

# PATH TO STATEHOOD



EARLY CLAIMS AND SETTLEMENTS

TAMING NEW FRANCE

THE SEVEN YEARS WAR

PRIZE OF THE EMPIRES

SPANISH DEFENSES

KEYSTONE OF THE FRONTIER

BIRTH OF THE LOUISIANA MILITIA

CLAIBORNE AND THE MILITIA

*Raising of the American Flag: Louisiana Transfer Ceremonies, 1803, Thure de Thulstrup, c. 1902, Courtesy of the Louisiana State Museum and the Louisiana Historical Society.*



# EARLY CLAIMS

## 1541



Discovery of the Mississippi by de Soto  
by William Henry Powell, 1853

## COMPETING CLAIMS

Among the early European explorers of North America, Hernando DeSoto claimed all the lands drained by the Mississippi River for Spain in 1541. Spain, however, was not the first nation to colonize the land that would become Louisiana.



Hernando de Soto

Native American tribes in the area, such as the Natchez, Choctaw, Creek, and Chickasaw, both resisted and aided the opposing European empires who were systematically conquering their native lands. The alliances often fell along traditional rivalries. For example, the Creeks allied with the British while long term enemies, the Choctaw, aligned with France.

## 1682



Rene-Robert Cavailler, Sieur de La Salle

Rene-Robert Cavalier, Sieur de La Salle claimed the Mississippi River basin for France in 1682. It would fall on other Frenchmen to consolidate the claim for the monarchy.

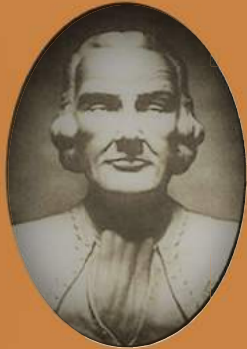
La Salle Colony Map, 1701



# TAMING NEW FRANCE . . . 1699

## La Louisiane

The Canadian LeMoyne brothers were leaders of French exploration and settlement efforts along the Gulf Coast and up the Mississippi River. Pierre LeMoyne D'Iberville established military outposts and small settlements at Biloxi and Mobile, 1699-1701. A temporary fort was created near the mouth of the Mississippi, but Iberville could not find high enough ground to settle a permanent Mississippi River port city.



*Louis Antoine Juchereau de St. Denis*



*Pierre Le Moyne D'Iberville*

# 1718

## New Orleans

Iberville's younger brother, Jean Baptiste Le Moyne de Bienville, continued colonizing efforts in Louisiana. He founded the city of New Orleans in 1718. Despite a rough start, Bienville managed to make the colony work and grow. New Orleans continued to gain importance as a center of commerce in the Atlantic World/Gulf Region and as the entrance to the vast North American river system emanating from the Mississippi River.



*Jean Baptiste Le Moyne de Bienville*

In 1714, Fort St Jean Baptiste was established along the Red River, near Spanish Texas, by Louis Antoine Juchereau de St. Denis, a cousin of the Le Moyne. An important military post along the early Southwest borderlands, Natchitoches is the oldest continuous settlement in the state of Louisiana.

St Denis was a skilled diplomat and created alliances with local tribes. Natchitoches would remain an important outpost to keep an eye on Spanish activities. A small military post was also established at Baton Rouge in 1721, named for the "Red Stick" that marked a boundary between tribal hunting grounds.



# ... TAMING NEW FRANCE

## The Natchez Wars

In this early period, the Natchez tribe was a major source of contention for the French settlers. Bienville was a skilled diplomat regarding the Native Tribes, resorting to war only if necessary. In 1725, two departures created a rapid decline in Natchez/French relations. The practical tribal chief, Tattooed Serpent, died and Bienville was recalled to France and eventually replaced by Governor Etienne Perier. Perier was not as effective or respected as Bienville and Tattooed Serpent's successors were less peaceful. The French military post near the Natchez, Fort Rosalie, was commanded by an even less effective officer, Sieur de Chepart. After a series of insults and indignities by Chepart in 1729, the Natchez attacked the Fort Rosalie settlement, killing all the men, including Commandant Chepart, and capturing the women, children, and slaves. Perier's answer was to attack and massacre a nearby Chaouacha town. The Chaouacha had nothing to do with the Natchez actions. French military expeditions then attacked the Natchez with help from Choctaw and Tunica allies. Hundreds of captives were sold into slavery at Saint Domingue and the remaining Natchez were forced to hide among other tribes.



