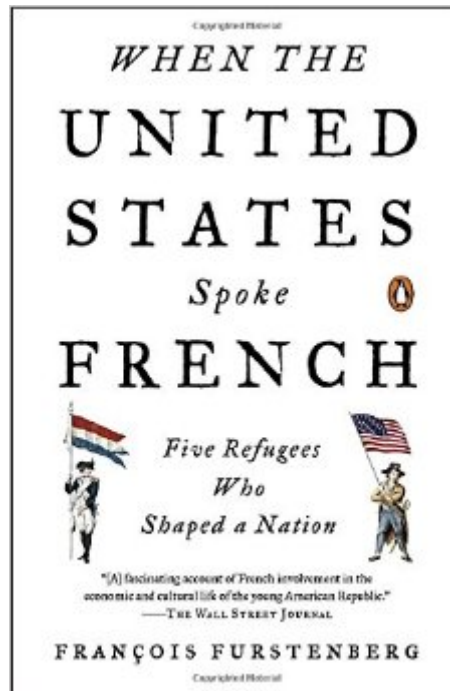


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When The United States Spoke French: Five Refugees Who Shaped A Nation



Synopsis

“A bright, absorbing account of a short period in history that still resounds today.” —Kirkus Reviews
Beautifully written and brilliantly argued, *When the United States Spoke French* offers a fresh perspective on the tumultuous years of America as a young nation, when the Atlantic world’s first republican experiments were put to the test. It explores the country’s formative period from the viewpoint of five distinguished Frenchmen who took refuge in America after leaving their homes and families in France, crossing the Atlantic, and landing in Philadelphia. Through their stories, we see some of the most famous events of early American history in a new light—from the battles with Native Americans on the western frontier to the Haitian Revolution, the Whiskey Rebellion to the Louisiana Purchase in 1803.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

In summary ; A fascinating read about the French influence in America, particularly in Philadelphia. It is a piece of history you never knew. Thank you so much for writing this book and reminding us of how much of history is truly lost. I sincerely hope some history text book writers as well as history teachers take note of your excellent research. I especially liked the list of the French residents on 2nd street in the appendix, which really brought home the fact of just how many French were in Phila. at the time. Some further detail: I picked up this book when I learned I had some French roots, and happened to catch an interview on TV with the author. As I started reading, I realized there was a whole chunk of American history/Philadelphia history, that I was shocked as Philadelphian, we were never taught. I do not remember ever really even hearing about the French in Phila in any

conversations, history classes or tours of the city. The 5 men profiled in this book, influential Frenchmen who fled to America during the French revolution, some without any money but with lingering powerful connections back in France, came to an austere city founded on Quaker principals. Some had literally helped America win its freedom from the British as they fought along side Americans in the revolution. They embraced the freedom ideology of the city and added to that founding brew their love of all things French; including, architecture, art, food, fashion, gardens, etiquette, conversation, and their always unique appreciation of female beauty. I am sure their tastes and those of other Frenchmen, helped transform the city into pretty little streets, beautiful gardens, and stunning houses, and most importantly great places to eat.

Francois Furstenberg has written a book that connects the history of the early United States with the history of the early republic of France. "When the United States Spoke French" follows five Frenchmen who played active roles in overthrowing the French monarchy and its ancien régime. But these men had to flee France when the revolution grew radical and bloody. Exiled from France, Charles Maurice de Talleyrand-Périgord, the duc de Liancourt, Louis-Marie Vicomte de Noailles, Moreau de Saint-Méry, and the Comte Volney settled in the United States and created a French ex-patriot community in Philadelphia. In the capital of the young nation, these men interacted with wealthy merchants, their families, and members of George Washington's presidential administration. Furstenberg follows the lives of the five French ex-patriots to highlight the great degree to which the politics, economies, and culture of France and the United States were entangled. The greatest contribution of "When the United States Spoke French" is Furstenberg's ability to detail how poor relations between the United States and France led the French, with the help of many of the five ex-patriots, to intrigue for French acquisition of the Louisiana Territory. Furstenberg convincingly points out that if France had taken control of the Louisiana Territory, it would have prevented the United States from expanding from "sea to shining sea." France had the power to take over this territory. Napoleon and his ministers took steps to establish a government in New Orleans; France purchased the territory from Spain.

My own high school and university studies of the history of the United States during the period from the American Revolution to the Louisiana Purchase provided me with very little information about the role that the French nation and some of its people played in the birth of our nation. Of course the Marquis de Lafayette and his support to George Washington with funds and troops was known to me as a youth. The flames of our 1776 revolution leading to our new nation and its constitution that

spread across and ocean to help ignite the French Revolution was also part of my education. But, like many Americans, I learned little in school about the outcome of the fear that the French revolution provoked in its aristocracy and wealthier citizens. Once marked for the tribunals and possible guillotine, they fled to England and “ for those with enough funds and/or fortitude “ to the newly created United States. This book is about the history of France’s direct and indirect involvement in the American Revolution and “ set against that history “ the story of five individual Frenchmen of merit who, each in his own way, created a new life in his new country. How those five men and their compatriots helped strengthen the early United States is the story of this book, a work of history with undertones of personal day to day life and family ties. Francois Furstenberg’s work, “When The United States Spoke French “ Five Refugees Who Shaped A Nation •, helped me to fill the void in my own knowledge of the effects of France’s contribution to the birth and early growth of the United States. I do not care much for the catchy title which drew my attention to the book, but I cannot come up with a better one. The book begins as a plodding and boring read and I almost gave up on it. It is by no means a page turner.

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