





## The American Soldier, 1780

Motivated by revenge for lost possessions, Spain, in 1779, joined the French and the infant United States in the war against Great Britain. Although the French were eager to launch combined operations in America, the Spanish refused. Instead, the governor of Louisiana, Gen. Bernardo de Galvez decided to eliminate the British holdings in East and West Florida. As part of his overall operations, forces under his command secured the Mississippi River ports of Manchac, Baton Rouge, and Natchez.

The following year, in 1780, his troops took Mobile and then prepared to crown their successes with the capture of Pensacola, the seat of the British government in West Florida. Brig. John Campbell was in command of the recently completed Fort George and had at his disposal several companies of the 16th and 60th Regiments of Foot, a battalion of "Waldeckers" and two motley battalions of American Loyalists recruited from Maryland and Pennsylvania, a total of nine hundred men.

Although the Spanish landed over eight thousand troops, they were unable to take the well-constructed fort by direct assault and began formal siege operations. Fortunately, a deserter from one of the Loyalist battalions provided to the Spanish artillerymen a good estimate of the range of the principal magazine. A direct hit was scored on 8 May 1780, killing approximately one hundred men and destroying one of the redoubts. Although the follow-up assault ground to a halt amidst the ruins, the presence of Spanish marksmen inside the fort made the serving of the British guns impossible and Campbell surrendered. This campaign relieved pressure on the southern states.

Here, amid the destruction from the exploded Fort George magazine, the painting depicts a grenadier officer of the Louisiana Regiment urging his troops to the assault. The Louisiana Regiment was organized in 1765 and their uniform, consisting of a white coat with blue facings and yellow buttons over a blue vest and breeches, was established at that time. The figure in the red jacket with yellow lace and buttons and blue facings, wearing a low crowned leather cap and white breeches, is from the Company of Free Blacks of Havana.