

“WHAT ARE MARINES FOR?”
THE UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS IN THE CIVIL WAR ERA

A Dissertation

by

MICHAEL EDWARD KRIVDO

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

May 2011

Major Subject: History

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ABSTRACT

“What Are Marines For?”

The United States Marine Corps in the Civil War Era. (May 2011)

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This dissertation provides analysis on several areas of study related to the history of the United States Marine Corps in the Civil War Era. One element scrutinizes the efforts of Commandant Archibald Henderson to transform the Corps into a more nimble and professional organization. Henderson's initiatives are placed within the framework of the several fundamental changes that the U.S. Navy was undergoing as it worked to experiment with, acquire, and incorporate new naval technologies into its own operational concept. Analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of Henderson's programs are provided and comparisons drawn with those priorities established by his successor, Commandant John Harris. In addition, the operations undertaken by the Corps during the Civil War are evaluated in terms of their relative benefit for the national military establishment as a whole.

The Corps organization and operational concept is scrutinized and compared with that of similar military structures. In particular, the relationship between the U.S. Marine Corps and the Confederate States Marine Corps are compared. In the process, the

South's Corps, born in part out of that of the North's, exhibited many distinct advantages that the USMC solidly resisted adopting during the war years. The influence of key leaders, both military and civilian, reveals many problems that continued to negatively affect the Corps' ability to meet operational requirements as defined by senior naval and Army commanders.

Yet despite these issues, the Corps' Civil War experiences served as a crucible for forging a new generation of leaders who earnestly fought for reforms and increased professionalization of the unit. Although the Corps suffered from several problems related to lack of institutional vision and leadership failings of some senior officers, at a small unit level the officers and Marines performed their duties in a competent, enthusiastic, and courageous manner. Therefore, Marines continued to be in great demand by naval commanders at all levels, who actively sought their service in a variety of operation.

DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to my son, Michael, and my daughter, Kaitlan, and especially my wife, Dianne. Their patience and understanding has helped make this a qualitatively better product.

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I would like to thank my committee chair, Dr. Joseph G. Dawson, for the superior guidance and mentoring he has graciously imparted over the years, during my graduate studies. He has patiently coached me in making the transition from professional military officer to professional historian. In the process, he has always been keen to point out opportunities to further hone my research and writing skills. I am deeply thankful for all of his advice and counsel.

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I thank Dr. Peter Hugill for introducing me to aspects of technology and international affairs that had immediate relevance for this study. Along with new

methodologies for analyzing old problems, he taught me to see connections previously invisible. Working with him was a pleasure that I will miss.

In addition, I also wish to thank the generous support of the Marine Corps Historical Foundation and the Marine Corps Historical Division at Quantico, Virginia. Their support provided me with the resources to pursue new leads and points of analysis. In particular, the professional staff of the Archives and Special Records section at the Alfred M. Gray Research Center exceeded all expectations, always working hard to dig out the most obscure source in response to my queries, and often providing other references without being asked. This research effort would not have been possible without their help.

Acknowledgement is also given to the Andrew W. Mellon Research Foundation and the outstanding staff of the Virginia Historical Society in Richmond, Virginia. The former provided the financial means of accessing the excellent sources of the latter's facility, and the consequent wealth of information that they safeguard. Finally, I thank the excellent faculty and staff of the History Department at Texas A&M University, to whom I owe a debt that can never be repaid.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT	iii
DEDICATION	v
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	vi
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	viii
LIST OF FIGURES.....	x
LIST OF TABLES.....	xii
 CHAPTER	
I INTRODUCTION.....	1
Marine Corps Historiography and the Civil War.....	10
II THE CHANGING NATURE OF NAVAL WARFARE, 1815-1861.....	25
III ARCHIBALD HENDERSON’S MARINE CORPS.....	67
IV CHANGE OF COMMAND, CHANGE OF DIRECTION.....	117
V CRACKING IN THE CRUCIBLE OF FIRE: FROM THE SECESSION CRISIS TO BULL RUN	150
VI THE CORPS STAGGERS OFF TO WAR: ORGANIZING, RECRUITING AND EMPLOYING MARINES.....	192
VII EMPLOYMENT AND OPERATIONS: BLOCKADES, RAIDS AND LANDINGS.....	241
Marine Barracks.....	241
Marine Detachments.....	245
Ad hoc Units Formed from Detachments.....	260
Deliberately Formed Battalions.....	274

CHAPTER	Page
VIII THE WAR'S END, AND THE PATH AHEAD	298
IX AFTERMATH AND CONCLUSIONS	352
REFERENCES.....	376
VITA.....	402

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE		Page
2-1	Contemporary Map of Hampton Roads Action, 8-9 March 1862...	26
2-2	Side and Top Views of the USS <i>Monitor</i>	28
2-3	Contemporary Drawing of the USS <i>Fulton I</i>	34
2-4	USS <i>Fulton II</i>	38
2-5	The USS <i>Princeton</i>	41
2-6	The USS <i>Naugatuck (Stevens' Battery)</i> , 1862.....	42
2-7	11-inch Dahlgren Pivot Gun on the USS <i>Kearsarge</i> (1864).....	53
3-1	The Marine Corps' Organization after the 1834 Act.....	98
4-1	Capital Area Defenses Occupied by Marines, January 1861.....	134
5-1	Situation at Bull Run, 12:00-2:00 P.M., 21 July 1861.....	177
6-1	Hatteras Forts and the Union Scheme of Maneuver.....	193
6-2	Marine Corps Organization after Congress' Act of 24 July 1861...	203
6-3	DuPont's Seizure of Port Royal, South Carolina.....	224
7-1	Sketch Map of Confederate Mines in the James River, May 1864 .	257
7-2	Sketch of the Plan for the Second Attack on Fort Fisher.....	266
7-3	Contemporary Drawing of Marines Moving on Fort Fisher, 1865...	269
8-1	Organizational Model of the Confederate States Marine Corps as Created on 16 March 1861.....	320

FIGURE		Page
8-2	Expanded CSMC Structure, 21 May 1861	321
8-3	Map Showing the Deployments of Company A, CSMC	325
8-4	CSMC Battalion Deployments during the War	327

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE		Page
5-1	Listing of U.S. Marine Officers Who Resigned or Were Dismissed Between December 1860 and December 1863.....	166
7-1	Location and Approximate Size of Marine Barracks, November 1862.....	244
7-2	Representative Sizes of Marine Detachments on Board Warships, 1861.....	245

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In the fall of 1859, the political leadership of the United States found itself unexpectedly confronted with a crisis of great consequence. On the night of 17 October, a small band of radical abolitionists led by John Brown crossed into Virginia, seized the Federal Arsenal at Harpers Ferry, and threatened to distribute weapons and support to slaves in the area to encourage them to kill their masters and thereby gain their freedom. The raid sent shockwaves through the region and the Federal government decided it needed to take immediate action to "protect the public property . . . endangered by riotous outbreak" before the situation inflamed already sensitive sectional differences. Looking for a quick, yet precise response to the action, military leaders turned to the Marines at the barracks in nearby Washington D.C. to quell the disturbance. Once orders to respond were received, the Marine Corps' headquarters quickly organized, equipped, and transported to the affected area a contingent of 86 men to deal with Brown's force. Within only hours of arrival at Harpers Ferry, the small detachment of Marines efficiently and boldly killed or captured most of Brown's men, rescued thirteen hostages, and restored order out of chaos.¹ In the process, the Marine Corps had once again proven itself to be an adaptable and efficient force-in-readiness capable of rapidly

This dissertation follows the style of the *Journal of Military History*.

handling difficult situations. The unit met the high level of expectations that senior officials held regarding its performance. Such would not always be the case.

The history of the United States Marine Corps (USMC) is dominated by the events of the twentieth century, especially since World War II (1939-1945), when it proved to be a flexible, innovative and highly successful military organization. Nonetheless, the Corps' reputation has not always stood so high: only a few short years after its exemplary performance at Harpers Ferry, in the midst of America's divisive and desperate Civil War, the opinion of many military and civilian leaders regarding the Corps changed. Some now hesitated to call upon the USMC; a few even argued for dissolution of the service. The Marine Corps' mixed record of 1861-1865 contrasts sharply with the picture of the healthy, innovative organization of only a few years earlier, when government officials and the American public held the Corps in high esteem and Secretary of the Navy Isaac Toucey proclaimed it to be "an indispensable branch of the naval service." By contrast, the Confederate States Marine Corps proved in several ways to be the more aggressive and innovative institution of the two, particularly in terms of its pursuit of new roles and missions and its adapting structurally to the operational needs of the Confederate Navy.² What factors account for such a remarkable change?

Additionally, in comparison with other periods in the Marine Corps' history, aspects of its service in the Civil War remained relatively unexplored. Examining the unit's leaders, organization, and linkage with society provides new insights into national military and naval developments in that war, and promotes greater understanding of the

process of professionalization of officers in both the Navy and Marine Corps. These points are also connected with aspects of joint warfare that are germane and applicable to the conduct of warfare since 1865, including issues surrounding the development of amphibious warfare. This study interprets the Corps' institutional growth within the framework of the political, military and societal context, an approach that has not previously been taken. Finally, a fresh analysis of the U.S. Marine Corps as an institution during the Civil War provides nuanced perspectives on the politics and public perceptions that shaped the naval services and influenced legislative and military actions.

The lack of vision and direction manifested by some civilian, Navy, and Marine leaders in the war was symptomatic of the greater problems evident within the military itself. For example, in almost every theater, Navy and Army commanders expressed disagreement with each other over issues of cooperation and argued about differing operational priorities. Furthermore, civilian leaders spent great time and effort in finding military leaders who could implement their orders in an efficient and competent manner, often passing over several senior officers before finding ones that produced the required results. Strangely, the deep selecting of officers with the required leadership characteristics occurred in every service *except* the Marine Corps. This study analyzes why that happened.

In particular, senior Marine leaders were unsuccessful in creating units that met the demonstrated needs of the Navy as it responded to the new challenges presented by the Civil War. Instead, senior Marines stubbornly fixed on the tactics and operations of

the past, leading them to focus narrowly on filling only the most basic of roles in a less efficient manner. In contrast, the U.S. Marine Corps' rival, the Confederate States Marine Corps, in many ways developed a more adaptive and efficient structural model that allowed it to become more valuable and relevant to the requirements of its navy than did the USMC.

The Corps' mixed reputation earned in the Civil War is surprising, considering that in the decades prior to the war the USMC had earned respect by providing reliable military services that the government increasingly turned to in times of crisis.

Domestically, the Marine Corps performed well in several instances of civil-military operations: Marines helped restore order during the "Know-Nothing" civil disturbances in Baltimore and Washington in 1857; they quelled riots in several cities in 1858; they excelled in dealing with John Brown's attempted insurrection at the Federal Armory at Harpers Ferry in 1859; and "leathernecks" notably manned the defenses of Washington in 1860-1861 following desertions of Army troops during the Secession Crisis.³

Overseas, Marines acquitted themselves well during combat actions in Central and South America, Japan, China, and other Pacific locations. Furthermore, Marines played an important role during the Mexican War in both the Central Mexico and Pacific campaigns. In the former, a Marine battalion distinguished itself during the fight for the "Halls of Montezuma" in the capital city, while Marines from the Pacific Squadron conducted critical operations ashore from Northern to Baja California.⁴ In time of crisis the Corps appeared to be the force of choice for the Federal government, a role that Commandant Archibald Henderson had long nurtured.

Yet despite these successes, the Marine Corps' inconsistent performance in the early months of the Civil War quickly dissipated that good will. Wartime commanders relegated Marines to handling minor, even obsolescent tasks. The service became an easy target for its detractors and even absorbed blame for failings that should properly be shared with higher commands.

Several factors combined to cause that loss of faith in the Corps and each merits fresh analysis. Importantly, military leaders remained uncertain as to the role expected of Marines and ambivalent to efforts to correct evident problems. Concurrently, the naval services wrestled with the impact that emerging technologies had on naval operations and tactics, issues that changed the familiar paradigm and caused further confusion regarding mission requirements and capabilities. This situation led some leaders to question whether the Corps constituted an effective investment of valuable manpower and materiel. While army and navy officers experimented with innovative ways to employ naval forces, Marine leaders stood passively on the sidelines and simply reacted to direction from above rather than working to influence conditions to improve their organization.

In the face of this confusing state of affairs, some civilian leaders expressed increasing frustration over the actions and antics of the Commandant and many of the Corps' other senior officers. This further undermined their confidence in the unit. However, the roots of this circumstance require further exploration. And while historians have studied the tenures of individual Commandants, none examine in detail the issues that arose from the turnovers of command and analyze the resultant changes of

direction, policy, and priorities against the military requirements at the time. This dissertation scrutinizes the critical periods of turnover that occurred between commandants to determine if these seams in command continuity were key in perpetuating the institution's lack of vision and cohesiveness.⁵ That said, not all of the Marine Corps' leadership problems originated from above.

The Corps experienced a crisis of leadership during the war, one that originated not only from the higher levels of command, but from within the Marine Corps' junior officer ranks as well. Officers' dissatisfaction and disappointment with the Commandant and his staff is evident in contemporary writings that reached a crescendo after the war. Addressing these issues, Lieutenant Colonel Clyde Metcalf, former chief historian for the Marine Corps, concluded that "The Civil War period of the Corps' history was probably the lowest ebb of fighting efficiency that the organization has ever reached in time of war."⁶ Yet this same dissatisfaction over the unit's inefficiencies prompted an element of the USMC's officer corps to call vigorously for reforms, with one of the most vocal and influential even referring to the service as "a parasite on the body of government" and "a barnacle on the hull of the Navy."⁷ Historian Jack Shulimson concluded that "by the late 1870s the Marine Corps was an organizational anomaly and in some disarray."⁸ Although not all scholars agree with these views, clearly they imply the existence of problems in leadership and organization. This dissertation contends that these leadership deficits exacerbated existing confusion regarding the service's basic function and future direction, and that the growing

discontent further inhibited attempts to correct problems. And yet, that same discontent drove the next generation of leaders to work together to achieve needed reforms.

The issue of the Corps' value to American military forces became such a significant topic that Congress actively debated disbanding the Corps several times during the war and pursued that subject for years afterward. Navy support for Marines became dependent largely on the personalities of individual commanders, and during the war the Army went so far as to independently create its own marine-styled organization to meet its requirements.⁹ Problems cited with the USMC were legion and ranged from the personal failings of senior officers to the identification of organizational and structural weaknesses. Furthermore, critics pointed out various training and educational inefficiencies that made the prospects of internal reform difficult. This dissertation analyzes these observations and ascertains the reasons behind the USMC's apparent inability to meet the challenges of the 1860s.

This study argues that the Marine Corps of the Civil War period included two diametrically opposed factions, each possessing a different vision of where a Marine Corps fit within the American military establishment. The dominant faction consisted of the Corps' ranking officers, men who openly and bitterly bickered amongst themselves over sometimes trivial matters while stubbornly clinging to traditional roles and missions that became increasingly obsolete or irrelevant. The second faction, comprising a segment of the mid- and lower-ranking officers, embraced new ideas and missions and strained to carve out a larger role for the unit by volunteering their services for non-traditional assignments. The latter group, despite its intimate familiarity with ongoing

operations and current combat requirements, lacked the seniority or forum to implement lasting institutional changes. They did, however, act as a force for change as they gained seniority and could institute the reforms they believed needed to be made. They also embraced an effort to increase the professionalism of the officer corps. These two groups worked against each other to the overall detriment of the Corps, further undermining national confidence in the service by 1865.

Another central feature of this dissertation involves assessing precisely what the Marine Corps' roles and missions were during the Civil War in relation to what the military establishment believed it should be doing. There were almost as many different and distinct views of what Marines should be doing as there were naval officers, officials of the Navy and War Departments, and members of Congress to espouse them. This study examines salient positions and evaluates them in terms of how they met the needs of the Navy, nation, and the military establishment.

Under the commandancy of Archibald Henderson (1820-1859), the Marine Corps began to move from traditional roles to ones that recognized the changes taking place in modern navies. Traditional roles involved the maintenance of order and discipline aboard ship and guarding navy yards and bases ashore. In combat afloat, Marines positioned themselves high in the ship's rigging and other locations that allowed them to snipe at enemy officers and gunners. Marines were also posted at ships' hatchways to prevent sailors from abandoning their battle stations to seek safety below decks. Henderson realized that naval reforms reduced the threats of mutiny and desertion, while technological changes from the adoption of more powerful (and longer

range) naval guns, armor protection and steam propulsion rendered many of the Corps' old functions obsolescent. Facing these changes head-on, he argued to have Marines assigned to ships' main batteries and proposed ways to enhance their capabilities when fighting ashore as part of a landing party or operating with army forces.¹⁰ The Corps' notable performance in the Mexican War, against the Chinese barrier forts in 1856, and in smashing John Brown's raiders in 1859 seemed to validate his concepts.

Many of Henderson's initiatives were well underway when John Harris replaced Henderson as commandant in 1859. However, for several reasons, to be explored in greater detail, Harris soon retreated from Henderson's initiatives and fell back on the time-honored, but increasingly irrelevant, tasks that Marines had performed since their inception in the Age of Sail.

