



Joseph Sohm and Visions of America, LLC

American Friends of Lafayette

CASE STUDY:

Using Mobile Audio Tours to Bring History to Life & Turn a One-Time Anniversary into a Multi-State, Lasting Visitor Experience

IMPACT & RESULTS



TOURS



STATES



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
Local experts and historians contributed content



REGIONAL SUPPORT
From multiple agencies & organizations

BACKGROUND

In 1824–25, Revolutionary War hero General Lafayette returned to the United States for a farewell tour that drew massive crowds and national celebration. Two hundred years later, his momentous impact on the U.S. risked being lost to history.

THE CHALLENGE

As the bicentennial approached, the nonprofit American Friends of Lafayette (AFL) faced a dilemma familiar to historical organizations and destinations:

- How do you commemorate an important anniversary without relying solely on signage or single-day events?
- How do you engage modern audiences of all ages, on-site and beyond?
- How do you coordinate storytelling across multiple locations and stakeholders while maintaining historical integrity and production quality?

The American Friends of Lafayette wanted more than interpretation—they wanted lasting educational impact.



THE SOLUTION

AFL partnered with TravelStoriesGPS to build eight immersive, GPS-triggered mobile audio tours in four states—allowing visitors to follow Lafayette’s route, hear his story in context, and engage deeply with the places he visited. These tours:

- Play automatically as visitors walk or drive historic routes
- Combine professional narration, character acting, period music & sound design
- Include interactive maps, images, and supporting text
- Remain accessible year-round, both on-site and remotely, via the free TravelStories™ app and website



ATTRACTING PARTNERS & FUNDERS

With TravelStorysGPS' guidance, AFL coordinated with local historians in each state to produce the tour content, while maintaining a uniform voice—brought to life by professional narrators and Colonial Williamsburg interpreter Mark Schneider as Lafayette.

Because the tours offer long-term public value—not just a temporary event—AFL was able to successfully secure funding for the project from state humanities councils, private foundations, the National Park Service, and other historical and cultural organizations. The mobile tours became a fundable educational asset, not just an expense.

“Storytelling for the TravelStorys app gives the author the opportunity to take a deep dive into a place, to find in the primary sources the inspiration to tell the story in a wider context, and to create a piece of writing that, while historically accurate, is easy on the eye and the ear.”

— Alan Hoffman, President, American Friends of Lafayette

EXTENDING THE IMPACT OF EVENTS

The tours launched during on-site, bicentennial events, enhancing attendance and engagement. But, unlike traditional event programming, they continue to educate new audiences long after the attendees went home.



MOBILE AUDIO STORYTELLING:

- Increases learning retention by **up to 24%**
- Makes narratives **up to 20x** more memorable than facts alone
- Builds emotional connection through the human voice
- Encourages action—**nearly 50%** of listeners take follow-up steps after engaging with audio

WITH TRAVELSTORYSGPS, HISTORICAL ORGANIZATIONS & DESTINATIONS CAN:

- Turn anniversaries into enduring interpretive assets
- Reach audiences beyond physical walls
- Collaborate across regions without sacrificing quality
- Offer visitors a richer, more immersive alternative to static signage
- Extend their mission, year after year

SOURCES: Skift Research (Traveler Experience & Authenticity Trends); Stanford Graduate School of Business (Narrative Persuasion & Memory Retention); Stanford Social Innovation Review (Storytelling in Mission-Driven Engagement); Nielsen Audio & Edison Research (Audio Trust, Action & Listener Behavior); Learning News (The Neuroscience Behind Podcast Learning); NPR (How Stories Connect & Persuade Us)

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platform to build,
share & explore
mobile audio tours.

