



**SONS OF THE
AMERICAN REVOLUTION**



VILLE DE VERSAILLES



COMTE de VERGENNES

**MINISTRE DES AFFAIRES ÉTRANGÈRES (1774-1787)
FRENCH FATHER OF THE AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE**

*225th Anniversary Celebrations in France
from the 12th to the 17th of February 2012*

*François de Mazières,
Maire de Versailles,*

*Hélie, duc de Noailles,
President of the Society in France of the Sons of the American Revolution,*

request the honor of your presence

*at the ceremonies and festivities which will take place in Versailles
to remember the Comte de Vergennes who died at Versailles on
February 13, 1787
and at the subsequent visits in the Loire Valley*

Under the high patronage of

Monsieur Nicolas Sarkozy,
Président de la République Française.

Monsieur Alain Juppé,
Ministre des Affaires étrangères et européennes.

Son Excellence Mr Charles H. Rivkin, (expected)
Ambassadeur des États-Unis d'Amérique,
Président d'honneur de la Société en France des Fils de la Révolution Américaine.

Monsieur Louis Giscard d'Estaing,
Vice-président de l'Assemblée nationale
Président du groupe d'amitié France- États-Unis

Comité d'honneur

Monsieur le général Francis Autran,
Commandant l'École Supérieure et d'Application du Génie.

Monsieur le général de division Christian Baptiste
Directeur du Musée de l'Armée

Maître François H. Briard,
Président de l'Institut Vergennes.

Monsieur le duc de Choiseul Praslin,
Vice President General of the Society of the Cincinnati.

Son Excellence Monsieur François Delattre
Ambassadeur de France aux États-Unis d'Amérique.

Monsieur le général d'armée Gilbert Forray,
Ancien grand-chancelier de la Légion d'honneur.

Charles-Philippe Gravier, marquis de Vergennes,
Vice-président de la Société des Cincinnati de France.

Monsieur le général Hanotaux
Président de la Sabretache.

Son Excellence Monsieur Jean-David Levitte,
Ambassadeur de France.

Larry J. Magerkurth,
President General of the National Society of the Sons of the American Revolution.

Madame Valérie Pécresse,
Ancienne députée des Yvelines,
Ministre du Budget et Porte parole du Gouvernement.

Madame Catherine Pégard,
Présidente de l'Établissement public du château, du musée, du domaine national de Versailles.

Monsieur le général Jean-Jacques Rigoux,
Président de la Fédération nationale du Génie.

Jacques, comte de Trentinian,
Vice President General (Europe) of the National Society of the SAR

Le baron Éric de Tugny-Vergennes.

VERGENNES CONVOCATION

225th anniversary program

(Subject to final arrangements and official authorization)

Sunday, February 12, 2012: Registration and welcome. (Hotel Pullman or Ibis at Versailles)

- 14:00-15:30 Guided visit of Versailles Palace's *Petits appartements*; (Vergennes' desk ...).
- 15:30 Transfert by bus to Hotel des Invalides (Paris).
- 16 :00 Presentation of the French Intervention in the American Revolution (DVD) at Austerlitz lecture hall in Musée de l'Armée.
- 16:45 to 17:30 Guided visit of Musée de l'Armée's XVIIIth rooms.
- 18:45 -20:45 Reception of American visitors by a French family at Versailles.

Monday, February 13: Commemorations and homage to Comte de Vergennes.

- 8:30 bus departure from Pullman hotel
- 9:00 Service at Notre-Dame de Versailles, where Comte de Vergennes' funeral was celebrated as illustrated by a monumental cenotaph; wreath laying.
- 10:00 Guided private visit to the former War Department and its superb paintings of the Seven Years War battles by Pierre L'Enfant's father.
- 11:00-12:30 Reception by the Mayor of Versailles at the former offices of the Navy and Foreign Departments, now Versailles' Municipal Library.
- 13:00 Lunch at restaurant La Flottille, fronting the Grand Canal in the Palace's Gardens.
- 15:00-16:30: Hotel Lambinet; private visit of XVIIIth century apartments and exhibition; lecture by François H. BRIARD, Président de l'Institut VERGENNES, « Charles GRAVIER, comte de VERGENNES, founding father of the USA ? »
- 18:00: Dinner hosted by the President of Domaine de Versailles at the former private Vergennes' apartment in the Palace.

