

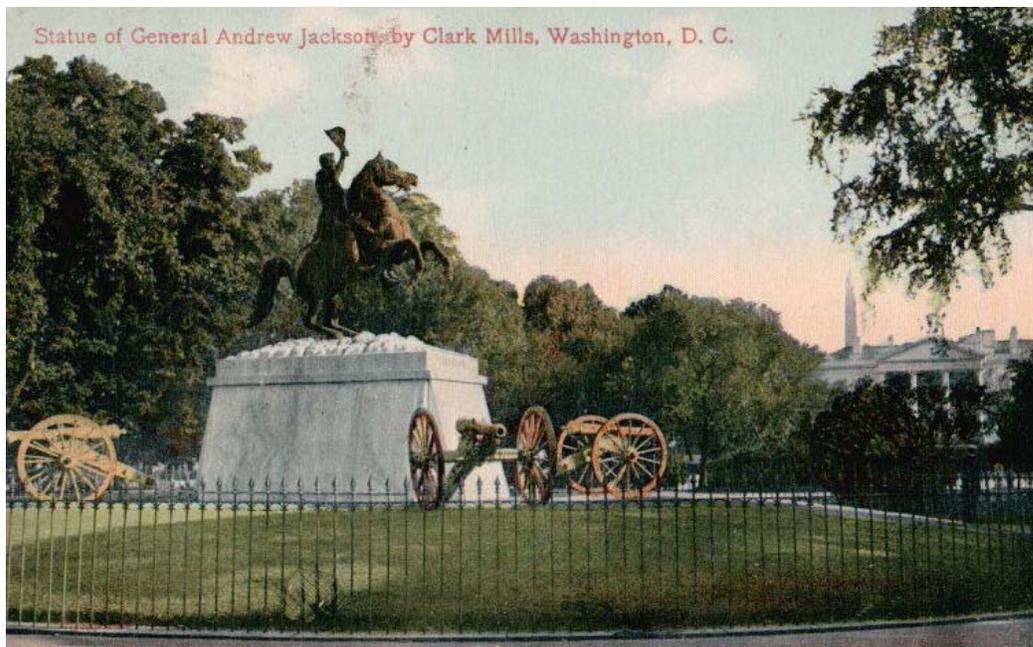
## NEW ORLEANS NOSTALGIA

*Remembering New Orleans History, Culture and Traditions*

*By Ned Hémard*

### Two Square Guys

Mariè-Joseph-Paul-Yves-Roche-Gilbert du Motier, the Marquis de La Fayette, the French hero of the American Revolution, was honored with a public square named in his honor. Lafayette Square was used as a graveyard, a racetrack, a bivouac, a slave market and the site of many celebrations and political protests.



*Mills Statue of Jackson in Lafayette Square, Washington, D. C.*

But this is not the Lafayette Square in New Orleans, but the one in Washington, D. C. Once a part of the "pleasure grounds" of the Presidential Mansion, Thomas Jefferson separated this park area from the White House grounds in 1804 when he had Pennsylvania Avenue cut through. There is a statue of Lafayette in the square, but the most prominent statue (directly in the center) is the equestrian statue of Andrew Jackson by sculptor Clark Mills. On January 8, 1853 (after being cast in bronze less than a mile away), it was the first equestrian statue to be erected in the United States. And it is all too familiar to

New Orleanians, for it is identical to the one in Jackson Square in the French Quarter.

Jackson Square, at the heart of the new city laid out by Adrien de Pauger, was first known as *Place d'Armes*. Under the Spanish it was referred to as *Plaza de Armas*, and the Creole citizenry also called it *Place Publique*. The square witnessed the transfer of Louisiana from the French to the United States in 1803, and in 1825 the Marquis de Lafayette it was visited the historic square. The park in Washington had been named in Lafayette's honor the year before (1824). The New Orleans city government all but vacated the Cabildo, so the Marquis could be made comfortable for his stay. He arrived on the steamboat "Natchez" at the Chalmette Battlefield, the scene of Andrew Jackson's victory ten years before.

