

# Artillery in Marine Corps History

By Major Edwin North McClellan, U.S.M.C.

Privates and generals, and all that intervene, look back with pride and pleasure on your past artillery history. It is ancient and it is honorable—and considerable and varied, too.

Small maybe were our past units of artillery and puny their calibre, but they were always within the scope of our Corps. That which we did, artilleryly-speaking, met the conditions, and we knew our job. We had artillery because our mission called for it.

Recorded history is always insignificant compared with actual history. That which is writ down never begins to tell the real story. Men act and often remain silent. The *Story-Teller* has hard work to secure the stuff to make his story true. And what follows is just a few remnants of what Time has left behind.

\* \* \* \* \*

## The American Revolution

The Germans were on their way to the Capital of our infant Republic in 1776; just as 142 years later they were hiking their way to another capital. History makes audible the fact that they arrived at both capitals of both republics—Philadelphia in 1776 and Paris in 1918—not as victors but as captives.. History also tells that American Marines were among those who so successfully blocked the enemy advance in both instances. And right there in 1776 is where Marine Corps artillery started ashore.

### Battles of Trenton and Princeton

The evening of Christmas Day in the year 1776 gave us the genesis of the first Battle of Trenton, the battle being fought on the 26th. George Washington's artillery officer in that battle was Captain Thomas Forrest. He was appointed a captain of Marines in the Pennsylvania State Navy on March 13, 1776, or at an earlier date, and commanded the Arnold Floating Battery on the Delaware from May 1 to September 1, 1776. In the fall of 1776 he ceased to be a Marine and joined Proctor's Artillery.

Captain William Brown of the Pennsylvania State Marines and his junior officer led the Marines of the Pennsylvania State warship *Montgomery*, which may have acted as artillery at the first battle of Trenton on December 26th. Also serving under Captain Brown were the Marines of the Pennsylvania State floating battery *Putnam*. These Marines may have crossed the Delaware with Washington. It is certain, however, that they fought at the second battle of Trenton (Assanpink) on January 2, 1777, and at the battle of Princeton on the following day, as artillery.

After the battle of Princeton the fine infantry battalion of Marines under Major Samuel Nicholas served as artillery in Washington's army and received extra pay for such duty. Read this resolution passed by Continental Congress on August 8, 1777:

"That there is due, to Major Samuel Nicholas, for himself and a detachment of three companies of Marines which he commanded on artillery duty, for which they were to receive additional pay, viz. Captain (Andrew) Porter's Company, from 1st February to 1st July; Captain (Robert) Mullen's Company from 1st February to 1st July; and Captain (Benjamin) Deane's Company,

from 1st February to the 1st April, the sum of 895 15/90."

That the Marines could so easily man the artillery was made possible by the fact that practically all the officers and men had served on board ship and thus had the experience in manning the great guns of the naval vessels in action against the British.

And many of these Marine officers, following Forrest's earlier lead, joined Washington's artillery. Among them were Captain Isaac Craig, who on March 3, 1777, was appointed a captain in Proctor's Artillery Regiment, and Captain Andrew Porter, who served with Lamb's and Proctor's artillery regiments, and eventually rose to general rank in the army.

## The Royal Marine Artillery of Great Britain

The regular Marine Corps has never been divided as was the Royal Marines of Great Britain into Royal Marine Light Infantry and the Royal Marine Artillery. The latter was created on August 18, 1804, because of the difficulty of getting the "naval and military officers to work well together during the embarkation of the latter," and the "suggestion to create an artillery force exclusively under the Admiralty came from Lord Nelson." However, in 1923 the Royal Marine Artillery and Royal Marine Light Infantry were amalgamated, the resulting organization being called, "The Royal Marines."

In this connection it is well to know that Nelson was given the honorary rank of Colonel of Marines—a sinecure appointment of which there were then four, given to post captains of distinguished services, and vacated by them upon promotion. These are now discontinued. When Nelson heard of this appointment, he said: "The Marines have been given to me in the handsomest manner. The answer given to many was, the King knew no officer who had served so much for them as myself."