Map showing Indian territories

Among the colonial militia Soldiers who participated in the Natchez campaigns, several were African slaves who gained their freedom by volunteering for these battles. These Soldiers were among the original group of free African Americans that went on to become the influential Free People of Color community in New Orleans.



Natchez Indian Family

# 1725

## French Colonial Militia

A handful of Regulars were supplied by the Crown for city defense and law enforcement, but appropriate defensive considerations required that some militia units be formed. Militia during the French period tended to be decentralized and built around prominent civilian leaders.



Louisiana French Militia, c 1750s, by Trevor Denham, 2019

Unhappy with the chaos unfolding in the territory, the French government removed the inept Perier and ordered Bienville to return to the colony. The few remaining Natchez made occasional guerilla attacks on the French settlers, often hiding among the British allied Chickasaws. This led Bienville to mount two failed campaigns against the Chickasaws, ultimately making peace terms in 1739. Natchez refugees were scattered among the Chickasaw, Cherokee, and Creek, soon completely disappearing as a people.

The Natchez Revolt  
by John Egan, Circa 1850



# THE SEVEN YEARS WAR

A largescale, eighteenth century war was waged across the globe between the British Empire and the French Monarchy. In the United States, the North American theater of this conflict is more commonly referred to as "The French and Indian War." Britain came out victorious, forcing French governance out of the North American continent. The result was a massive shift in who controlled what territory. Maintaining Mexico and the lower Pacific Coast, Spain took over the Louisiana territory. Britain came to control East and West Florida, as well as Canada, while still controlling the 13 colonies on the East Coast.

## Transfer From France to Spain

Treaty agreements and the French cession of the Louisiana Territory to Spain came in the early 1760s, but the first Spanish attempt to govern the colony did not come until 1766. Antonio de Ulloa was the first Spanish governor of Louisiana. He arrived with three officials and ninety soldiers. Colonists were apprehensive about the new administration.

*The Battle of Quiberon Bay, 20 November, 1759  
by Nicholas Pocock, 1812*

Another consequence of the war that affected Louisiana was Britain's expulsion of the French Acadians from Canada. Already controlled by the British Empire, Acadia held a populace that was not trusted by the government during a time of war. Skirmishing began in the New World by 1754. In 1755, the British government forced the deportation of thousands of Acadians to various locations. A large faction made their way to South Louisiana by the 1760s. Later referred to as "Cajuns," Acadians became a permanent and influential group in Louisiana.



*Deportation of Acadians order, 1755  
by Charles Williams Jeffreys, 1923*



*America 1763- 1783, After the Seven Years War*

# 1756 - 1763

## The Fixed Infantry Regiment of Louisiana

Under Ulloa's governorship the Spanish military Regiment was staffed with 12 Spanish and 24 French Officers under a lieutenant colonel. By 1769, under O'Reilly they grew to 600 men – 180 or so of them from Louisiana. The Regiment had soldiers of many ethnic backgrounds reflecting the diversity of people living in Spanish Louisiana. Other than Spanish, Spanish-American (Criollo) and French men, many Irish, German, Portuguese, Italian, Greek, Sardinian, and even Hungarian were known to have been soldiers of the Regiment. The purpose of the Fixed Regiment was to enlist the local inhabitant's in its own defense.



Ulloa sought to enforce Spanish commercial laws prohibiting trade between colonists and French holdings in the Caribbean. As a result, the French Creole soldiers of the colony threatened revolt, forcing



# PRIZE OF THE EMPIRES ...

## 1764

### British West Florida



In 1763, West Florida came to be a part of the British Empire.

Fort New Richmond, the military post at Baton Rouge, gave Britain access to the Mississippi River. As rebellion grew in Britain's thirteen East Coast colonies, some Loyalists moved to Baton Rouge, St Francisville, and other parts of West Florida. When France declared war with Britain during the American Revolution, British commanders in the Floridas had to be wary of Spanish Louisiana. France and Spain were allies.



