



Undress Uniform Of A Major General, Attributed To Joseph Bonaparte, King Of Spain, 1813



100 000 EUR

Period : 19th century

Condition : Très bon état

Description

SMALL UNIFORM COAT OF A DIVISIONAL GENERAL, attributed to Joseph Bonaparte, King of Spain, model of the 1st Vendémiaire Year XII, First Empire (July 22, 1813 - November 27, 1815). 33622 "Divisional and brigade generals included in the organization of the army have a full and a small uniform." Full dress coat in national blue wool, lined in the same fabric, without lapels, buttoning straight on the chest to the waist, flaring on the thigh, and not crossed at the back. Straight national blue wool collar, height 11 cm. Cuffs, made of the same wool, height 10 cm, cut wider by one centimeter than the sleeve, which will be fastened below by a small uniform brass button of Ø 1.7 cm. At the rear, the two tails are folded in on themselves, forming turnbacks embellished in each corner

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with a bomb in flames and a winged and sparkling Jupiter's spindle richly embroidered in silver gilt threads, cannetilles, and sequins. Height of the embroidered insignia 7 cm x 5.2 cm. Coat adorned on the front right side with nine large buttons (one button missing) Ø 2.7 cm in gilded brass mounted on a brass base, placed at equal distance from the collar to the pocket level, over a total distance of 33 cm, and one button at each hip. Gilt metal buttons depicting a shield stamped with an imperial eagle, resting on a trophy, topped with a helmet and crossed by a winged and sparkling thunderbolt. All rank embroideries, with two rows of oak leaves adorning the collar and cuffs (one row of oak leaves 5.3 cm underlined by a second row of 2.2 cm). The front of the coat, the tails at the back and the pleats have embroidery of a fixed width of 6 cm including the scalloped rod. This embroidery features a branch of oak in gold (gilt silver), with very small sequins on the edges of the leaves and on the rod. Branch body and rod net embroidered in twisted strands. Epaulet straps in blue wool embroidered with twisted strands and golden sequins, width 1.3 cm. On each side of the collar, at the level of the straps, a small button is sewn. Inner lining in blue wool. Sleeve length 71.5 cm. Shoulder width approximately 38 cm. Total height from the top of the collar to bottom approximately 87 cm. France. First Empire. Perfect state of preservation with intact gold embroidery, missing upper front button, partially missing lining at the back.

PROVENANCE: Joseph-Napoleon Bonaparte (1768-1844), King of Spain (1808-1813). John Nevill, 3rd Earl of Abergavenny (1789-1845), who seized it at the Battle of Vitoria on June 21, 1813. Then by descent to the Marquess of Abergavenny (PUITS TUNBRIDGE). Public sale in the United Kingdom on September 19, 2018, at Mellors & Kirk. This uniform is a Napoleonian full dress coat (dark blue, richly embroidered in gold) attributed to Joseph Bonaparte and said to have been taken at the Battle of Vitoria on June

21, 1813, it is mentioned in an article in 1907 published in the magazine "The Connoisseur an Illustrated Magazine for Collectors" (later titled "Connoisseur"), a British magazine published from 1901 to 1992 in London dealing with subjects related to luxury in areas such as fine arts, collectibles, and antique furniture. The article "Eridge Castle and Its Contents, Part I" signed by R. Nevill and L. Willoughby was published in 1907, Volume XIX (September-December 1907), page 221. In this article, this uniform is described as an "interesting souvenir of the Peninsular War", in excellent condition with gold embroideries "absolutely intact". The article publishes a photograph of this piece then kept at Eridge Castle in Sussex, owned by the Nevill family. It is written that this uniform was seized by English soldiers during the French rout at Vitoria in Spain, on June 21, 1813. It was part of the royal baggage convoy abandoned by Joseph Bonaparte, King of Spain, when he fled the battlefield. Among the many war spoils seized by officers and men of Wellington at the Battle of Vitoria, the huge baggage convoy of Joseph Bonaparte, consisting of over 200 carts, found itself blocked in the narrow streets of the city. The morale of his troops, shattered by Wellington's tactics and the skill of his subordinates, drove the French to flee, and chaos quickly ensued as the British pounced on the treasure-laden convoy. Ironically, Joseph himself had plundered whatever he could carry. During the looting by the British, Joseph and his troops managed to escape. Wellington's army was completely disorganized by late afternoon, and the opportunity to drive the French out of the Iberian Peninsula was lost, leading the Duke of Fer to describe the participants as "ragtag". Lieutenant John Nevill (1789-1845) of the 23rd Infantry Regiment witnessed the scene, which, by early evening, had degenerated into drunken revelry. Noticing a drunken soldier wearing the coat, he ordered him to hand it over. Nevill, who later inherited the title of 3rd Earl of

Abergavenny and entered the clergy, took the coat with him to the family's Eridge Castle in Sussex, UK, where it was preserved and exhibited in the family collection. In the twentieth century, it was loaned to the Military Museum and Fortress of Redoubt at Eastbourne.

