

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Albert Hatton Gilmer, Professor of Speech and Dramatic Art at Lafayette College, was born in Loraine, Illinois on December 31, 1878. He received a Bachelor of Science degree from Knox College in June 1900. In 1911 he received a Master of Arts degree from the same institution. In 1936 he was awarded the honorary Doctor of Letters degree from Knox College. Gilmer attended the University of Chicago during the summer of 1905. In 1908-1909 he studied in the Department of Drama of the University of Munich, Germany. In 1912-1914, while teaching at Tufts University, he attended Harvard University. During the summer of 1925 he studied abroad at Oxford University, and in 1934 he studied at the University of London. Gilmer was a member of the Phi Beta Kappa academic honor society and a member of the social fraternity Beta Theta Pi.

After serving as a reporter for the *Galesburg Daily Mail*, in 1900 Gilmer became a teacher and then principal of Sheffield High School in Illinois. Between 1902 and 1905 he was the Head of the Department of English at Kewanee High School in Illinois. He taught at Detroit University School from 1905-1908. In 1909 he became an instructor of English at Bates College in Lewiston, Maine. In 1910 he joined the faculty of the English Department at Tufts College in Medford, Massachusetts. While at Tufts he was promoted from instructor of English to Professor of Dramatic Literature. In 1928 Gilmer became Professor of Speech and Dramatic Art at Lafayette College in Easton, Pennsylvania.

While at Lafayette Gilmer greatly increased the dramatic arts profile of the college. Under the advisement of Gilmer, the drama club, Repertory Players, changed its name to the Marquis Players, a group which continues to exist at the college. Gilmer also recruited women from the community to perform female roles in plays. This and the concert and lecture series, which Gilmer founded as director of the popular Little Theater, raised the Easton community's interest in the college. Gilmer retired from Lafayette in 1947, at which time the Department of Speech and Dramatic Art was incorporated into the Department of English.

Gilmer was a member of the American Association of University Professors. He was also appointed to the school board of the City of Easton from 1943-1947. In 1934 Gilmer was chosen to go to Paris to be the representative of Lafayette College and the American Friends of Lafayette at the 100th anniversary commemoration of the Marquis de Lafayette's death. The French Government later appointed Gilmer as an officer of the French Academy of Education. The speech he delivered at the Sorbonne in France was published in *France-Amerique*, May 27, 1934.

Gilmer was the author of several unpublished plays, which included "The Edge of the World" (1912), "Marching on, or, Our John Brown: Four Act Historical Drama" (1915), "A Wake or a Wedding" (1936), and "A Voice for Freedom" (1950). He was a writer and director of three published pageants including *King Shakespeare: A Masque of Praise for the Shakespeare Tercentenary* (1916); *Lafayette the Man and the College: A Pageant of*

GILMER, ALBERT HATTON, 1878-1950
LAFAYETTE, WE ARE HERE!
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Patriotism and Education 1832-1932 (1932); and *The Pageant of Easton: Charter Jubilee Celebration 1887-1937* (1937). Published articles of Gilmer's include "The Latvian Art Theater" in *Theater Arts Monthly*, February 1927, "'Lafayette, We Are Here!' Historic Phrase Was Uttered by an American Officer" in the *New York Herald Tribune*, May 17, 1943, and "When a Soldier Spoke Effectively: 'Lafayette, We Are Here!'" in *The Quarterly Journal of Speech*, October 1943.

Gilmer was married to Mabel Bishop Gilmer on June 25, 1910. The Gilmers lived in Phoenix, Arizona following Gilmer's retirement from Lafayette College in 1947. Gilmer died on June 5, 1960 at the home of his sister in Lowry, Missouri.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The "Lafayette, We Are Here!" Collection documents the development of a book-length manuscript by Albert H. Gilmer, Professor of Speech and Dramatic Art at Lafayette College (1928-1947). The purpose of the book, which was never published, was to present proof that the famous phrase, which is still often attributed to World War I General John J. Pershing (1860-1948), was in fact said by Colonel Charles E. Stanton (1859-1933) at the end of a speech written and delivered by him in 1917. The collection is housed in one box with nine folders. It includes two typewritten drafts of the manuscript for the book "Lafayette, We Are Here," correspondence ordered chronologically, newspaper articles also ordered chronologically, and speeches ordered chronologically by the date of their original delivery.

The phrase, "Lafayette, we are here," is from a speech given at the annual Sons of the American Revolution ceremony on the anniversary of America's independence in 1917 at the tomb of the Marquis de Lafayette in Picpus Cemetery in Paris, France. The ceremony was the first public appearance of the American Expeditionary Force (AEF) in France. The AEF was led by General John J. Pershing whose goal for the AEF was for it to be an independent army. One of the highest achievements of the force was its role in the Meuse-Argonne offensive of September 1918 which destroyed the German resistance and led to the armistice in November. Following the war, in 1919 General Pershing was awarded the rank General of the Armies of the United States.

