James Armistead was a slave. As a slave, he had to get permission from his owner to join the army. In 1781, his commanding officer was the Marquis de Lafayette. Lafayette asked Armistead to go into a British Army camp and pretend he wanted to help the British Army. Armistead became a servant to Benedict Arnold and then to General Cornwallis. He sent back information about British troops to the Continental Army.

After awhile, General Cornwallis asked Armistead to spy on Lafayette and the Continental Army. Armistead remained loyal to the Patriots. He gave false information to the British while continuing to give correct information to the Patriots.

Town Crier News

- After the war, Armistead added Lafayette to his name in honor of the Revolutionary War leader, making him James Armistead Lafayette.
- In 1786, Armistead received his freedom from being a slave.