



The Brandywine Dispatch

Member Newsletter of the Brandywine Battlefield Park Associates

“Keeping the Story Alive and Interesting”

Winter 2018

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“La Foudre”

by Andrew Outten

At the park's "Patriot's Day" event in late November, we were privileged to have as our keynote speaker, Dr. Robert Selig Ph.D. to discuss the significance of a 4lbs artillery piece in our museum collection. Ornamentally decorated with the common French markings of that time, this piece, "La Foudre" or Lightning, was cast in 1756 in Douvay, France and came to America in 1777 during the early part of the American Revolution. Dr. Selig's discussion focused on how it ended up at Brandywine and the little-known story associated with it and others like it. That fascinating story adds to the piece's character and offers insight and understanding towards both French and American domestic and foreign policy in the 18th century. This article is a synopsis and contains information from Dr. Selig's lecture.

On March 3, 1776, Silas Deane, one of the American envoys to France during the American Revolution approached the Comte de Vergennes, the French Foreign Minister, and requested that France assist the American war effort by sending one hundred pieces of artillery to North America to better equip the Continental Army. Shortly after the request was made, Vergennes came back to Deane, and much to Deane's surprise, informed him that France would offer one hundred and seventy-three short guns and twenty-one long gun 4lbs. artillery pieces. It turns out France had been waiting for this request, but why and how did Deane hit the jackpot in obtaining so many? To answer this question and understand how so many field pieces were sent from France to America, one must step back to a previous conflict and even farther back to the early 18th century.

At the start of the French and Indian war, or Seven Years War in 1756, France quickly realized that they were not prepared for the conflict in terms of their artillery. In 1732, Inspector General of Artillery in France, Jean-Florent de Vallière, structured the French artillery system into 24, 12, 8, 4lbs size artillery pieces. Casted to be used with early 18th century tactics where infantry approached in massed squares, these guns were primarily used to repel those squares and were very effective, especially at greater distances. As the 18th century progressed, France's enemies started to adapt and moved away from the massed squares of infantry in battle to line formations making their infantry more mobile and thus making the French guns more and more ineffective. The reason for the ineffectiveness was the guns were just too heavy. Their 4lbs. guns, which were intended to support infantry on the field were divided into two types; long and short barrel. A long barrel 4lbs gun weighed roughly 1,200 lbs while the short barrel gun was not much lighter. All-in-all, France's artillery did not have the mobility required to counteract the changing tactics with the Vallière system of artillery.

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The Brandywine Battlefield Park Associates is sponsored by the Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission (PHMC)

The Brandywine Dispatch is published quarterly by BBPA, and is free with membership.

Submissions are welcome !

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The President's View

Welcome back to Spring! The Brandywine Battlefield Park has had a short respite, however, our staff and volunteers have been very busy. Our heartfelt thanks go out to everyone who helped make our season opening Charter Day a success. By-laws updates were adopted, as presented by the Board. A transition within our Board of Directors occurred. Our gratitude of appreciation for many years of hard work to departing members; Judy Thorpe, Bryan Thorpe, Kathy Massey, and Verne Weidman. A warm welcome to Terry Ceulers and Shirley Dogan who are joining the Board of Directors.

Financial solvency, the Elephant in the Room (so-to-speak) has been foremost in my thoughts, and with that, I make an appeal. Before everyone runs to guard their bank account, I am asking for your help in another way. We need your ideas and suggestions in any form to assist in building and maintaining financial solvency. In my mind, we need to bolster sustainable revenue streams to support professional staff and strong education programs. Albeit, we are a non-profit organization, however we must have a sound financial base to operate successfully. On February 8th we held a session on Financial Planning and Funding. Many very good ideas were shared. We need to continue, therefore, next week, on Wednesday, April 18th, 2018 from 5:30 to 7:00 pm we will be open for more dialogue. Come join in, one and all!

Congratulations, George Tolton, Itinerant Dance Master, for being selected as the 2017 Volunteer of the Year for the Brandywine Battlefield Park. Once again, I wish to thank our partner, the Pennsylvania Historic and Museum Commission (PHMC). As always, I offer my gratitude to all those who work so hard and share our wonderful story. We look forward to an exciting and productive year and hope to see you soon!

