



LAFAYETTE'S
Hermione
Voyage 2015

Friends of Hermione-LaFayette in America

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A project that has defied all the odds



1993

A small group of the enthusiasts conceive an audacious idea—to re-create the frigate L'Hermione, which carried Lafayette to America in 1780, and then sail it here. Led by author and savant Érik Orsenna and by Benedict Donnelly, they start a long process of feasibility planning and then of laying out the construction site at Rochefort (in the Charente-Maritime district) in the Poitou-Charentes Region (Southwest of France).

1997

On the basis of exact line drawings (taken from L'Hermione's sister ship, La Concorde, after she was captured and then stored in the British Admiralty), the construction begins. A wooden framework appears, and starts to define the lines of L'Hermione.

2000

The superstructure and then the deck take form. Some thousands of craftsmen eventually join the process. The ship's dinghy and longboat are completed.

2011

By now some three million people have contributed to the funds which support the project. Popular and media interest continues to grow in France. The final planking of the hull takes place, rendering it complete.

2012

65,000 people gather in Rochefort to witness the launch. L'Hermione floats on water for the first time. In New York, the event is watched via live broadcast by a group of American Friends.

2013

The masting takes place, and L'Hermione starts to assume its final form, the masts towering above the landscape. The crow's nest follows, and the rigging. The appointment of L'Hermione's captain is confirmed.

2014

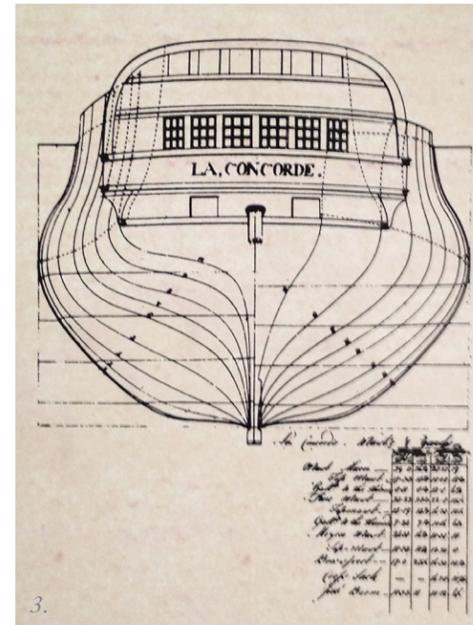
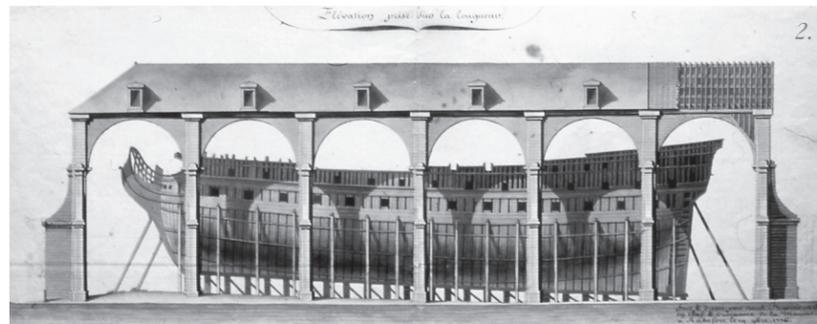
All 19 sails of L'Hermione will be completed. The crew will be selected, and a period of trials and training will begin. Final planning for the voyage up the East Coast of the USA and Canada will take place.

2015

On April 25, years of labor will be fulfilled, and L'Hermione is due to set sail for the USA. The journey will start from the mouth of the River Charente, in Port-des-Barques, where Lafayette boarded on March 10, 1780. The transatlantic crossing is expected to take 42 days in total before landfall at Yorktown, Virginia.



1. An 18th century frigate in action; 2. A dry dock at Rochefort; 3. British Admiralty drawing of L'Hermione's sister ship; 4. 18th century French manual for warship construction; 5. L'Hermione in construction; 6. The naval battle of Louisbourg in 1781; 7. "La vie à bord de la frégate L'Hermione" by Didier Georget.



“She sails like a bird.”