Taking these changes into account, did the Corps perform well enough to be worth the national investment of men and money? If not, did the Marine Corps pursue changes and attempt to transform itself into a more valuable military organization? This dissertation posits the notion that the Corps as an institution actively resisted change during the 1860s, and that its intransigence led to the deterioration of its relationship with senior naval, military and civilian leaders. Because of this, the Marine Corps rapidly squandered the hard-earned reputation it had gained prior to the war. However, these shortcomings also helped to fertilize the seeds of reform and to nurture within a new generation of Marine leaders the desire to pursue institutional changes that would improve the Corps' status and relevance as a service.

Marine Corps Historiography and the Civil War

Perhaps because of the inconsistency of its performance, a definitive history of the U.S. Marine Corps during the Civil War had not been written. Furthermore, when one examines general histories of the USMC, the service's activities from 1861-65 seem curiously downplayed. Take, for example, a series of carefully focused historical publications prepared by the Corps itself. One concludes "the Marine Corps played an important, if minor role, in the Union victory,"¹¹ yet it provides few specifics on why that was the case. Another pamphlet in the series, *The United States Marines at Harpers Ferry, 1859*, convincingly argues that the Corps' response to John Brown's raid constituted a significant achievement, an observation shared by many historians. Indeed, in yet a third pamphlet that spans the entire period from 1859 until the end of the war, the Harpers Ferry action dominates the narrative and overshadows the Corps' subsequent four years of wartime service.¹² Apparently, at least when these works were produced in the 1960s, the Marine Corps believed it had little to relate about its own activities in the Civil War. Actually, there is much worth analyzing about the Corps' activities in the war, particularly at the organizational level.

Scholars are divided over the issue of the Marine Corps' performance during the war. Generally, two schools of thought have developed, one that centers principally on the often-courageous actions of individuals and small units, and another that discusses the service's performance as part of the larger conflict. A good example of the former group appears in two of the earliest histories of the Marine Corps, wherein M. Almy Aldrich and Richard S. Collum provide battle narratives drawn from a combination of

official documents and after-action reports. However, critical examinations of these actions are absent: Marine participation in failed undertakings such as the First Battle of Bull Run and the night attack on Fort Sumter, the costly assault on Fort Fisher, the wholesale surrender of a battalion of Marines on the steamship *Ariel*, to name a few, are retold from the perspective of the individual participants without mention of the contemporary controversy that these reverses generated or analysis of lessons learned from the actions.¹³

For example, Collum recounts that Major John G. Reynolds' battalion at Bull Run "broke line several times, but [its members] were as frequently formed and urged back to their position . . .,"¹⁴ accenting the positive while diminishing the negative aspects of the Marines' behavior under fire in this first major combat action. Yet he omits Colonel Commandant John Harris' often cited biting observation that the incident represented the "first instance in [the USMC's] history where any portion of its members turned their backs to the enemy," an act that so affected his judgment that it prompted him to officially request that Marines be excused from serving with the army in the future so that they could return to what he perceived as more traditional assignments.¹⁵ Basically, these early works avoid discussing controversies altogether.

Upbeat, largely uncritical examinations of the Marine Corps' actions in the Civil War continued into the late twentieth century. Colonel Robert Heintz's *Soldiers of the Sea*, and journalist J. Robert Moskin's massive *The U.S. Marine Corps Story* both provide narrative descriptions of the Corps' Civil War operations, yet neither author seeks to analyze larger issues or discuss in detail weaknesses in leadership, training,

doctrine or structure. Although Heintz curtly states that new Commandant John Harris “was no Archibald Henderson,” and that “the officers of the Corps were divided by rivalry,” he does not elaborate on those observations, bypassing an opportunity to analyze why the Corps’ leaders acted as they did and how their bickering affected the unit’s overall performance.¹⁶ As for Moskin, other than remarking that the USMC, “under Harris’ tired leadership,” was not capable of meeting the challenges posed by the war, he also stops short of real analysis and leaves obvious questions unasked.¹⁷ Were Commandant Harris and his squabbling senior officers the only roadblocks to the creation of a more valuable and successful Marine Corps? What, if anything, did Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles do about the situation? And neither author attempts to address key issues such as the state of the USMC’s relationship with its sister services, or to analyze the value and appropriateness of the Corps’ roles and missions.

Heintz’s key contribution is his central theme outlining the Marine Corps’ development of the amphibious assault and its assumption of that mission as a core function of the organization. Accordingly, he briefly mentions Marine Corps participation in certain amphibious operations, but especially focuses on Admiral David Dixon Porter’s charges that the Marines were primarily responsible for the near-disastrous Naval Brigade assault on Fort Fisher in 1865. Heintz astutely recognizes that “no amount of bravery can compensate for lack of training, practice, and correct organization on the part of all forces in an amphibious assault, especially, as in this case, when the plan [Porter’s] was unsound.”¹⁸ Unfortunately, Heintz does not provide deeper analysis of whether Marine leaders should share in the responsibility for planning

shortfalls, or if they contributed suggestions but were ignored or disregarded by Porter or his staff. Moreover, Heintz confuses the definition of “amphibious operation” with “amphibious assault” and thereby weakens his tracing of the Marine Corps’ development of the former to the few Civil War landings made by Marines, particularly since the army conducted far more amphibious operations than Marines did during the war.¹⁹ These matters merit further examination that will facilitate a rigorous analysis of Marine participation in the development of amphibious operations during the war.

In his revised edition, Moskin provides negligible coverage of the Civil War, devoting only nine of the book’s 727 pages to relate the highlights of Marine participation in that four-year long war.²⁰ Basing his work mostly on secondary sources, he presents rousing tales of heroic individual Marine actions but neglects the more controversial aspects of the USMC’s employment. For example, Moskin believes that the Marines’ “most ambitious attempt in this war,” their attempt to retake Fort Sumter in 1863, “was a chaotic failure,” yet he provides no analysis of why it was ambitious, why it did not succeed, or what (if anything) was done to prevent the same problems from resurfacing in later operations.²¹

Allan Millett’s *Semper Fidelis* applies the elements of the “new” military history and focuses on the organization as an extension of the society that produced it.²² Millett produces a penetrating study, but declines to give the same intensity of examination to the Civil War period that he does to other periods of Marine Corps history. To Millett, “the Civil War brought the United States Navy and Marine Corps their greatest challenge since their formation,”²³ yet he buries that experience within a chapter subtly

entitled “The Marine Corps Survives its Doldrums.” He devotes far more pages to discussing the effects of the Marines’ performance on its continued survival than he does answering the question of why the service performed so poorly to begin with.²⁴

Despite his abbreviated coverage, Millett’s observations on the Civil War Marine Corps are thought-provoking. Citing problems such as the overall poor quality of the Corps’ officers, the debilitating effect of the service’s loss of experienced leaders to the Confederacy, and the unit’s chronic inability to recruit sufficient numbers of high-quality enlisted men, he correctly argues that the service “began the Civil War on the defensive both tactically and institutionally, and it never recovered.”²⁵ Bluntly describing its performance at the First Battle of Bull Run as “a disaster,” Millett asserts that “the Marine battalion had suffered as severe a defeat as any of the Army’s amateur regiments,” and consequently gained a reputation that would prove hard to shake in the following years.²⁶ The “debacle” of a disastrous attack on Fort Sumter, the surrender of Marines at sea in the *Ariel* episode, the Army’s forming of its own “Marine Brigade” on the Mississippi, and Admiral David Dixon Porter’s charges of poor performance by his Marines rounds out Millett’s picture of an organization in crisis.²⁷ In Millett’s eyes, individual acts of heroism and courage in battle could not make up for perceived deficiencies at the organizational level: critics declared that many Navy vessels performed well *without* Marines on board and that few ships dissolved into disorder, much less into mutiny, in their absence.²⁸

However, where Millett narrowly concentrates on the internal struggles of the Marine Corps, some issues were larger than that. A significant portion of the problems

faced by the Corps' leaders either originated were perpetuated by actions, policies and procedures within the Navy and War Departments, and also from political leaders. Although the Marine Corps certainly possessed its share of leadership failings and institutional flaws, many of those problems were exacerbated by a distinct lack of structural and strategic guidance from above that might have clarified institutional expectations, command relationships, and personnel policies. This dissertation argues that civilian leaders and the military establishment itself should have issued clear guidance and direction on what was expected from its Corps of Marines, and that leaders from both naval services share some degree of responsibility for the uneven performance of the Marine Corps. The study asserts that the Civil War Marine Corps lacked a strategic focus, and that its senior leaders failed to develop and pursue a course of action that might have resulted in its carving out a defined niche for itself. Ironically, under former Commandant Archibald Henderson the Corps had previously moved toward enhancing its capabilities and structure to assume a greater role in landing party operations, missions that became more important as the war progressed. In distancing itself from similar initiatives, the wartime Corps was passed over for several missions that it had previously sought to fill.

In his Ph.D. dissertation, Jeffrey Ryan largely concurs with Millett's assertions and dwells on what he believes is the key to many of the Corps' problems: a surfeit of leadership among the Corps' senior officers, "whose limitations were a cause for concern even before the war."²⁹ Specifically, Ryan contends that many senior Marine officers, from Commandant Harris down, neglected to grasp the fact that many of the

core roles and mission of the Marines were being rapidly made obsolete by new naval technologies, tactics, and personnel practices.

In essence, the Corps' senior leaders lived in the past, married to old ideas and concepts that made their adherence to traditional roles more irrelevant as time passed. To Harris, the Corps' Bull Run experience reinforced his notion of what happened when Marines worked outside their traditional roles and "he became determined not to let such a thing happen twice."³⁰ To Ryan, Harris and other officers actively held the Marine Corps back in its development of new roles and failed to initiate reforms in the areas of training and professional development that might have created a better, more modern Corps of Marines. While absolutely correct, he does not address why they did this, nor does he explain why senior naval or military leaders did not intervene to correct the situation.

Like Millett, Ryan concentrates too tightly on problems internal to the USMC. He ignores the fact that the Marine Corps never operated in isolation, but was a component of the national armed forces. He devotes little attention to exploring the same issues at the Navy Department and congressional levels, and therefore neglects to paint a clear picture of the Marine Corps as part of the larger naval structure. While Ryan correctly observes that some naval operational commanders "displayed a startlingly weak grasp of the realities and difficulties of organizing and carrying out a successful sea-based land assault,"³¹ he does not connect that point to the larger matter of what actions, if any, were taken by naval leaders to correct these deficiencies and to gain a better understanding of those principles. This dissertation fills that void and

examines the expectations of the chain of command above that of the Corps itself, particularly since those leaders also were accountable for shaping the Marine Corps to meet their demands.

Historian David Sullivan's multi-volume description of the Marine Corps' actions during the Civil War turns away from the organization itself and dwells instead largely on the activities of individual Marines. Within the framework of his meticulously detailed research effort, Sullivan places the Marine squarely in the center of action and argues (like Collum, Heintz, Moskin, and others before him) that the individual heroism and courage of the Marines at the small unit level should somehow mitigate the criticisms of the Marine Corps' general performance during the war. The majority of his work consists of battle narratives. In the last chapter of his final volume Sullivan steps back and provides his analysis of the Corps' overall performance in the war. He directly attacks the idea that the Marine Corps' performance in battles such as Bull Run or Fort Fisher was less than expected from a regular national military organization, instead arguing that the Marine battalion at Bull Run in 1861 fought valiantly and "performed as well as, if not better than, any other [Union] military organization thrown into the battle...."³² Valor aside, Sullivan forgets that men can fight bravely and still lose in battle, and it is that taint of failure, whether accurate or not, that can influence how commanders employ that unit from that point on. This dissertation, while acknowledging the courageous individual contributions of Marines, re-centers the debate on the organization and on decisions made at higher levels. It argues that the Marine Corps, at the organizational level, could not discern important flaws in its own

organization. If it had, it might have resolved those issues and made changes to enable the Corps to better serve the requirements of the military establishment.

The Corps experienced a crisis of leadership during the war, one that originated not only from the higher levels of command, but from outside the Marine Corps as well. These problems were compounded by the fact that the Navy Department lacked a clear expectation of its own roles, and therefore had little understanding of how the Marine Corps should fit within the organization. Yet these problems were true also of the Federal government itself at that same time; in many ways it lacked the administrative capacity to achieve its goals. But whereas the government eventually overcame those shortcomings, the Marine Corps continued to flounder. Fortunately for the Corps, many of its junior officers filled the leadership void, providing valued direction and guidance that helped to ensure that, at least at the smaller organizational level, Marines were well trained and provided with the concerned leadership that allowed them to succeed in roles and missions not foreseen or sometimes neglected by senior Marine leaders. One purpose of this study is to shed light into the factors that contributed to that situation.

Furthermore, the emergence of revolutionary technologies, tactics and weaponry that saw implementation during this particular period of time changed the conduct of naval warfare and exacerbated the problems inherent in developing a naval strategy that went beyond blockading enemy ports. The Navy's role in how it identified, conceptualized, absorbed and placed these new technologies into service is scrutinized along with a critical examination of the process whereby new capabilities are taken into account to develop cohesive naval strategies. Furthermore, the Marine Corps' role in

ascertaining where it fit within these new strategies is analyzed, and the Corps' successes and failures to meet the challenges posed by technological change is measured.

A number of other questions are examined as well. Foremost among them is assessing exactly what the Navy's, Marine Corps' and the nation's expectations were from the Corps in terms of the organization's roles and missions. It looks at the factors that determined what roles and missions the Corps should be conducting and measures its success in meeting those requirements. The study scrutinizes how the Marine Corps responded to stimuli for institutional change and provides analysis of factors that made it resistant to acceptance of new ideas of how the unit should function. The performance of its leaders, at all levels, to better prepare the Marine Corps for war and to improve the training of its men serve as a yardstick to measure its success.

Importantly, the Marine Corps could not clearly articulate its personnel requirements for officers and enlisted men, in part due to a lack of commitment to make necessary reforms and also because of structural weaknesses. Where other services sought new answers to problems of gaining sufficient numbers of qualified persons, the Corps instead continued traditional practices that had long proven inefficient. Furthermore, senior civilian and naval leaders, themselves confused as to what Marines should be doing and relying on perceptions hardened during the first battles of the war, relegated their responsibility for oversight of the service to others, thereby aggravating the situation.

Finally, the actions of the Marines during the war deserve to be evaluated in terms of their performance relative to that of other regular forces. I contend that the true legacy of the Corps during the war lay in its faithful service performed to the best of its abilities - despite being handicapped by deep professional, functional, and institutional problems. At the individual and small unit level, Marines served effectively, but the uneven performance of its senior leaders exposed serious flaws that, if uncorrected, threatened the Corps with absorption into another service or outright dissolution. Fortunately for the Marine Corps, its junior leaders became acutely aware of the institutional hurdles they needed to overcome and developed among themselves a strong desire to advocate needed reforms. As such, the Civil War Marine Corps, with all of its defects, served as the catalyst for changes that would take place later, sowing seeds that would flourish in the more fertile grounds of future conflicts. The Civil War therefore served as a sort of crucible that forged strong drives for reform among the Corps' more junior leaders, and their actions eventually brought about changes needed for the overall professional growth of the institution.

Endnotes

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- ¹ Quote from Toucey to Harris, Navy Department, Washington, D.C., 17 October 1859, Record Group (hereafter abbreviated as RG) 80 (General Records of the Dept. of the Navy, Records of the Office of the Secretary of the Navy), Entry 1 (Letters to the Commandant and Other Officers of the Marine Corps) (hereafter “Letters Sent”), National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C. (hereafter abbreviated as NA); Bernard C. Nalty, *The United States Marines at Harpers Ferry, 1859*, Marine Corps Historical Reference Series (Washington: Historical Branch, G-3 Division, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, 1959); Michael E. Krivdo, "Harpers Ferry: Last Action of the 'Henderson Era,'" *Fortitudine* 34 (October 2009), 7-11.
- ² Quote from Secretary of the Navy Isaac Toucey, Navy Dept., “Annual Report of the Secretary of the Navy” (hereafter “Annual Report of the Secretary of the Navy, 1859”), *U.S. Congressional Serial Set* (hereafter *Serial Set*) 1025, Session vol. 3, 36th Congress, 1st Sess., Senate Executive Document 2, pt. 3, 1141; Michael E. Krivdo, “Marines in Gray: The Birth, Life, and Death of the Confederate States Marine Corps” (M.A. thesis, Texas A&M University, 2006), *passim*.
- ³ Nalty, *Marines at Harpers Ferry*, *passim*; Allan R. Millett, *Semper Fidelis: The History of the United States Marine Corps*, ([1980]; Revised and expanded ed., New York: Free Press, 1991), 85-86; B. Franklin Cooling, III, “Civil War Deterrent: Defenses of Washington,” *Military Affairs* 29 (Winter 1965-66), 164-78.
- ⁴ Bernard C. Nalty, *The Barrier Forts: A Battle, a Monument, and a Mythical Marine*, Marine Corps Historical Reference Series, No. 6. (Washington: Historical Branch, G-3 Division, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, 1962); Millett, *Semper Fidelis*, 85-86.
- ⁵ For example, see Allan R. Millett and Jack Shulimson, eds., *Commandants of the Marine Corps* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2004); also Joseph G. Dawson, III, “With Fidelity and Effectiveness: Archibald Henderson’s Lasting Legacy to the U.S. Marine Corps,” *Journal of Military History* 62 (October 1998), 727-53.
- ⁶ Clyde H. Metcalf, *A History of the United States Marine Corps* (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1939), 192.
- ⁷ 1st Lt. Henry Clay Cochrane, “The Status of the Marine Corps: A Plan for its Reorganization,” Privately published 9-page pamphlet (U.S. Naval Academy: Annapolis, MD., 1 October 1875), copy in Cochrane Papers, Archives and

Special Collections, Alfred M. Gray Research Center (hereafter GRC), Marine Corps Historical Division, Quantico, Va. (hereafter MCHD), quotes from 8.

