



Contact: Eric Beaty – Rennes/US Consulate for Western France (0) 6 19 96 41 03
Lt Charles MacDonald Phone: 781 665 5565 Email: ahac@ymail.com

ANCIENT & HONORABLE ARTILLERY COMPANY OF MASSACHUSETTS
Armory
Faneuil Hall
Boston, Massachusetts 02109

*****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE*****

(Boston, MA – October 1, 2009) Hallowed Battlefield Soil to be Disbursed in Historic Commemoration

On a sunny Boston morning in August, a small group of men assembled on Bunker Hill in Charlestown for the gathering of battle-hallowed earth for transport to France by members of the Ancient & Honorable Artillery Company of Massachusetts. The Captain Commanding, Major Michael Downing broke ground and shoveled a small quantity of earth from Bunker Hill into a spent artillery canister.

The soil, which was flown to France, was presented at the gravesite of the Marquis de Lafayette, a great friend of the United States who visited Bunker Hill in 1825, to honor his service in the American Revolution and to symbolize the historic bonds between France and the United States.

Presiding at the graveside ceremony was Lt Frank Magaletta, of the Ancient & Honorable Artillery. In his remarks Lt Magaletta said, “The Marquis de La Fayette came to America in 1777 to fight for the cause of liberty and the rights of a free people to determine their own destiny. It was a cause at that time alien to men of his class. La Fayette risked his station, his fortune and his life for a noble cause. Our people owe him a debt that can really never be repaid other than to remember. On 17 June 1824 La Fayette was present in our home city of Boston, Massachusetts for the laying of a cornerstone to a

monument commemorating the Battle of Bunker Hill, the first great battle of the American Revolution. Today we deposit soil from that very battlefield here on the grave of La Fayette. This mingling of the battle consecrated soil of Massachusetts with the sacred soil of France symbolizes the never-ending bond between America and La Fayette and more importantly, the unbreakable bond of Franco-American friendship”.

Also present at the ceremony were: Count Gilbert LaFayette and his wife, Madame Michele Vlahos of the Club Richlieu of Boston, representatives of the American Embassy and the French government

The Company is visiting France on their annual trip as good will ambassadors for the City of Boston and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The visit will include tributes to fallen U.S. and Allied servicemen at Normandy and Bastogne.

The Ancient & Honorable Artillery Company was Chartered by the Great and General Court of Massachusetts and Governor Winthrop in 1638 to train gentlemen as officers for the Massachusetts Militia, a role which the Company fulfilled until 1912. In addition the Company has served as a ceremonial unit for the Governor and the City of Boston; and as a patriotic, fraternal organization. The Company has been headquartered at Faneuil Hall since 1745. Today’s members include distinguished professionals, businessmen, clerics, serving and retired military officers, including two Medal of Honor recipients; also Presidents John F. Kennedy, Calvin Coolidge, James Monroe, and Chester Arthur.

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