Lafayette during the first voyage of L'Hermione, 1780

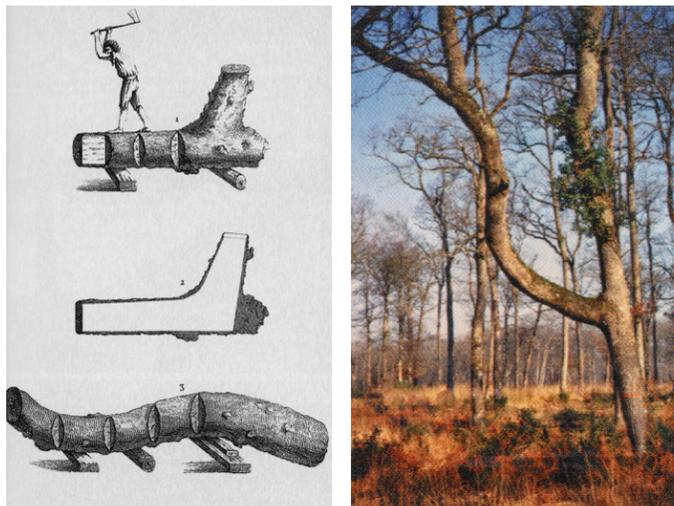
One of the fastest naval ships of her kind, the Hermione was the product of a French drive for naval supremacy that was personally led by Louis XVI. Her relatively small size gave her nimbleness, while the twenty-six 12lb and six 6lb cannons gave her formidable fire power. She was built on the Charente River, exactly where the new Hermione has taken shape, in 1778-9.

L'Hermione VITAL STATISTICS

LAUNCHED 1779	LOST AT SEA 1793	DISPLACEMENT 116 tns	DRAUGHT 5.78 m	LENGTH OVERALL 65 m	BEAM 11.22 m
CREW COMPLEMENT 315	SAILS 19 with an area of 2181 sq m	MASTS 3, with a main mast of 47 m	GUNNERY 26 x 12lb cannons 6 x 6 lb cannons	RIGGING ROPES 24 km	

Now, a labor of love

The recreation of historic tall ships has often involved compromises with modern techniques and materials. But one of the purposes of this project has been to show that a re-creation can (just!) be performed today with complete authenticity. Even the wooden bilge pumps exactly replicate 18th century plans, allowing bilge water to be raised to the gun deck, where it flows overboard.



Left: The curve is 'courbe,' detailed manually; right: An oak tree that meets specifications.



Wood The biggest challenge was carpentry. Oak trees which were bent to fit the shape of the future hull simply are not grown any more; forests all over France provided the trees, to the exact specification, with strict adherence to the principle of sustainability. They were then fashioned according to traditional methods.



Sails The sails are made of linen, finished with a boltrope of tarred hemp. Every eyelet and stitch has been meticulously done by a single female sailmaker.



Metal Nothing on this scale has been forged traditionally in centuries: composition of iron, and the processes were followed to perfection in order to create the 1,500 blocks, tackles and pins which hold the rigging.



Cannons The cannons are made by La Route des Tonneaux et Cannons near Ruelle, the site of the foundry that made the originals—each one weighing 1.6 tons of cast iron.

Then, a cargo of great value

The original L'Hermione was commanded by Louis-René de Latouche. Some thirteen years older than his precious human cargo, the Marquis de Lafayette, Latouche was conscious of this considerable responsibility, and, like so many others, fell under the young Lafayette's spell. Getting him safely through, in his words, "*un passage agréable*" to America was the start of a very distinguished naval career.



The Marquis de Lafayette, the human cargo of L'Hermione

The Boy General, “our Marquis.”



“The invariable and indefatigable friend of America, in all times, places and occasions.”

JOHN ADAMS



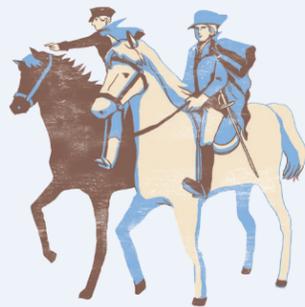
1. *Cur non?* *(Why not?)*

Marie-Joseph Paul Yves Roch Gilbert du Motier, Marquis de Lafayette ranks as one of the most extraordinary figures in modern history. In his early twenties, he played a pivotal role in securing American Independence. His guiding spirit was that nothing is ever impossible: “Why not?” Adopted by America, he became “our Marquis.”



“His zeal is unbounded.”

THOMAS JEFFERSON



5. *“Here I am, my dear General”*

“As amiable a man as can be imagined, and as sincere an American as any Frenchman can be.”

JAMES MADISON

As he arrived in Boston harbor, he sent word to Washington, ‘Here I am.’ L’Hermione was met with a 13-gun salute, and Lafayette and party were regally and enthusiastically entertained at the Council Chamber. Lafayette sped on to meet Washington, and informed him of the scale of the French intervention.