- ⁸ Jack Shulimson, *The Marine Corps' Search for a Mission, 1880-1898* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1993), 1.
- ⁹ For a good study of the "Mississippi Marine Brigade," see Chester G. Hearn, *Ellet's Brigade: The Strangest Outfit of All* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2000).
- ¹⁰ For more information regarding Henderson's initiatives, see Joseph H. Alexander, "Archibald Henderson," in *Commandants of the Marine Corps*, 71-72; Dawson, "Archibald Henderson's Lasting Legacy," 744-53; and Krivdo, "Marines in Gray," 21-25.
- ¹¹ Bernard C. Nalty, *The United States Marines in the Civil War*, Marine Corps Historical Reference Series (Washington: Historical Branch, G-3 Division, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, 1961), 13.
- ¹² Nalty, *The United States Marines at Harpers Ferry, 1859*; and Bernard C. Nalty, *The United States Marines at Harpers Ferry and in the Civil War*, Marine Corps Historical Reference Series (Washington: Historical Branch, G-3 Division, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, 1966). In the latter publication, the Marine Corps' single action in response to John Brown's Raid accounts for more than a third of the total pages in a pamphlet that ostensibly covers over five years of warfare (ten out of twenty-six total pages).
- ¹³ See M. Almy Aldrich, *History of the United States Marine Corps*, Compiled by Captain Richard S. Collum (Boston: H. L. Shepard), 1875; and Richard S. Collum, *History of the United States Marine Corps* (Philadelphia: L. R. Hamersly & Co., 1890).
- ¹⁴ Collum, *History*, 112, citing from Major John G. Reynolds' report as commanding battalion of U.S. Marines, reprinted in full without editorial change in U.S. War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, 128 vols. and atlas (Washington: GPO, 1880-1901), Series I, 2: 391-92 (hereafter cited as *OR*, and all citations are to Series I, unless otherwise indicated).
- ¹⁵ Col. Commandant John Harris to Gideon Welles, Secretary of the Navy, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, Washington, D.C., 26 July 1861, RG 80, Entry 14 ("Letters From the Commandant and Other Officers of the Marine Corps, January 1828-December 1886") (hereafter "Letters Received"), NA.

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- ¹⁶ Robert Debs Heintz, *Soldiers of the Sea: The United States Marine Corps, 1775-1962* ([1962]; Second ed., Baltimore: Nautical & Aviation Publishing Co., 1991), 71-87, with quotes from 68 and 75, respectively.
- ¹⁷ J. Robert Moskin, *The U.S. Marine Corps Story* ([1977]; Rev. ed., New York: McGraw - Hill Book Company, 1982), 76-84, quote from 78.
- ¹⁸ Heintz, *Soldiers of the Sea*, 83.
- ¹⁹ By definition, not all amphibious operations are amphibious assaults. Military terminology can be found in: U.S. Dept. of Defense, *Joint Publication 1-02, Department of Defense (DoD) Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms* (Electronic edition), Managed by the Joint Doctrine Division, J-7, Joint Staff, Washington, D.C., as amended through 17 October 2008. Available on the Internet at: http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/dod_dictionary/, last accessed on 24 February 2011. According to Joint Publication 1-02, “amphibious operation” is defined as “A military operation launched from the sea by an amphibious force, embarked in ships or craft with the primary purpose of introducing a landing force ashore to accomplish the assigned mission,” whereas an “amphibious assault” is defined as “The principal type of amphibious operation that involves establishing a force on a hostile or potentially hostile shore.” The difference mainly concerns whether an amphibious operation lands forces that then move to, and assault the enemy, or whether the assault is made directly from the sea against enemy positions, a distinctly more difficult undertaking. Most Civil War amphibious operations fall within the former category, with relatively few that fit the more rigorous definition of amphibious assaults.
- ²⁰ Moskin, *U.S. Marine Corps Story*, 76-84. Moskin devotes slightly more than 1 percent of the book to coverage of the Marine Corps in the Civil War. In the original work he provides about seven percent of the total substantive text to the Marine Corps’ actions in the Civil War, but also defines the war more broadly in time (1857-1865) and includes as part of that treatment more large quotations that are absent from the revised edition.
- ²¹ Quote from *ibid.*, 83.
- ²² See Russell F. Weigley, ed., *New Dimensions in Military History: An Anthology* (San Rafael, Calif.: Presidio Press, 1975), 389-405; or as expressed in his organizational study of the U.S. Army in Russell F. Weigley, *History of the United States Army* (New York: Macmillan, 1967). In the latter work, Weigley relates how the development of the organization of the Army is affected by the thoughts, feelings and values of the society that raises, governs and maintains it.

²³ Millett, *Semper Fidelis*, 90.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 87-114.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 90-94, quote from 93.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, quotes 94 and 95, respectively.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 95-100, quote from 96.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 100-101.

²⁹ Jeffrey T. Ryan, "On Land and Sea: The United States Marine Corps in the Civil War" (Ph.D. dissertation, Temple University, 1997), iii.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 66-78, quote from 78.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 209.

³² David L. Sullivan, *The History of the United States Marine Corps in the Civil War: The Final Year* (Shippensburg, Pa.: White Mane Pub. Co., 2000), 274-75, quote from 275.

CHAPTER II

THE CHANGING NATURE OF NAVAL WARFARE, 1815-1861

In the early afternoon hours of 8 March 1862, a massive iron monster of a ship chugged slowly out of the Elizabeth River in Hampton Roads and set a course for the Union warships on blockade duty near Fortress Monroe, Virginia (see Figure 2-1). The strange-looking armored vessel, the reconstructed CSS *Virginia* (formerly the wooden steam frigate USS *Merrimack*)¹ bore ominously down on the Federal ships, belching huge plumes of black smoke from its single smokestack. Aboard the waiting Union warships, sailors and Marines manned their weapons and sighted in on the *Virginia* as it closed on them. On signal, the Union gunners opened fire. The *Virginia*'s own batteries, one-fourth of them directed and manned by Confederate Marines, followed suit. A one-sided battle soon ensued. As Union shells bounced harmlessly off the *Virginia*'s sloping casemate armor plating, the Confederate guns wreaked havoc aboard her first intended victim, the USS *Cumberland*. At its full speed of five knots, the *Virginia* struck the *Cumberland*, burying an iron ram deep into the wooden timbers of its prey. Mortally wounded, *Cumberland* filled with tons of water while the *Virginia*'s crew frantically disengaged from the wreck, then turned and made for its next target, the frigate USS *Congress*.²

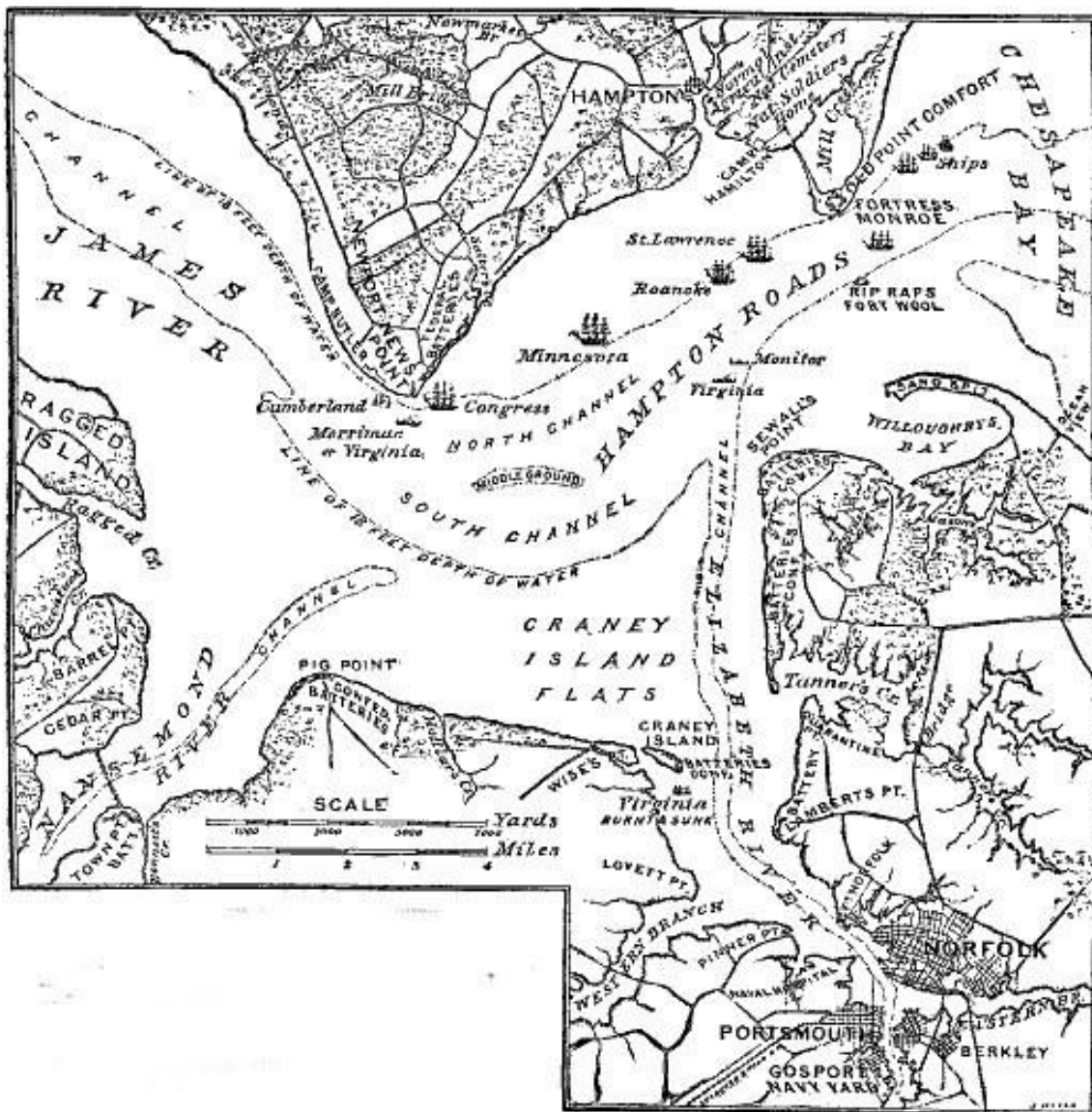


Figure 2-1. Contemporary Map of Hampton Roads Action, 8-9 March 1862.³

Having witnessed the ease with which the *Virginia* dispatched the *Cumberland*, the captain of the *Congress* (Lieutenant Joseph Smith, Jr.) made way and headed for shallow water, hoping that the *Virginia*'s deeper draft would prevent it from following. The *Congress* soon ran aground, safe from the *Virginia*'s ram, but still within range of

the ironclad's guns. Both ships fired at one another at long range, yet the contest was grossly uneven: shots from the *Congress* merely "glanced harmlessly" off the *Virginia*'s casemate, yet the Confederate guns wreaked carnage on the wooden Union frigate. The *Congress* struck its colors, but was soon set ablaze by hot shot fired from the *Virginia*'s guns. Seemingly unstoppable, *Virginia* moved on to its next victim, the steam frigate USS *Minnesota*, also grounded in a forlorn attempt to keep away from the Confederate warship. Expecting to repeat its success against the *Congress*, the *Virginia* raked the *Minnesota* with long range fires, but soon tired of the one-sided fight. With the tide changing and light fading, and knowing that the *Minnesota* would most likely still be aground in the morning, the *Virginia* withdrew slowly up the Elizabeth River to rest its crew and to replenish ammunition for the morrow, the path illuminated by the light thrown off by the blazing wreck of the *Congress*.⁴ In only one afternoon of fighting, a single Confederate ironclad had completely destroyed two Union frigates, seriously damaged a third, and a fourth (the steam frigate USS *Roanoke*) also lay helplessly aground and vulnerable to destruction by the *Virginia*. The Federal blockading squadron in Hampton Roads had suddenly ceased to exist as an effective force.

However, when the *Virginia* returned the next morning to finish off the *Minnesota*, the Confederates observed what one officer described as "an immense shingle floating on the water, with a gigantic cheese box rising from its center."⁵ That "cheese box on a shingle" turned out to be the USS *Monitor*, the Union Navy's own uniquely designed ironclad that had arrived in Hampton Roads only the previous afternoon, too late to have joined in that day's fight (see Figure 2-2). With *Monitor* now

on scene, Federal sailors hoped it might stem the carnage that the *Virginia* had inflicted on the Union blockaders the previous day. The *Monitor*'s captain (Lieutenant John L. Worden) positioned his ship near the grounded *Minnesota*, hoping to protect the crippled ship from fires from the *Virginia*. The two ironclads began an artillery duel that lasted for hours, and several times the slower, less maneuverable *Virginia* tried unsuccessfully to ram the *Monitor*. The *Monitor* experienced problems rotating its novel gun turret and eventually settled for using the vessel's maneuvering power to bring the immobile guns to bear on the *Virginia*. Neither ship's weapons could penetrate the other, although the *Virginia* scored a direct hit on the *Monitor*'s pilot-house, blinding its captain and forcing a change of command. As the Union ship withdrew to assess the situation, the *Virginia* also tired of the battle and steamed back up the Elizabeth River.⁶

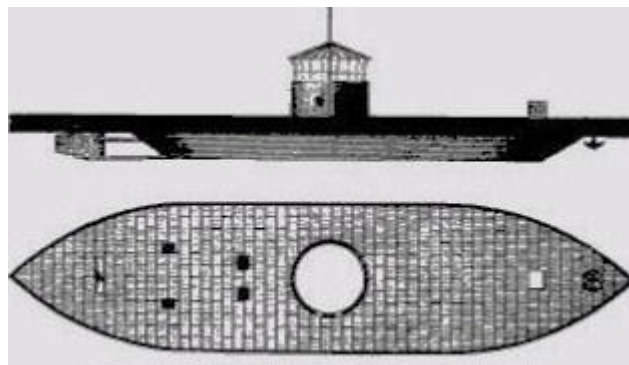


Figure 2-2. Side and Top Views of the USS *Monitor*.

Although this first battle between ironclad warships appeared to possess all the trappings of signaling the dawn of a revolutionary new age in naval warfare, it instead reflected the culmination of a long chain of developments that navies had pursued for

almost a half a century. Britain and France were engaged in an ironclad naval arms race, and American developments as a result of the Civil War were but the latest in a long line of advances. Yet the fight at Hampton Roads captured the attention of naval leaders around the world, revealing in dramatic fashion the clear superiorities of iron over wood in ship construction. The ironclad duel also showcased both the advantages and disadvantages of steam propulsion and spurred the pursuit of more powerful and accurate naval artillery and projectiles. Accounts of the battles at Hampton Roads reverberated throughout the naval communities and both accelerated and expanded the naval arms race.⁷ Literally overnight, construction of wooden-hulled warships ceased and ironclad alternatives became the new standard. Furthermore, the fight also exposed how much the missions of shipboard Marines were affected by these changes and provided two quite different approaches to that problem within Federal and Confederate military organizations.

Yet as historian Craig Symonds explains, perhaps the greatest change brought by the fight of 8-9 March 1862 was how it “significantly redefine[d] the character of naval combat.” Gone were the glorious days of epic battles won at sea by men fighting in the elements from open decks at close ranges, in clashes often decided by desperate hand-to-hand combat. Instead, naval warfare entered the industrial age, wherein officers and sailors were but cogs in a great machine, small parts of a mechanical whole, existing only to maintain, repair, feed, and operate the great machines of destruction. In this new form of modern warfare most participants had only the vaguest of ideas of what was transpiring outside their limited areas of observation. Even at this early stage, the

engineers and mechanics of the ironclads toiled in the dark compartments of the ship, covered with soot and grime, often unaware of events occurring above decks.⁸ These new conditions reflected the adoption of a new system of operations and organization, wherein specialization of tasks and responsibilities became more important and issues of how to command and control ships and crewmembers under such conditions became more complex and problematic.

This chapter examines the American experience in transitioning its naval forces from sail to steam, from wood to iron, and in replacing its short-range cannons with more powerful and longer-ranged smoothbores and rifled artillery. It also investigates the consequent development of tactics, techniques, and operational procedures to maximize on the different capabilities afforded by these new technologies. In particular, it explores the implications that these innovations had for the Marine Corps' role in modern naval warfare, with special attention paid to the degree that such problems were realized and addressed by civilian and military leaders.

This first battle of ironclads hinted at possible changes in the future roles and missions of Marines aboard ship. The *Monitor* carried no Marine detachment. The novel ship had no superstructure that might support sharpshooters, a limited number of guns, and, with its deck space tightly enclosed, needed no coercive force to keep the crew at their battle stations. In short, the *Monitor* had no room for Marines in their traditional roles. Conversely, the Confederates adopted a different approach aboard the *Virginia*, where several of the great guns were ably manned by Confederate Marines,

who also served as a boarding party for capturing a ship's crew once the victim had been disabled by the main batteries.⁹ Both approaches had merit for their respective units.