## 1775

### Louisiana and the American Revolution

Beginning in 1775, the British Empire found its hands full with rebellion in the American colonies and another war with France. Once Governor Bernardo de Galvez learned that Spain had also declared war on Britain, he saw an opportunity. East and West Florida were ripe for the taking.

Galvez added and improved cavalry and artillery units within the Louisiana militia and used them in concert with regular troops to attack British positions along the Eastern Gulf of Mexico. The first strikes came in 1779 at Fort Bute near Manchac and in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. On August 18, a major hurricane made landfall near New Orleans. Despite the resulting personal hardship and damaged property,

*Bernardo de Galvez at the Battle of Pensacola, May, 1791, by Augusto Ferrer Dalmau Museo del Ejercito Madrid*



*Bernardo de Galvez Near Baton Rouge, 1779 by Augusto Ferrer Dalmau Courtesy Iberdrola, 2018*

# ... PRIZE OF THE EMPIRES



One of the most successful Spanish military commanders of the 18th century, Bernardo De Galvez's stint as military governor of Louisiana came after combat experience in Portugal, Algeria, and against the Apaches in Mexico. After reclaiming the Floridas from the British in 1780, he was eventually promoted as the Viceroy of New Spain, responsible for all Spanish possessions in the Western Hemisphere. Galveston, Texas and St. Bernard Parish are both named in his honor. In 2014, US Congress granted Galvez honorary citizenship for his contribution to American Independence.

After Baton Rouge, Galvez and his forces saw even greater victories at Mobile and Pensacola in 1780-1781. A failed English resurgence at Natchez was stopped by the Attakapas militia, under the command of Captain Estevan Moriandiere. Removing British forces from the Gulf Coast and the Florida peninsula, Galvez supported the Revolutionaries by clearing British military support functions in those areas and by drawing British soldiers and resources away from George Washington's Army.



## *Flintlock Mechanism*

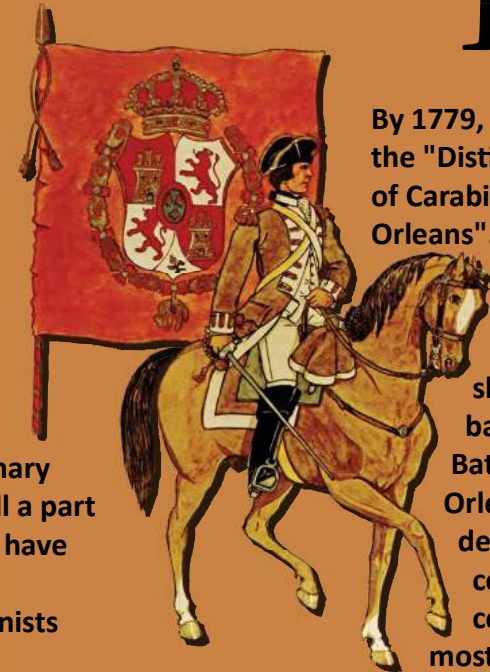
*17th - early 19th century*

When released by the trigger, the spring-loaded hammer moves forward, causing the flint to strike the "frizzen", resulting in a spark. This motion pushes the frizzen back, opening the cover to the pan which allows the spark to ignite the

Galvez also settled colonists from the Canary Islands into Louisiana. The Islenos are still a part of the state's ethnic landscape and many have served in the militia and Guard over the generations. He also settled Spanish colonists into Acadiana at the town of New Iberia.

Despite a tumultuous start, the Spanish administrators of Louisiana generally did a fair job in administering to the colony as it, and New Orleans in particular, began to increase its importance to global trade and commerce. As Louisiana prospered and grew, so did its militia.