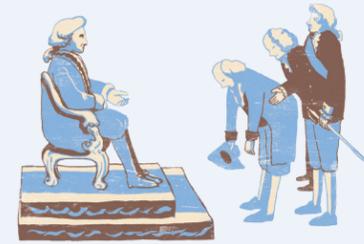
2. *The first sojourn in America*

In 1777, then aged only 19, he secretly—and against the wishes of the French government—sailed to America, announced himself a volunteer and charmed himself into being commissioned a Major General. Meeting Washington, a deep bond of friendship developed. Lafayette served him with distinction, most notably rallying the retreat at the Battle of Brandywine.



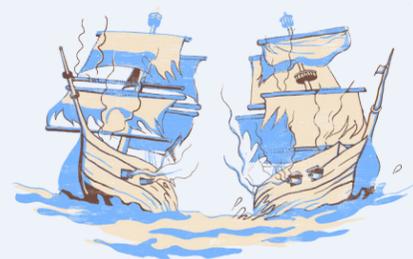
6. *Congress visits L’Hermione*

On May 4, 1781, L’Hermione was moved to Philadelphia. The entire Continental Congress paid the frigate the exceptional tribute of a visit, commemorating her service in the previous year in action up and down the coast. Meanwhile, Lafayette has been moved to the Virginia frontline.



3. *Return to France —and royal favor*

In 1778, a wounded Lafayette returned home to France. For the next two years he lobbied on behalf of the American cause—eventually winning back royal favor. Louis XVI agreed to send a significant and well-equipped military force. While this was under French command, Lafayette’s role as an American general serving under Washington was recognized.



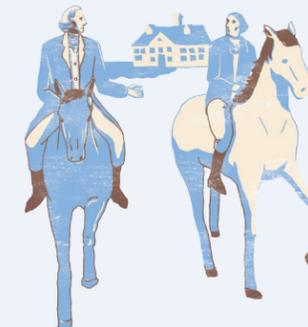
7. *Endgame at Yorktown*

His forces played a critical part in the squeeze of General Cornwallis at Yorktown, harrying the British with guerrilla tactics. While in Chesapeake Bay, L’Hermione was part of the blockade which sealed the fate of the British, and led to their surrender.



4. *The Voyage of L’Hermione 1780*

The frigate L’Hermione, recently built, was assigned to Lafayette, and left Rochefort on March 19, 1780. The crossing took 38 days, and the captain studiously avoided military action en route to get to Boston as quickly as possible.



8. *“Remember your adopted son”*

As he returned home later in the year, he bade farewell to Washington, whom he would never see again. For the rest of his life he would remain an ardent friend of the United States, finally returning, one more time, in 1824 for a tour where he was showered with praise and plaudits.



“It is a common remark in our country that wherever you go, you do us good.”

JOHN JAY



“It is easy to express everything but the service we have of your birth and our obligations to you. For this, figures and even words are insufficient.”

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN



“A gentleman who has distinguished himself in the service of this country so signally.”

GEORGE WASHINGTON

Re-affirming a friendship both deep and long

MISSION STATEMENT

1

To evoke the spirit of “Why not?”, and to demonstrate that, given determination, anything is achievable.

2

To bring alive the memory of Marquis de Lafayette who embodied this spirit.

3

To symbolize and rekindle through L’Hermione, the intimate ties between France and the United States, and the spirit of liberty which sustains them.

4

To celebrate the value of impeccable craftsmanship, as the sole foundation for the authentic reconstruction of the Hermione.

5

To demonstrate the inestimable value of history both to the present and the future, and to show that it can be a living force in increasing our understanding of the world around us.

6

Through this, to create a lasting educational legacy which will be accessible to generations of young Americans to come.

In modern times no relationship has endured as consistently or as positively as that between the United States and France. France is the USA’s oldest ally.

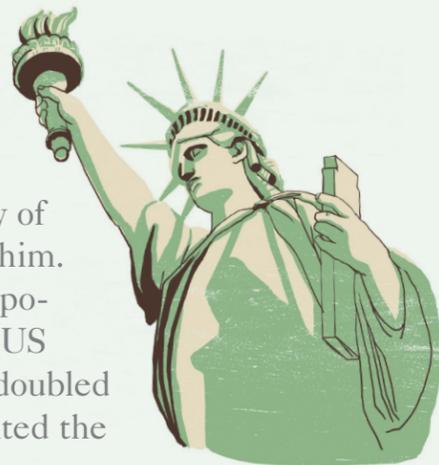
It was French support that tipped the balance against Britain in the Revolutionary War. Lafayette symbolized that aid, and became recognized as the “French Founding Father.” His return and triumphant tour of the States in 1824-25 cemented this bond, and led to a multiplicity of cities and towns named after him.