The American pursuit of modern warships and ordnance in the decades prior to the Civil War era proved uneven and sporadic. At any given time between 1815 and 1861, cliques of senior civilian and uniformed naval leaders could be found that either solidly opposed or actively advocated experimenting with new propulsion, armor or weaponry systems, making the development of modern naval warships an erratic process, at best. All too often new initiatives would be begun, only to be abandoned or modified by the next group of leaders, bringing any progress made to a halt. Ideas deemed worthwhile in one administration might be considered foolhardy under the next, resulting in discontinuity and inconsistency in long-range planning. This situation made it difficult for the Navy's leaders to see beyond the equipment issues and develop the tactical concepts needed to implement new naval technologies. As a result, leaders often focused on providing near-term solutions rather than on producing integrated service capabilities, practically guaranteeing the Navy and Marine Corps would continue to be ill-prepared for new challenges.

Any visualizing of the Navy's path to modernization during this period produces a picture similar to the track of a roller coaster. Although the effort grew more consistent in the years immediately preceding the war, overall one would observe spikes reflecting sudden bursts of rapid technical improvements and experimentation interspersed with valleys depicting years of inactivity, regression, and neglect. Some historians have ascribed this erratic progress as the result of decades of generally myopic

or poor leadership. Critics point to the many starts, stops, delays, changes and cancellations of projects that haunted the navy's shipbuilding program from 1815 through early 1861, and lay much of the blame for the uneven progress at the feet of the secretaries of the navy. Others fault the excessive conservatism of the Board of Commissioners and the Bureau Chiefs that replaced it. Each bears some responsibility for failing to define long-range goals and implement plans to achieve them.¹⁰

Reexamining the naval shipbuilding program in the decades before the American Civil War reveals shortfalls and gaps in the Navy's ability to plan for its requirements in terms of ships and equipment. More important to this study is whether the Navy pursued in an efficient manner efforts to modernize the fleet and to increase combat capabilities by deliberately incorporating new technologies in both ship and weapon design, as foreign navies were doing at that same time. And although there has been some disagreement over whether the legislative or executive branch of government proved more dominant in formulating and shaping naval policy prior to 1861, historian Christopher McKee persuasively concludes that "the initiative and impetus for the development and nurturing of the navy have almost always come from the executive branch," and by extension, the appointed secretaries of the navy.¹¹

One of the most important duties of the senior administrator of the Navy is to ensure that his organization is adequately equipped with ships of sufficient quality and quantity to execute the missions assigned to it. By analyzing a particular secretary's performance in accomplishing that task, that assessment can serve as the basis for comparison with the effectiveness of other secretaries. Such assessments reveal just how

conflicted naval policy was between the War of 1812 and the Civil War, a situation exacerbated by having some nineteen different secretaries and several interim or acting appointees during those years. On the average, a new administrator assumed control of the Navy every two years, a circumstance not conducive to establishing or implementing of any long-range plans. Aggravating that problem is the fact that some secretaries opposed previous plans for modernizing the force or pursuing new technologies, further degrading the ability of any one secretary to effectively plan beyond his own tenure.¹²

For example, toward the end of the War of 1812, the U.S. Navy seemed to be foremost among the major navies in the adopting of steam power. It launched the world's first steam warship, the USS *Fulton I* (formerly *Demologos*), an achievement that attracted the interest of even the more powerful British Navy (see Figure 2-3). The unique, catamaran style frigate powered by a steam-driven centrally mounted wheel between the hulls was described as being "far in advance of her time," yet the end of the war and a change in naval leadership helped bring the bold experiment to an ignominious end. When the *Fulton*'s chief proponent, Navy Secretary William Jones, resigned in late 1814, his successor, Benjamin W. Crowninshield suspended work on a sister ship and quickly relegated the *Fulton* to mundane duty as a receiving ship.¹³

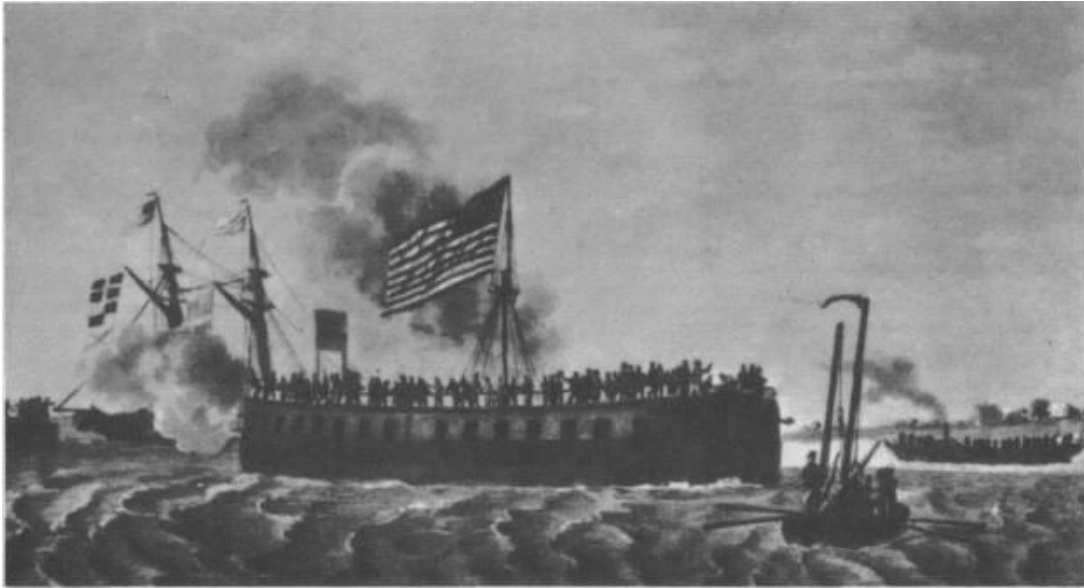


Figure 2-3. Contemporary Drawing of the USS *Fulton I*.¹⁴

The next major experimentation with steam involved the Navy's purchase of the riverboat steamer *Enterprise* in December 1822. Faced with an urgent need for a shallow draft steamer to help intercept pirates off the coast of Cuba, the Navy purchased the vessel, rechristened it the USS *Sea Gull*, and employed it in the West Indies for three years, becoming the first steam warship to engage in combat operations.¹⁵ Despite its success, steam power continued to be viewed by some as highly experimental.

Certain secretaries stand out from their peers as either being great proponents for progress and efficiency or as negative forces that made the Navy less capable under their tutelage. For example, historian Edwin M. Hall argues that "the war-readiness of the U.S. Navy after the War of 1812 reached bottom under [Navy Secretary Smith] Thompson." Thompson, who favored austere budgets, "showed no interest in technological developments," and the few ships contracted under him were mostly still

under construction decades later. One of Thompson's ships, the *New York*, "proceeded so slowly that she was still on the stocks at Norfolk when the Civil War began and was burned when the Norfolk Yard was destroyed" four decades later.¹⁶

Thompson's successor, Samuel L. Southard, reversed that downward trend. Southard "welcomed technological change" and seemed supportive of efforts to modernize the fleet while still understanding the need to reduce numbers of ships. Importantly, Southard successfully communicated those desires to Congress, gaining funding for new shipbuilding. However, that achievement was mitigated somewhat by the actions of the Board of Navy Commissioners, which convinced Southard to instead allow it to reallocate some construction funding toward repairs of outmoded ships, thus diluting his original intentions.¹⁷ This example reinforces the observation that the Board served at times as an anchor delaying the forces for change.

Although the next two secretaries paid little attention to shipbuilding and modernizing, in 1834 Secretary Mahlon Dickerson convinced the frugal Andrew Jackson administration to build steam warships. Dickerson argued in his first annual report that steam warships enhanced "the . . . strength and respectability" of the Navy, and he declared that "the power of steam is soon to produce as great a revolution in the defense of rivers, bays, coasts, and harbors, as it has already done in commerce, intercourse, and business." In response, the navy began constructing a new steam-powered battery, the *Fulton II*, and two years later Congress authorized two similar vessels.¹⁸

The same inconsistent approach to modernizing could be found even at the highest levels of government. President Andrew Jackson, a former army general, argued

in his first Message to Congress in 1829 that the Navy represented “the best standing security of this country against foreign aggression,” yet believed the service needed reorganization and had too many obsolescent warships. Six years later, Jackson reversed his opinion, arguing instead for “its gradual enlargement,” and the following year, 1836, the Navy needed “a speedy increase of the force that has been heretofore employed abroad and at home,” even if it were costly. Those expenses, he asserted, “are small compared with the benefits which they will secure to the country.”¹⁹ Jackson’s reversal reflected two points of analysis: he had not provided adequate support to the service in his first term, and by the time of his second term had gained a new sense of appreciation for the role the Navy played in protecting the expansion of American maritime commercial interests. In all, Jackson learned to better manage the costs of maintaining the Navy’s capabilities. The same points applied to Jackson’s thoughts concerning the Marine Corps, which will be covered in due course in the next chapter.

Meanwhile, Commodore John Rodgers, the President of the Board of Naval Commissioners under Dickerson, reversed a longstanding position of the board when in 1836 he concluded that steam power *did* have a valid place in the future of the U.S. Navy. Authoring a document that provided the closest semblance to anything of a naval policy at the time, Rodgers acknowledged not only the need for steam warships in the Navy; he recommended that *twenty-five* of the vessels be built. Yet the vague roles he identified for the ships revealed his limited understanding of the existing capabilities of steam warships already being realized in other modern navies. He argued for steam vessels “to defend our great estuaries, to aid the operations of our other naval force, and

in the concentration or movements of the military force,” all auxiliary or support missions.²⁰ Rodgers, though changing his mind about the value of steam in the Navy, still could not foresee that it would eventually replace sail on naval vessels.

But others were working toward that goal. In 1837, the Navy launched the steam vessel *Fulton II*, a ship that became in some ways the forerunner of a new steam Navy. Although generally unseaworthy, the *Fulton II* did provide naval engineers with a test platform for experimenting with the concepts of steam propulsion and armor plating on warships (see Figure 2-4). To get the most out of the tests, Dickerson assigned a long-time critic of the navy’s sluggish support of innovative ideas, Captain Matthew C. Perry, to command the *Fulton II*. Perry took an active role in the ship’s trials, in the process becoming one of the first advocates for what eventually became the Navy’s engineering branch and earning him the title “father of the steam navy.” From the Marine Corps’ perspective, although it assigned a detachment to the vessel, it did not give any consideration to how Marines should be employed on modern warships: the duties assigned its members were traditional ones identical to those on other Navy ships at the time. The ship spent the next twenty-four years on active service until seized by Florida and Alabama militiamen at the Navy Yard in Pensacola, Florida in 1861.²¹

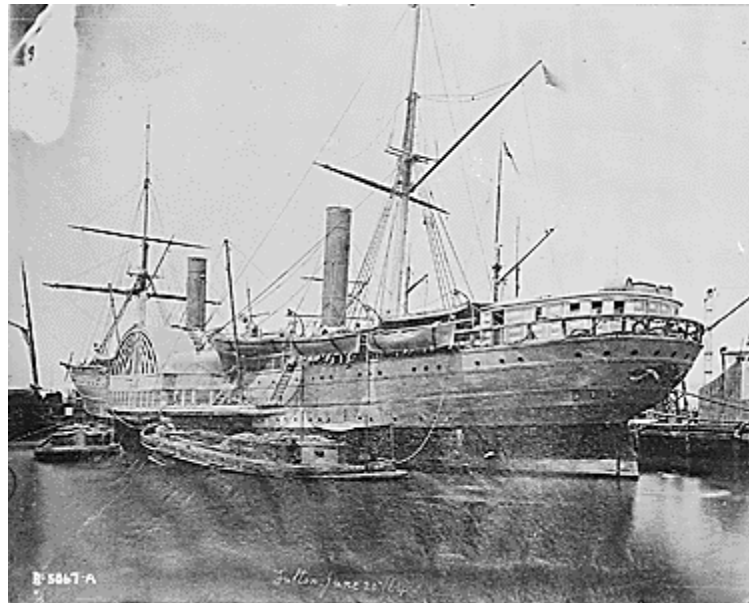


Figure 2-4. USS *Fulton II*.²²

In another example of how changes in administration caused abrupt adjustments in naval policy, in 1837 Martin Van Buren succeeded Andrew Jackson as president. Van Buren brought with him a different view of the value of the Navy. Despite having been Jackson's vice-president, he contended that "this country required no navy at all, much less a steam navy."²³ Van Buren replaced Dickerson with James Kirke Paulding, who historian W. Patrick Strauss characterizes as a man that "planted himself across the path of progress toward 'dirty and noisy steamers.'"²⁴

In 1837, the navy lost the influence of Commodore John Rodgers as well. Late that year the man who had headed the Board of Naval Commissioners off and on for almost thirty years retired, and that conservative body fell back into its familiar groove

of generally opposing new ideas. According to Strauss, “While major navies abroad adopted iron ships, steam power, and more powerful shells for their guns, the board still believed that the wooden sailing ship of the line was the embodiment of sea power, smoothbore cannon and solid shot the epitome of firepower; and proficiency in seamanship the great quality sought in officers.” The financial impact of the Panic of 1837 worsened the situation, as it brought increased pressure to reduce government expenditures, particularly expensive experiments with new technologies. For all these reasons, steam power and other modernizing efforts generally languished during Secretary Paulding’s tenure.²⁵

The next period of growth in naval ship construction took place during the tenure of Secretary Abel Upshur, widely considered to be a reformer genuinely interested in making the navy a more capable and efficient force for the nation. Upshur was a forward thinking leader who presciently believed that “the application of steam-power to vessels of war, and the improvements which have recently been made in artillery, are destined to change the whole system of maritime war.” In his first annual report he advised that “a very large part of [the fleet] ought to consist of steamships.” Of interest is his advocacy for all-iron steam warships, and he urged Congress to authorize the constructing of “at least one vessel of medium size, sufficiently large to afford a fair test, without exposing too much to the hazard of failure.”²⁶

When Upshur assumed office in 1841, two of the three steamers authorized by Congress in 1839, the *Missouri* and *Mississippi*, were still being built along the same general design as *Fulton II*; as side-wheel steamers whose 650 horsepower engines

would propel them at about 9 ½ knots. However, since the exposed engines and drive wheels were vulnerable to enemy fire, few naval officers believed the ships were useful for anything other than peacetime missions or as test platforms for steam technology.²⁷

One Navy officer believed he could solve the vulnerability issues, if he were only given the chance. Captain Robert R. Stockton proposed building a steam sloop propelled by a submerged screw, thereby using the ship's own hull to protect the boilers and machinery. Upshur supported Stockton and gave him command of the warship, later christened as the *Princeton*, to serve as a floating laboratory for the Navy (see Figure 2-5). Further innovations, such as a six-bladed screw, increased the performance and versatility of the vessel, and Stockton also had several notions concerning ordnance that will be discussed later. In 1843, *Princeton* became the first screw-driven steam warship in the world and also the first naval vessel to burn the more efficient (and cleaner) anthracite coal, a significant development in itself. Anthracite not only provided more energy per ton, but it produced less smoke when burned, thereby also reducing the characteristic signature plume that normally gave away a steam-powered vessel's location for many miles.²⁸

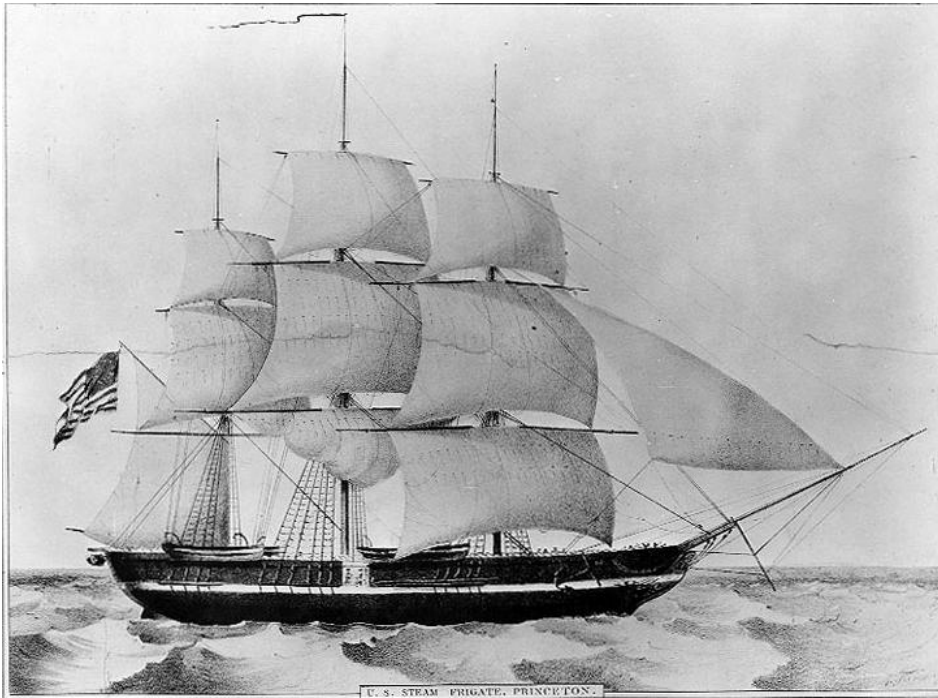


Figure 2-5. The USS *Princeton*.²⁹

In addition to supporting Stockton’s work, Upshur also pushed for the building of four more experimental iron steamers: the *Michigan*, *Union*, *Water Witch*, and *Alleghany*. Two of the ships, *Union* and *Allegheny*, unfortunately proved wholly unreliable, but served to provide valuable data to naval construction engineers nonetheless. Of the others, after a major redesigning of *Water Witch*’s propulsion system, that ship on to spend about a decade in active naval service around the world. And the *Michigan*, the Navy’s first all iron-hulled vessel, served for decades in the Great Lakes. Upshur also pursued another initiative that initially appeared to great promise. In 1842, he requested funding to build a “shot and shell proof” armored steam battery along the lines of the original *Fulton I* steam battery. However, contractual and technological problems plagued the project for almost two decades, during which several

models were discarded. Finally, a smaller, all iron-hulled battery clad in 4-inch armor plate with a twin screw-drive was launched in 1860. By then, the *Stevens' Battery* (later *Naugatuck*) was outdated and consequently saw little operational use even during the Civil War (see Figure 2-6). In 1862, it provided disappointing service at Drewry's Bluff in the James River.³⁰ The combining of cost overruns, serious design limitations and overly long construction period ensured it had little positive influence on the navy's ship-building program.