JOSEPH BONAPARTE: Joseph Bonaparte, born on January 7, 1768 in Corte during the period of Corsican independence, and died on July 28, 1844 in Florence, in the Grand Duchy of Tuscany, was a French statesman and the older brother of Emperor Napoleon I. His political, diplomatic, and military career was closely intertwined with that of his brother Napoleon. Under the Consulate, he was initially appointed as a member of the Council of State and the Legislative Body as the deputy of Golo, and then tasked with several major diplomatic missions: it was he who negotiated the Treaty of Mortefontaine with the United States, the Treaty of Lunéville with Austria, and the Peace of Amiens with the United Kingdom, while also participating in discussions that led to the signing of the Concordat. As a Grand Elector and French prince after the establishment of the Empire on May 18, 1804, Joseph Bonaparte took on the responsibility of governing during his brother's military campaigns. He was King of Naples from 1806 to 1808, and then of Spain from 1808 to 1813, playing a significant role in Napoleon's efforts to establish French sovereignty over continental Europe. His second reign, culminating in a decisive defeat of the Napoleonic armies he led at the Battle of Vitoria, was marked by continuous warfare, earning him the moniker "el rey intruso," an intruder king unable to govern due to the country's fragmentation and Napoleon's control over its policies. Appointed as the Emperor's Lieutenant General during the 1814 French campaign, he was unable to prevent the capitulation of Paris to the allied forces. Exiled to Switzerland at the Château de Prangins, he was reinstated in all his functions during the Hundred Days, but eventually forced into another exile in

the United States after his brother's abdication.

Engaging in business ventures in America while sidelined from politics, he later sought to play a significant role in advocating for his country.

Following the death of his nephew Napoleon II in 1832, he became the first heir to the imperial throne and returned to Europe. Settling in

London, he endeavored unsuccessfully to promote his family's interests and to persuade French political leaders and the populace to

restore the Empire. After another period in the United States between 1835 and 1839, he

returned once more to Europe following the death of his third daughter, Charlotte, and settled in

Florence, where he passed away in 1844. At the Battle of Vitoria, Joseph Bonaparte held the title of King of Spain (Joseph I), representing French

political authority in Spain. His military role officially was that of the commander-in-chief of

the French army in Spain. However, being a relatively inexperienced military leader, he

delegated the actual military leadership to Marshal Jean-Baptiste Jourdan, who served as his

chief military advisor. Jean-Baptiste JOURDAN

Major General of the Army of Spain: Born on April 29, 1762 in Limoges, Haute-Vienne, and

died on November 23, 1833 in Paris,

Jean-Baptiste Jourdan was a French military

leader who rose to the rank of Marshal of the

Empire. On May 19, 1804, while still in Italy, he

learned of his appointment as Marshal of the

Empire (fourth in the order of precedence) and

escorted the Emperor's carriage during the

Coronation ceremony. This appointment was

more about Napoleon's desire to garner support from former Jacobin officers rather than

recognizing Jourdan's military talents. Jourdan

was among the Freemason marshals. In 1808, he

went to Spain as the major general under King

Joseph, serving as his chief military advisor.