# 1780



By 1779, Galvez had created the "Distinguished Company of Carabineer Militia of New Orleans". Since wealthy

French creoles declined to serve next to their

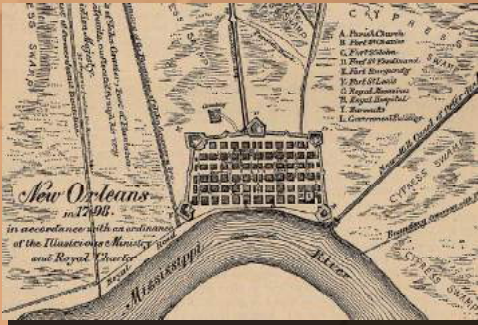
shoemakers and barbers in the

Battalion of New Orleans Militia, he decided to organize a company of cavalry composed of the most prominent men

with Galvez himself as captain. The first group of 49 men bought their own uniforms and horses but the Spanish government supplied carbines, pistols, saddles and other cavalry equipment. By 1792 there were 2 companies of 40 men each, none of whom were paid except in times of war.



# SPANISH DEFENSES



1798 Sketch of New Orleans showing the surrounding five forts



Governor Francisco Luis Hector de Carondelet was the principle designer of Spanish Louisiana's defensive system. This included the five protective forts on the edges of New Orleans, the fort at Bayou St. John at Lake Pontchartrain (now known as "Spanish Fort"), and Fort St. Philip.

Spanish governor of Louisiana from 1791-1797, Carondelet wanted the militia to equal the regular army in regard to chains of command, training and equipment. His reforms sustained a militia in direct proportion to the strength of Louisiana's population.



Ignacio de Balderes, c 1790  
by Jose Francisco Xavier  
de Salazar y Mendoza,  
La State Museum

As a sergeant in 1779, Balderes earned distinction by capturing a post at Pass Manchac during the Battle of Galvez-Town. Balderes was knighted by the king of Spain and given a large land grant near Pensacola.

In the early 1790s, Balderes was a Sub-Lieutenant of the Grenadiers, Second Battalion of the Regiment of Louisiana, and commander at Balize, an outpost guarding the mouth of the Mississippi River. Balderes was respected for his zeal and leadership. Francisco Bouligny, his commander, wrote "I believe it is always fitting to provide officers of well-known courage, good conduct, assiduity and who are intelligent, with promotion" when he became adjutant-major of the Third Battalion in 1793. Balderes eventually reached the rank of captain in 1798, and died in 1815 at the age of fifty-eight.

The city of Monroe began as Fort Miro. It was founded by Captain Jaun Filhoel, who served under Galvez. Galvez promoted him and named him "Commandant of the Militias." The fort was intended to act as an interior defensive position and create a post on the Ouachita River. Monroe is now a major city in Northeast Louisiana.

Plan of Fort Saint Charles  
The Historic New Orleans Collection, acc. no. 1970.2.11



# KEYSTONE OF THE FRONTIER

## 1800

### Napoleon Re-acquires Louisiana for France

In the secret Treaty of San Ildefonso of 1800, Spain agreed to return the Louisiana Territory to France, now under the rule of Napoleon Bonaparte. Due to several circumstances, however, France never resumed full administration of the colony. By 1803, it was willing to sell the land for money to support the wars raging on the European continent.



*Raising of the American Flag: Louisiana Transfer Ceremonies, 1803, Thure de Thulstrup, c. 1902, Courtesy of the Louisiana State Museum and the Louisiana Historical Society*

## 1803

### Louisiana Purchased

Desperate to control access into and out of expanding US boundaries, the Thomas Jefferson Administration sought to purchase the critical port city of New Orleans to protect US economic interests. Napoleon's government offered the entirety of the Louisiana Territory, which would double the size of the US. Jefferson's diplomats took the deal. The land was split into multiple territories, with the area encompassing most of current Louisiana designated "The Territory of Orleans."

The Spanish government was unhappy with the land deal, although they retained the Floridas and most of the Southwest. The British government did not recognize the legality of Napoleon's treaties or transactions.

