

# Guides Gazette

## September 2022

The Marquis de Lafayette  
By Julia Bloom



The State House Senate Chamber is home to many busts of historical figures, including one of the Marquis de Lafayette, the only foreigner portrayed in the building. But who was Lafayette, and what is his connection to the United States?

Gilbert du Mortier, Marquis de Lafayette, was born on September 6th 1757 in Chavaniac, France, to a noble family with a strong history of military accomplishments. In 1768 Lafayette was sent to Paris to attend school at the College of Plessis, and he was put in a training program for members of the Black Musketeers, King Louis XV's personal horse guard. In 1770 Lafayette's mother and grandfather died, and he inherited the family fortune.

That May, Lafayette was commissioned as an officer in the Black Musketeers at the age of 13. Three years later he married Marie Adrienne Françoise, the daughter of the Duke of Ayen. Lafayette felt stifled in the royal court, and he accepted a commission as an officer in the Noailles Dragoons in 1773. Two years later, while training with his regiment, Lafayette met Charles-François de Broglie, the Commander of the Army of the East, and joined his regiment's Masonic Lodge. At a dinner with Broglie, Lafayette was introduced to Prince William Henry, the Duke of Gloucester, who strongly criticized his brother King George III's treatment of the American colonists that had led to the Revolutionary War. Lafayette was inspired by the cause of the Americans fighting for independence, and saw the war as a chance to gain military glory. He began to plan a way to travel to the American colonies and join the Continental Army.

In the early years of the war the Continental Congress was looking to secure France as an ally in their fight for independence. Delegates such as Arthur Lee traveled overseas to persuade the French Foreign Minister Vergennes to secretly fund the patriots as a way of getting back at the English for France's losses in the Seven Years' War. In March of 1776 Vergennes wrote a letter to King Louis XVI urging him to support the patriots financially. This support needed to be provided secretly, to avoid another costly and dangerous war with England. The French king had a fake company set up to buy up French arms and ship them to America. Silas Deane also worked to recruit men to travel overseas and fight in

the American cause, promising some high rewards if they succeeded. Lafayette met with Deane in late 1776 to apply for a spot in the army's American campaign, and was commissioned as a Major General on December 7th, 1776.

When Lafayette's family heard the news, his father-in-law forbade him from going. Lafayette pretended to drop the idea while continuing his plans to go to America, buying a twenty-two gun ship named *La Victoire*. In April of 1776 Lafayette set sail on his ship— but not before receiving angry letters from the French government after his family learned what he had done. Guilt-ridden, Lafayette left the ship in Spain and returned to France to make amends. Count Broglie, who hoped to win a high position in the American government through Lafayette's crew, sent an aide to lie to Lafayette, telling him the French government actually supported his actions. Encouraged, Lafayette returned to Spain, and set sail on April 20th, 1777, landing at Charlestown, South Carolina on June 13th, 1777.

Lafayette and his fellow officers traveled to Philadelphia, where they were initially met with a brusque dismissal. Silas Deane's recruitment efforts had led many Frenchmen to travel to America in hopes of getting high military positions, annoying the Continental Congress. Lafayette differed from these men by offering to serve in the army without pay and also learning English. Congress commissioned Lafayette as a volunteer Major General in the Continental Army on July 31st, 1777, and a few days later he met his new commander George Washington, whom Lafayette instantly admired. Lafayette had joined the American forces at a crucial point in the Revolutionary War. The previous summer British forces had taken Manhattan, and defeated Washington's troops in multiple battles during his disastrous New York campaign. Lafayette first saw combat at the Battle of Brandywine on September 11th, 1777. Although the battle resulted in a loss for the Continental Army, Lafayette helped keep the soldiers' retreat orderly, and he was wounded in the leg.

After recovering, Lafayette returned to the army, and in the fall of 1777 Congress gave him command of a Virginian army division. Lafayette wintered with Washington in the harsh conditions at Valley Forge, and recruited the Oneida tribe of upstate New York to the American side during an expedition to Canada. In March 1778 the French government publicly revealed their alliance with the American states, and England declared war on France. That July the French fleet landed in America, commanded by the Count of Estaing. However the Count rejected a planned attack on New York due to its shallow harbor, and was unable to participate in an attack on the British in Rhode Island when his ships were damaged in a storm.



In early 1779 Lafayette returned to France on leave, and was welcomed back after a brief house arrest for leaving without permission. During this time Lafayette pushed unsuccessfully for France to invade England, and advocated for additional troops and arms to be sent to America. On March 5th 1780 the Continental Congress ordered Lafayette back to America aboard the frigate *Hermione*, and he rejoined Washington in camp on May 10th. That July a new French fleet

led by the Count of Rouchambeau arrived, but their lack of supplies made a major attack unadvisable. After more unsuccessful campaigns that year, Lafayette bemoaned the lack of his supplies to the French government, which promised additional funds and troops.

