

# Bernardo de Gálvez

## and the American Revolution



Bernardo de Gálvez was born in Macharaviaya, among the mountains of Málaga, Spain on July 23, 1746. His birth date is celebrated as Gálvez Day in a few cities across the United States and has been recognized as a day of commemoration by individuals and state congresses. His significant contributions to the independence of the United States from Britain has been recognized by various groups and regions, but is still left out of most textbooks.

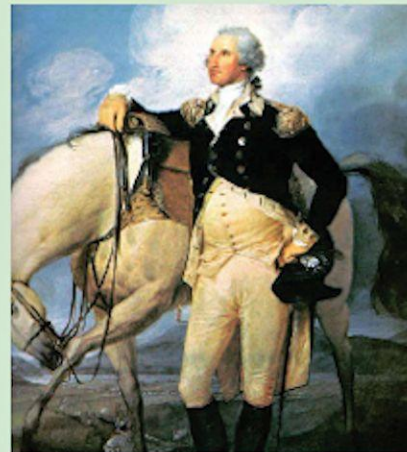


Like many in his distinguished family, he chose a military career. By the age of 16, he was serving as a lieutenant in a war with Portugal, which led to his promotion to captain. In 1769, he was selected for service in New Spain.

Before Spain officially declared support for the rebelling colonies of Britain, Gálvez was assisting the revolution. He corresponded directly with Thomas Jefferson, Patrick Henry, and Charles Henry Lee and sealed off the port of New Orleans so that British ships could not utilize the Mississippi River.

He also welcomed any American patriots at his ports and river. The river, under French and Spanish administration, served as a constant source of money, ammunition and weapons to the American forces under George Washington and George Rogers Clark. By 1777, more than \$70,000 had reached American troops.

On June 21, 1779, King Carlos III declared war against Great Britain and commissioned Governor Gálvez to organize forces against the English. His efforts were focused on the Mississippi and the Gulf. Texas Governor Domingo Cabello y Robles provided Gálvez with over 10,000 cattle for food and several hundred horses for the soldiers.



In 1779, Gálvez led 1,400 men and captured Baton Rouge, Natchez and Manchac from the British. On March 14, 1780, a month long campaign ended against the British, and the 2,000 soldiers under Gálvez had captured Fort Charlotte in Mobile, Alabama.

In 1781, General Gálvez dealt another blow to the British by leading 7,000 men against the British capital in Pensacola.

In the spring of 1783, he returned to Spain with his wife and two young children, only to be called back to service in 1784 to serve as captain general and governor of Cuba.

In 1785, Gálvez was appointed to his post of viceroy of New Spain to replace his father who had died the year before and held the post before him.

In 1786, Gálvez became ill and died on November 30th. His body was placed beside his father in the Church of San Fernando. His heart was placed in an urn and kept at the Cathedral of Mexico.

Robert H. Thornhoff, of Karnes City, Texas, is a retired educator, author, historian, speaker, emcee, retired Karnes County Judge, and a former President of the Texas State Historical Association.