Regards,

Linn (Linnell) Trimbell, President
Brandywine Battlefield Park Associates

Upcoming Events - 2018

Lecture Series - April 29th
Encampment Day - May 12th
Summer History Camp - June - August 2018
Remembrance Day - September 11th

We will be open July 4th, Memorial Day, and Labor Day!

For more information on our programs visit www.brandywinebattlefield.org

La Foudre continued

In 1764, Valliere was replaced by Jean Baptiste Vaquette de Gribeauval who made the King of France and other decision makers realize that changes had to be made regarding the Valliere system of artillery. Gribeauval argued for more mobility from artillery pieces and others went against Gribeauval and argued for firepower. Great debate ensued over this topic, but ultimately Gribeauval was able to start the process of modernizing France's artillery system. His reforms were successful and by 1770, Gribeauval replaced nearly all of the old pieces from the Valliere system, leaving the smaller, infantry supporting 4lbs pieces as the last ones to be dealt with. When comparing the two artillery systems in France to other other powers in Europe at the time, one can obtain a better understanding of the significance of the problem that existed. For example, Prussia's 12lbs. cannon weighed 350kg. France's 12lbs. cannon under the Vallière system was 1,500kg, but Gribeauval reduced them to 900kg. Prussia had a 6lbs. cannon weighing 268kg compared to France's Vallière 6lbs gun at 1,000kg, which Gribeauval reduced to 500kg. Unfortunately for Gribeauval, he lost his position in 1772 and was replaced by the son of Valliere, Joseph Florent de Vallière, who immediately wanted to bring back his father's system. This was easy for him to do because, much to Gribeauval's dismay, all the 4lbs. pieces from his father's system were saved for last during Gribeauval's reformation and these 4lbs guns were the primary pieces used on the battlefield. In 1774, the King of France died and in 1776 Vallière's son died as well. Soon after, on November 3, 1776, Gribeauval was reinstated to the position he was appointed to in 1764. Gribeauval set to work again to eradicate the old system entirely but needed a quick way to accomplish the challenge. This came just in time because just a few months earlier, a Declaration of Independence was signed in North America.



The delegates of the Continental Congress knew that they needed foreign assistance considering they barely had supplies for an army, no navy, and no money to support/build either. When Deane went to France in the summer of 1776, neither he nor the French court were aware of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. Months earlier, however, Gribeauval was approached by a French associate of Benjamin Franklin who suggested that should the case arise, Gribeauval should be prepared to sell the Vallière 4lbs cannon to the Americans. After being informed of Deane's request by Vergennes, Gribeauval immediately sent officers to complete an inventory of all the Vallière pieces throughout the armories in France. By the time Benjamin Franklin arrived in France in December 1776, all of Vallière 4lbs. pieces had been rounded up and were sitting in French ports ready to be shipped to America. From January-September 1777, France sailed nine ships to Portsmouth, New Hampshire with one hundred ninety-four artillery pieces and supplies for the Continental Army. The last ship left France in September 1777 and arrived in Portsmouth on December 1, 1777 carrying forty-eight 4lbs cannon and a Prussian officer known to many as Von Steuben. Additionally, on December 1, 1777, Gribeauval's long headache of erasing the old Vallière system was over.

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La Foudre continued

After the first shipments arrived from France, the Continental Army quickly put the 4lbs cannons into service. Ten of the twenty-two field pieces that were used at Saratoga were in fact French Vallière 4 lbs guns. The French actually sent way more cannons than the Continental army could handle and in December 1782, the majority of them were still sitting in storage at the Springfield armory simply because there were not enough men to man the guns. Today, there is only one 4lbs Vallière cannon in France on display in Paris. There is also one in Copenhagen, one in Brussels, and two in Berlin. The rest are all still here in the United States, the majority still in storage. In 1782, five were given to Pennsylvania where they were moved from Philadelphia to Harrisburg. One of those five pieces, "La Foudre," is currently on display in our museum at Brandywine Battlefield.