## The Providence Marine Corps of Artillery

Though as has been said, there never has been a regular division of the regular Marine Corps infantry and artillery, there was in 1801 organized "The Providence Marine Corps of Artillery," a state organization of Rhode Island, in which all Marines should be interested.

The Providence Corps was armed originally with two heavy iron cannon, probably eighteen-pounders, which were drawn by horses. The men marched on either side and carried heavy, short swords. Subsequently, the iron guns were replaced with brass field pieces; but in other respects their armament and drill were not materially changed until after the Dorr War, in which little unpleasantness the command took an active and prominent part in behalf of the law and order party. To the Chepachet expedition it contributed 89 muskets and two field pieces, with the requisite number of bombardiers, besides its quota of officers. On the 4th of July, 1842, it paraded with muskets and was equipped in scarlet caps, trimmed with brass, black fountain plumes with scarlet tips, blue coats trimmed with scarlet, scarlet epaulettes white pantaloons, black belts and cartridge boxes. This historic organization had its origin in the Providence Marine Society. Hence all its officers and most of the men were at first members of that society—practical seamen. Its

charter authorized the election of a lieutenant-colonel, two majors, one captain and two lieutenants. The charter was twice amended by the legislature, in 1830, to allow two of the officers to be chosen from persons outside the Marine Society, and in May, 1842, removing all restrictions, thereby dissolving all connection with that society save in sentiment and history. In 1843 these Marines accepted the provisions of a militia law and a regiment was formed with proper officers. This continued until the repeal of the law in 1862 when the Corps revived the provisions of its charter. This organization justly claims the proud title of "*Mother of Batteries*." It was instrumental in the organization of the earliest artillery of Massachusetts and from these gradually sprang all others (aside from the regulars) since organized east of the Rockies. During the ten years succeeding the Civil War the Marine Artillery maintained its independent existence and received orders from the governor alone. On April 19, 1875, it came under the state militia law. It is now represented in the line by Battery A, Rhode Island militia, all of whose officers and most of whose men are members of the Marine Artillery. The Veteran Association of the Providence Marine Corps Artillery was organized on January 21, 1875.

#### Artillery at an Early Advanced Base

Early in 1811 President Madison directed that the Marines should establish a post at Cumberland Island off the southeast coast of Georgia. Captain John Williams was selected to command it. On April 22, 1811, Secretary of the Navy Paul Hamilton sent complete instructions for Captain Williams to Captain Robert Greenleaf, commanding the Washington Barracks. Captain Williams was to take such a position on Cumberland Island as would permit him with facility to unite with the flotilla for the protection of the rights and neutrality of the United States.

Captain Williams took with him two six-pounders, to be placed so as to secure his position and annoy "any enemy entering the harbor and other waters in the vicinity of his station." He and his detachment of one other officer, three sergeants, three corporals, one fifer, one drummer and 39 privates, proceeded southward on the U.S.S. *Enterprise*, arriving at Cumberland Island in May, 1811.

#### War of 1812

As early as June, 1814, two months before the battle of Bladensburg, a Marine battalion of artillery was in the field. The British were at the mouth of St. Leonard's Creek, about twelve miles above the mouth of the Patuxent River. The Secretary of the Navy ordered against them a battalion of Marines "with all the field pieces that are mounted together with every equipment necessary for the detachment to act effectually either as artillery or infantry."

The battalion with three pieces of artillery arrived at St. Leonard's Creek, after a hike of 80 miles, on June 17th and erected a breastwork. Captain Sam Miller commanded it. A battle was fought on June 25th and the British warships *Narcissus* and *Loire* were driven back. The round-shot, grape and cannister from the Marine artillery proved very effective.

Thomas Clark in 1814 wrote that a "Corps of Marines are particularly requisite for the defence of our extensive sea-coast. These Corps should be instructed in the discipline of both infantry and artillery Corps." There should be a "master of ordnance, whose duty it should be to instruct the men in the practice of gunnery," and to

"take care of the cannon, mortars, and howitzers attached to the Corps."