The French official, Pierre Clement de Laussat, acted as the temporary governor between Spanish and American administrations. He accepted service of a mostly American provisional militia unit to help oversee the transfer. This unit was later known as the Orleans Volunteers



*Official Presidential Portrait of Thomas Jefferson, by Rembrandt Peale, 1800*





# KEYSTONE OF THE FRONTIER

## Republic of West Florida

After the Louisiana Purchase, Americans streamed from the East Coast and upper Mississippi into the Gulf Coast, including Spanish controlled West Florida. As Spain's control over its New World territories was waning, some Americans in West Florida began to clamor for independence or annexation to the United States. Reuben Kemper and his brothers led an 1804 revolt against the Spanish administration, but it did not garner enough steam to succeed. By 1810, however, the majority of Americans in the territory were ready to shake themselves of their status as subjects to a distant monarch.

The only battle in this rebellion occurred at Baton Rouge, with a raid on Fort San Carlos. The military commander of West Florida was a Revolutionary War veteran named Philemon Thomas. Spanish forces fell back to Mobile and Pensacola. Victory was declared, and the Republic of West Florida was announced on September 26, 1810. The Madison Administration annexed the republic on December 10, 1810 and it was folded into the new state of Louisiana in 1812. The geographic boundaries of the short lived republic consist of today's "Florida Parishes."



*Fulwar Shipwith, the first and only President of the Republic of West Florida in 1810*



*Philemon Thomas, Military Commander of West Florida by George Peter Alexander Healy, c. 1845  
Courtesy of the Louisiana State Museum*

## Spanish West Florida and the "Neutral Ground"

Spain still controlled West Florida, which included the areas of modern Louisiana east of the Mississippi River and north of Lake Pontchartrain, Lake Maurepas, and Bayou Manchac. U.S. officials believed the area to be part of the transaction, but did not want war with Spain in attempting to take it by force. The Jefferson and Madison administrations followed a policy of biding time as thousands of Americans streamed into the territory from the East Coast.

Another point of territorial contention was the strip of land between the Territory of Orleans and Spanish Texas, making Natchitoches a critical outpost. Diplomacy created a de-militarized "Neutral Ground" which neither side officially claimed. The current boundaries were ironed out later between the U.S. and an Independent Mexico.

# 1810





# KEYSTONE OF THE FRONTIER

## 1812

### Statehood

In 1811 a delegation of 17 Americans and 26 Creoles convened in New Orleans to adopt a state constitution. The US House of Representatives passed the bill in March of 1812, the Senate approved it in April and President Madison signed it into law soon after, making Louisiana the 18th state to join the American Union.



*Louisiana Constitution*

Governor Claiborne reorganized the militia into two divisions. The 1st Division was centered around the New Orleans area. The 2nd Division encompassed the rest of the state and was commanded by Philemon Thomas, former commanding officer of the Army of the West Florida Republic.

### 15 Stars and Stripes

The fifteen star flag was adopted by Congress in 1794 following the admission of Vermont and Kentucky into the Union. The number of stripes was also increased to fifteen. This was the official US flag during Louisiana's purchase, admission to the US, and the version flown during the Battle of New Orleans. Fearing that the continued addition of stripes would become unwieldy, Congress passed a law in 1818 returning the number of stripes to thirteen and providing that a new star be added for each state admitted.



*1836 New Orleans Lithograph*

### Louisiana's Pelican Flag

The state seal was adopted in 1813. It depicts a mother pelican tearing at her breast to feed her hungry chicks. The symbolism derived from Catholic European beliefs and is indicative of Louisiana's strong Catholic influence. The imagery was incorporated into unofficial state flags throughout the 19th century. Finally, in 1912, the state legislature adopted the pelican flag as official.



# BIRTH OF THE LOUISIANA MILITIA

## 1769

After the armed rebellion by French colonists, Spain sent Alexander O'Reilly to pacify the territory. An Irishman who provided a lifetime of military service to Spain, he brought 2,600 Soldiers with him in 1769. O'Reilly arrested nine ringleaders of the insurrection, executing five of them. This earned him the nickname "Bloody O'Reilly." Despite his swift actions to pacify Louisiana, he was generally lenient considering the circumstances.