Without the support of the French in the American Revolution, the Continental army could not have accomplished what it did and defeat one of the world's most dominating powers of the 18th century. France not only sent cannons and supplies, but soldiers and a large fleet that eventually assisted Washington in the defeat of Cornwallis at Yorktown. Even contemporary paintings idolizing famous events and officers such as the one of Washington at Princeton portray the importance of the Franco-American alliance. If one looks closely at what Washington is resting on, it's a 4lbs Vallière cannon. That was not only placed there for a show of pride and patriotism, but a tip of the hat and a thank you to our French allies, but more importantly, a sign to old King George III that we have some new powerful friends.



*Andrew Outten, Director of Education & Museum Services
Brandywine Battlefield Park Associates*

Charter Day 2018

March 11th, 2018



Charter Day:

Our first day of the season!
We had a beautiful winter day in between Nor'easters to celebrate William Penn's Charter for Pennsylvania. Guests enjoyed activities such as colonial dancing, musket demonstrations, house tours, and a lecture from John Gras as William Penn.

Special Thanks:

John Gras (William Penn)

1st Delaware Regiment

Linn the Blacksmith

Tom Demott

Volunteer of the Year - George Tolton

Brandywine Battlefield is pleased to announce our 2018 Volunteer of the Year, George Tolton. George has played an instrumental role at the Brandywine Battlefield Park for the last 10 years, especially in his role as a Colonial Dance Instructor. During our Colonial Days (school field trips), George excites students by teaching them the art of 18th century dance. On any given Saturday, you will find George and the Dover English Country Dancers in our Visitor's Center dancing professionally. Guests are encouraged to join in on the fun. BBPA is eternally grateful for the years of dedicated service George has given to the park.

Thank you, George!



Summer Camp 2018

Registrations are already coming in for Brandywine Battlefield Park's annual Summer History Camp! Last year we had over 100 participants over 7 weeks. The camp takes place from late June to August. Campers can look forward to different historical activities each day; including artillery day (water balloon launching), 18th century medicine, 18th century cooking, and others. The camp is Monday - Friday, 9am - 1pm, with an extended day option available until 4pm. Parents are invited for lunch on cooking day (Thursday)! Check out the 2018 registration form located [here](#) for information on exact dates and prices!



New Items in the Giftshop

One of the many new items in the Giftshop is our Hiking Stick Medallion. Hiking Medallions are increasingly popular in the United States and have been a long standing tradition in Europe. The medallion may be gently shaped to fit on hiking staffs, paddles, etc. They can also be flattened and glued to RV's and other flat surfaces.

Each medallion serves as a memento of a new region explored or trail conquered.



Hiking Stick Medallion - \$4.99

Members 10% off!



“Brandywine Battlefield Park serves the educational needs of the public through the preservation of the cultural landscape and the interpretation of the largest single day battle of the American Revolution. The Brandywine Battlefield Park Associates is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization, EIN #23-2143174. The official registration and financial information of the Brandywine Battlefield Park Associates may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of State by calling toll free, in Pennsylvania, 1-800-732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement”

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Take Notice! Volunteers Wanted:

If you are interested in becoming a volunteer at the Brandywine Battlefield Park or know someone who might, please visit our website for more information and to fill out a registration form!

www.brandywinebattlefield.org

Contribution Form

Yes! I would like to offer additional support to the Brandywine Battlefield Park and Brandywine Battlefield Park Associates by making a tax-exempt donation!

Please send form and donation to: BBPA - P.O. Box 202 Chadds Ford, PA 19317

My Contribution is: _____ \$500 _____ \$100 _____ \$50 _____ \$25 _____ Other: _____

_____ _Check Enclosed

_____ Please Charge my: _____ Visa _____ MasterCard _____ American Express _____ Discover

Name on Card (Please Print): _____

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Notes: _____

To make an Online Donation, visit our website: www.brandywinebattlefield.org, and click the “Donate link on the home page. All donations are very much appreciated and go towards bettering educational and interpretational components of the Battlefield Park! Thank you!