#### Advanced Base in West Indian Piracy War

In the Twenties a large naval force was dispatched to the West Indies to destroy the pirates. The Marines established an advanced base on Thompson's Island, Florida, at Allenton (Key West). A battery of eight guns under Captain Alfred Grayson were emplaced to defend the base. Under date of May 31, 1823, we read of Captain Grayson "commanding Marines and Battery" at Allenton. The Marines with two field pieces were stationed on Key Vacas, Florida, under Second Lieutenant Stephen M. Rogers, in July of 1823.

#### Marines Want to Be Artillery

On November 19, 1825, twenty-five Marine officers addressed a memorial to Secretary of the Navy reading in part: A vessel may be so fixed in battle that Marines would have to man great guns. "To place the Corps upon such a footing of usefulness as is contemplated by the undersigned, it will be necessary to reorganize it, and establish it with the double character of Marine Infantry and Marine Artillery; with a suitable provision of field pieces for each command. \* \* \* The undersigned pray to be reorganized, and constituted to serve as a Corps of Marine infantry, to be drilled to act in either capacity, as occasion may require."

#### A "Marine to Each Gun"

On December 4, 1841, in his annual report, Secretary of the Navy A. P. Upshur suggested that "there should be provided for each ship, not less than one Marine for every gun." On November 4, 1842, Brigadier General Commandant Henderson referred to "one private Marine for each gun" of a warship.

#### Advanced Base in 1840

The Indian War in Florida required a minor advanced base on Tea Table Key in 1840. Naval artillery, represented by several four-pounders, was part of the defenses of the base and was also available for offensive actions. Some of these pieces of artillery were manned by Marines.

Among the many operations participated in by the Marines as artillery in this war was that against Indian Key. The Indians captured this small island off the Florida coast on August 6, 1840. A small army of Marines and Bluejackets was immediately organized to retake the Key. This army consisted of five men reinforced by eight sick, all volunteers, and commanded by a midshipman. A naval barge was the transportation and on board of it were placed several four-pounders. It was in the nature of a miniature overseas expedition. A forced landing was to be made on the hostile Indian Key, supported by naval gun fire. Upon arriving at Indian Key the enemy were found to be alert and in active defense. The plan of the attackers was to shell the Indians with their four-pounders and then to land. The following incident occurring during the bombardment illustrates the difficulties added by the use of land-guns on board naval vessels. "At the third discharge, being obliged to fire them athwart ships, our guns rebounded overboard." The island was eventually recaptured.

#### Artillery Instruction of 1841

The "General Regulations for the Marine Corps of the United States," approved by Secretary of the Navy

J. K. Paulding on February 19, 1841, provided in part as follows: "The military instruction of the Marine Corps shall be according to the system of infantry tactics which is or may be, established for the Army of the United States, unless the Secretary of the Navy shall direct the whole or any of the Corps to be instructed in artillery."

### Mexican War on Pacific Coast

Probably the most valuable success of the Mexican War was the addition of California to the Union. The United States Navy and Marines were responsible for this acquisition. During the Mexican War there was a total of 402 Marines who saw service on the Pacific coast. While all these officers and men did not serve together at any one time, there were several operations—for instance at Los Angeles, San Diego, San Pedro, Monterey—in which a great portion of them combined with other personnel to operate ashore. The operations they participated in were land operations and not on board ship. The vessels really served as floating bases from which the Marines and Bluejackets operated and were supplied. Artillery formed part of the weapons used in these operations and Marines, at times, manned the pieces.

The annual report of December 5, 1846, of Secretary J. Y. Mason urged an increase of the Marine Corps for "operations against Mexico," and further stated that "with light pieces, prepared as field artillery, on board each ship, the expeditions, which must include operations on shore, would derive important aid from increased guards of Marines."

### General Henderson Advocates Artillery Training

Brigadier General Commandant Archibald Henderson served as a Marine officer from June 4, 1806, to the day of his death, January 6, 1859—about 53 years. He was Commandant of the Marine Corps for almost 40 years, from October 17, 1820, to January 6, 1859. Among extremely varied duty ashore and afloat, he commanded an Army Brigade (regular Army troops, including artillery, Marines, and Indians) that did most of the fighting in the Indian War of 1836-1837. He thus commanded and came in contact with the Army artillery during actual war, and he constantly urged that Marines receive artillery instruction.