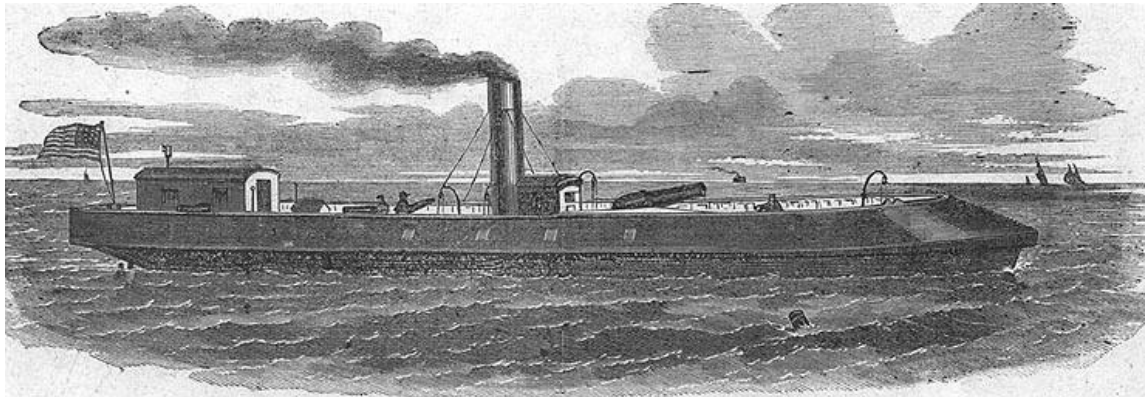


Figure 2-6. The USS *Naugatuck* (*Stevens' Battery*), 1862.³¹

Secretary Upshur paid a terrible personal price for his support of new technologies. Just seven months after relinquishing the naval portfolio to become Secretary of State, Upshur, President John Tyler, and other dignitaries boarded the *Princeton* to observe a test-firing of the ship's unique naval gun system. On 28 February 1844, with the crowd pressing close to its novel twin 12-inch guns, the breech of one piece exploded and shot shrapnel into the group. President Tyler, who had lingered behind the crowd, narrowly escaped injury, but Secretary Upshur, Secretary of the Navy

Thomas Gilmer, and four others were killed outright, and scores of other guests wounded. Although a court of inquiry absolved Captain Stockton of any blame in the accident, the incident cast a pall over his experiments for several years afterward.³²

For the next two years, naval requirements were heavily influenced by worsening relations with Mexico over the annexation of Texas that culminated in the Mexican War. As the diplomatic situation deteriorated, Secretary of the Navy George Bancroft queried the commander of the Home Squadron, Commodore David Conner, about assets he might need should the nation be forced to blockade Mexico's Gulf coast or seize coastal ports. Conner quickly replied that he would require a sea-going steamer and ships with drafts of eight to ten feet to operate in the sandbar-clogged Mexican Gulf port cities. These communications hinted of the possibility of future landing party operations, yet there is no evidence that they were shared with Marine Commandant Archibald Henderson, who might have made special preparations for such an eventuality.³³

The outbreak of hostilities near the Rio Grande and congressional declaration of war against Mexico on 13 May 1846 added a sense of urgency to the navy's requirements. Bancroft quickly gained authority to fill Conner's earlier request, purchasing outright several small, shallow-draft vessels that proved ideally suited for the Gulf environment. Furthermore, Conner added to his squadron by capturing and arming several small Mexican steamers, giving his force greater capability to cross sandbars and move up shallow rivers. As a result, Conner's forces soon captured Tabasco, Frontera and Tampico, his steamers towing gunboats over the sandbars and providing the means of moving up rivers against the current, regardless of wind conditions. The smaller

steamers also granted greater mobility in transporting troops ashore.³⁴ Tellingly, squadron commanders routinely stationed themselves on steamers, whenever available, proving the value and versatility of steam power.

The increased dependability and flexibility of steam warships in the Mexican War convinced the new Secretary of the Navy, John Mason, to request “four war steamers of the first class.” In 1848, Congress authorized the building of four vessels that became the *Powhatan*, *Saranac*, *Susquehanna*, and *San Jacinto*. A unique contract system entailed their being built under the supervision of naval constructors at New York, but employed as contract mail steamers until required in wartime. The agreement also stipulated that each mail steamer be capable of easy conversion to a warship in event of need, and that active naval officers be assigned to each ship at all times.³⁵

Even as it entered the 1850s, the navy institutionally still seemed reluctant to commit to steam technology despite improvements in the durability and efficiency of steam engines. For example, in a report detailing the advantages of steam over sail, Secretary William Graham confusingly urged that “authority be given to build every year two new vessels, one sail and the other steam.” In asking for half the ships to be sail, he contradicted his own argument that it was “vain to rest content with the old models and armaments and appliances of vessels, which, however excellent in their day, may have been superseded by more recent inventions.”³⁶ These conflicting statements indicated that there was no long-term, coherent shipbuilding policy.

The next year, a new secretary, John P. Kennedy, again changed direction, this time advocating the construction of even more steam vessels. Reporting “the principal

maritime nations are now diligently intent upon the effort to build up powerful navies,” he asked for “three first-class screw-propeller frigates, and the same number of propeller sloops-of-war [and] . . . a few smaller steamers.” Kennedy essentially proposed an all steam navy and also boldly urged that Congress authorize “the establishment of one or more factories for the construction of all the machinery necessary to the complete requirements of the largest class of steamers.”³⁷ However, Kennedy served only seven months, leaving office with President Millard Fillmore’s administration.

The incoming Democratic President, Franklin Pierce, selected Southerner James C. Dobbin for his Secretary of the Navy. Dobbin sought to build a navy that could protect American maritime interests around the world and assert neutral rights for commerce. Consequently he urged building “at least six first-class steam-frigate propellers” since he believed those ships had distinct advantages over side or stern-wheel steamers. The screw-propeller arrangement, he asserted, by not “being exposed to the shot of the enemy,” combined “two elements of *progress* – the sail and the steam-engine.” In other words, Dobbin believed the screw-propeller arrangement to be the most versatile and less vulnerable of the options: it freed more deck space for cannon that would otherwise be masked by side-wheels and moved the vulnerable machinery below decks where it was better protected by the hull.³⁸

After some debate, Congress appropriated funds for Dobbin’s six steam frigates and the last of those vessels was launched by the end of 1856. Dobbin also recommended much-needed changes in the contracting process that Congress soon adopted; withholding half of a ship’s construction funding until the vessel was launched,

tested, and met expectations. Those rules were implemented, in part, as a response to the loss of control experienced on the Navy's albatross project, the *Stevens' Battery*. That venture, begun over a decade before, continued to limp along without producing any significant progress, serving as an expensive and highly visible example of the need for reform of the Navy's contracting process.³⁹

During Dobbin's tenure, the Navy also passed up a great opportunity to witness first-hand the successes (and failures) of European naval forces in integrating new technologies in ship design. Multinational conflicts such as the Crimean War provided a laboratory of sorts wherein new ideas and concepts in naval technologies could be tested and improved upon in actual combat conditions. Although not a participant in the Crimean War, the United States nonetheless sought to benefit from the experiences of European combatants by dispatching military observers to glean nuggets of information on "The Art of War in Europe" that might improve its own military forces. To this end, Secretary of War Jefferson Davis dispatched three Army officers under Major Richard Delafield to Europe, who visited the military forces of several combatants on both sides of the conflict. Returning a year later, the team presented their observations in a richly detailed report that circulated widely throughout the American military.⁴⁰ And although the army officers provided a wealth of information on select naval subjects, such as modern naval rifles, floating batteries, hospital ships, ship-fort engagements and the like, their report could have benefitted from the inclusion of a naval officer. By not dispatching its own observers, the Navy missed an invaluable opportunity to better prepare its forces for future conflicts.

Nonetheless, Dobbin did not hesitate to use European examples to support his goal of enhancing American naval power. In his 1854 report, Dobbin alluded to the utility of screw-driven steam sloops in the Crimean War to back his request to construct some for his navy. With a draft of only eighteen feet, he pointed out that such ships could enter any major American port, where larger frigates could not. Dobbin strongly asserted that, given ten screw-driven steam sloops outfitted with fifteen to twenty guns each, the Navy “could annoy the enemy at sea, and penetrate and defend our harbors along the coast inaccessible to the larger class of heavier draught.”⁴¹

Several influential contemporary naval officers later considered Dobbin’s tenure, the first full four-year term served by a Navy Secretary in two decades, as “a time of naval awakening and naval expansion.” Historian Harold Langley concurs, observing that Alfred T. Mahan and George Dewey, both midshipmen during Dobbin’s term, considered it the “last great period of [development] before the Civil War.”⁴²

With the inauguration of Democrat James Buchanan in 1857, Isaac Toucey replaced Dobbin. Fortunately for the naval services, the new secretary pursued many of the same initiatives of his predecessor. Though rising sectional difficulties and the economic distress caused by the Panic of 1857 made it difficult to gain significant funding increases, Toucey managed to take advantage of tensions between Britain and America over the African slave trade to convince the Southern-dominated Naval Committee to build seven shallow-draft steam sloops similar to those proposed earlier by Dobbin. Interestingly, part of his argument centered on his observation that the Navy had few vessels “that can enter most of the harbors south of Norfolk,” and that the

sloops, if built, could fill that need. By 1860, seven had been built and placed in service, just in time to perform that mission during the Civil War. And in his last report in 1860, Toucey cogently recommended that all newly-constructed Navy vessels be propelled by steam, and that some older warships be refitted as steamers.⁴³

Although not considered a particularly strong secretary, Toucey attempted to make the Navy as efficient and functional as circumstances would permit. Concerning operations, Toucey's introduction of steam power, along with the coaling stations to support it, helped make the African Squadron effective in its role for the first time in its four decades of existence. In addition, his purchase of commercial steamers as auxiliary naval vessels enabled the Punitive Expedition to Paraguay in 1859-1860 to succeed as the largest overseas deployment of combat power since the Mexican War. Toucey also proved supportive of other technology initiatives in the area of ordnance. And, Toucey provided the Marine Corps with excellent support, authorizing the transfer of artillery and ammunition to the Corps and allowing some of its officers to attend the artillery course at West Point. Each of those initiatives helped create a more capable Navy and Marine Corps. However, as a southern sympathizer and an avid devotee of his president (James Buchanan), Toucey did little to ready the Navy or its personnel for combating a Southern rebellion, even when that threat loomed prominently.⁴⁴

Looking at the period between 1815 and 1861, the pursuit of American naval steam vessels proved a discontinuous and fragmented process. Responsibility for this properly rests on the shoulders of the naval leaders for failing to articulate a clear position on new technologies and ideas. The dizzying succession of different

administrators, each changing their minds abruptly and frequently regarding the types of ships that the service required, made it extremely difficult to plan for long-range requirements. Not until late in the period did the combination of having full-term navy secretaries and the creation of advisory boards coupled with service-led construction and inspection efforts produce some level of consistency in the process. Although they gained some limited success by adopting commercial steam propulsion systems to military use, the efforts failed to produce a modern, serviceable ironclad warship in the years before the Civil War.

The developing of more powerful, safer, and more versatile naval weapons followed a different path. During the same period of time, great leaps were made in the area of naval armament: what Spencer Tucker refers to as a “Revolution in Naval Ordnance.” In the War of 1812, most ships’ guns were muzzle-loading, smooth-bore short cannons that were dependent on tactics designed for close-range, massed broadside salvos to inflict enough damage to the enemy’s ship and crew to force surrender. The Napoleonic Wars in Europe accelerated the development of more powerful artillery pieces and the use of experimental shells, vice shot, as a way of increasing the destructive power of projectiles. In 1824, the development of the French Paixhans shell, named for its inventor Henri-Joseph Paixhans, demonstrated that wooden naval ships could not withstand the greater explosive and penetrating power of shells and consequently sparked a naval arms race.⁴⁵

Initially, the American fleet’s adopting of modern naval artillery faced many of the same challenges seen with other new technologies: the old system had worked fine

for the more senior naval leaders, so why change? Not surprisingly, many of the same naval leaders who favored iron construction and steam power also embraced new naval artillery designs; conversely, the same men who resisted steam and iron also generally opposed shells and high-velocity guns. One of the early proponents for the new Paixhans type shells was Matthew Perry, who enthusiastically tested and evaluated several different artillery and shell designs while captain of the *Fulton II*. Impressed with his findings, in 1840 Secretary Paulding ordered Perry to continue that effort, hoping to use Perry's data to support the purchase of shells for some of the larger guns in the fleet. Research on naval guns continued until the *Princeton* accident in 1844, when that episode placed a damper on experiments.⁴⁶

On 25 June 1844, Secretary Mason dispatched two officers to Europe to learn more about France's ordnance standardization program. That same year Mason instituted his own board to investigate and recommend a similar standardizing of naval ordnance for the American fleet. His goal was to simplify the logistical nightmare of having to supply the many different calibers of shot/shell in use throughout the navy, by possibly cutting down on the many types and sizes of guns that could be found even on a single warship. By 1847, the board had succeeded in its task, and soon after almost the entire Navy had adopted a new system of deploying only six models of 32-pounder cannons and two versions of an 8-inch shell gun. It also doubled the number of shell guns on all ships. Of course, ships carried lesser guns as well, particularly on the smaller vessels, but the move was "beneficial in that it greatly simplified the types of shot and charges and eliminated possible costly error in battle."⁴⁷ With the nation then at war

with Mexico, this single initiative greatly simplified the required resupply and rearming of the fleet, saving precious resources.

