

**François-Joseph Paul de Grasse,  
Marquis of Tilly,  
of the Princes of Antibes  
General Lieutenant of the Navy  
Commander of the Royal and Military  
Order of Saint-Louis  
Chevalier of Malta  
Founder Member of the  
Cincinnati Society**

**By his naval victory over  
the English on September the 5th 1781,  
the Count of Grasse helped  
in the fall of Yorktown,  
which was besieged by  
the Franco-American army,  
under the command of  
General Washington and  
Lieutenant-General Rochambeau.**

**He thus acquired alongside the immortal  
glory of achieving Independence for  
the United States of America.**

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# The Admiral de Grasse

François-Joseph Comte de Grasse  
Lieutenant Général des Armées Navales 1722-1788

# François-Joseph de Grasse

## Lieutenant Général of King Louis the XVI's navy

### Childhood and early career

On 13<sup>th</sup> of september 1722, François-Joseph Paul, Count of Grasse was born in the castle of Bar-sur-loup.

At this time, the only way over the defences of the castle was by draw-bridge.

The dungeon, the base of which is now a Restaurant was a seven-storey tower and a strategic look-out point over the Gorges du Loup. Flanked by several angular tower, these bulwarks were all strengthened by large rocks underneath.



François-Joseph was a difficult and troubled child, so his father decided upon a military career for him. Walking around the port of Antibes with his tutor, he discovered the world of sailing and at the age of 12, he started his naval apprenticeship.

He joined the naval guards in Toulon, and then in Malta. Finally, he joined the Royal Navy. Climbing up the ranks of the military hierarchy, he obtained his first command in 1762, on a vessel named « Le Protée ». He fought upon all seven seas, and particularly in the Antilles. It was in the Antilles that the name of the « Admiral de Grasse » made history...

### The siege of Yorktown

On March the 22<sup>nd</sup> 1781, on the orders of Louis XVI, who had made him Lieutenant General of his Navy, the Count of Grasse left Brest with a fleet to go to the aid of the Americans, who were fighting the English for their Independence.

From Saint Domingo he took 3000 men to go and support Washington, Lafayette and Rochambeau at Yorktown, where Lord Cornwallis was under siege.

The men and supplies disembarked in Chesapeake Bay on 5<sup>th</sup> of September 1781. Then, having been warned by a frigate of the approaching English fleet, the Admiral de Grasse quickly turned his own fleet around and started fighting them in order to prevent supplies getting to Yorktown.



He saw off the English, who eventually gave up.

On land, the siege began. By 14<sup>th</sup> October, two defences were broken, and on 18<sup>th</sup> October Lord Cornwallis surrendered.

American Independence had been achieved !

### The battle of Saintes

After this amazing victory, the English wanted their revenge. On April the eleventh 1782, the Admiral de Grasse, aboard the « Ville de Paris » in charge of 30 men-of-war escorting 100 commercial vessels, was attacked by the English fleet commanded by Lord Rodney.

The « Ville de Paris » was cut off at the front and from the rear. With the other French commanders no longer obeying his orders, and his crew decimated, the Admiral de Grasse was taken prisoner. On his arrival in London, he was received by King Georges III who returned his sword to him. Instructed by the English government to negotiate a peaceplan between France and England, he returned to Paris embittered by this last defeat.

Despite opposition from the King, the Admiral caused the trial of Lorient. The arrest of the War Council overwhelmed his adversaries, but the King never forgave him for causing such a scandal, and banished him from Court.

Worn-out and exhausted, the Admiral de Grasse died in Paris on January the 14th 1788. He is buried in St Roch's church in Paris.