That General Henderson's mind ran in a naval channel of overseas operations is shown by the following quotation from his letter dated November 17, 1853, to the Secretary of the Navy:

"The Artillery drill, especially that of Light Artillery, would be highly beneficial in case of landing a force in a foreign country."

In his annual report of 1857 to the Secretary of the Navy General Henderson used the following words: "First Lieutenant Greene, with your approval, passed a large portion of the past summer at West Point, engaged in securing a knowledge of artillery, for the purpose of introducing it into the Marine Corps. A battery of heavy and light guns, directed by the department to be turned over to the Marine Corps, will be in a few days at Headquarters, and instruction in artillery will immediately thereafter commence. This will be an important step onward, and will add much to the weight and efficiency of the Corps. But it is not enough. The Marine officer should be placed on a footing with the Army and Navy officer by being given the advantage of a military education. He should be not only an infantry and artillery

officer, but an engineer. When bodies of men are landed from vessels of war their numbers are rarely large; but they may be made very formidable by properly constructed field works, or by more permanent works. There is no officer on board the ship who would be expected to do this but the Marine officer, and it would not be fair to expect it of him without military education."

### Lieutenant Greene Urges Artillery Instruction

Lieutenant Israel Greene, on March 21, 1857, wrote the following to Brigadier General Commandant Archibald Henderson:

"Agreeably to your request; I herewith submit the following reasons why 'Marines,' should be instructed in field and heavy artillery.

"The batteries now in use on board our Ships of War, will prevent actions being fought within *musket range*; and unless stationed at the 'great guns'; the Marines will only be a target for the fire of the enemy without the power of returning it; which would of itself produce a demoralizing effect not only with the Marines, but with the crew; and this I think can best be obviated by combining the two. (Artillery and Infantry.) Their efficiency as infantry would not be impaired and if it were I contend that instruction in artillery is the most important for Marines, as they will be but seldom called upon to use small arms; in comparison with artillery—and I understand that it is the intention (if not already done by the new 'station bill,' to station the Marines at the 'great guns')—now would it not enhance the efficiency of the Corps and its standing in the Navy and out of it; were they to acquire a knowledge of artillery practice before going on board ship; they would then not only be efficient, but the only ones, at the time a ship goes into commission.

"It seems to me that there can be but one opinion; and to attain an object so much to be desired, I would suggest for your consideration that a school of instruction in artillery be established at 'Headquarters' and that a competent officer be detailed as instructor.

"A section of a ship's battery could be gotten up with but little expense or trouble, and the field pieces could be procured from the Arsenal."

On November 20, 1858, Brigadier General Commandant Archibald Henderson wrote Secretary of the Navy Isaac Toucey, concerning "the propriety of having established at Headquarters a school for drill both in the use of the musket and of light and heavy artillery, which latter practice with the sanction of the Department went into operation about a year ago."

### Marine Artillery at Capture of John Brown

In October of 1859 when news reached Washington regarding John Brown taking the arsenal at Harper's Ferry Colonel Commandant John Harris of the Marine Corps directed Lieutenant Israel Greene in command of a detachment of Marines to proceed to Harper's Ferry. The last paragraph of his orders were:

"You will take with you two twelve-pound howitzers, with such ammunition as may be necessary to serve them efficiently, in case of their being required for use."

In describing his movements, Lieutenant Israel Greene wrote that "I started for Harper's Ferry that afternoon on the 3:30 train, taking with me two howitzers."

### Civil War

There were numerous instances, both afloat and ashore, during the war with the Confederacy, in which

Marines performed artillery duty. In the month of June, 1864, when Washington was threatened, a battalion of Marines and a battery of howitzers, under the command of Captain James Forney, assisted by Second Lieutenant George B. Haycock, were ordered from Philadelphia to Havre de Gras, Maryland, to open the railroad to Baltimore, then in possession of the enemy. Major General French says, "The battalion commanded by Captain Forney attracted my attention by its fine military appearance, its discipline, and the admirable manner in which it was handled. The arrangements made by Captain Forney for the artillery to repel the attack threatened upon the station had a great influence in preventing one. The rapid manner in which the order concentrating the troops at Havre de Grace was obeyed by him, and the valuable and effective services performed by the battalion under his direction entitle him and them to the recognition of the government."

An illustration of one of the many times that Marines served naval artillery is recorded by the report of Commodore S. W. Godon, commanding the *Susquehanna*, that "First Lieutenant William Wallace, with his fine company of Marines, handled most effectively two extra nine-inch guns," during the first attack on Fort Fisher December 24, 1864.

Another instance is described by Captain Percival Drayton, who commanded the *Hartford* at the battle of Mobile Bay, in these words: "The two after guns were entirely manned by Marines, who, under the direction of Captain Charles Heywood, performed most efficient service."

#### The First "School of Application"

The year 1891 was made memorable by the foundation of the School of Application of the Marine Corps at Headquarters, Washington, D. C. In General Order No. 1, May 1, 1891, Colonel Commandant Charles Heywood announced the establishment of this school, a part of the course of instruction being:

"Gunnery instruction.—To include machine and rapid-fire gun drills; naval great-gun exercise; nomenclature and description of guns, carriages, mounts and gun implements; description and mode of manufacture of gun powder, projectiles, cartridges, fuses, and primers; pointing, sighting, sights and range finding."

#### Spanish-American War

The Battalion of Marines organized for service in Cuba during the Spanish-American War was composed of six companies, Company F being artillery. This artillery company was commanded by Captain S. H. Harrington and manned four three-inch rapid fire guns, received from the Ordnance Department, Navy Yard, New York.

#### The Philippine Insurrection

Colonel P. C. Pope, commanding the Marines at Cavite, on July 29, 1899, reported that "the three-inch field pieces and Colt's automatic guns have been received and mounted, and the men are being drilled in their use."

Among the other weapons carried by the Battalion of Marines landing in Samar, P. I., in October, 1901, was one three-inch gun.

#### Chinese Boxer War

A report of Captain F. M. Wise, commanding the U.S.S. *Monocacy*, dated June 22, 1900, shows that the

Marines entraining for Tientsin carried one three-pounder and that on the following day he sent the Marines another three-pounder.

Company F of Colonel Robert L. Meade's force of Marines that participated in the capture of Tientsin in July, 1900, "was an artillery company of three three-inch rapid fire guns and three Colt's automatic guns." This artillery company was commanded by Captain (now Major General Commandant) Ben H. Fuller. Captain Charles G. Long, commanding the Second Battalion, reported that "the artillery, under Captain Fuller and his officers, was handled well, and the fire was effective in spite of poor ammunition."

#### Nicaragua in 1912

The Advanced Base Battalion, organized in August, 1911, in Philadelphia, had one artillery company that handled three-inch field pieces.

A year later a large expedition of Marines proceeded to Nicaragua. At least two companies of this force were artillery, those commanded by Captain Robert O. Underwood and Captain John C. Beaumont. In his report of October 11, 1912, describing the capture of Coyotepe, Colonel (now Major General retired) Joseph H. Pendleton wrote that "promptly at 8 a.m. firing was opened by Butler from the southeast, with three field guns, and by Underwood's battery from the northwest with two three-inch field guns, at ranges varying in the case of both batteries from 1,500 to 2,500 yards, with considerable damage to the enemy's earthworks and redoubts on both the Barranca and Coyotepe."

#### Vera Cruz, Haiti, Santo Domingo, Nicaragua, Virgin Islands and China

Artillery of the Marine Corps formed a part of all the expeditions that proceeded to Vera Cruz, in 1914; Haiti, 1915 to date; Santo Domingo, 1916 to 1924; Nicaragua, 1912 to 1925 and 1927 to date; and China, 1926 to date. It was also present in the Virgin Islands, 1916-1931.

#### At Marine Corps Posts

Artillery is present at most of our Marine Corps posts, such as Pearl Harbor, Peking, Quantico, Guam, Philippines, and so forth.

Artillery has always been carried on the many maneuvers carried on by Marines.

In the first issue of the Gazette, March, 96, General Lejeune then a Colonel wrote that "artillery will be a tremendous factor in the defense of insular bases," and then goes into detail as to its use concerning advanced bases.