Meanwhile, the sale by Napoleon and the purchase by the US under Jefferson of Louisiana doubled the size of the US, and benefited the statecraft of both parties.

By the late nineteenth century, the common rooting in the principles of liberty had matured into warm friendship. In the 1880’s, the Statue of Liberty was paid for by the French government and people. Sculpted in Paris, it was erected in New York, where it symbolizes our shared values.



In 1914-1918, France’s very existence was threatened. Before the US intervened officially, young Americans volunteered to form an American air unit to fight on its side.



They took the name of the Lafayette squadron (Lafayette Escadrille), whose exploits became legendary. By 1917, America was in the war, its expeditionary force led by General John Pershing. One of his aides, Lt. Col. Stanton, visiting the tours of Lafayette in Paris, uttered the words,

“Lafayette, nous voilà!”

(Lafayette, we are here!), which have gone into the French language as a token of the two countries’ friendship.



That friendship was to be tested again. In 1944,

thousands of young Americans lost their lives in the D-Day campaign in Normandy. The campaign and the ensuing battles against Nazi tyranny reinforced the sense of a common fight for freedom which had started in the 1770’s.

Many Americans have chosen to live their lives in France, some 100,000; while 300,000 French people now live in the United States. Commercial ties remain critically important. The US is the largest investor in France, in excess of \$112 billion of value. France accounted for 9% of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in the US, with over 1,200 US businesses, almost 200 new investment projects in 2012, and 4,600 French companies generating 650,000 American jobs.

The Voyage of L’Hermione in 2015 is a contemporary gesture of commitment to the enduring friendship between our two countries.



“The alliance and friendship between the two countries will be established in such a way as will last forever.”

