



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Contact:

Erika Holst

217-782-7152

erika.holst@illinois.gov

Illinois State Museum Acquires Glove Worn at 1825 Lafayette Ball

SPRINGFIELD, IL – On April 29, 1825, the Marquis de Lafayette spent a single night in St. Louis on his grand American tour. That night, Mary Paddock of Madison County, Illinois attended a ball in his honor wearing a pair of kid leather gloves bearing Lafayette’s image. Now, nearly two centuries later, one of those gloves has been donated to the Illinois State Museum.

It was passed down through Mary’s family with a note that reads “Glove worn by Miss Mary Paddock at a LaFayette ball in St. Louis.” It was donated to the Museum by Mary’s great-great-great grandnephews and niece on October 17. LaFayette gloves were common souvenirs in 1824-25, but only a handful are known to survive today, and none with the particular variation of Lafayette’s image on this glove.

The Marquis de Lafayette was a French aristocrat who served in the American Revolutionary War as a major general. At age 67, he returned to the United States for a reunion tour. He initially planned to visit the 13 original colonies over the course of four months. But Americans were so excited by the tour that he ended up visiting all 24 states and staying 13 months.

On April 29, 1825, Lafayette stopped for the night at St. Louis, where local citizens entertained him at a grand ball at the Mansion House Hotel. Lafayette’s promenade partner was Alzire Menard, daughter of Illinois’ first Lieutenant Governor, Pierre Menard.

Lafayette’s American visit had inspired the production of a wave of commemorative goods throughout the United States, including gloves, ribbons and ceramic vessels. Reportedly, the Marquis was stunned the first time a lady offered her gloved hand to be kissed and he saw his own image there. At a ball in Philadelphia he “murmured a few graceful words to the effect that he did not care to kiss himself...made a very low bow, and the lady passed on.”

The Illinois State Museum will exhibit the glove in its lobby starting on October 24. It will remain on view until next spring. The Illinois State Museum is located at 502 S. Spring Street in Springfield. It is open Monday – Saturday, 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. and Sundays 12 noon – 4:30 p.m.

Photo files available on request:

