



the corps
since 1775



1775-1825
1825-1875
1875-1925
1925-1962

by Robert Leckie
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Capt Samuel Nicholas, upon receiving his appointment as Commandant, opened a recruiting rendezvous in the old Tun Tavern, a prominent hostelry in Philadelphia, Pa.



1775-1825

IT HAS BEEN said that as the first Marine reported for duty aboard an American ship in 1775, he was greeted by a salty character who snapped:

"You should have seen it in the Old Corps! I mean, that was when things were *really* rough!"

Contradictory as this old chestnut may seem in its suggestion that, even in the beginning, there was an "Old Corps" to throw up to boots, there is at its center a kernel of historical truth. And this is that Americans have for so long been accustomed to sea-soldiers that if some of them were asked to locate the Marine prototype, they would probably begin searching through the Book of Genesis.

Actually—and no matter with what shrill agony the Gunny beats his breast—the true Marine forebear may be located in England during the year 1664. It was then that an outfit to serve at sea and fight ashore was authorized and called, with a stiff solemnity, "The Duke of York and Albany's Maritime Regiment of Foot." Certain difficulties of battle communications arising upon the unspeedy shout, "An't please your Lordship, Sir, His Majesty desires the Duke of York and Albany's Maritime Regiment of Foot to enter the line," it was later shortened to "Marines."

These troops, the first sea-soldiers of

modern arms, and the forerunners of the British Royal Marines, were also the originators of the famous remark, "Tell it to the Marines!" This occurred when a ship captain at the Court of King Charles II spoke of having seen fish flying through the air.

"Sir," exclaimed the king, "such a thing is beyond our believing."

Turning then to Sir William Killigren, colonel of the new maritime regiment, Charles declared:

"What say you, Sir, to a man who tells for truth that he has seen fish that fly like birds?"

"I should say, Your Majesty," Col Killigren replied, "that he hath sailed in southern waters. When Your Majesty's business carried me thither of late I did frequently see such a sight."

Smiling, the king said: "Henceforth, whenever we cast doubt upon a tale that lacketh likelihood we will tell it to the Marines. If they believe it, it is safe to say that it is true."

■ In that same year of 1664, incidentally, the British expelled the Dutch from what is now New York and the Marines began to appear in the New World. They remained there—spearheading the numerous expeditions England mounted against France in eastern Canada—until the advent of the American Revolution. Not all of them were Marines properly so-called, but actually only

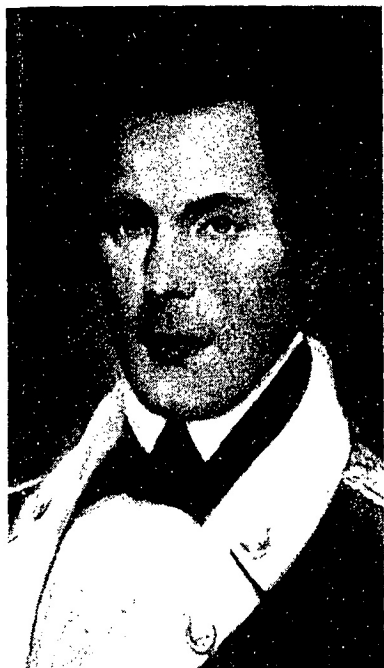
colonial riflemen taken aboard ship to snipe from the fighting tops during a surface battle or to storm a strongpoint during a ship-to-shore operation. Thus, by 1775, the image of the sea-soldier had become so deeply etched in the American mind that it was only natural for each of the revolting colonies to form bands of Marines to serve the individual state navies.

In the Massachusetts Navy, a Marine applicant was required to possess "a good effective Fire Arm, Cartouch (cartridge) Box, Cutlass and Blanket." Such, of course, is no longer required in the modern Corps.

■ There were also, in 1775, American sea-soldiers serving with Washington's "fleet" on Lake Champlain, and General Benedict Arnold may be credited with being the first to take official cognizance of the ragged Marine when he described his sea-soldiers as "the refuse of every regiment." These troops of Arnold's are the first American Marines of record, the payroll of the sloop *Enterprise* carrying an entry for May 3, 1775, which lists the names of James Watson, a lieutenant of Marines, and 17 enlisted men.

So it was that by the end of that year the Continental Congress made it official with this resolution:

"That two battalions of Marines be raised, consisting of one colonel, two



The first Commandant, Capt Nicholas, held the oldest Naval commission.

Travel and adventure, bounties, and ample grog were offered by early recruiters.



BY ROBERT LECKIE

lieutenant colonels, two majors, and other officers, as usual in other regiments; that particular care be taken that no persons be appointed to offices or enlisted into said battalions but such are good seamen or so acquainted with maritime affairs as to be able to serve with advantage by sea when required; that they be enlisted and commissioned to serve for and during the present war between Great Britain and the colonies, unless dismissed by order of Congress; that they be distinguished by the names of the First and Second Battalions of American Marines."

■ It is from the date of this resolution, November 10, 1775, that the Marine Corps marks its birthday—though it must be admitted that both those battalions of Continental Marines were probably never raised. Nevertheless, American Marines were now official, and less than three weeks after this act of Congress, they had a commandant: Captain Samuel Nicholas.

Well-wired socially and politically—he was a popular clubman, and his uncle, Atwood Shute, had been Mayor of Philadelphia—Sam Nicholas worked his points to fill his ranks. He prevailed upon a gentleman named Thomas Mullan—who was also made a Marine captain—to turn his Philadelphia pub, Tun Tavern, over to the business of recruiting. Likely-looking candidates

who passed this waterfront watering-station were lured within by Capt Mullan, a man who might have commanded Madison Avenue had he been born in this century. Here is a sample Mullan recruiting poster: "The Daily Allowance of a Marine when embarked, is—One Pound of BEEF or PORK,—One Pound of BREAD,—Flour, Raisins, Butter, Cheese, Oatmeal, Molasses, Tea, Sugar, &c. &c. And a Pint of the best WINE, or Half a Pint of the best RUM or BRANDY; together with a Pint of Lemonade."

■ Young men were also asked where they could find "such a fair opportunity of reaping Glory and Riches, as in the Continental Marines, a Corps daily acquiring new Honors . . . once embarked in (the) American Fleet, he finds himself in the midst of Honor and Glory, surrounded by a set of fine Fellow(s), Strangers to Fear, and who strike Terror through the Hearts of their Enemies wherever they go!"

The crusher, of course, was applied at the end: "The single young man on his Return to Port, finds himself enabled to cut a Dash on shore with his GIRL and his GLASS, that might be envied by a Nobleman,—Take Courage, then, seize the Fortune that awaits you, repair to the MARINE RENDEZVOUS, where in a FLOWING BOWL OF PUNCH . . . you shall drink Long Live

the United States, and Success to the Marines."

Following this, there was nothing left to do but sign. Unhappily, it is likely that the recruit got his GI grog after signing, and also possible that the rum had been watered, and this, according to the Boondocks School of Marine scholarship, is the basis of that well-known greeting offered boots arriving at Parris Island or San Diego.

■ Nevertheless, by February of 1776, Captain Commandant Nicholas had managed to supply most of the Continental Navy's fighting ships with Marines, and had raised a complement of 268 sea-soldiers for this nation's first naval expedition, the invasion fleet which Commodore Esek Hopkins was leading to New Providence in the Bahamas. Captain Sam led most of these men—already called "Leather-necks" for the black leather stock or collar that they wore—aboard the *Alfred*, while Mullan commanded a 60-man detachment on the *Columbus*.

On March 1, the eight vessels of the American fleet stood off the island's capital at Old Nassau, but Nicholas' plan to slip ashore with 220 Marines and 50 sailors misfired when the bigger fire-support ships arrived ahead of the troop-sloops. Seeing this, the British in the shore forts became suspicious and drove the sloops away. With surprise



Marine sharpshooters served aboard the Bon Homme Richard when it encountered the Serapis on September 23, 1779.

denied him, Nicholas took his men to the island's undefended east coast and brought them ashore in early April. Then he notified the Governor that his only intent was to seize military stores, and began marching on Fort Montagu, a mile east of Old Nassau. The Marines captured this after the British fired a few token cannonballs and tok off, but the fort proved empty of munitions.

■ Capt Nicholas then decided to attack Fort Nassau, the city's western outpost, where, he concluded, the stores must be cached. But, night coming upon him, he delayed the attack until morning.

The decision was unwise. During the night the Governor removed 150 of 175 casks of powder from Fort Nassau, loaded them aboard ship, and sent the vessel stealing softly out of the harbor mouth which Commodore Hopkins had neglected to patrol. In the morning, after Capt Sam's Marines had taken the western fort, it was found that although a prize of 71 cannon, 15 brass mortars, numerous small arms and shot, as well as 24 casks of powder, had crowned this first Marine invasion in history, the vast bulk of what Capt Nicholas called "the grand article, powder," was already bound for British arms in St. Augustine, Fla.

Nonetheless, the New Providence landing was a victory, and when Hopkins' fleet spread sail for New London two weeks later, the unbroken string of successful Marine assault landings which stretches from the Bahamas in April 1776, to Inchon in September 1950, was fairly launched.

Back in Philadelphia that Spring, Nicholas and Mullan renewed recruiting activity. By the critical Winter of 1776-

1777, they had mustered the first of those two authorized battalions—and it was well.

General Washington was by then sorely in need of troops. Wholesale desertions had followed his defeat in New York and his pitiful retreat across the Jerseys to Philadelphia. So this Marine battalion under Nicholas was welcomed and turned over to the Pennsylvania Militia under General Cadwalader, who had been ordered to cross the Delaware at a point below Washington's crossing with the main body. Cadwalader did cross, but was forced to return to the Pennsylvania side because of his inability to land artillery. The Marines, therefore, were not in on Washington's great victory over the Hessians at Trenton.

■ But they joined him for the Second Battle of Trenton, on January 2, 1777, and the Battle of Princeton the next day, and they also shivered with the Continental Line in that first Winter at Morristown—an ordeal of cold and hunger more terrible than the celebrated miseries of Valley Forge. Thus, the Continental Marines were present during Washington's most critical operations, the "times that try men's souls," as Tom Paine called them, the period in which The Great Delayer was able to save his army.

During the remaining five years of the war, there were three outstanding events involving Continental Marines among those scores of sea fights, land skirmishes and minor landings which kept the men of Commandant Nicholas, now a major, employed. And the greatest of these was the ill-fated Penobscot Expedition.

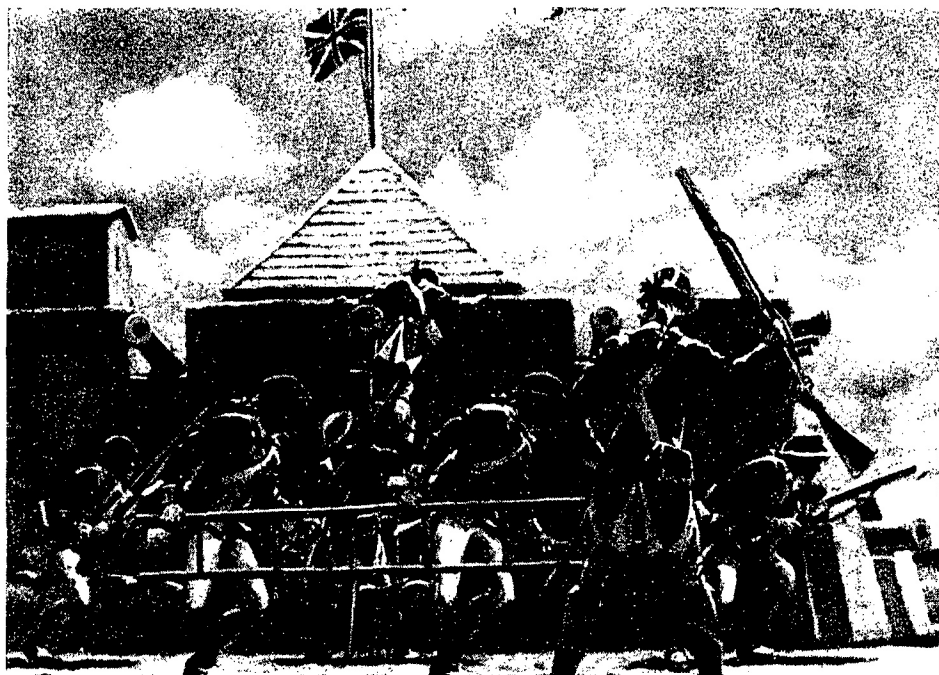
In June of 1779, the British began to build a fortified naval base on Penobscot Bay at what is the present town of Castine, Maine. The object was to provide a base for operations against the numerous American privateers then chewing savagely on the long British supply line back to England.

In reply, the State of Massachusetts, which then included the Province of Maine, formed an amphibious invasion force to be commanded at sea by Captain Dudley Saltonstall, while Brigadier General Solomon Lovell was to lead the ground forces. The chief of artillery was that famous Boston coppersmith, Paul Revere.

■ In all, there were about 1500 Massachusetts Militia and 300 Continental Marines aboard 34 ships—supply and line—when the fleet arrived off the Bagaduce Peninsula, about 20 miles up river from Penobscot Bay, and that night a Marine raiding party under Lieutenant William Downe slipped ashore on Fox Island and returned with several civilian prisoners. From them it was learned that the British had moved very quickly in the construction of Fort George, which, held by 700 red-coats, commanded the mile-and-a-half long Peninsula. So it was decided to move against Fort George next day. But the militia who went ashore with no opposition just as quickly came back to their boats—with no explanation.

Then the Marines, led by Captain John Welsh, were ordered to hit flanking Banks Island. This was done, and the island was cleared of its defenders. It was then decided to attack the peninsula from its southwestern side, using Welsh's Marines as a spearhead. Once

**Capt Samuel Nicholas
led the first
Marine amphibious operation
when his troops
assaulted Fort Montagu
in the Bahamas.**



ashore, Welsh held his beachhead until the militia came in safely, before moving against a precipice called Bagaduce Heights. What happened thereafter has been well-described by Bugler Philbrick, a Marine from the detachment aboard the *Providence*:

■ "When the Marines were all landed and about half of the militia, we began our ascent, which was indeed a very difficult one; had it not been for the shrubs growing on the side of the hill, we might have lost half our men before we gained the heights. . . . When we had ascended about one-third of the distance, the British from the brow began a brisk fire upon us, which they kept up until we were within a few rods of the top; they then courageously fled and left the ground to us. In this ascent we had forty men killed and twenty wounded. Among the killed was Captain Welsh of the Marines, a very amiable young man and a brave officer. . . . The place selected for landing was very injudiciously chosen, being a high bank covered with small trees and shrubs, with an ascent of at least 45 degrees, whereas about a mile distant was a fine, level, clear spot, sufficiently large to hold the whole army, where we might have landed under cover of the guns of one or two of our ships without the loss of a man."

The attack swept forward nonetheless and rapidly approached Fort George, the commander of which, Brigadier McLean, was already prepared to fire a few token shots, "So as not to be called a coward," before striking his colors. But . . . just as the Marines got to within 500 yards of Fort George, the American General, Lovell, ordered

them to halt, presumably until Paul Revere came up with supporting artillery. But the "final assault" never came, much as the Marines pleaded with Lovell for permission to renew the attack.

Lovell explained that he could not move until Capt Saltonstall drove the supporting British ships away from the Bagaduce Peninsula, while Saltonstall . . . merely snapped, "I am not going to risk my shipping in that damned hole." Capt Saltonstall lost his fleet anyway.

■ On August 13, seven British warships were sighted sailing up river from the bay to cut off the American fleet. Next day Capt Saltonstall signaled "every ship for itself," and the armada fell apart. While the Americans on land melted into the deep Maine wilderness, every one of Saltonstall's vessels was either sunk or seized by the British or run ashore and burned by their crews. . . . Massachusetts lost its State Navy at a cost of about \$8,500,000, and the Marines, militiamen and seamen spent a harrowing time getting

back to Boston. In summation of the Penobscot Expedition, a Marine officer wrote:

"Although I was indeed proud of the manner in which the Marines acquitted themselves throughout, it was, in the overall view, a most disheartening affair."

■ Barely a month after the ignominy of Penobscot, the Continental Navy had taken its revenge, and here, too, there was glory for the Marines. On September 23, the great John Paul Jones took his patched-up old *Bonhomme Richard* up against the superior *HMS Serapis*. Aboard *Bonhomme Richard* were 137 Continental Marines, many of whom were Frenchmen, led by Lieutenants Edward Stack, Eugene MacCarthy, and James J. O'Kelly, and wearing—not the regulation grass-green uniform of the time—but gaudy red coats captured from the British. John Paul Jones was not a man to scruple over a fractured regulation, and he liked his Marines looking smart.

As the battle opened, Jones' guns almost
(continued on page 80)

Robert Leckie

Robert Leckie, an enlisted Marine during WW II, has several books about Marines to his credit. One, *Helmet For My Pillow*, received the Marine Corps Combat Correspondents Association's annual award in 1957. His two latest books, *Conflict* and *Strong Men Armed* have been widely acclaimed by critics and reviewers.



immediately proved inferior, two of them exploding on the first broadside. But the fire of his Marines from the *Richard's* tops was so deadly that the enemy's weather decks were kept clear. Only the *Serapis'* lower tiers of guns fought on, until a Marine crept over to the Britisher's yardarm and lobbed a hand grenade down an open hatch. It struck a powder chest and blew it up, thus, according to most historians of that memorable fight, swinging the tide of battle in the Americans' favor. It was just in time, too, for Jones had no sooner transferred his crew to the captured *Serapis* than his own glorious old sieve of a sea-going tub went under.

■ This was the Marines' most famous sea exploit of the Revolutionary War, and but for the diligent research of the late historian, Lynn Montross, it would still be accepted that the Marine story thereafter, except for their role in the defense of Charlestown, S.C., navy yard in early 1780, was only a bright thread running through the cloth of the Continental Navy.

Happily, Montross' study of the letters of Robert Morris, the Colonial Superintendent of Finance, has produced an explanation of the mysterious "disappearance" of Major Commandant Samuel Nicholas during the last days of the war. Major Sam had not, as had been thought for 175 years, simply dropped out of sight—he had been secretly moving more than a million crowns in silver from Boston to Philadelphia by oxcart, a feat, which, though colorless because the money train encountered no opposition on its 350-mile journey, may well have saved the young American nation from financial ruin.

The money had been borrowed from Louis XVI of France through the offices of Benjamin Franklin. But the French frigate *La Resolue*, bringing it to Philadelphia, was blown off course and forced into Boston. Because it was dangerous to put to sea again in the face of mounting British seapower, Morris decided to transport the money overland and chose 37-year-old Nicholas to do it. It was then that Major Sam faded out of sight, until, on January 7, 1782, Robert Morris opened the Bank of North America with capital assets of \$250,000 and was soon able to deliver a loan of \$100,000 to the fledgling American government.

And then the Revolutionary War was over, and in 1784, the Continental

Navy passed out of existence—and with it the Continental Marines.

Fourteen years later, they were back. On May 1, 1798, the Navy Department was established, and as the recruiting of Marines went forward again, the United States Marine Corps, as it is now known, came into being on July 11 of that year. Next day, President John Adams named William Ward Burrows as its Major Commandant.

This new organization, however, rarely rose to a strength of more than 1,000 men, and because the two-year Naval War with France was strictly a seagoing affair, the Marine story was overshadowed by that of the Navy. And then, President Thomas Jefferson, a man who believed in economy, cut back the nation's sea defenses once more.

Whereupon the Barbary States—Tripoli, Algeria, and Tunis—began to attack U.S. shipping in the Mediterranean. The U.S., its Navy reduced to a handful of harbor gunboats, was forced to pay tribute to the Barbary States or else run the risk of losing most of its merchant fleet. But in 1801, the Pasha of Tripoli demanded more "tribute," or extortion money, and declared war to force it out of Washington. And so, Mr. Jefferson ruefully brought American ships out of mothballs, restored them to fighting shape, and sent 10 of them to the Mediterranean.

■ The stage was now set for that strange and glorious episode which has contributed the second line to *The Marines' Hymn*. "To the shores of Tripoli," it was that tough young Lieutenant Presley Neville O'Bannon and six enlisted Marines led a motley "army" of about 40 Greeks and Levantines in the service of an American whose daring was rivaled only by his fondness for the nicely complicated plot.

William Eaton had been an Army captain in the Revolution, and, after that, had served as U.S. consul in Tunis, the neighbor of Tripoli. Eaton knew that the Pasha of Tripoli, Yusuf Karamanli, had seized power by murdering his older brother and by sending another brother, Hamet Karamanli, into exile. Eaton persuaded President Jefferson that a civil war might be started in Tripoli if young Hamet could be placed in power in the city of Derna, the second largest in Tripoli. In 1804, Jefferson dispatched Eaton to the Mediterranean, where Commodore Barron assigned him Lt O'Bannon and six Marines for his expedition against Derna.

Eaton and O'Bannon located Hamet Karamanli in Egypt. The Pasha's brother at once fell in with Eaton's

scheme and promised to lead 90 of his followers against Derna. In the meantime, O'Bannon began training the "army" recruited by Eaton. Joined by camel drivers under the mercenary, Shiekh El Tayeb, the expedition set out on a 600-mile trek across the burning sands of the Libyan Desert. It was a cruel march, for the desert sun hung in a cloudless sky like a brazen ball, and the relief seemingly bestowed by 10 days of rain actually only renewed and diversified the ordeal, turning the sands into a gritty, cloying, clinging paste. Periodically, Shiekh El Tayeb's men struck for more money. Eaton managed to pay them off once by the expedient of passing the hat. He raised \$673. Meanwhile the closer the marchers came to battle, the colder the feet of Hamet Karamanli became. Each crisis was met, however, by Eaton's diplomacy or the discipline of O'Bannon's men, although a very near-thing between Eaton's Christians and Hamet's Moslems was only avoided by the providential arrival of fresh supplies.

■ Finally, the attack on Derna: With U.S. warships bombarding the city from the sea, the daring O'Bannon led his Marines and Greeks into the town and seized the fort. O'Bannon personally hoisted the American flag above it—the first time in history that Old Glory was to fly in the Old World—and then turned the fort's guns on the governor's palace and drove that dignity into flight. Whereupon the population came over to Hamet's cause.

Although Pasha Yusuf launched a counterattack on Derna from Tripoli, this, too, was defeated, and Hamet was firmly installed with the pleasant prospect of engaging his treacherous brother in civil war. It was then that Commodore Barron ordered Eaton to abandon both Derna and Hamet and to stand by for evacuation. President Jefferson, it turned out, had reneged on his promises. He had decided to negotiate with the Pasha and sent an emissary named Tobias Lear to Tripoli. Although Lear bore a striking physical resemblance to George Washington, he had none of his courage. He submitted to nearly every one of Pasha Yusuf's demands, and the glory of O'Bannon's charge had ended in the ignominy of increased tribute.

The only thing obtained from "The shores of Tripoli," was a Mameluke sword given to O'Bannon by the admiring Hamet, and this was to become the model for the sword still worn by Marine officers. It is also the oldest weapon in continuous use in the U.S. Armed Forces.

As the glory of Derna began to fade in the public memory, the Marine Corps itself began to dwindle. Economy

was again the watchword in Washington, the new and muddy city on the Potomac which had replaced Philadelphia as the Nation's Capital in 1801, and most of the Marines still in service were reduced to that time-honored and still-popular proverb of the Marine: "As you would have yourself a camp, so also must you build it." Rifles were stacked and hammers and shovels issued all around, and the Marine Barracks and the Commandant's home were completed in 1805 on the site where both still stand—the oldest military post in the U.S., in point of continuous occupancy, with the sole exception of West Point.

By that time also there was a Marine Band in Washington, then, as now, called "the President's own." Commandant Burrows raised the money for it. In 1804 Burrows fell into poor health and resigned, being replaced by Lieutenant Colonel Franklin Wharton, who was to remain in command when the United States embarked upon the unpopular War of 1812 with Great Britain.

Once more there were Marines in the fighting tops of American warships, clearing the enemy's weather decks with a withering fire as of old, and most notably in the *Constitution's* epic defeat of *HMS Guerriere*, and there were Marines with Oliver Hazard Perry on Lake Erie, where, as that brilliant young naval officer was to write, "We have met the enemy and they are ours. . . ." There was also a young Marine officer named John Marshall Gamble whose remarkable South Sea odyssey equaled, if it did not surpass, the exploits of O'Bannon.

■ Lieutenant Gamble, a tall, handsome youth, was in charge of the 31 Marines who sailed with Captain David Porter on the 32-gun frigate *Essex* out of the Delaware River on October 27, 1812, under orders to rendezvous with a small U.S. squadron off the coast of Brazil. Failing to find the squadron, Porter took the *Essex* around Cape Horn into the Pacific, where he fell on British whalers operating in the Galapagos Islands. Capturing two ships, he commissioned them *Greenwich* and *Essex Junior* and gave the latter to Lt Gamble.

The young Marine officer quickly gave proof of his skill as a sailor in the conquest and capture of the armed whaler *Seringapatam*, repeatedly distinguishing himself thereafter in all of Porter's forays. After a year at sea, however, and fearing that British reprisal was imminent, Capt Porter headed west for an obscure base at which he might refit his ships. Also, his men were beginning to mutter against the monotony of sea life, and

Porter promised them that "the maidens of the South Sea Isles will assuage your loneliness."

In a way not customary in such matters, the fulfillment exceeded the promise. After the squadron arrived at Nukuhiva in the Marquesa Islands, the astonished Porter found that the discipline which had withstood British shot and shell was just not up to resisting the "assuaging" of the South Sea maidens. He found it very difficult to get his men to sea again. Finally, on December 12, 1813, Porter set out with *Essex* and *Essex Junior* for the west coast of South America. Lt Gamble was left behind to guard the island with *Greenwich*, a few other smaller prize ships, 21 Sailors and Marines, and six captured British crewmen.

■ But Porter did not return. He was captured in Valparaiso, Chile, on February 3, 1814. Meanwhile, at Nukuhiva, the assuaging grew apace. Tearful maidens lined the beaches by day, and by night swam out to Gamble's ships—swimming back a few hours later with portions of Gamble's dwindling supplies. The native men of the island, noticing the small size of Gamble's force, became bolder. At last, the British prisoners revolted. They wounded Gamble and took him prisoner, along with his one remaining officer, after which they seized the *Seringapatam* and sailed for home. Though Gamble recovered his two remaining ships, the natives now rose against him. They were repulsed, but four of Gamble's Marines and his last officer perished doing it. There were now only seven sick and wounded men left.

Desperate, Gamble cut his anchor cable and put to sea in his last ship, hoping the trade winds would blow him to Hawaii. They did, depositing him there coincident with the arrival

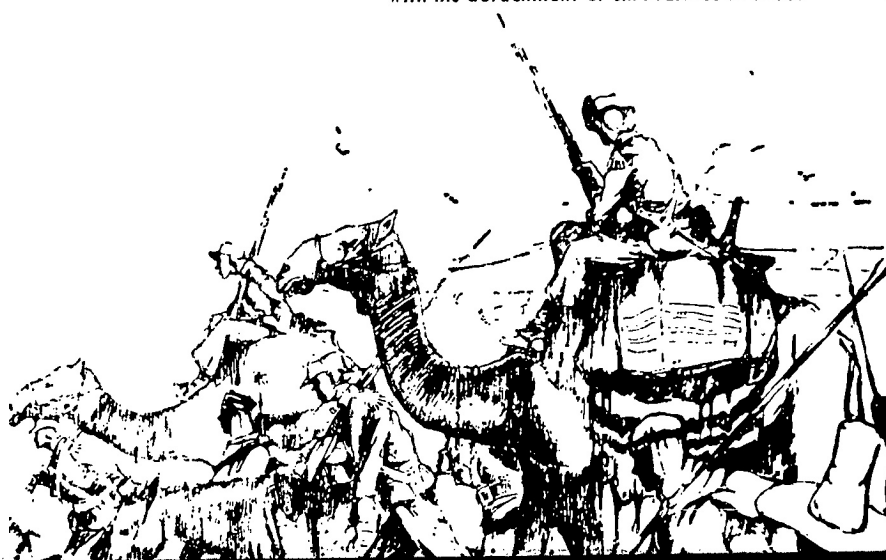
of *HMS Cherub*, one of the ships which had proved Porter's undoing. And thus the odyssey of John Marshall Gamble ended in captivity, where he remained until the end of the war.

On land, meanwhile, the War of 1812 was still going badly for the United States. Most of the American ships had been sunk or captured and it seemed all up for the young nation when, in 1814, the defeat of Napoleon in Europe released large numbers of British troops for duty in the New World. On August 17, a British fleet, loaded with thousands of these veterans under Major General Robert Ross, entered Chesapeake Bay. Three days later, Ross landed at the town of Benedict on the Patuxent. Soon his troops were marching on Washington. On August 24, they collided with a force of American militia at Bladensburg, Md., and there fought the battle which the American Marines and Sailors who were in it derisively called "the Bladensburg races."

■ The determined advance of the British not only broke the American line but sent the militia reeling back in broken flight. The American secondary line was composed of 500 Marines and Sailors under Commodore Barney and Captain Samuel Miller, adjutant of the Corps. Three times this small force repulsed the attack of 3,000 British regulars. But then, both flanks being turned, they were forced to withdraw, leaving both Barney and Miller on the field, severely wounded.

Thereafter, the British moved into Washington unimpeded, burning most of the capital buildings, but sparing the Marine Barracks and the Commandant's home. Marine legend suggests that the Commandant's home escaped the British torch in tribute to the gallant stand of Miller's men at Bladensburg. More (continued on page 83)

The threat of a political coup was the reason Lt Presley O'Bannon was sent to Tripoli with his detachment of six Marines in 1805.



1775-1825

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likely, it survived because both General Ross and Admiral Sir George Cockburn needed it for headquarters.

At any rate, the seizure and burning of Washington marked the apogee of British success in the War of 1812. Five months later, on January 8, 1815, General Andrew Jackson's bobtail army—including a force of Marines commanded by Captain Daniel Carmick—met the enemy at New Orleans. Although the peace treaty ending the war had been signed in London two weeks before, news had not yet reached America, and the Battle of New Orleans, which ended in such a crushing defeat for the British, was fought anyway.

■ Commandant Franklin Wharton remained at his post of Commandant until he died in 1818. The man who succeeded him, Lieutenant Colonel Anthony Gale, was, though gallant, well known for his fondness for his glass. In fairness to Gale, it must be said that he was literally hounded out of his office by Secretary of the Navy Smith Thompson. On October 17, 1820, a court-martial, conspicuous for the bias of some of its members, convicted Gale of, among other things: "... being intoxicated in common dram shops and other places of low repute in the City of Washington."

Gale fought back, claiming that his condition at that time was due to temporary insanity, and though it took him 15 years of litigation, he finally won his case.

In the meantime, the Marine Corps was in the hands of perhaps one of its most distinguished and colorful leaders, Archibald Henderson.

On October 17, 1820, LtCol Archibald Henderson became the fifth Commandant of the Marines. He held that post until 1859—so long, according to legend, that he attempted to will the Commandant's home to his heirs.

Under Archibald Henderson, the Marines entered a new phase of their history. A half-century of full-scale war and brush fire war had established their image in the public consciousness of America. The daring and resourcefulness of men such as Sam Nicholas, O'Bannon, and Gamble were already associated with their calling. They had performed the exploit which would form the basis of the second line of their marching song.

It remained for the five decades ahead and Montezuma to provide the first line.

END

1825-1875

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with Lee and Stuart, was fighting with the Confederacy.

Archibald Henderson had died in January, 1859. His death had undoubtedly saved him from making the decision which faced many Marines at the outbreak of the Civil War. Loyalty to their native states and the eventuality of fighting blood brothers brought resignation after resignation as officers and enlisted men left the Corps to join the Confederate States in their bitter conflict with the Federal Government.

■ Along with the loss of men, headed South, the Corps had begun to lose some of the professional vigor stimulated by the Henderson regime. Many of the fine officers who had early in their careers fallen under the Henderson spell of spit, polish and discipline, had grown old and a little tired with their Commandant. This fact became apparent with the inconspicuous part played by the Corps in the early actions at the start of the War Between the States.

The war began on a small scale for the Corps when several hundred Alabama militia, under the leadership of Florida authorities, marched against the Pensacola Navy Yard. The small Marine detachment lost the engagement under overwhelming odds and the detachment, led by Captain Josiah Watson, departed on the first ship headed north. The encounter was never considered an official action of the Civil War.

Although both Confederate and Union Marines saw service on land and aboard ships, they did not meet in battle until the Spring of 1862. David Farragut, veteran of the War of 1812, had been ordered by President Lincoln to attack New Orleans. He struck at 0200 on the morning of April 24, 1862. In the furious scrimmage which followed, Northern Marines slashed away at Southern Marines in a bloody battle to take the city. Aboard the *USS Iroquois*, two Union Marines were killed and 24 wounded in a wild encounter with the Confederate steamer *McRae* and her supporting gunboats. Southern opposition was strong, but the Union fleet blasted its way through the defenses and plodded up the Mississippi to take New Orleans.

Throughout the war both Union and Confederate Marines served aboard ships, fighting in various engagements. The scuttled *Merrimac* was raised by the South, sheathed in iron and renamed the *CSS Virginia*. On March 8, 1862, she attacked the Union frigates,

Congress and *Cumberland*. The *Cumberland* fired first. Her accuracy hurled a hail of shot through the *Virginia's* open gunports, killing 19 Confederate Marines. The ironclad returned the fire. Nine Union Marines were felled by her furious rain of round shot and grape. The encounter was short-lived. The iron clad blasted the *Cumberland* mercilessly and slowly the gallant Union frigate slipped below the waves. Meanwhile the *Congress* had been run aground. She surrendered, but clouded in smoke, her white flag was not visible from shore, and Union riflemen continued to fire volley after volley on the *Virginia*. Infuriated, the skipper of the Confederate ship opened fire with heated shot and set the *Congress* aflame.

The war dragged on. Marines, always a few, on both sides fought valiantly. In January 1865, 400 Union Marines joined Army and Naval forces in an attack on Fort Fisher at Wilmington, N.C. The Marines played their role in the costly victory with a diversionary action which enabled the Army to gain a foothold within the fort.

■ Marine participation in the War Between the States was continuous but comparatively small. By April 9, 1865, when Lee surrendered, only 77 Union Marines had lost their lives in battle, but 257 had died from diseases and other causes.

Upon the death of Archie Henderson, Colonel John Harris was appointed to the office of Commandant. Harris, a man with more than 45 years of commissioned service behind him, lacked the zest of his predecessor, and in his few years at the helm, drew severe criticism. His death on May 12, 1864, however, brought a man into the office whose abilities would be taxed to the utmost in the 12 years during which he would guide the destinies of his Corps.

When Jacob Zeilin became Commandant he was a major. He had been appointed over the heads of many far more likely candidates. In the years which followed his selection and the close of the Civil War, he was faced with not only rebuilding the Corps, but maintaining it in spite of Congressional apathy. In his hands lay the future of a Marine Corps, forgotten in the turmoil of a country rebuilding itself. And, his undisputed success as a Commandant during these trying years may well have been the result of his early training at Marine Barracks, Washington, under the stony stare of that old stalwart, Archie Henderson.

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