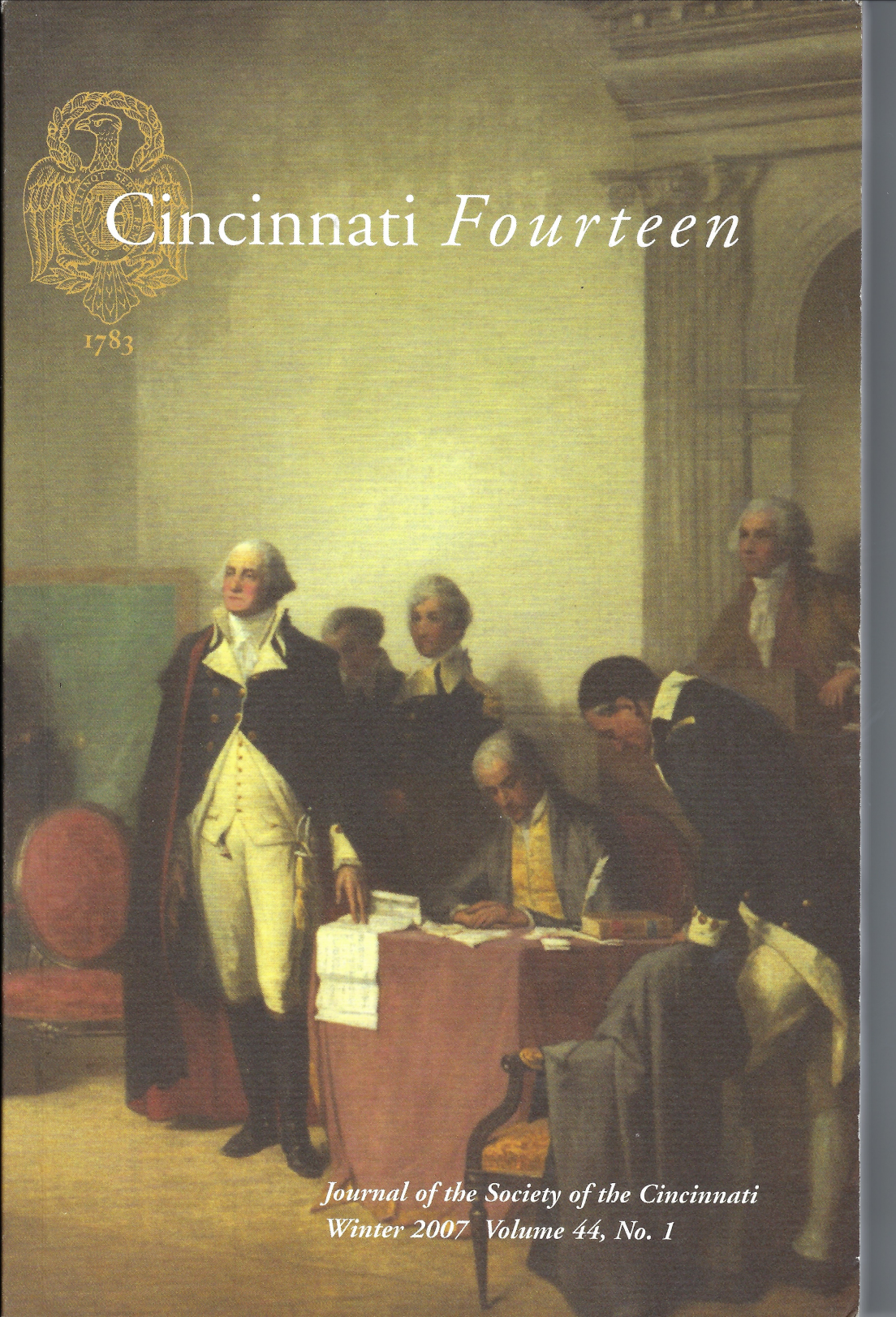




1783

Cincinnati *Fourteen*



Journal of the Society of the Cincinnati
Winter 2007 Volume 44, No. 1



Cincinnati *Fourteen*

Journal of the Society of the Cincinnati

Winter 2007

Volume 44, No. 1



The Pennsylvania Society played an integral role in commissioning a statue in York, Pa., dedicated to an influential toast Lafayette made in 1778 honoring George Washington. The statue was unveiled in 2007.

The State Society of the Cincinnati of Pennsylvania

The Pennsylvania Society was pleased to play an integral role in commissioning a statue in York, Pa., dedicated to the famous toast made by General Washington's dear friend the Marquis de Lafayette in 1778. The toast is widely characterized as the *coup de grace* that ended the efforts of the Conway Cabal to replace General Washington as the commander of the Continental army in early 1778. The society contributed a total of \$7,000 to the project, and Vice President Harry Lowell Davis was instrumental in raising the additional funds from the community.

The impressive, colored bronze statue, placed prominently in front of the General Horatio Gates House in downtown York, was presented during a magnificent weekend that included a Friday night gala at the Yorktown Hotel and the early Saturday unveiling and dedication. The event inaugurated what was to be an entire year of celebrations nationwide honoring the 250th anniversary of the birth of Lafayette. The Pennsylvania Society was represented by six members, including President Clifford Butler Lewis and Vice President Davis, and their

ladies. President General Robert Fillmore Norfleet was also in attendance to commemorate the event.

The Friday night gala at the Yorktown Hotel was held in the opulent Lafayette ballroom, where guests were greeted by remarkably canny historical re-enactors playing the roles of Washington and Lafayette, who regaled the crowd with their clever repartee. The guests then enjoyed a sumptuous meal as they sipped wine out of glasses specifically designed for the auspicious occasion. Remarks by the mayor of York, John Brenner, and President General Norfleet followed the repast. The president general reminded guests of the seminal role played by Lafayette not only in the quest for American independence, but also in supporting Washington during the hardscrabble days of 1778, when the Conway Cabal appeared likely to succeed in deposing General Washington from his command.

On Saturday a large crowd assembled outside the General Gates House in eager anticipation of the unveiling. A crimson cape draped the life-sized statue as President Lewis proudly recounted the tremendous friendship between General Washington and the man he regarded as his son. The crowd looked on as President Lewis and artist Lorann Jacobs unveiled the statue. It fittingly depicts Lafayette, who is standing, with a wine goblet raised in a toast. It is a salient reminder of the tremendous friendship Lafayette gave to the cause of American independence.

The weekend culminated with the rare opportunity to tour the impressive Lafayette Club in downtown York where members were able to meet the sculptor of the statue. Members also took note of a large painting hanging prominently above the fireplace mantel depicting the scene of Lafayette's toast. The famous toast was delivered during Lafayette's stopover in York for three days between January 31 and February 3, 1778. During this time he was invited to dine with many of Washington's generals at the home of Gen. Horatio Gates, believed to be one of the primary participants in the Conway Cabal. The convivial evening ended with a round of toasts. After a deluge of sanctimonious toasts honoring the attendees, Lafayette stood and proclaimed, "Gentleman, there is one you have forgotten. I propose a toast to our commander in chief, Gen. George Washington. May he remain at the head of the army until independence is won!" The entire room raised their glasses, albeit grudgingly, recognizing that Lafayette had dashed their hopes for a change in leadership of the Continental army.

William Hoyt Olinger