# EDITORIAL METHOD

## **SELECTION**

Nearly three thousand first- and second-party Lafayette documents are available to us for the period 1776-1790. We shall publish about three-fifths of them in these volumes. The choice of documents depends on the exigencies of space and the desire to avoid needless repetition. We intend to provide material sufficient to illuminate the events in which Lafayette participated, his motives and character, and those of the people with whom he lived and worked. The selections include first-party material: letters and documents written by Lafayette himself, including the memoir he wrote in 1779; second-party material: letters and documents addressed to Lafayette; and some third-party material: contemporary letters, journals, and documents that contain information about Lafayette. Some of the third-party material is extracted from longer documents; we have reproduced only the portions relevant to Lafayette. In such cases, the letter E is placed as a superscript after the title of the document. First- and second-party documents that we do not print are listed in Appendix II.

## TRANSCRIPTION

In our transcription of the manuscripts we retain the original spelling. If it is unusual enough to cause confusion, the correct spelling follows in brackets. The thorn (as in "ye") is transcribed as "th." Punctuation is retained as found, except for dashes at the ends of sentences, which are replaced by periods. A minimum of additional punctuation is supplied when necessary for clarity. Apostrophes are supplied for possessive forms. When the writer's punctuation is unclear, we follow modern usage. Original capitalization is also retained, except that each sentence is made to begin with a capital letter and names of persons and places and personal titles are silently capitalized. Lafayette's use of capitals increased during the period of this volume, and in some instances he wrote over lower-case letters to capitalize them. We have

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tried to reproduce his capitalization, but in cases where it is unclear we follow modern usage. Abbreviations are not spelled out unless they are not readily recognizable; contractions are retained. Superscript letters are brought down to the line.

When the manuscript has been damaged or contains an illegible passage, if no more than four letters are missing, we supply them silently. If more than four letters or entire words are missing, we supply them in brackets, with a question mark within the brackets if the conjecture is doubtful. Gaps that cannot be filled are explained in brackets in the text; for example, [illegible], [torn]. The writer's interlineations or marginal notes are incorporated into the text without comment. Slips of the pen are silently corrected. Words underlined once by the writer are printed in italics. Passages written in cipher and deciphered interlinearly are printed in large and small capitals. Signatures are printed in large and small capitals. Addresses, endorsements, and docketing are not transcribed but are included in the provenance note if they are contextually significant. The dateline is placed at the head of each document regardless of its position in the manuscript.

The greatest problems arise in the materials that were altered in preparation for the publication of Mémoires, correspondance et manuscrits du Général Lafayette, publiés par sa famille: Lafayette's Memoir of 1779 and his letters to his family and to George Washington. Many changes have been made in these manuscripts in pencil and nineteenth-century ink. Words, sentences, and even paragraphs have been scribbled over or marked for deletion with slashes or brackets, and words and phrases have been added in the margins and between the lines in Lafavette's nineteenth-century hand. It is likely that he made or approved all the changes, because copies of the letters and memoir that Lafayette sent to Jared Sparks in 1829 conform to the text of the amended manuscripts. Most of the changes Lafayette indicated were incorporated in the texts printed in the Mémoires. A comparison of the printed texts with the amended manuscripts reveals further changes, but these alterations follow the pattern Lafayette established. The majority of the changes are purely stylistic, and we disregard them. We have attempted to print the text as Lafayette first wrote it. When a significant passage has been deleted on the manuscript or omitted from the Mémoires, we print it in angle brackets. All other significant changes are explained in the notes.

### TRANSLATIONS

The French materials in this volume are translated into English because these documents would otherwise be either unintelligible or poorly understood by too many readers. Our experience and knowl-

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edge of eighteenth-century French has enabled us to offer what we believe to be accurate translations, particularly of idioms and technical terms; more important, our effort has been to catch the nuance and tone of the French language of that time, when epistolary style often depended on the status of the correspondents as well as the subject discussed. Translators' rationales are rarely convincing to those who have an intimate grasp both of the era and of the language being used. For those readers, the French texts of all translated documents are printed in Appendix I.

The letter T is placed as a superscript after the title of every translated document. The same superscript follows passages translated in the notes, but we do not print the French texts of those passages. In the translations, spelling, capitalization, and punctuation are modernized.

### ANNOTATION AND INDEX

Notes to the text follow each document. The first note gives the provenance and other necessary information about the document and is unnumbered. The numbered notes provide clarification, information, and explanation of materials in the text. In our annotation we have tried to take into account the pattern of Lafayette's life and thought and the fact that the best commentary on his letters usually is to be found in the other documents. This is particularly true of the Memoir of 1779, which is presented serially at the beginning of each of the parts in the volume; if a subject mentioned in the memoir is clarified in another document in the volume, we do not annotate the memoir. When we cite documents that are printed in our volume, we identify them by title and date only. The source citation is given for all other items mentioned in our notes.

All proper names are identified in the Index; people and places are given space in the annotation only when the information is immediately required for an understanding of the text.