In the winter of 1781 the Americans won the Battle of Cowpens, an engagement that changed the course of the war in the Americans' favor. In August 1781 British forces set up camp at Yorktown, Virginia, and the allied French and American troops began planning a siege there. On October 6th, 1781 French and American soldiers dug a series of siege trenches around the British fort at Yorktown, and the next day began firing on it. Lafayette's division helped capture two fortified British redoubts on October 14th, and after the British commander Cornwallis's attempt to retreat by sea failed, he surrendered on October 17th, 1781. The British troops were all taken as prisoners of war, and that December Lafayette sailed back to France. He served as an advisor to Benjamin Franklin, John Jay, and John Adams while they drafted the Treaty of Paris, which was signed on September 3rd, 1783, officially ending the Revolutionary War. He also worked to secure favorable terms for trade between France and the United States, including a six million dollar loan to the US in the midst of France's recession.

Lafayette visited the United States from 1784 to 1785, and returned to find the French monarchy in political and economic turmoil. On December 29th, 1786 King Louis XVI called an Assembly of Notables to discuss the financial situation, and appointed Lafayette to the council. During the Assembly Lafayette decried France's unequal social structure and called for a meeting that represented all the people of France. The Assembly soon fell apart, as King Louis and the notables disagreed on whether new taxes should be enacted to raise needed funds and which ones should be implemented.

King Louis called a meeting of the Estates General, an assembly of representatives of the nobles, clergy, and common people, on January 24, 1789. During the meeting the nobility and clergy estates locked the commons out of the meeting room due to a disagreement on how the members would vote. Lafayette and the commons estate met in an indoor tennis court, where they swore the Tennis Court Oath, vowing not to dissolve until they had a new constitution. On July 11, 1789 Lafayette presented the Assembly with the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen, a document written with the help of Thomas Jefferson that proclaimed equal rights for all people. The next day a mob of angry soldiers and common people captured the Bastille, a national prison, on July 17, 1789, starting the French Revolution.

On July 18th, Lafayette was proclaimed head of the National Guard of France, which was to maintain order and enforce the laws of the National Assembly. However he soon became a hated figure for supporting the king, putting his life in danger. In April 1792 Austria declared war on France, and that summer the Austrian government threatened to invade France if the royal family was harmed. Lafayette was put under an arrest warrant, and fled to Austria in an attempt to travel to the United States. He was captured there and held in prison for the next three years, living off his US Government pension. His wife and children joined Lafayette in joint captivity on October 15th 1795, and they spent two more years in prison.

On September 19th, 1797 Lafayette and his family were released from prison as part of the treaty negotiated by Napoleon Bonaparte that ended the war. On November 9th, 1799 Napoleon organized a coup that made him consul for life, and Lafayette took the opportunity to sneak back into France under an alias. Lafayette regained his French citizenship in March 1800, but largely stayed out of politics during Napoleon's reign.

In 1824, The US Congress and President James Monroe invited Lafayette to visit the United States as part of its 50th anniversary celebrations. Lafayette accepted, and arrived in New York on August 15th, 1824, where he was welcomed by cheering crowds. Lafayette's visit lasted sixteen months and covered all twenty four states, with parties and celebrations held in every town and city he visited. Many artworks and monuments were created to honor Lafayette, as well as many souvenirs ranging from gloves to fans. During his visit, Lafayette visited Washington's grave, met with President James Monroe, and past Presidents Thomas Jefferson and John Adams. In June 1825 he laid the cornerstone for the Bunker Hill Monument, and took some soil from there which was eventually placed on his grave. Lafayette left the United States on September 7th, 1825 and returned to France.

When Lafayette arrived in France he found it ruled by a new king, Charles X, who planned to restore the monarchy's absolute rule and remove rights from the common people. Lafayette was angered by the curtailing of popular rights and participated in the July Revolution protests in the summer of 1830. He also spoke up against the next king, Louis Phillippe I, when he back-

tracked on promised reforms and tried to censor the press. That spring Lafayette became ill, and he died on May 20th, 1834. He was buried in Picpus Cemetery in Paris, under the soil from Bunker Hill that he had brought back. Today Lafayette is honored in the United States with numerous towns, cities, and other landmarks named for him. He is remembered as a prominent man who stood for individual rights and helped the United States become an independent nation.