*"The merits of the case resulted in the penalty of the gallows for six of them, but as one of them had already died in prison, and as there is no hangman here, five of them were shot on the 25th instant, at three o'clock."*

**-Alexandro O'Reilly, October 27, 1769**

O'Reilly can be considered the founder of the Louisiana National Guard. He established a colonial militia of thirteen companies and 1,040 men on February 12, 1770. Eligibility extended to able bodied males aged 15 to 50, including Free Men of Color. Military uniforms were authorized for the part time Soldiers. O'Reilly initiated a weekly training regimen and one strenuous multi-week annual training period. While the United States eventually took over the territory, governors maintained the basic organization from the preceding Spanish administration. Unbroken continuity of the Louisiana militia is traced back to 1770.

After further organization and strengthening of territorial fortifications, O'Reilly left for Havana. His replacement, Governor Unzaga, employed veteran Regulars to train militia into a more professional force. Unzaga established the Battalion of New Orleans Militia on June 1, 1775.

Order	Name	Rank	District
	Don Carlos Luis Burzard du Grandpied	First adjutant major of all the militia of this province.	
	Don Nicolas Laurens Lacombe	Second adjutant major of the militia of this capital.	
1st	Don Joseph Villar	Captain	
2nd	Don Antonio Gilberto	Captain	
	Don Luis Ramon	Captain	
3rd	Don Bartolomeo McNamara	Captain	In this capital.
4th	Don Juan Joseph Dubouart	Lieutenant	
5th	Don Juan LaRite	Lieutenant	
6th	Don Juan Hernandez	Lieutenant	
7th	Don Francisco Longue	Lieutenant	
8th	Don Juan Baptista Cavalier	Sub-Lieutenant	
9th	Don Juan Bertrant	Sub-Lieutenant	
10th	Don Pedro Gonzalez	Sub-Lieutenant	
11th	Don Lorenzo Wills	Sub-Lieutenant	
12th	Don Joseph Duane	Standard Bearer	
13th	Don Antonio Plancher	Standard Bearer	
14th	Don Martin	Captain	
15th	Don Juan Luis Sainchez	Lieutenant	St. Louis de Villamos.
16th	Don Eugenio Porto	Sub-Lieutenant	
17th	Don Francisco Valle	Captain	
18th	Don Nicolas Caporaso	Lieutenant	San Sebastian de Villamos.
19th	Don Francisco Deschamps	Sub-Lieutenant	
20th	Don Luis Juan Jose Barro	Captain	
21st	Don Benigno Pineda	Lieutenant	Natchitoches.
22nd	Don Victorio Dupain	Sub-Lieutenant	
23rd	Don Santiago Cuervo	Captain	
24th	Don Jaime Petit	Lieutenant	Opelousas.
25th	Don Santiago Cuervo	Sub-Lieutenant	
26th	Don Juan Francisco Altamir	Captain	
27th	Don Juan Francisco Altamir	Lieutenant	Pointe a la Poudre.
28th	Don Jorge Ramon	Sub-Lieutenant	
29th	Don Antonio Jordan	Second Adjutant Major	
30th	Don Nicolas Berrel	Captain	St. Charles Fort, comprising all the parishes of St. James.
31st	Don Miguel Castrejon	Lieutenant	
32nd	Don Santiago Castrejon	Sub-Lieutenant	
33rd	Don Luis Peltre	Captain	Parishes de Claiborne comprising all the parishes of Attakapas.
34th	Don Nicolas Berrel	Lieutenant	
35th	Don Luis Peltre	Sub-Lieutenant	
36th	Don Roberto Robin Langui	Captain	Half the German Coast comprising the parishes of St. Jean Baptiste.
37th	Don Pedro Baster Lafren	Lieutenant	
38th	Don Juan Perret	Sub-Lieutenant	
39th	Don Luis Agustin Melon	Captain	
40th	Don Francisco Trepastier	Lieutenant	
41st	Don Alonzo Bore	Sub-Lieutenant	The other half of the German Coast, which comprises the Parish of the Chiteles.
42nd	Don Nicolas Longueval	Second Adjutant Major	

*"Statement showing the names and ranks of all the militia officers of this province appointed by me and the districts where they are to serve."*



# BIRTH OF THE LOUISIANA MILITIA

## 1775

By the time of the American Revolution, all of the elements necessary to create a battalion of Free Men of Color were present – Spanish authorization and format modeled after the colored militias in Havana; a legacy unit of the former slaves who won their freedom through military service under Bienville; and manpower in the form of 169 free colored males in New Orleans. The Battalion survived, albeit with controversy, into the American period.