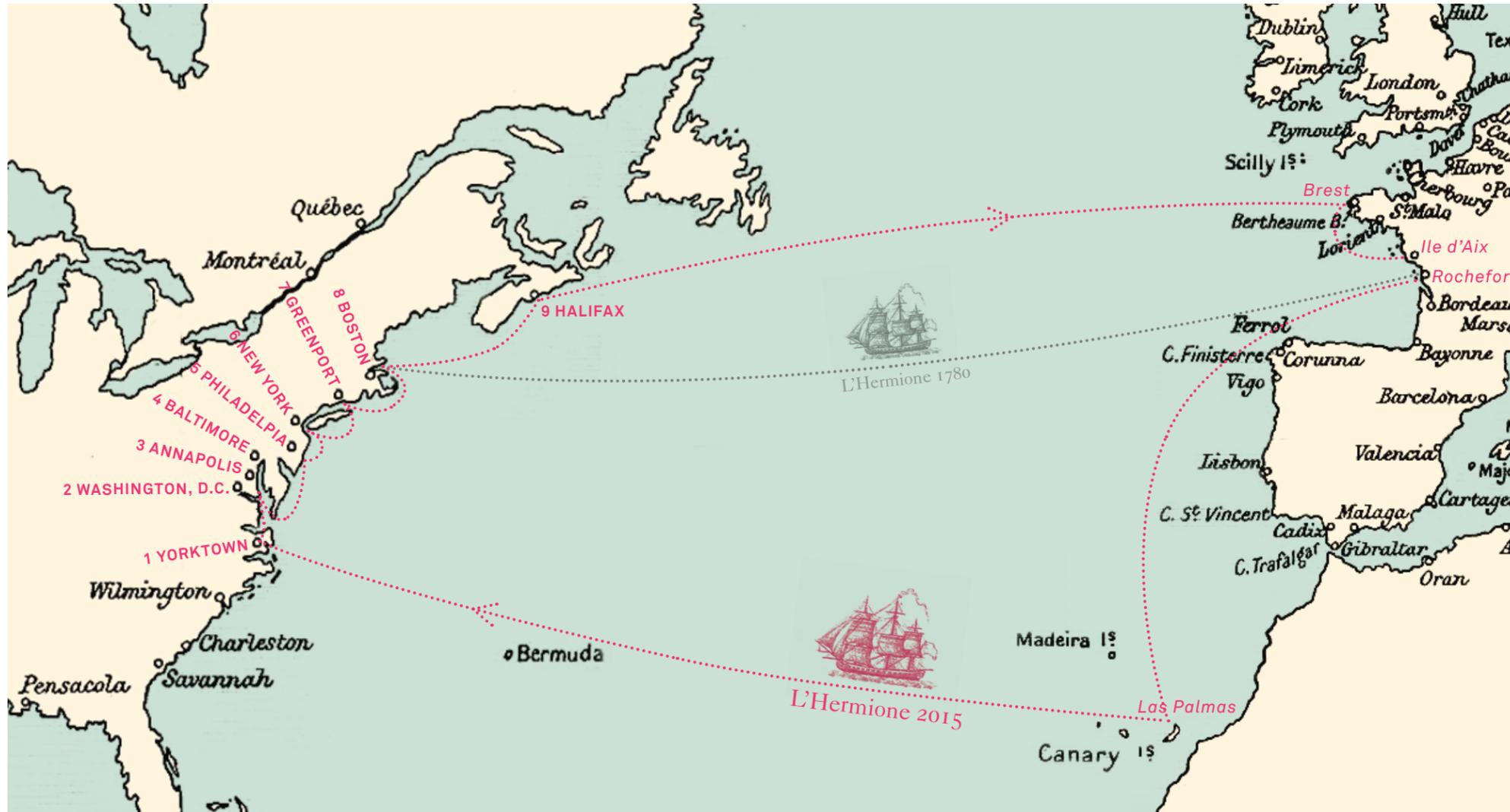
GEORGE WASHINGTON
First President



“There are certain values that bind us together and reveal our common humanity ... our two republics were founded with some of these ideals.”

BARACK OBAMA
44th President

Voyage 2015



YORKTOWN, VA

Yorktown, Virginia is where the decisive battle for American independence took place. L'Hermione took part in the naval battle of Yorktown in September 1781. Today, Yorktown, Jamestown, and Colonial Williamsburg form a unique historic hub and world famous tourist destination.



WASHINGTON, D.C.

At the time of the Revolutionary War, the nation's capital did not exist. Now Lafayette's portrait hangs in a place of honor in the Capitol Building. L'Hermione will moor in the vicinity of Washington, visiting Mount Vernon, Washington's home, and the nearby port of Alexandria, VA.



ANNAPOLIS, MD

Annapolis is located on Chesapeake Bay. It is the capital of the state of Maryland. Lafayette was present in the city in March 1781. Annapolis is the home of the US Naval Academy. Annapolis was the capital of the United States in 1783 after the Treaty of Paris.



BALTIMORE, MD

Baltimore is located on Chesapeake Bay in Maryland. Lafayette went there several times in the spring of 1781 and during the summer of 1784. Baltimore played a leading role in the American Revolution. Here, L'Hermione will meet the full fleet of Tall Ships America.



PHILADELPHIA, PA

Philadelphia is located on the Delaware River in the state of Pennsylvania. Lafayette was frequently in the city in 1777 and 1778, and later in 1780 and 1781. This is the place where the members of the United States Congress were received aboard L'Hermione in 1781.



NEW YORK, NY

New York, the largest city in the United States, was the country's capital from 1785 to 1790. It was also the last to be liberated by George Washington's army at the very end of the Revolutionary War in 1783.



GREENPORT, NY

Greenport is on the North Fork of Long Island, a landscape of vineyards and long maritime history. It has become a place of rendezvous for tall ships, especially Tall Ships America.



HALIFAX, NOVA SCOTIA

Proceeding via the picturesque coast of Maine, L'Hermione will sail to Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada. L'Hermione patrolled the coast of Lunenburg, nearby Halifax, along the banks of the St. Lawrence River before the famous Battle of Louisbourg.



BOSTON, MA

Boston, the capital of Massachusetts and the leading city of New England, was the starting point of the American Revolution, triggered by the Boston Tea Party. Lafayette arrived on L'Hermione in Boston on April 28, 1780.



MAY 17, 2013

On May 17, the masts were installed. Since then, construction has entered its final stage, including the fitting of modern-day equipment required for a transatlantic crossing. The countdown to Voyage 2015 begins.

A celebration of youth in the digital age

Voyage 2015 is a celebration of youth. The key players will be the crew members themselves. Through the digital communications programs they will interact with our audience—capturing the spirit and adventure of “Why not?” Voyage 2015 is being designed not just as a physical voyage, but as an experience for the digital, virtual age, spreading its reach way beyond the ports it visits. Educational legacy is also a critical objective of the project, to keep alive the belief in liberty that the first L’Hermione fought for.



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