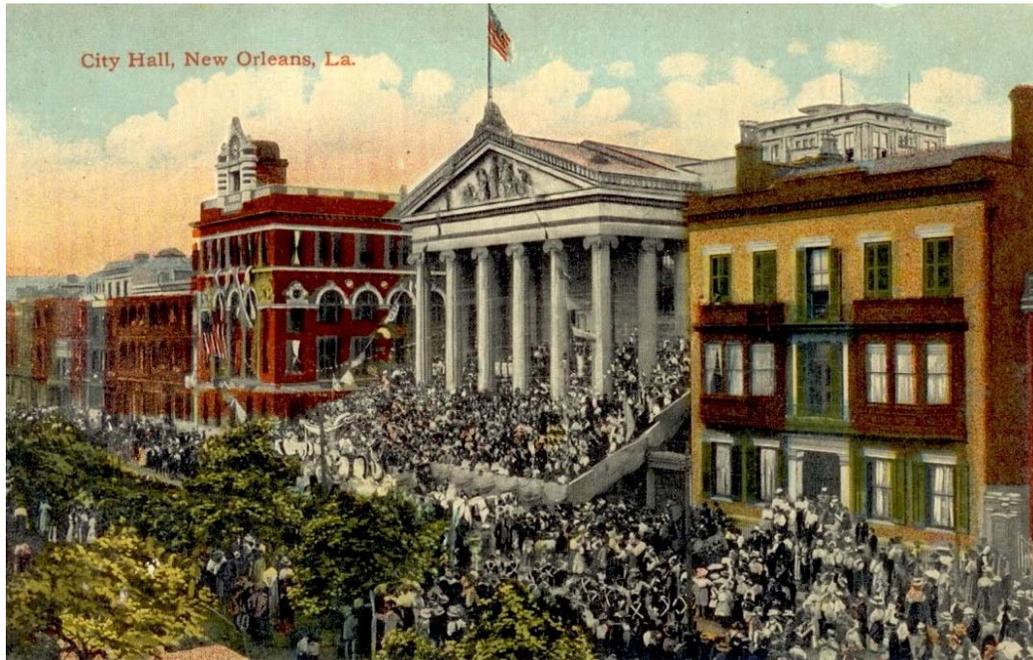


*1907 Postcard View of Lafayette Square*

A map from that same year (1815) showed the city had a new park named *Place Publique*. It was created when Samuel Peters and others formed the Second Municipality of New Orleans with this public square as an American counterpart to the *Place d'Armes*. This park was renamed Lafayette Square in honor of the visit of the Marquis. In 1872 came a statue of Benjamin Franklin followed in 1897 by one of the patron of the city's public schools, John McDonogh. In 1900, the impressive statue of Henry Clay (which had stood at the intersection of St. Charles and Royal Streets) was moved to the center of the park. Three statues grace the park, but a statue of Lafayette is not there.

It wasn't that the city wasn't crazy about him. Back in the *Place d'Armes* during his visit, the city built him a triumphal arch. It stood

68 feet high and was painted to resemble green and yellow marble, decorated with figures representing Justice and Liberty. With what would be two of the three Mardi Gras colors, the arch was like the *papi r mach * of a carnival float. It was only a temporary structure.



*City Hall at Mardi Gras, across from Lafayette Square*

Also a City of Lafayette would evolve from the subdivision of the Livaudais Plantation into residential lots in 1825 for the newly affluent Americans who became wealthy in their adopted city. It would become part of the City of New Orleans in 1852, and known today as the Garden District.

“Old Hickory” had been the guest of honor in 1840 for the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Battle of New Orleans, and presided over the laying of a cornerstone for his future monument. The city’s hero died in 1845. At his funeral, Jackson’s pet parrot Poll was removed for screaming out curse words. A year later the Baroness Pontalba (another tough bird) submitted plans for the improvement of the public square. A special committee met and, on January 28, 1851, they decided to rename the historic *place* Jackson Square. That same year, Lafayette Square in Washington was laid out in the picturesque style. The landscape architect was named (appropriately enough) Andrew Jackson Downing.

The Baroness was a great admirer of Jackson, and it is said that she made a significant contribution to the statue. The battle had been fought on the plantation of her uncle, Ignace Martin de Lino de Chalmette. Clark Mills was commissioned to do the statue, and it was scheduled to be dedicated on January 8, the anniversary of the battle. However, the schooner “Southerner” was delayed and the ceremonies

were held on February 9, 1856. Mr. Mills offered a few words of artistic explanation at the dedication:



*1908 Postcard View of Jackson Square, New Orleans*

"The lines have come to present arms as a salute to their commander, who is acknowledging it by raising his chapeau, according to the military etiquette of that day. His restive horse, anticipating the next move, attempts to dash down the line; the bridle hand of the dauntless hero being turned under, shows that he is restraining the horse, whose open mouth and curved neck is feeling the bit."

Part of the strategy in winning at New Orleans entailed Andrew Jackson first frustrating the British at Pensacola. Four rare Spanish cannons captured in Pensacola surround the Jackson memorial in Washington. Jackson served his nation as the seventh President of the United States, and the Marquis de Lafayette is only one of six persons to be granted honorary citizenship of the United States. The others are Winston Churchill, Mother Theresa, Raoul Wallenberg (Holocaust hero and Swedish diplomat), William Penn and his second wife.



*Marquis de Lafayette*

*Andrew Jackson*

2015: Since first writing the above article, there have been two additional persons granted honorary U.S. citizenship (making a total of eight). In 2009, the Polish military officer, Casimir Pulaski, who fought on the side of the American colonists against the British in the American Revolutionary War, was posthumously awarded the honor.

In 2014, Governor of Louisiana during the Spanish colonial period, Bernardo de Gálvez, was also posthumously honored. Gálvez, it should be remembered, was a hero of the American Revolutionary War who aided the American Thirteen Colonies in their quest for independence. He not only provided military support, supplies and intelligence to the war effort, he bravely risked his life defeating the British at the Siege of Pensacola (1781).



*Bernardo de Gálvez y Madrid, Viscount of Galveston  
and Count of Gálvez, Viceroy of New Spain*

## **NED HÉMARD**

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