Officials in Washington and incoming American settlers were less comfortable with arming free African Americans than their French or Spanish predecessors. A factor in this discomfort was the ongoing unrest in the island nation of Haiti and the fears stoked by the potential for slave revolts. In 1811, the militia put down a large slave uprising in St Charles Parish, intensifying racial unease.

The Battalion of Free Men of Color was respected by most and eager to serve.

Governor Claiborne ultimately allowed it, despite the continued ambivalence by many of his peers. Due to a lack of clarity on the unit's status via the territorial legislature, the unit existed in limbo until 1814.

Some historians have suggested this Battalion wore white linen uniforms with red or green facings, but extensive research of primary documents have found no evidence to support this. Until at least 1801, the Free men of color very likely wore the same militia uniform as the white units - Blue with red facings, cuffs, waistcoat and breeches.

*Address from the Free People of Color  
to William Claiborne, January 1804*

*"We were employed in the military service of the late government, and we hope we may be permitted to say, that our conduct in that service has ever been distinguished by a ready attention to the duties required of us. Should we be in like manner employed by the American government, to which every principle of interest as well as affection attaches us, permit us to assure your Excellency that we shall serve with fidelity and zeal. We therefore respectfully offer our services to the government as a corps of volunteers agreeable to any arrangement which may be thought expedient".*

## Battalion of Free Men of Color





# BIRTH OF THE LOUISIANA MILITIA

## Battalion d'Orleans

**Battalion d'Orleans** A French creole unit of 5 companies numbering about 500 men were considered "foreigners" by the new American administration and therefore capable of disloyalty and treason. These Louisiana Militiamen proved those fears groundless as they executed their duties.

# 1775

*Captain Julien Vienne, wearing the uniform of the Louisiana Militia, and son Julien George Vienne, c. 1795  
by Jose Francisco Xavier de Salazar y Mendoza*



**Michel Dragon (1739-1821)** was a native of Athens, Greece. He immigrated to New Orleans about 1760 as a soldier in the French Colonial Army. In 1764, as Spain assumed control of the Louisiana Territory, Dragon received a commission in the Spanish militia. After having distinguished himself at Pensacola with Bernardo de Galvez, Dragon attained the rank of second lieutenant and received a Royal Appointment in 1792.

*Lieutenant Michel Dragon, Attributed to F. Godefroid, c. 1810, Courtesy of the Louisiana State Museum, Gift of John T. Block.*



# CLAIBORNE AND THE MILITIA

## 1805

William Charles Cole Claiborne, a Jefferson political ally, was appointed governor of the territory, and therefore Commander in Chief of the militia. The Territorial Militia was established by the legislature in 1805. The American militia did not change much in organization from the Spanish period. Free men between the ages of 18 and 45 still drilled once a month. A sizable militia offered the least expensive solution to the need for security against potential invasion from both Spanish Florida and Texas. One major difference for the Louisiana militia under American authority was that Jeffersonian principle considered the militia to be the main military force instead of being supplemental to the regular army. Claiborne was not a natural military commander and had a difficult time ensuring that the militia was prepared to defend against a mounting threat of British attack.



*William Claiborne  
by E. B. Savary  
Louisiana Historical Society*

## Early Disaster Response

In the spring of 1790, members of the militia, both black and white, were called out by their officers to repair breaks in the levee. Each man was paid 4.5 reales (about \$3) a day plus meals for the month it took to rebuild the break. Many of the officers in charge were notable veterans of service under Galvez during the American Revolution.

## Orleans Volunteers

The Orleans Volunteers was an all volunteer unit of New Orleans's middle and working class Anglo-Americans led by officers drawn from the upper ranks of society. These militiamen volunteered under a transitional French administrator to execute the transfer of Louisiana to the U.S. By 1804 the territorial legislature allowed for the establishment of more volunteer companies like this where any group of free white men could elect officers, clothe and equip themselves, restrict membership and drill regularly.

