THE LIMNER COMPANY



FRENCH SCHOOL

Portrait miniature of an Officer, probably of the Garde Nationale, wearing dark blue coat with white facings, red collar and epaulettes, white cross belt and a bicorne hat with red plume

Circa: circa 1800

circa 1800

Watercolour on ivory (licence 3VGRESTR)

Oval, 70 mm (2 3/4 in) high

Gold frame with plaited hair reverse

The officer in the present portrait was possibly a member of the *Garde Nationale*, formed in Paris in July 1789 after the storming of the Bastille. Escalating urban unrest in Paris, fuelled by food shortages and fears of royal military intervention, intensified after King Louis XVI (1754-1793) dismissed the reformist finance minister Jacques Necker (1732-1804) on July 11, prompting spontaneous armed assemblies among the city's districts to protect the nascent revolutionary assemblies. Those who created the National Guard intended it to protect Paris from these counter-revolutionary attacks and internal stability. As the Revolution unfolded, however, the National Guard, which was dominated by affluent *bourgeois* interests, would come into conflict with the working classes of Paris more than any external threat.

Given that the ranks were led by the Marquis de Lafayette (1757-1834), its core membership consisted of thousands of politically active, middle-class Parisian citizens and mutinous soldiers from the King's old Royal Guards Regiment. The soldier pictured here, likely from the affluent *bourgeois* classes, would have commissioned his miniature while under Napoleon’s rule.

The portrait here reflects the new middle classes of France around the year 1800 - when artists

captured their subjects with modern realism, and celebrated those who had held Paris safe during the turbulent Revolution, but who were far removed from nobility.

We are grateful to Stephen Wood for his assistance in identifying this sitter's uniform.