Tuesday, February 14: Visit to official venues in Paris:

- 8:00 bus departure from Pullman hotel, transfer to La Courneuve
- 9:30-11-30 Visit of the Diplomatic Archives Department (original treaties ...)
- 12:30: and visit of the Museum at Maison de la Chasse (XVIIIth Century Hotel Guénégaud)
- 14:45 Transfer by bus to Angers' Pullman hotel in the Loire River valley.
- Dinner at Angers Pullman hotel.

Wednesday, February 15: Angers.

- Cathedral and Château d'Angers: the famous *Apocalypse Tapestry* is the longest tapestry in the world (woven between 1373 to 1382).
- 13:00 Lunch at the officers' mess, lectures and ceremony at École du Génie:
- 14:30 Lecture on military engineering and General Du Portail by his biographer Colonel (h) Serge Le Pottier.
- Lecture on the landing of American Expeditionary forces in France (Saint-Nazaire, ...).
- 16:00 unveiling of General Du Portail's bust at Musée du Génie.
- 17:00 cocktail in the Museum's reception lounge.
- Dinner at hotel Pullman.

Thursday, February 16

- Visit of extraordinary double chateau de Brézé, near Saumur.
- 12:30-13:45 Lunch at château de Brézé ; departure to Versailles Pullman Hotel
- 19:30 farewell dinner.

Friday, February 17: departure to USA *or continuing private program(s)*.

Commemorating Vergennes French Father of the American Independence

The deep friendship between the American and French peoples continues to be kept alive by the sacrifices and common struggle for shared values. Festivals and monuments remind us of those moments in history.

The Societies in France of the Sons of the American Revolution reunite in the same spirit the direct descendants, residing in France, of those who fought for the liberty of the United States of America.

They propose to commemorate the 225th anniversary of the death of the man who forged the crucial decisions which brought the Sovereign and the French Nation to side the American Patriots.

HISTORICAL REMINDER

1. Who was Vergennes?

Charles Gravier, Comte de Vergennes was born at Dijon, (Burgundy) on December 28, 1719 and had a long diplomatic career (Trier, Constantinople, Sweden).



Among his deeds had been maintaining Turkey out of the Franco-British confrontation in the French and Indian war; Later encouraging the Ottoman Empire to combat Russian Catherine II attacking Poland.

He had assisted Gustav III's liberal coup in Sweden and further dedicated most of his efforts to maintain power balance in Northern Europe and gaining Russian neutrality.

Upon Prime Minister Maurepas' advice, young new King Louis XVI appointed Vergennes as his Secretary for Foreign Affairs.

After Lexington and Concord, Vergennes dispatched Achard de Bonvouloir to meet with the secret committee of correspondence at Philadelphia and upon the latter's report developed for the French King why France should bring to the rebels the support which would inevitably lead to an open conflict with imperialist Britain

He constantly put forward some of the most critical initiatives leading to the victory,

- permitting Beaumarchais supply operations;
- dispatching military engineers to the continental army even before La Fayette set sails;
- gaining neutrality of Continental European nations;
- dragging Spain to France's side;
- launching Rochambeau's and de Grasse's campaign leading to the Yorktown victory.

His passing away was deplored by the King as the loss of his best companion.

Vergennes' anniversary is thus the occasion to commemorate in Versailles the sacrifices undertaken together and the perennial friendship which resulted.

2. Versailles, birthplace, jointly with Paris, of American Independence

It was on a Wednesday, September 3, 1783, 228 years ago, that the final step in the path to peace and independence for America occurred in Versailles.

The great European war powers -- France, Spain and Great Britain -- finally signed the Treaties of Peace confirming the British Crown had acknowledged the independence of its former subjects.

The Count de Vergennes, Minister of Foreign Affairs for King Louis XVI, waited in order to have the treaties signed, for a messenger to confirm that, the same morning in Paris, the American and British delegates had truly signed the treaty whereby the British crown had just concluded with her former subjects the terms of her recognition of their independence.

The treaties were the final step of the conflict begun on April 19, 1775, with the battle of Lexington between the British colonist insurgents and the English armed forces. From Saratoga to Brandywine, from Valley Forge to Yorktown, the Revolution that had cost the country so much was over, and the Republic had begun.

Paris and Versailles are rich, not only in places where these agreements were negotiated and ratified, but also due to so many others which have played an important role in the history of America and the friendship of our two countries.

At the Palace of Versailles, King Louis XVI had greeted the American delegation of Silas Deane, Benjamin Franklin and Arthur Lee on March 1778.

In front of the Palace, on the *rue de l'Indépendance américaine*, is the old Ministry of Foreign Affairs where the Count de Vergennes enacted a diplomatic strategy that held neutrality on one side and alliance on the other; the visits of the American Delegates followed.