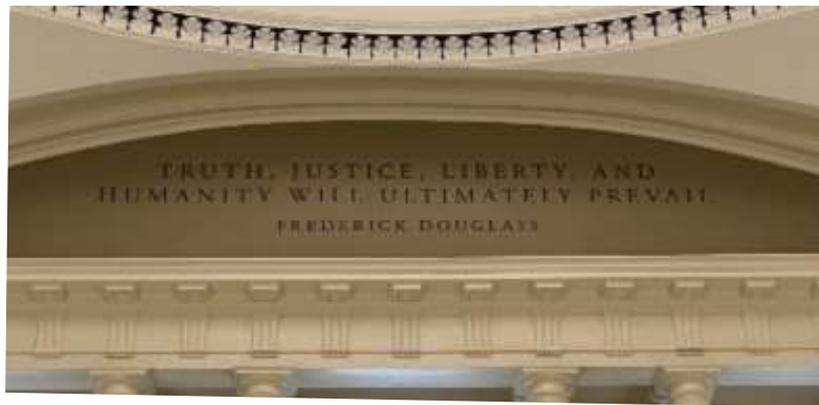
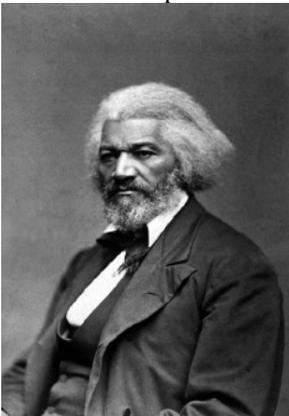
## **Frederick Douglass: An Abolitionist Orator in Nineteenth-Century Massachusetts**

**By Scott Kirshy**

In the present-day United States, Frederick Douglass is a near universally recognized figure. Whether from textbooks in schools or his portrayal by the late actor Raymond St. Jacques in the 1989 film *Glory*, the public recognizes him as a towering historical figure and activist in pursuit of abolition in nineteenth-century America. Douglass is remembered as a national figure, but his life trajectory brought him to the Bay State as he rose to the national spotlight.

Douglass experienced the brutal life of slavery from the moment of his birth. Born in 1818 in Easton, Maryland, as Frederick Augustus William Bailey, he was the son of Harriet Bailey, an enslaved woman, and possibly Captain Aaron Anthony, Bailey's master. By the age of 16, Douglass had been the slave of Anthony, his daughter, his granddaughter, and several others, and he experienced brutal treatment, particularly after he was leased to one farmer on the Chesapeake Bay, who regularly beat him. In 1838, Douglass finally escaped his enslavement; he disguised himself as a common sailor and boarded a train for Philadelphia. At only 20 years old, Douglass had endured two decades in bondage, escaped his enslavement, and soon began to chart a new course in life.

Soon after he escaped, young Douglass' embarked on a new path that would bring him to Massachusetts. He married a free black woman, Anna Murray, in New York City, before the couple moved to New Bedford, Massachusetts, in the 1840s. Shortly after their move, he finally took the name Frederick Douglass, basing his new last name after a line from Sir Walter Scott's poem *The Lady of the Lake*. In 1841, Douglass made his first speech at a meeting of the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society in Nantucket. The positive reception led to his employment as a lecturer with the Society, and he subsequently moved his family to Lynn, Massachusetts. Just four years after his first speech in Nantucket, he published his autobiography, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave*. For the rest of the 1840's, Douglass continued to speak in the United States, including an 1849 speech in Faneuil Hall in Boston, as well as in Great Britain. With the approach of the 1860 presidential election, the famed orator now furthered the cause of abolition as a political lobbyist.



As the Civil War commenced, Douglass began an abolitionist push from within the government. Though suspicious of Abraham Lincoln, Douglass supported his campaign in 1860. His frustration with Lincoln's initial disinterest in abolition as a war aim quickly shifted when Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1st, 1863. Douglass quickly inspired enlistment into the first all-Black 54th and 55th Massachusetts regiments, and his two sons also joined the 54th. While he urged for all-Black regiments, Douglass also pushed the President on issues of equal pay and equal opportunity for African-Americans within the US military. Even after the end of the war, Douglass continued to be an influential public figure.

Douglass continued his work to push the government towards abolition and equality. On February 7, 1866, President Andrew Johnson met with a delegation of Black leaders, which included Douglass, and refused their demands for Black suffrage and racial equality. Douglass subsequently supported the Grant administration as the publisher of the pro-Grant newspaper *New National Era*. In the 1870s and 1880s, he held several prominent government posts, such as U.S. Marshal for the District of Columbia, Recorder of Deeds for the District, and US Minister to Haiti. On February 25, 1895, Frederick Douglass died at his estate in Washington, D.C.