However, his orders often clashed with the

hostility of other marshals who only obeyed the

Emperor's commands. Joseph, not well-versed in

military strategy, nonetheless took on the chief

command on several occasions, leading to detrimental outcomes. In these challenging circumstances, Jourdan focused on addressing the Anglo-Spanish army under Generals Wellesley and la Cuesta, who had repelled Marshal Soult in Portugal. Jourdan managed to convince the king to allow the enemy troops to advance towards Madrid, intending to encircle them with Soult's forces arriving from the north. However, on the day of the Battle of Talavera, Marshal Victor's impatience led to disregarding the major general's instructions, gaining Joseph's authorization to attack the English forces entrenched on a hill. After resisting French assaults for three days, Wellesley withdrew, escaping destruction. Feeling disillusioned about having the appearance of command without the actual control, Jourdan requested his recall, which he received in October 1809, retiring to his estate in Le Coudray (Seine-et-Oise). When Napoleon, determined to wage war against Russia, ordered him back to Spain in 1811 with his primary role, in response to his brother's discord with Soult, he returned. During this second period, the retreat from Madrid unfolded, where he was governor since July 11, 1811, and the Battle of Vitoria took place. Joseph, eager to confront the enemy, disregarded Jourdan's advice to await reinforcements and to dispatch the convoy carrying his court and treasury back to France. Ill, the marshal was unable to assume any command during the battle, which ended in a decisive defeat for the French forces. Jourdan lost his marshal's baton when the king's carriage was attacked by the English. Blamed entirely for the defeat by Napoleon, he asked for his retirement. For a long time, Marshal Jourdan was held responsible for the day's failure, but he had neither formal nor effective command, and his advice faced numerous contradictions.

THE BATTLE OF VITORIA:

The Battle of Vitoria took place on June 21, 1813, between the French troops escorting the King of Spain Joseph Bonaparte in his retreat and a conglomerate of British, Spanish,

and Portuguese troops under the command of General Arthur Wellesley, Viscount Wellington. The Allies' victory marked the definitive retreat of French troops from Spain -- except for Catalonia -- and forced Emperor Napoleon to return the Spanish crown to Ferdinand VII, thus ending the Spanish War of Independence. Following the decisive defeat of the French at the Battle of the Pyrenees (also known as the Battle of Salamanca) (1812), Napoleon's troops were unable to hold back the allied army's advance towards Madrid, which was evacuated in July 1812. The following month, Wellington entered the capital. After deploying some divisions to secure the area, he marched with the main army northwards and laid siege to Burgos. However, the French defenders held the stronghold, forcing Wellington to retreat on October 22. Subsequently, the British once again abandoned Madrid to withdraw to Salamanca and then to Ciudad Rodrigo, where they regrouped during the winter. In the meantime, the French forces, already severely diminished and disorganized by the harsh campaign in Spain, were further reduced when several divisions were withdrawn from the Iberian Peninsula to cover other European fronts following Napoleon's disastrous Russian campaign. With the arrival of spring, Wellington advanced once more to the northeast, reaching the Esla Valley on May 20, 1813. This movement unsettled the French. Marshal Jean-Baptiste Jourdan withdrew the 58,000-strong army he had deployed to reoccupy the area between the Douro and Tagus rivers and concentrated them again at Burgos, ready to secure communications with southern France. The Allied army then moved to cut off this retreat route for Jourdan, who was already considering leaving Spanish soil to safeguard Joseph I's court. Wellington's army, arranged in three columns, caught up with the retreating French forces near Vitoria in the Basque Country. The French were forced to engage in battle. After a series of fierce encounters, the 3rd Division under

Thomas Picton broke the French center, causing it to collapse. The French then fled desperately towards their country's border, leaving behind 7,500 dead, wounded, and captured men. They also lost 151 of their 153 cannons and the abundant loot they were carrying back to France. The Allies (especially the British) then stopped pursuing the French to divide up the spoils, much to Wellington's annoyance. Later, the Allied forces regrouped and occupied Saint Sebastian and Pamplona, and in December, the invasion of French Basque Country began from these bases. At the end of July 1813, when the news reached Vienna, Johann Nepomuk Maelzel commissioned Ludwig van Beethoven to compose a symphony to celebrate the victory; this became Wellington's Victory, Op. 91 (Wellingtons Sieg or Die Schlacht bei Vitoria or Siegessymphonie). A monument on the Virgen Blanca square in the center of Vitoria commemorates this event, while another monument inaugurated in 1966 at the Jundiz site was buried during industrial zone development works.

JOSEPH BONAPARTE'S TREASURE IN SPAIN: The "treasure" was not just a simple chest but a massive convoy consisting of hundreds of wagons containing the plundered goods in Spain, gold and silver from the Spanish Royal Treasury, precious items seized from palaces, jewelry, artworks, religious pieces (from monasteries and churches), as well as artistic collections including paintings by Spanish masters and works from royal collections (notably those from Madrid). The archives and personal belongings of Joseph Bonaparte, silverware, and luxurious furniture were also part of the treasure. In total, it is said to have comprised over 250 wagons filled with riches.