According to Gilmer, General Pershing assigned the well-spoken Colonel Charles E. Stanton the task of writing a speech for the Independence Day ceremony at Picpus Cemetery. The speech was written and delivered by Colonel Stanton in full and was authorized by General Pershing. The last line in this approximately ten minute speech was the famous exclamation "Lafayette, we are here!"

The research and proof for the claims of this book make up the majority of the rest of the collection. The earliest correspondence in the collection is from 1930, but the bulk of the correspondence does not begin until 1937 with responses to Gilmer's research inquiries and requests. The collection includes a photostat copy of a letter, dated November 26,

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1942, written by General Pershing to Gilmer indicating that the famous phrase was in fact said by Colonel Stanton. The collection also contains an original letter from General Pershing to Gilmer (February 4, 1944) in response to Gilmer's request for permission to dedicate his book to Pershing. Also included is a letter to Gilmer from Lloyd M. Howell, a New York lawyer who, quoting a letter from a friend, was the first to send the story of Colonel Stanton's speech at Picpus Cemetery to the American press. His article was also the first to attribute the slogan to General Pershing instead of to its author Colonel Stanton. The photostat of Howell's *New York Herald Tribune* newspaper article from August 31, 1917 is available in the collection.

The collection includes newspaper articles from the years 1917 to 1949 in the form of photostats, original clippings, as well as typewritten reproductions of articles. Gilmer's article "'Lafayette, We Are Here!' Historic Phrase Was Uttered by an American Officer" from the *New York Herald Tribune* May 17, 1943 is available in the collection. Also, available is a photocopy of a journal article written by Gilmer titled "When a Soldier Spoke Effectively: 'Lafayette, We Are Here!'" from *The Quarterly Journal of Speech*, October 1943.

There are several different pieces of evidence in the collection regarding Colonel Stanton's writing of the 1917 speech. The collection includes a photostat of the original 1917 speech that is signed by Colonel Stanton and is initialed "O.K. J.J.P." by General Pershing. There is also a photostat of the phrase signed by Colonel Stanton. There is a copy of the transcript of the short speech given by General Pershing at the 1917 ceremony after the speech by Colonel Stanton. Pershing's speech in no way incorporates the phrase "Lafayette, we are here." Also included is the 1934 speech by Gilmer at the Lafayette memorial service in Colton Chapel at which the photostats proving Colonel Stanton's coining of the famous phrase were given to the college.

Source notes for the book consist of an unbound scrapbook with photographs of the July 4, 1917 ceremony, Colonel Stanton, and General Pershing. The final folder contains biographical information on Gilmer. The collection includes a photocopy of his Lafayette College Staff Personal Record (the original of which is available in Special Collections and Archives), newspaper articles concerning his retirement and his death, and the details of the 1951 memorial exhibit at Lafayette College following his death. Also available in the collection are picture post cards from the University of London, which Gilmer attended in 1934, and the *American Selective Biographical Reference* which includes a short biography of him in the section entitled "Who Was Who in America."

INVENTORY

Folder

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|---|---|
| 1 | "Lafayette, We Are Here!": Second Draft |
| 2 | "Lafayette, We Are Here!": First Draft |

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|---|---|
| 3 | Correspondence: 1930 - 1943 |
| 4 | Correspondence: 1944 - 1949 and Undated |
| 5 | Newspaper and Journal Articles: 1917 - 1949 and Undated |
| 6 | Speeches: 1917 Col. Stanton, Photostat; 1917 Gen. Pershing, Photostat; 1932 Gilmer, Typewritten |
| 7 | Scrapbook of Source Materials: Unbound |
| 8 | Albert H. Gilmer Biography and Miscellaneous |

ADDITIONAL GILMER MATERIALS
in the Lafayette Special Collections and Archives

Fifty Years a City: A Record of Easton's Celebration Commemorating Half a Century of the City Charter 1887-1937 (1937) (974.822 E13fi)

King Shakespeare: A Masque of Praise for the Shakespeare Tercentenary (1916)
(Y G48k)

Lafayette the Man and the College: A Pageant of Patriotism and Education 1832-1932
(1932) (E G4)

"Marching on, or, Our John Brown: Four Act Historical Drama" (1915) (Y G48m)

"The Pageant of Easton: Charter Jubilee Celebration 1887-1937" (1937) Manuscript
(Y G48p)

"When a Soldier Spoke Effectively: 'Lafayette, We Are Here!'" *The Quarterly Journal of Speech*, October 1943 (AFL)