During the latter half of the 1840s, Lieutenant John A. Dahlgren became one of the premier experts in the field of naval ordnance, and his stabilizing influence added structure to the Navy's development of ships' weapon systems. He had been one of the first Americans to learn of the capabilities of Paixhans' shells, and had also served on the successful ordnance standardization board. In 1847, Dahlgren successfully adapted the highly experimental Hale rockets for naval service against Mexico. But his major career achievement lay in his research, testing, and developing of new naval guns for the fleet.⁴⁸

To support his tests, Dahlgren first created a naval test range along the Anacostia River in Maryland, applying the same principles he learned in the coast survey to accurately survey the range. Once established, Dahlgren used the range extensively to experiment with various guns, and eventually designing his own series of weapons. The Dahlgren gun, as it was called, took into account the common metallurgical flaws all too often encountered by ships' gunners with sometimes fatal results. He added more metal around the vital breech area, and cast less metal around the lower-stressed muzzle area. The result was a lighter, yet safer gun, thus solving two problems at once. Furthermore, his detailed testing of guns with various bore sizes and shell combinations led him to recommend that the navy move away from 32-pounders and instead adopt more accurate and longer-range combinations.⁴⁹

Dahlgren also designed versatile small boat howitzers that proved especially valuable to Marines in several landing force operations, in particular the assault against the Barrier Forts in China in 1856. Despite occasional conflicts with his immediate supervisors, some of whom “disapproved [of] Dahlgren’s ideas and methods,” Dahlgren’s work bore fruit. In 1854, the Navy adopted the 9-inch Dahlgren gun as the standard armament for the USS *Merrimack*, the first of a new class of screw frigates. The success of that trial helped Dahlgren convince Secretary Toucey in 1857 to use the sloop *Plymouth* as a test platform for an 11-inch Dahlgren pivot gun – the pivot being yet another ordnance innovation (see Figure 2-7). That same year (1857), Dahlgren’s crew fired 121 11-inch and 230 9-inch shells from the decks of the *Plymouth* “without experiencing any of the difficulties usually supposed to render such heavy ordnance nearly unavailable on shipboard,” dispelling “all remaining doubt” about the weapons.⁵⁰

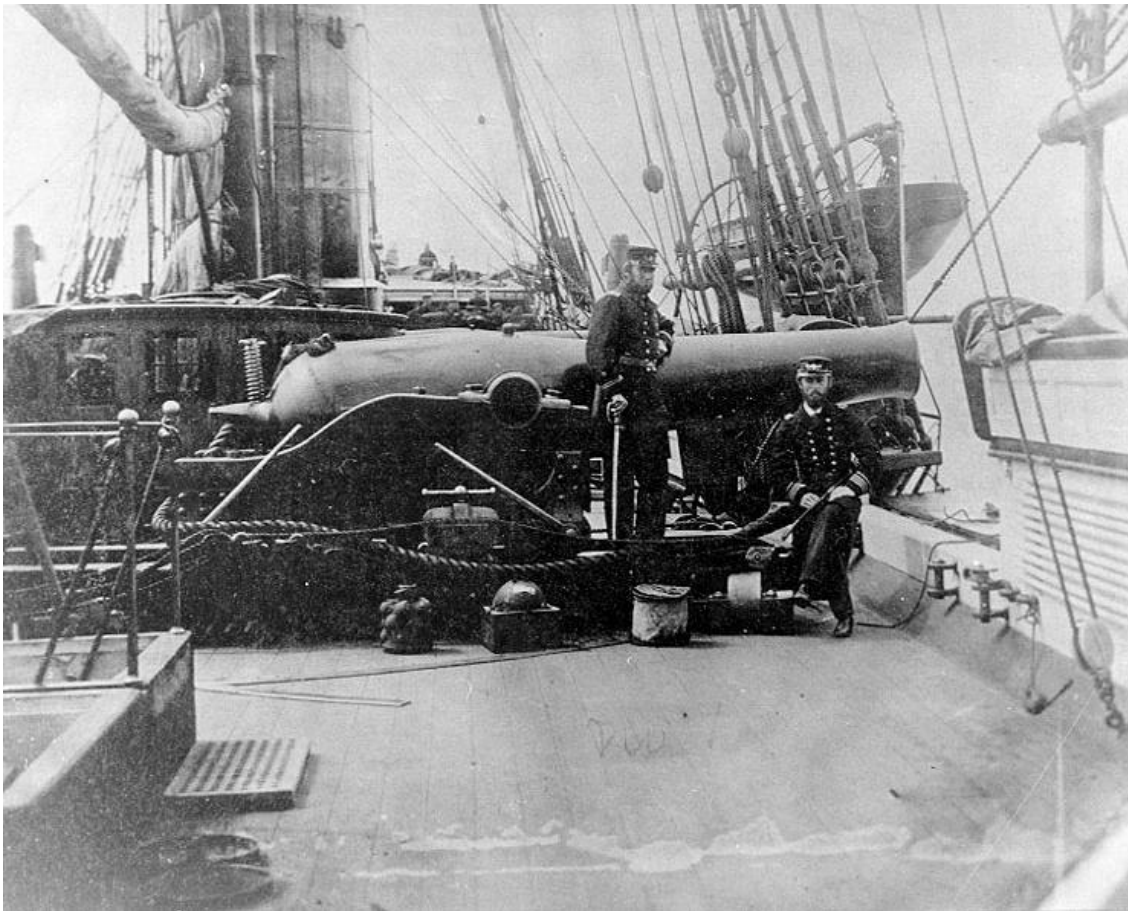


Figure 2-7. 11-inch Dahlgren Pivot Gun on the USS *Kearsarge* (1864).⁵¹

Understanding that a warship's main purpose is to place naval guns where they could best engage the enemy, Secretary Toucey could confidently report in 1858 that "In the Dahlgren gun we have found what we want, and it is believed there is no gun in any service that surpasses it." Meanwhile, the Navy's own foundries, machine shops, and gun-carriage manufacturers, all established under Dahlgren's watchful eye, freed the service from having to deal with sometimes unreliable outside contractors and helped ensure a level of quality that enhanced the Dahlgren gun's standing. Flush with success, Dahlgren turned to the developing of even larger guns and conducting experiments with

rifled cannon.⁵² And by 1861, Dahlgren's guns could be found throughout the nation, where they were thereafter used with great effectiveness by both sides.

Surveying American naval ship construction and weapons development supports two major points of analysis. First, particularly with regard to the transitioning from wind to steam power, the Navy's harnessing of modern technology into its vessels was sporadic and overly dependent on the influence of certain key personalities rather than any deliberate plan. When a particular leader did manage to gain authority to experiment with a particular new concept, the effort was all too frequently cancelled or changed by the next, further frustrating the efforts of reformers to modernize the American Navy. The development of naval ordnance was less sporadic, due to the prominence of certain dominant persons whose expertise in that field outweighed the voices of critics and opponents to change.

Second, even when the Navy gained an improved capability, it lacked a system to develop the new tactics, techniques and procedures to maximize the advantages of the technology. Such a system would have helped the Navy as an institution benefit from the new potential by properly matching tactics to capability. It would also help to identify shortfalls in either, that could then be properly addressed by leaders. Shortfalls in either capabilities or tactics represent combat requirements. Once identified, plans can then be developed to fulfill those requirements. This type of process can also add structure to a defined research and development effort to produce a more fully integrated capability. But without having a process or system to integrate new equipment with proper tactics, the full potential of the weapon may go unrealized. For example, when

Dahlgren's efforts bore fruit by producing safer, more powerful, and increasingly accurate naval guns, the Navy at first simply used the new guns to replace old ones, and continued to use the same tactics employed with the older weapons. A more effective approach might have been to replace all older ordnance on a vessel with the new weapons, and then develop new tactics to advantageously engage enemies at greater distances. The latter approach would have allowed ships equipped with Dahlgren's guns to hit enemy targets from ranges beyond that which the enemy could hit with inferior guns. Similarly, if that range advantage were coupled with new tactics to maximize on the use of steam power that freed vessels from the vagaries of wind, one can see the extra benefits that might be gained in combat over enemy forces as compared to older, close engagements to deliver massed, broadside fires as done in the War of 1812.

The problem, however, went beyond the absence of a system to develop tactics to fit capability. Even if new tactics were developed to fit the increased capabilities derived from the integrating of new technologies in modern ships, the Navy Department did not have the means to capture and disseminate standard lessons learned until the creation of the Naval Academy in 1845. Before then, the Navy relied on individual ship captains for that purpose, an inefficient and fragmentary effort at best. Furthermore, many of those same captains constituted the largest body of resistance to new ideas and many were wholly unfamiliar with emerging concepts, technologies or tactics to begin with. And even with the Academy, decades passed before it found itself in a position to teach new officers about the latest technological or scientific advances. For example, according to historian Harold Langley, steamers were not regularly assigned to it for

practice ships until after the Civil War, making that institution of little value in teaching new officers practical information they might need about steam propulsion.⁵³

Since no formal mechanism existed within the Navy Department to develop the new tactics or procedures to match the increased capabilities, many warships engaged enemies using essentially the same methods employed in the War of 1812. In truth, the problem went even deeper. Not only was there no single system to develop new tactics, in the critical field of naval gunnery there were few gunnery procedures or drills that were standardized at a level beyond that of an individual ship. Gunnery procedures, even commands, varied widely from ship to ship and sometimes even gun to gun, making it more difficult to develop cohesive and efficient gun crews. Even seasoned sailors required some amount of additional training to gain proficiency with a particular gun captain's methods and commands. Historian Spencer Tucker cites the excellent example of one gunner in 1850: "when he first entered the service, there were twenty-seven separate [commands] for exercising the guns in his division, whereas another officer on the same ship received only three commands – fire, load, and run out."⁵⁴ In the area of gunnery, at least, Marine gun crews had a distinct advantage over their Navy brethren by the simple virtue of having all been trained in one system by Marine officers who, in turn received all their instruction from one focal point: the Corps' Adjutant and Inspector's training cadre. With their standardized procedures, Marines could more easily increase gun crew proficiency, a factor not wasted on ships' captains eager to eke out greater combat efficiencies from their crews.

This examination illustrates that the Navy Department adopted new concepts and technologies in a haphazard manner in the decades before the Civil War. Furthermore, it had no defined system of integrating capabilities with tactics. Of greater relevance to this study is that no consideration was given to the ways that the naval modernization effort might affect the overall mission of the Marine Corps in naval warfare. Part of the reason lies in the fact that the Navy had no clear visualization of how the adopting of faster, more versatile steam vessels, greater armor and longer range, more accurate and deadly armament might change its own methods of fighting. And, if the Navy could not systematize its own adapting to the changing face of naval warfare and create new tactics, techniques and procedures to fully realize the technological gains, who could expect it to understand how those same changes might affect the Marine Corps?

Another factor is that the Navy Department, since its earliest years, typically administered the Marine Corps with a paternalistic sense of benign neglect, paying little attention to the service unless a problem surfaced. Until it was dissolved in 1842, the Board of Navy Commissioners did not include Marine representation and that body consequently only addressed specific Marine Corps issues that threatened to impact the Navy at large; issues such as manning, regulations, pay and allowances, and the like.⁵⁵ When the old Board of Navy Commissioners system made way for the forming of separate functional bureaus, again Marines were excluded. Although it would have been quite easy (and more effective) to detail a Marine officer to the Bureau of Ordnance and Hydrography to represent the Corps' interests in weapons or ordnance issues, that step was not even considered. A similar situation existed at the highest levels of the Navy

Department. In general, the various secretaries of the navy and their staffs remained interested mainly in ensuring that adequate numbers of Marines were assigned to ships and shore stations, and little attention was paid to how they were employed except when problems arose.⁵⁶

In the decades before the Civil War, the Navy Department paid little attention to the Marine Corps unless a problem arose. As an institution, it invested little time or effort considering how new technologies and capabilities might affect the roles and missions of the Marine Corps in naval warfare; there were enough problems determining how those factors would affect the Navy. Marine problems were left to the Corps' own leaders to solve, unless the problem had some direct bearing on the Navy. And with the changing nature of naval warfare gradually making traditional roles and missions of Marines on ship less relevant and even obsolescent, the future of the Marine Corps was therefore left by default largely in the hands of Marine leaders. Some of those leaders would prove more effective than others in dealing with those issues.

Endnotes

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- ¹ In many Union sources, the *Virginia* is referred to by the name given to the wooden hulled steam frigate on whose hull it was reconstructed: the USS *Merrimack*. In addition, many contemporary (and some modern) writers added to the confusion by misspelling the ship's name as *Merrimac*. For more information, see Navy Department, *Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships* (hereafter *DANFS*) (Internet Reference Publication) (Washington, D.C.: Naval Historical Center), available on the Internet at: <<http://www.history.navy.mil/danfs/index.html>>, last accessed on 2 September 2009.
- ² Commander William Radford, U.S. Navy, to Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles, Fortress Monroe, Va., 10 March 1862, reprinted in U.S. Navy Department, *Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of the Rebellion*, 30 vols. and index (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1894-1922), Series I, 7: 20-21 (hereafter cited as *ORN*, and all citations are to Series I, unless otherwise noted); "Report of Lieutenant Austin Pendergrast, U.S. Navy, to Captain John Marston, Senior Naval Officer," Fortress Monroe, Virginia, 9 March 1862, reprinted in *ORN*, 7: 23-24; "Report of the Secretary of the Navy of the Confederate States," [Confederate States] Navy Department, Richmond, Va., 11 March 1862, reprinted in *ORN*, 7: 41-43; "Message of the President of the Confederate States, transmitting to [Confederate States] Congress the report of Flag-Officer [Franklin] Buchanan," C.S. Navy, Executive Department, Richmond, Va., 10 April 1862, reprinted in *ORN*, 7: 43-49; John Taylor Wood, "The First Fight of the Iron-Clads," *The Century* 29 (March 1885), 738-44; Craig L. Symonds, *Decision at Sea: Five Naval Battles that Shaped American History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 85-87, 107-13.
- ³ From Wood, "First Fight of Iron-Clads," 743.
- ⁴ *ORN*, 7: 8-11, 23-24, 35-36, 41-42, 44-46, 52-54; Wood, "First Fight of Iron-Clads," 742-43; R. E. Colston, "Watching the 'Merrimac[k]'," *The Century* 29 (March 1885), 764-65, quote from 764; Symonds, *Decision at Sea*, 113-17.
- ⁵ Lieutenant James H. Rochelle, C.S. Navy, to Flag-Officer John R. Tucker, CSS *Palmetto State*, Charleston, S.C., 30 January 1865, reprinted in *ORN*, 7: 49-54, quote from 53.
- ⁶ *ORN*, 7: 11-12, 25, 45-47, 53-54; Wood, "First Fight of Iron-Clads," 744-47; Samuel Dana Greene, "In the *Monitor* Turret," *The Century* 29 (March 1885), 754-62; Symonds, *Decision at Sea*, 119-32.

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- ⁷ See Howard J. Fuller, *Clad in Iron: The American Civil War and the Challenge of British Naval Power* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger Press, 2008), xiii-xxix, 3-12, 73-93, quote from 87.
- ⁸ Symonds, *Decision at Sea*, 136-37, quote from 137.
- ⁹ William Frederick Keeler, *Aboard the USS Monitor: 1862*, Robert W. Daly, ed., (Annapolis: Naval Institute, 1964); John Thomas Scharf, *History of the Confederate States Navy From Its Organization to the Surrender of Its Last Vessel* (New York: Rogers & Sherwood, 1887), 155, 169, 687, 771; Michael E. Krivdo, "The Birth, Life and Death of the Confederate States Marine Corps" (M.A. thesis, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas, 2006), 209-10.
- ¹⁰ See Paolo E. Coletta, ed., *American Secretaries of the Navy*, 2 vols. (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1980), 1: 123-357, for excellent characterizations of the various navy secretaries and their performance. For observations regarding the Board of Navy Commissioners' outlook of "opposition to anything new, whether a new method or a new type of ship . . .," see Howard I. Chapelle, *The History of the American Sailing Navy* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1949), 362, quote from same; and John H. Schroeder, *Commodore John Rodgers: Paragon of the Early American Navy* (Gainesville, Fla.: University Press of Florida, 2006).
- ¹¹ Christopher McKee, "The US Navy, 1794-1860: Men, Ships, and Governance," in James C. Bradford, ed., *A Companion to American Military History*, 2 vols. (Malden, Mass.: Wiley-Blackwell Publishing Co., 2010), 1: 379-80, quote from 379.
- ¹² Analysis of the author based on examination of several sources such as: Charles Oscar Paullin, *Paullin's History of Naval Administration, 1775-1911* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1968); Chapelle, *History of the American Sailing Navy*; Coletta, ed., *American Secretaries of the Navy*, 1: 113-357; and selected documents from Record Group (hereafter abbreviated as RG) 45 (Naval Records Collection of the Office of Naval Records and Library), National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C. (hereafter abbreviated as NA); and RG 80 (General Records of the Dept. of the Navy, Records of the Office of the Secretary of the Navy), NA.
- ¹³ DANFS, "Fulton I," last accessed on 1 March 2010; Frank L. Owsley, Jr., "William Jones," in Coletta, ed., *American Secretaries of the Navy*, 1: 107-108, quote from 108; Edwin M. Hall, "Benjamin W. Crowninshield," in *ibid.*, 1: 117-19; Howard I. Chapelle, *Fulton's "Steam Battery": Blockship and Catamaran*, U.S. National Museum Bulletin 240 (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1964), 142-44.

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- ¹⁴ DANFS, “*Fulton I*,” last accessed on 1 March 2010.
- ¹⁵ Edwin M. Hall, “Smith Thompson,” in Coletta, ed., *American Secretaries of the Navy*, 1: 124.
- ¹⁶ Hall, “Smith Thompson,” 1: 123-128, first quote from 127, second from 126; and Chapelle, *History of the American Sailing Navy*, 324-34, third quote from 324.
- ¹⁷ Edwin M. Hall, “Samuel Lewis Southard,” in Coletta, ed., *American Secretaries of the Navy*, 1: 131-40, quote from 137; Navy Secretary Southard to James Lloyd, Chairman of the Naval Committee, U.S. Senate, 7 January 1824; and Southard to Benjamin W. Crowninshield, Chairman of the House Committee on Naval Affairs, 7 January 1824, both reprinted in *American State Papers* (hereafter *ASP*) 023, Naval Affairs, vol. 1, 18th Congress, 1st Session, Senate Executive Publication 233, 898-99; Report, “Ten Additional Sloops of War,” Crowninshield to U.S. Senate, 24 January 1824, reprinted in *ASP* 023, Naval Affairs, vol. 1, 18th Cong., 1st Sess., S. Pub. 234, 900; and Navy Dept., “Condition of the Navy and Marine Corps,” *ASP* 023, Naval Affairs vol. 1, 18th Cong., 2nd Sess., Pub. 249, 7 December 1824 (hereafter “SecNav Annual Report, 1824”), 1005.
- ¹⁸ W. Patrick Strauss, “Mahlon Dickerson,” in Coletta, ed., *American Secretaries of the Navy*, 155-59, first quote from 158; Navy Dept., “Annual Report of the Secretary of the Navy,” *ASP* 026, Naval Affairs vol. 4, 23rd Cong., 2nd Sess., Pub. 564, 2 December 1834 (hereafter “SecNav Annual Report, 1834”), 589-90, 613, second quote from 590; Navy Dept., “Annual Report of the Secretary of the Navy,” *U.S. Congressional Serial Set* (hereafter *Serial Set*) 344, Sess., vol. 1, 25th Cong., 3rd Sess., H. Doc. 2, 4 December 1838 (hereafter “SecNav Annual Report, 1838”), third quote from 545.
- ¹⁹ Andrew Jackson, “Message From the President of the United States to the Two Houses of Congress,” 8 December 1829, *Serial Set* 192, Sess. vol. 1, 21st Cong., 1st Sess., S. Doc. 1, 17-18, first quote from 17; Andrew Jackson, “Message From the President of the United States to the Two Houses of Congress,” 8 December 1835, *Serial Set* 279, Sess. vol. 1, 24th Cong., 1st Sess., S. Doc. 1, second and third quotes from 25; Andrew Jackson, “Message From the President of the United States to the Two Houses of Congress,” 6 December 1836, *Serial Set* 301, Sess. vol. 1, 24th Cong., 2nd Sess., House Doc. 1, 21.
- ²⁰ John Rodgers to Secretary Dickerson, Navy Commissioners’ Office, 2 March 1836, reprinted in “On the Means and Measures Necessary for the Military and Naval Defences of the Country,” *ASP* 021, Military Affairs, vol. 6, 24th Cong., 1st Sess., Pub. 671, 8 April 1836 (hereafter “Military and Naval Defences of the Country”),

365, 399-403, quotes from 365 and 400, respectively. For a discussion of the flaws inherent in Rodgers' stated policies in that document, see Schroeder, *John Rodgers*, 205-06.

- ²¹ Strauss, "Mahlon Dickerson," 1: 160-61; *DANFS*, "*Fulton II*," last accessed 1 March 2010; and Navy Dept., "Annual Report of the Secretary of the Navy," *Serial Set* 363, Sess. vol. 1, 26th Cong., 1st Sess., H. Doc. 2, 24 December 1839 (hereafter "SecNav Annual Report, 1839"), 533; according to Navy Dept., "Annual Report of the Secretary of the Navy," *Serial Set* 977, Sess. vol. 4, 35th Cong., 2nd Sess., S. Exec. Doc. 1, 6 December 1858 (hereafter "SecNav Annual Report, 1858"), 684, a Sergeant's Guard of one First Sergeant, two corporals, and ten Marines were assigned to the *Fulton II*; John H. Schroeder, "Matthew Calbraith Perry," in James C. Bradford, ed., *Captains of the Old Steam Navy: Makers of the American Naval Tradition, 1840-1880* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1988), 8-9, quote from 8.
- ²² Photo from Still Picture Records Section, Special Media Archives Services Division (NWCS-S), ARC Identifier 529956, NA.
- ²³ Van Buren as quoted in Harold and Margaret Sprout, *The Rise of American Naval Power, 1776 to 1918* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1946), 113; and as cited in W. Patrick Strauss, "James Kirke Paulding," in Coletta, ed., *American Secretaries of the Navy*, 1: 166.
- ²⁴ *Ibid.*, 1: 166.
- ²⁵ *Ibid.*, 1: 165-71, quote from 166; John Schroeder, "Matthew Calbraith Perry," 8-9.
- ²⁶ Navy Dept., "Annual Report of the Secretary of the Navy," *Serial Set* 395, Sess. vol. 1, 27th Cong., 2nd Sess., S. Doc. 1, 7 December 1841 (hereafter "SecNav Annual Report, 1841"), 381-82, quotes from 381 and 382, respectively; Paolo E. Coletta, "Abel Parker Upshur," in Coletta, ed., *American Secretaries of the Navy*, 1: 183-84; Claude H. Hall, *Abel Parker Upshur, Conservative Virginian, 1790-1844* (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1964), 125-31.
- ²⁷ "SecNav Annual Report, 1841," 372; Coletta, "Abel Parker Upshur," 1: 184.
- ²⁸ Coletta, "Abel Parker Upshur," 1: 184.
- ²⁹ Navy Dept. Photo, Lithograph by N. Currier, New York, 1844, Image # NH 42371, Photographic Branch, Naval Historical Center, Washington, D.C. (hereafter NHC).

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- ³⁰ Coletta, "Abel Parker Upshur," 1: 184-85; Hall, *Abel Parker Upshur*, 172-73, although the biography is silent regarding the *Steven's Battery/Naugatuck* project; *DANFS*, entries "Allegheny I," "Michigan I," "Union I," "Water Witch I," "Water Witch II," "Steven's Battery," and "Naugatuck," last accessed on 1 March 2010. The ironclad has also been referred as the *E.A. Stevens* and sometimes identified as a Revenue Service ship.
- ³¹ Navy Dept. Photo, Line engraving published in *Harper's Weekly*, circa spring 1862, when the gunboat was operating in the Hampton Roads area, Virginia, Image # NH 58871, Photographic Branch, NHC.
- ³² *National Intelligencer*, 4 March 1844; Hall, *Abel Parker Upshur*, 209-12; Coletta, "Abel Parker Upshur," 1: 194; *Niles' National Register* 56: 1-2, 20-21.
- ³³ Secretary Bancroft to David Conner, Navy Dept., Washington, D.C., 16 August 1845, RG 45, "Record of Confidential Letters," NA; Conner to Bancroft, 6 September 1845, RG 45, "Home Squadron Letters," NA; K. Jack Bauer, "George Bancroft," in Coletta, ed., *American Secretaries of the Navy*, 1: 219.
- ³⁴ Navy Dept., "Report of the Secretary of the Navy," *Serial Set* 493, Sess. vol. 1, 29th Cong., 2nd Sess., Sen. Doc. 1, 8 December 1846 (hereafter "SecNav Annual Report, 1846"), 380-83, 630-35; Bauer, "George Bancroft," 1: 219-227. Also see K. Jack Bauer, *Surfboats and Horse Marines* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1969).
- ³⁵ Navy Dept., "Report of the Secretary of the Navy, 1847," *Serial Set* 503, Sess. vol. 1, 30th Cong., 1st Sess., Sen. Exec. Doc. 1, 7 December 1847 (hereafter "SecNav Annual Report, 1847"), 954; U.S. Congress, *Statutes at Large*, 18 vols., 29th Cong., 2nd Sess., Chap. LXII, "An Act Providing for the Building and Equipping of Four Naval Steamships," 3 March 1847, 9: 187; Bauer, "John Young Mason," 1: 233; Harold D. Langley, "William Ballard Preston," in Coletta, ed., *American Secretaries of the Navy*, 1: 245-46; Schroeder, "Matthew Calbraith Perry," 13.
- ³⁶ Navy Dept., "Report of the Secretary of the Navy, 1851," *Serial Set* 612, Sess. vol. 2, 32nd Cong., 1st Sess., S. Exec. Doc. 1, 2 December 1851 (hereafter "SecNav Annual Report, 1851"), 8-9, quotes from 9; Harold D. Langley, "William Alexander Graham," in Coletta, ed., *American Secretaries of the Navy*, 1: 263.
- ³⁷ Navy Dept., "Report of the Secretary of the Navy, 1852," *Serial Set* 674, Sess. vol. 1, 32nd Cong., 2nd Sess., H. Exec. Doc. 1, 6 December 1852 (hereafter "SecNav Annual Report, 1852"), 320-21, first three quotes from 320, fourth quote from 321.

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- ³⁸ Navy Dept., “Report of the Secretary of the Navy, 1853,” *Serial Set 712*, Sess. vol. 1, 33rd Cong., 1st Sess., H. Exec. Doc. 1, 6 December 1853 (hereafter “SecNav Annual Report, 1853”), 309-11, first quote from 310, remaining quotes from 309, italicized emphasis in original; Harold D. Langley, “James Cochrane Dobbin,” in *American Secretaries of the Navy*, 1: 285-86.
- ³⁹ “SecNav Annual Report, 1853,” 302-03, quote from 302; Langley, “James Cochrane Dobbin,” 1: 286-87; *DANFS*, entries “*Naugatuck*,” and “*Stevens’ Battery*,” last accessed 1 March 2010.
- ⁴⁰ For information as to the scope and content of the Military Observers’ Report, see Richard Delafield, “Report on the Art of War in Europe,” *Serial Set 1035*, Sess. vol. 14, 36th Cong., 1st Sess., S. Exec. Doc. 59; and Matthew Moten, *The Delafield Commission and the American Military Profession* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2000).
- ⁴¹ Navy Dept., “Report of the Secretary of the Navy, 1854,” *Serial Set 747*, Sess. vol. 2, 33rd Cong., 2nd Sess., S. Exec. Doc. 1, 4 December 1854 (hereafter “SecNav Annual Report, 1854”), 390-93; “Report of the Secretary of the Navy, 1856,” *Serial Set 876*, Sess. vol. 3, 34th Cong., 3rd Sess., S. Exec. Doc. 5, 2 December 1856 (hereafter “SecNav Annual Report, 1856”), 413-414, quote from 414; Langley, “James Cochrane Dobbin,” 1: 286.
- ⁴² Langley, “James Cochrane Dobbin,” 1: 286-87, quotes from 287.
- ⁴³ Navy Dept., “Report of the Secretary of the Navy, 1857,” *Serial Set 944*, Sess. vol. 2, 35th Cong., 1st Sess., H. Exec. Doc. 2, 8 December 1857 (hereafter “SecNav Annual Report, 1857”), 584-85, quote from 585; Sprout, et al, *American Naval Power*, 146-47; Navy Dept., “Report of the Secretary of the Navy, 1860,” *Serial Set 1080*, Sess. vol. 3, 36th Cong., 2nd Sess., S. Exec. Doc. 1, 4 December 1860 (hereafter “SecNav Annual Report, 1860”), 3-5; Harold D. Langley, “Isaac Toucey,” in Coletta, ed., *American Secretaries of the Navy*, 1: 305-306.
- ⁴⁴ Langley, “Isaac Toucey,” 1: 303-318. For information regarding the impact of steam vessels on the increased capabilities of the African Squadron, see Donald L. Canney, *African Squadron: The U.S. Navy and the African Slave Trade, 1842-1861* (Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, 2006), 201-27; for information regarding the operations of the punitive expedition to Paraguay, see Michael E. Krivdo, “Last Action of the ‘Henderson Era,’” *Fortitudine* 34 (October 2009), 10.
- ⁴⁵ Spencer Tucker, *Arming the Fleet: U.S. Navy Ordnance in the Muzzle-Loading Era* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1989), 170-83, quote from chapter title on

170; John V. Quarstein, *A History of Ironclads: The Power of Iron Over Wood* (Charleston, S.C.: History Press, 2006), 42-43.

- ⁴⁶ Tucker, *Arming the Fleet*, 184-87; Strauss, “Mahlon Dickerson,” 1: 160-61; Strauss, “James Kirke Paulding,” 168; *National Intelligencer*, 4 March 1844; Coletta, “Abel Parker Upshur,” 1: 194; Bauer, “Thomas Walker Gilmer,” 1: 204.
- ⁴⁷ Tucker, *Arming the Fleet*, 151-52, 190-98, quote from 151; Bauer, “John Young Mason,” 1: 210.
- ⁴⁸ Tucker, *Arming the Fleet*, 200; David K. Allison, “John A. Dahlgren: Innovator in Uniform,” in Bradford, ed., *Captains of the Old Steam Navy*, 30-32.
- ⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 32-35; Tucker, *Arming the Fleet*, 200.
- ⁵⁰ Allison, “John A. Dahlgren,” 32-35; Tucker, *Arming the Fleet*, 200-07; “SecNav Annual Report, 1857,” 579, 603-20, quotes from 579; Langley, “Isaac Toucey,” 1: 306-07. In 1857, after years of lobbying on the part of Marine Commandant Archibald Henderson, the Marine Corps received two 32-pounder cannon and four Dahlgren guns for training its men in artillery gunnery; see “SecNav Annual Report, 1857,” 581.
- ⁵¹ Navy Dept. Photo, “Forward 11-inch Dahlgren Pivot Gun on USS *Kearsarge*, 1864,” Image # NH 61671, Photographic Branch, NHC.
- ⁵² Tucker, *Arming the Fleet*, 209-16; “SecNav Annual Report, 1858,” quote from 7; Allison, “John A. Dahlgren,” 35-38; Langley, “Isaac Toucey,” 1: 307.
- ⁵³ Langley, “Isaac Toucey,” 1: 308-09.
- ⁵⁴ Tucker, *Arming the Fleet*, 43-44. Under Archibald Henderson’s commandancy, all Marine officers were trained before deploying aboard ship at one location (Washington, D.C. Marine Barracks) and under the supervision of one set of training officers. This approach instilled proficiency with common tactics, techniques and procedures among the officers. After 1857, the addition of artillery and ammunition to train with and officers schooled at the Artillery Course in West Point meant that the same standardized procedures could be imparted to all recruits and other enlisted Marines as well. See Chapter 3.
- ⁵⁵ Observations regarding the Board of Naval Commissioners are the product of the author’s analysis of the records of the board’s deliberations as found in RG 45, NA; RG 127 (Field Organization Records, Records of the United States Marine Corps), NA; and RG 80, NA.

⁵⁶ Author's analysis of the actions of the several secretaries of the Navy as found in RG 45, NA; RG 127, NA; RG 80, NA; and covered in secondary works such as Coletta, ed., *American Secretaries of the Navy*; see also William P. Leeman, *The Long Road to Annapolis: The Founding of the Naval Academy and the Emerging American Republic* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 174, 237, for the opening of the Naval Academy to Marine prospects; and "Proceedings of Certain Officers of the Navy and Marine Corps, Recommending the Establishment of a Naval Academy," ASP 026, Naval Affairs vol. 4, 24th Cong., 1st Sess., Pub. 628, 23 April 1836, wherein both Marine and Navy officers contributed letters of support for the establishment of an academy that would benefit both services. Despite Marine officers being actively involved in requesting the establishment of a Naval Academy, graduates of that institution were not allowed to select Marine service after graduation until 1882.

CHAPTER III

ARCHIBALD HENDERSON'S MARINE CORPS

Taking advantage of the cooler temperatures in the late Florida afternoon on 4 May 1837, Brevet Brigadier General Archibald Henderson, Commandant of the Marine Corps, sat down to pen a letter to his wife, Anne. With his long campaign against Creek and Seminole Indians drawing to a close, he wanted to tell Anne that he would soon be home. Even within such an intimate communication, Henderson's pride in his achievements during what was known as the Second Seminole War found its way into the letter. And he had a lot to be proud of. Then fifty-four years old, an age when many persons were content to follow a more sedentary lifestyle, Henderson instead did something that no other military service chief had done since the Revolution: he personally led his troops into combat. With a touch of self-satisfaction, he informed Anne that he "never sleep[s] out of the camp and have now been near eleven months continuously in tents in the field." However, petty rivalries also crept in and he could not resist contrasting his dedication to duty with that of Lieutenant Colonel Samuel Miller, his next senior Marine officer, who "has never left Tampa for the field and has [even] gone to Havannah [*sic*] in one of the cutters for a visit."¹

Internal discord aside, Henderson returned to his favorite subject, the Marines, and boasted of how their aggressive patrolling had succeeded in depriving hostile Indians of a refuge and forcing many of the enemy to sue for peace. In the field, surrounded by the camp tents of his fellow Marines, he took comfort that his men had worked alongside

army troops in a new role and mission; to help restore order and federal control over a rugged and often violent frontier. And, to his personal credit, Henderson's performance in the field earned him new, ground-breaking commands; first of an army artillery regiment and then the command of a full brigade comprised of regular army, Marine, militia and volunteer troops. In the end, his "distinguished services in the Creek and Seminole campaigns" earned him his brevet promotion to brigadier general; the highest rank ever bestowed on a Marine officer at that time.² Now, sitting on the banks of the Hillsborough River in central Florida, his mission nearly over, he had time to both reflect on his accomplishments to that point, and also to look forward to the next challenges for his beloved Corps. Having served as Commandant for sixteen years, Henderson already had achieved more than all previous Commandants combined, yet he had even higher goals in mind.

This chapter explores the influence and actions of Archibald Henderson in first saving the Marine Corps as a service, then forging it into a more efficient and important element of the national military establishment. It examines his role in modernizing the unit in terms of both its roles and missions as well as in acquiring and employing newer, more efficient technologies and equipment. It also appraises Henderson's efforts to institutionalize practices intended to increase the professionalization of the officer corps and enhance the general proficiency of individual Marines. Henderson's goals and visions for the organization are scrutinized to ascertain the level of progress that he made toward reaching his objectives and institutionalizing his initiatives. The analysis of that

evolution will provide a baseline for comparative assessment of his performance with that of others.

This study argues that Henderson proved to be the right man to lead the Marine Corps at the right time. But who was he? Several historians have assessed Henderson's strengths and weaknesses. According to Allan Millett, "Henderson was politically astute, stubborn, intelligent, and a polished gentleman of considerable charm." He describes Henderson as a complicated man, yet "also a bit of a martinet" who was "no slouch as a bureaucratic infighter and schemer." Nonetheless, Henderson tempered his "burning ambition" with genuine "moral probity, devotion to his Corps, and love of soldiering."³ Joseph Dawson characterizes Henderson as "an exemplary American military leader" whose leadership by personal example guided the Marine Corps through one of the most challenging periods in its history. An intelligent, articulate, and meticulous man, his dedicated and determined effort to improve the Corps allowed him to put "his stamp on future generations of Marines."⁴ A similar picture, by Joseph Alexander, paints Henderson as "an unofficial, outspoken crusader for professionalism and accountability within his own officer corps" who "inherited a tiny Marine Corps in disarray, a marginal naval auxiliary" that, "in less-capable hands . . . would surely have failed to survive another decade."⁵ Henderson was the right man, with the precise skills, to lead his organization through its most challenging period.