Within the halls of the Massachusetts State House, Frederick Douglass occupies a unique position. While Americans remember him as a national orator and leader in the abolitionist movement, the state government still honors him alongside other Bay State leaders. In the Senate chamber, his quote “Truth, Justice, Liberty, and Humanity will ultimately prevail” adorns the wall opposite the Senate President’s chair. This quote originated in one of Douglass’ last public speeches to a meeting of the Bethel Literary and Historical Association in Washington, D.C. on October 21, 1890. The speech is a criticism of denied promises of equal opportunity in the United States. Yet despite his own frustration, Douglass concluded his remarks with hope that civil and political action would create a more just and equal country. Frederick Douglass was a great American orator and abolitionist leader, for he rose from enslavement, embarked across the country, settled in the Bay State, and emerged as a leading voice for racial equality and equal opportunity in pre and post-Civil War America.

## **Benjamin Franklin Butler: A Restoration of Reputation**

**By Liam Szwed**



*Benjamin Franklin Butler*

*“A Reputation is something which those with courage can often do without”*

Benjamin Franklin Butler is not a man often remembered in the popular history of this commonwealth. If he is mentioned, it is often with some sort of disclaimer attached. “He was a difficult man,” they say; a “colorful and controversial figure in government” and from the surface, these are not necessarily unfair characterizations. Butler often feuded with his political rivals and allies alike. By the time he becomes governor of Massachusetts he had alienated himself from both the Democratic and Republican parties (both of which he once counted himself a member). To limit our story of Butler to this flat image is a missed opportunity to learn about a fascinating character right in the center of one of the most tumultuous periods in American history. When you look at the substance of Butler’s disagreements, the motivations behind his party switchings, you will find not petty issues of reputation, but principled and motivated actions. You are introduced to a vision of the world that is remarkably progressive even by today’s standards. When we peel back just one thin layer of Butler’s reputation, we find an ardent defender of civil rights decades ahead of his time but it’s rare that the Major General from Lowell gets this sort of attention

.The two instances where Butler's name is most likely to crop up in conversation around the state house involve two traditions surrounding the end of the Governor's term. The first contribution the Major General left with this state is the "Butler Bible". Butler arrived in the corner office of the governor to discover that there was no bible to be found for executive reference. To rectify this, Butler donated his personal copy of the bible, dedicating it with a note on the inside cover for it to be passed down to each successive governor (it is now one of four totems passed from governor to governor, the other three being a pewter key to the office, a gavel made from timbers of the USS Constitution, and a two volume set of the Massachusetts General Statutes which carries a personal note from each governor to their successor). It is on this very bible that every single governor (30 total) has been sworn in. That is until Governor Deval Patrick, who chose instead to be sworn in on a bible that was given to John Adams by members of the Amistad (referred to as the Mendi Bible).

Ben Butler's final act as governor has become one of the most consistent and recognizable traditions surrounding the governorship here in Massachusetts, and the disparity between the story that's been told about its origin, and the likely reality of the matter illustrates the exact kind of discrepancy in the record around Butler that I hope to help correct. On January 3rd, 1884, Benjamin Franklin Butler left the governor's office on the third floor for the final time. In a tradition now familiar to all governors of the commonwealth, He then walked downstairs, out the front doors of the state house, and stepped across Beacon Street into Boston Common. Butler is credited as the first to have made this walk alone. The short story is that Butler was left to promenade alone due to his status as a political orphan and the supposed mutiny of his entire staff, reportedly abandoning him on his final day eager to be rid of the famously difficult man. In my research, I have failed to find any record of such a dramatic display of divorce on that day in 1884. What I did find was the Boston Globe's account of a torrential downpour that day in early January which may be credited for a smaller than expected turnout for the ceremony. The second piece of context adds a human element and provides a clarifying light that could be applied to all of Butler's dealings. It is likely that previous governors made a similar walk, or at least held some form of ceremony to commemorate this occasion, and the standard was to be accompanied by one's family. By January of 1884, Ben Butler had buried his wife of 32 years and three of his four children. Leaving aside his political exile from each major party (he split with the republicans over his support of fiat currency and using the greenback to finance reconstruction) Butler was truly alone by the time he descended into Boston Common. It was not a matter of his character, but a product of simple bad luck. It pains me that this is how Butler is most remembered here in Massachusetts. That our last image of him is one of a man standing alone in the rain dwarfed at the bottom of a massive staircase.

Over the next few months, I am going to attempt to present a portrait of the man I have come to see as the most interesting character of the American Civil War. Through a series of articles I aim to introduce you the reader to the first general to effectively free the slaves during the Civil War; the man who prevented the state of Maryland from succeeding by stealing their Great Seal; the man so brutal in his opposition to the defenders of slavery that, while military governor of New Orleans, he earned the title of Benjamin "The Beast" Butler. And most importantly, the man who was very nearly appointed as Lincoln's vice president in 1864. Had it been Old Ben Butler at the helm of reconstruction, the outcome may have resembled something closer to justice.