#### The World War

To describe the part played by Marines in the World War with the artillery would be too long a tale for these pages. Major General John A. Lejeune commanded the Second Division, which included an artillery brigade. Colonel Robert H. Dunlap was in command of the 17th Field Artillery Regiment of the Second Field Artillery Brigade, Second Division, from October 30, 1918, to February, 1919. Major E. H. Brainard commanded a battalion of artillery of the Second Division during the Meuse-Argonne operation and there were many other Marines in addition to the above who served as artillery.

The Navy Department planned to send a battery of thirty-eight seven-inch guns to France. "The operation

of these Navy guns in France was intended to be entrusted to a regiment of United States Marines, assembled for this purpose in the summer of 1918 at the Naval Proving Grounds at Indian Head, Md., and also at the lower station of the Proving Ground at Dahlgren, Va." The Bureau of Ordnance provided complete "outfit of material for the operation of the battery." This "equipment furnished by the bureau to this regiment of Marines was sufficient to enable them to go anywhere in the world and operate as an independent unit or in conjunction with Army and Navy forces." A sufficient quantity of equipment was ready by "September 15 (1918) to have warranted the transporting abroad of the Marine personnel of the battery and the commencing of shipment of the material."

"By October 15, five or six mounts were ready for shipment to France." The "Marines were enthusiastic and ready to start at once, but at this point the only delay in the entire expedition occurred, and as no embarkation orders were received, time rolled by until on November 11 the Armistice was signed and thus the battery lost its chance to do its part in the field."

#### Artillery Instruction at Marine Corps Schools

Splendid results are being attained in our Marine Corps schools by the instructors in artillery. During the past school year a total of 30 hours was devoted to the tactics and technique of artillery in the Field Officers' School, and many more hours of artillery instruction was given under other headings such as in combat orders, command staff and logistics, field engineering, historical rides, lectures, legal principles, map maneuvers, methods of training, military intelligence, military organization, overseas operations, small wars, solution of map problems, tactical principles and decisions, the tactics and technique of the various arms (air service, cavalry, chemical warfare service, engineers, howitzer company, infantry, machine guns, medical service, signal communication, and tanks); and troop leading.

#### Graduates of Army Artillery School

In the Marine Corps Gazette of December, 1925, Colonel (now Brigadier General) Robert H. Dunlap wrote: "This year officers have been sent to the Field Artillery School at Fort Sill. This last assignment may be said to be one of the most important steps taken in later years. The Marine Artillery Regiment has always been an excellent unit, but it has never had officers attached who have had the advantages which the Army Field Artillery School can provide.

"When we consider the number of field artillery units which would have to be manned were we to engage in a campaign requiring our maximum effort in support of the Fleet, it can be readily understood how essential it is that our officers should have every advantage in training possible to obtain."

Major General Commandant Wendell C. Neville in The Naval Institute Proceedings, of October, 1929, wrote that "the Marine Corps maintains two regiments of artillery, and officers are sent to the Army artillery schools so that they may keep us in touch with the latest developments in this important branch of military science."

The first Marine officer graduated from an Army school, at Fort Sill, was in 1917 when the school was called the "Infantry School of Arms," and Colonel George C. Reid and Lieutenant Colonel Richard P. Williams and Major General M. Kincade graduated in the musketry course, while Majors Charles J. Miller and

Edward A. Ostermann graduated in the musketry and grenade course. In 1918 Major Harry L. Smith and Major John Potts and Captains Jesse L. Perkins and Julius T. Wright graduated in the musketry and grenade course.

Major Emile P. Moses graduated in the advanced course of the Army Field Artillery School, Fort Sill, Oklahoma, in 1926, Major Andrew B. Drum in 1927, Major George H. Osterhout in 1928, and Captain Lloyd L. Leech in 1929.

The following officers have graduated from the battery officers' course of the Army Field Artillery School: Roscoe Arnett (1926), Blythe G. Jones (1926), Curtis W. Legette (1927), Galen M. Sturgis (1927), Lloyd L. Leech (1928), Thomas E. Bourke (1928), Harold S. Fassett (1928), Campbell H. Brown (1929), Captain Bert A. Bone (1930).

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