Archibald Henderson was born on 21 January 1783 near the town of Dumfries, Virginia, coincidentally only a few miles from the main gate of the modern Marine Corps base at Quantico. From all accounts, "Archie" enjoyed a good childhood growing

up as the fourth son of Alexander and Sarah Henderson. Alexander, a Scottish immigrant who arrived in Virginia in 1756, proved himself a successful merchant with a concurrent appreciation for public service: he served two terms as a delegate in the Virginia General Assembly, as a justice of the peace, and also as a colonel serving under his neighbor (and fellow church-member) George Washington in the Revolutionary War. Following the war, Alexander attended the Mount Vernon Convention of March 1785, a preliminary session that helped lay the groundwork for the Constitutional Convention of 1787.⁶ In any event, Alexander's reputation as a patriot, politician, and respected businessman extended throughout the region.

Alexander's success allowed him to provide his sons with excellent educations and as an adolescent Archibald attended two private academies in Maryland and learned French with the assistance of a tutor. Typical of well-to-do adolescents of the time, Archibald worked for his family's business interests and also sampled a job at an iron foundry near Antietam, but he seemed not to find a niche. He returned to his Dumfries home and, perhaps with some prodding by his parents and siblings, sought out other opportunities. Military service was one option. In his early twenties he applied for military commissions and, on 4 June 1806 his efforts were rewarded with the offer of an appointment as a second lieutenant of Marines. That seemingly inauspicious start led to a career that spanned over fifty years.⁷

Henderson advanced steadily, benefitting from modest expansions of the naval services. Within nine months he received a promotion to first lieutenant and within a year gained command of a detachment of twenty-three Marines aboard the new sloop-of-

war USS *Wasp*. In December 1807, barely eighteen months after he entered the service, Henderson advanced to command a fifty-four man detachment aboard the frigate USS *Constitution*. Afterward, Henderson then served ashore from 1808 to 1811 at several of the Marine barracks that guarded essential naval shore facilities and property. During that time, he also functioned for four months as the adjutant to the Marine Commandant in Washington, D.C. That position provided him with valuable professional experiences, exposure to the bureaucratic system in the capital, and introduced him to the administrative challenges facing the fledgling corps. On 1 April 1811, Henderson gained promotion to the rank of captain and received orders to command the Marine detachment aboard the newly commissioned frigate USS *President*. However, to his chagrin the assignment was short-lived. When the War of 1812 broke out, Archibald found himself far from the action as the commander of the Marine Barracks in Boston, Massachusetts, a post he held until September 1813.⁸

For a time, he thought he might miss the war against Britain altogether. Henderson even toyed with the idea of seeking a transfer to the army to get into the fight. However, on 9 September 1813, Henderson received orders to command his old detachment aboard “Old Ironsides,” the nickname the USS *Constitution* had since earned for its seemingly shot-proof performances in combat. On 20 February 1815, while patrolling off Madeira near the coast of North Africa the *Constitution* (Captain Charles Stewart, USN, commanding) encountered two British warships, the frigate HMS *Cyane* (34 guns) and the sloop HMS *Levant* (21 guns). To deprive the British of their combined advantage, Captain Stewart decided to fight each ship separately. In an impressive

display of seamanship, Stewart opened the attack with a broadside from the *Constitution*'s main batteries and then deftly maneuvered to keep the two enemy ships from combining their fires. Stewart's bold tactics worked: the *Constitution* fought first one enemy warship and then the other, alternating her broadside batteries and avoiding the guns of the enemy ships. For his part, Henderson deployed his Marines "in the tops and from the gangways" to fire on British officers and gunners with their muskets to disrupt the enemy's actions. Within an hour the *Cyane* struck her colors, and the *Levant* followed soon afterward. Henderson's men then provided protection for the prize crews and guarded the captured sailors. At home the details of the *Constitution*'s late triumph at sea captured the attention of the American public and spread rapidly through the popular press.⁹ Importantly, the action provided a victory to a war-weary public that had not seen many successes during the conflict.

For his part in the fight, Captain Henderson received recognition that elevated his reputation in Virginia and the nation's capital. To begin with, Captain Stewart mentioned Henderson personally in his report on the action, stating he "owes his grateful thanks for the lively and well directed fire kept up by the detachment under [Henderson's] command."¹⁰ Among additional accolades, Congress awarded a gold medal to Captain Stewart and silver medals to several junior officers, including both Henderson and another Marine. On 26 April 1816, Congress also awarded Henderson about \$400 in prize money for the capture of the *Cyane*, converted to a U.S. Navy warship.¹¹

After 1815, Henderson held a number of assignments. One post stands out: from 16 September 1818 to 3 March 1819, he served as the acting Commandant of the Marine Corps following the death of Lieutenant Colonel Franklin Wharton. In what appeared to be a dress rehearsal for his later holding of that post, Henderson took over the day-to-day administration of the Corps and consequently learned how to navigate the halls of government to get things accomplished. That experience served him well when, eighteen months later, the new Commandant, Lieutenant Colonel Anthony Gale, was court-martialed and relieved from that office. Almost immediately, on 19 December 1820, President James Madison nominated Archibald Henderson, as the next senior Marine officer, “to be Lieutenant Colonel Commandant of Marines, to take rank from the 17th day of October, 1820,” the official date of Gale’s dismissal.¹² At age thirty-seven, with fourteen years in service, Henderson’s time had arrived.

That is not to say that Henderson’s assumption of the commandancy was guaranteed. Henderson certainly did not believe that to be the case and he, like his peers, spent a considerable amount of time lobbying for his own selection as Commandant. An examination of the process of selecting a Commandant yields insight into the level of unprofessional conduct inherent in the intra-service politics that all senior Marine officers, Henderson included, engaged in, wherein they often shamelessly endorsed themselves at the expense of their rivals. While still serving as acting Commandant after Wharton’s death, Henderson wrote President James Monroe directly, offering to personally fill the permanent post should Monroe determine that the “present senior officer [Gale] is incompetent to discharge the duties of the Commandant.”¹³ When

Monroe nonetheless selected Gale for the job on the traditional basis of his seniority, Henderson, from his new post in New Orleans, continued to poison Gale's reputation by forwarding third-party reports alleging a naval officer had "seen Major Gale intoxicated in New Orleans."¹⁴ The Gale-Henderson interaction could best be described as coldly hostile or even borderline insubordinate, as evidenced when, after being banished by Gale to New Orleans (at that time the most distant shore post in the Corps) and ordered to proceed there "by the nearest and most expeditious route," Henderson instead chose a leisurely and circuitous route that took him ten weeks to complete.¹⁵ These, and similar episodes show that Henderson personally partook of the same pattern of bickering and backstabbing that he publicly disdained and later unsuccessfully tried to eradicate from the Corps.

The situation seemed much the same on the question of Gale's successor. Despite being the next senior officer in line and believing himself to be the most qualified, Henderson still worried about being passed over. Of the next four officers in line, all were, like Henderson, captains holding brevet promotions to major: Richard Smith, Robert D. Wainwright, William Anderson, and Samuel Miller, in order of seniority. During Gale's trial, Miller, a hero of the controversial Battle of Bladensburg during the War of 1812, served as the Corps' Adjutant and Inspector and acting Commandant, nominally Gale's second-in-command and the most likely alternative to Henderson. In the end, although we may never know with certainty what factors swayed President Monroe to select Henderson, the facts that he was most senior, a war hero in

his own right and the product of an influential Virginia family may all have entered into the equation in his favor.¹⁶

In becoming Commandant, Henderson inherited a Marine Corps in a state of disarray and threatened with either outright dissolution or with being absorbed into the army or navy. Systemic problems were widespread, and the roots of those troubles originated both in and outside the Corps. Each problem needed to be resolved if Henderson hoped to make any progress in saving and reforming the institution. Internally, the organization had functioned for some years under the central direction or guidance predominantly of the secretary of the navy, who personally made most of the executive decisions for the Marine Corps. The role of the Commandant was at the time more of an administrator than a service chief, but Henderson would soon gain some of the reins for himself.¹⁷ As for the small and widely scattered Marine detachments, the men remained largely in the hands of officers who spent much of their energies looking after their individual interests, either jockeying for assignment to comfortable shore posts or engaging in public bickering with rival officers over actual or perceived slights to their character. Also, in contrast to the other services, little to no initial screening took place either in the officer commissioning process or in recruitment of enlisted Marines; officer accession relied heavily upon political patronage and, located in only a few cities, recruiters looked more for quantity than quality. Furthermore, the highly publicized institutional embarrassment of having its Commandant court-martialed for public drunkenness and misconduct did not improve the Marine Corps' image in the eyes of the public.

Moreover, Gale's trial was only one example of public spectacles wherein some senior officers hoped to knock a rival down a notch. In fact, Major Miller became the next one in the public arena and that event provides insight into the mindset of the Corps' senior officers regarding one other. Following Henderson's selection as Commandant several officers, led by Major Richard Smith, alleged improprieties and illegal activities on the part of Miller while he had been acting as Commandant during Gale's trial. With a sense of the dramatic, Smith, along with Captains Robert Wainwright, John Gamble, Samuel Watson, and future Commandant Lieutenant John Harris, published a manifesto entitled "Justice" in a local newspaper that outlined specific grievances against Miller, prompting Henderson to convene a formal court of inquiry to resolve the charges. Smith and his fellow officers claimed that Miller had "fomented a spirit of discord and contention among the officers at Headquarters," appropriated mess funds, had been "carrying on a petty traffic with subordinate officers," and "has, at times, employed Marines to work on his private property." After hearing all the evidence, Miller was acquitted of all charges except one: that he had hired Marines to work on his property. However, since "it has been customary, for officers commanding, to employ marines occasionally as gardeners and otherwise," the court of inquiry could not hold Miller solely accountable for an impropriety commonly practiced by all barracks commanders.¹⁸ The incident leaves the reader with a sense of the ingrained attitudes and unprofessional practices openly displayed by the Corps' seniors against each other. These events were distractions that did little to improve the Marine

Corps' public reputation, yet to Henderson's credit, open spectacles such as these generally declined both in number and visibility during his tenure.

Externally, the small organization became an easy target in times of increased public pressure for military cost reductions. Ambiguities over the roles and missions of Marines and questions regarding the operational command of both shipboard detachments and shore-based barracks further aggravated the situation and added to the Corps' vulnerability. Within the navy, the authority of a ship's captain was absolute, and by extension that authority also included the Marines assigned to his ship. However, with no central, binding guidance or regulations that detailed appropriate tasks for Marines or formal agreements regarding command responsibilities, problems were usually resolved in an arbitrary fashion. The opinions of ships' captains varied widely over the subject of what constituted appropriate tasks for Marines. In the absence of clear guidance, some commanders assigned their Marines to duties totally unrelated to those normally associated with the service, such as tasks associated with unskilled laborers, a practice harmful not only to the morale, but also to the individual proficiency of the men. A similar problem existed at shore posts, wherein the senior navy officer sometimes applied the same degree of authority as if at sea, although for years Henderson successfully argued his men fell under different rules while stationed on shore.¹⁹ In an era wherein complex command and control relationships were largely undefined, the Marines often suffered.

Henderson had a full plate of problems to solve if he intended to reform and improve the organization. The first priority, on which all other initiatives rested, was to

strengthen the Commandant's authority over all of his Marines. That authority, always ephemeral by the very nature of assigning Marines to work for navy officers, had been further eroded over the years through institutional neglect combined with inconsistent or weak Marine leadership. Historically, the Navy Department expressed little interest in the Marine Corps, except where its performance impacted the navy. Furthermore, past Commandants had been reluctant to "rock the boat" by seeking to better define the limits of the Commandant's (or any other Marine officers') authority. Absent any incentive to do otherwise, most Marine officers simply avoided dealing with challenging issues altogether. Henderson, though, took a different tack and wasted no time in letting the Marine Corps know he was now at the helm. In quick succession, he issued orders to the Marine commanders of both the shipboard detachments and the shore-based barracks to report regularly (and directly) to Marine Corps Headquarters and not, as had previously been the case, through their local ship or yard commanders or to the secretary of the navy. In addition, he issued orders and guidance designed to tighten the accountability of equipment, supplies and contracts among the commanders of Marine barracks and also shipboard detachments. That effort encouraged frugality and efficiency within the organization. To supervise the implementation of his directives, Henderson scheduled regular inspection trips to the various Navy Yards and ships.²⁰ These measures served two goals: they tightened the chain of command and consequently reinforced his authority and control over the organization, and they also created a means of influencing and supervising subordinates who were often scattered to various posts around the world.

To increase his control over the organization, Henderson personally appointed officers to the key headquarters billets of Adjutant and Inspector, Quartermaster, and Paymaster. Henderson understood the importance of having supportive officers in those important posts and consequently took immediate steps to place trusted men in those billets. Although the issue of who could nominate persons to these staff positions later resulted in friction between the Commandant and the Navy Department, Henderson nonetheless placed new officers in each of the billets soon after becoming Commandant, giving him the means of directing and supervising the implementation of his policies throughout the Corps.²¹

However, Henderson's authority was not absolute; some of the "old guard" senior officers resented his imposition of authority over them, particularly where their duty assignments were concerned. When Henderson replaced Miller, it ignited a new challenge to the limits of the Commandant's authority and exposed the degree that politics influenced officer assignments. After replacing Miller, Henderson assigned him to sea duty in the West Indies, causing Miller to muster his political pull to countermand the orders and gain instead a shore assignment at one of the barracks. The issue of who could make Marine officer assignments quickly worked up the chain of command and landed on the desk of President Monroe himself, a long-time supporter of Miller. To Henderson's chagrin, the commander-in-chief sided with Miller and cancelled the sea duty orders. Believing his command prerogatives were being undermined, the Commandant tactfully, yet firmly wrote the president and convincingly argued that his failure to back the decisions of the Commandant would negatively impact on the good

order and discipline within the Corps. To drive the point home Henderson politely offered his resignation should the president lack confidence in his abilities. Although Monroe agreed in principle that Henderson had the authority to assign subordinates, Miller remained ashore in Norfolk – a visible symbol of the limits to the Commandant’s authority where senior officers were concerned. Henderson afterwards sought to avoid similar confrontations by assigning more junior captains to sea duty and allowing the more senior ones to stay ashore.²² It seemed that he considered those types of battles not worth expending his political capital on.

One can almost understand why the senior officers of the Marine Corps shunned sea duty as they did. Historian Allan Millet notes that “there were substantial reasons for Marine officers to find sea service disagreeable. Although death in action was not much of a threat, the mortality rate of Marine officers from disease, suicide, drowning, accidents, and duels was substantial.”²³ Factored over the 44 years in question, it appears that a total of seventy-one company grade officers either died or were discharged from their duties, a rate of about two per year. And, if officer resignations are factored in, the officer attrition rate more than doubles. Spread out evenly over the years, it appears that about five officers a year either died, resigned, or were dismissed, making a rough annual attrition rate of about 20 percent each year, representing a high degree of loss for such a small organization.²⁴

Henderson fully understood the scope of the officer attrition problem and sought ways to reduce the incessant drain of manpower. Perhaps based on his own career experiences, he believed that one of the contributing factors involved the traditional

practice of sending new lieutenants to command shipboard detachments with no preparation or training, essentially throwing them out to sea to learn through trial and error. Henderson sought to make that transition from civilian to officer more efficient by providing new officers with instruction regarding their duties and responsibilities before going to sea. Immediately after becoming Commandant, he directed that “all officers appointed in the corps are ordered here [to Headquarters] in order to receive instruction, that they may be capable of performing the duties assigned them.” To supervise the effort, he formally tasked the Adjutant and Inspector with the responsibility for instructing “all officers who join the corps in the manual [of arms] and battalion exercise.”²⁵ Explaining his rationale to Secretary of the Navy Smith Thompson, Henderson argued that “nothing is so well calculated to give character to a Corps, as a uniformity of a system, and the initiation of your officers into the duties of their profession . . . under the immediate notice and auspices of its Commanding Officer.” Therefore, he directed that “a young officer should never be permitted to leave Head Quarters before he is perfectly competent to [direct] the drill of a Battalion -- so that should he succeed by accident, or other causes, to command, he might be able to do justice to the situation.”²⁶ With this goal in mind, Henderson sought to better prepare new officers for the challenges he knew they would soon face.

Often, this period of instruction represented the only formal training an officer might receive, and the last chance to evaluate the fitness of new officers before sending them out to the fleet for duty at sea. The latter point is important because at that time little or no physical or mental screening took place in the commissioning process itself.

Although Henderson tried throughout his tenure to gain approval for a proper screening of prospective candidates for medical, moral or mental problems before accepting them, that reform was not adopted until the Civil War. In the interim, Henderson's "internship" program filled that void, granting experienced officers an opportunity to infuse in the new officer, through the personal examples of the instructors and Commandant, a common framework of customs and traditions that built *esprit de corps*. The initial training period also helped weed out weaker officers at an early stage, thereby increasing overall efficiency. This last point is borne out by evidence that suggests some of the new officers resigned their commissions or were dismissed during their entry level training period.²⁷ In those instances, the marginal officers were identified early, before being dispatched to command detachments around the world, thereby avoiding not only the costs involved in transfers, but also the problems associated with short, often tumultuous officer turnovers at overseas commands. Lastly, the instructors also benefitted from the experiences gained in training men.

Until a proper pre-commissioning screening program came about, Henderson's new officer training bridged the gap and provided a common baseline of knowledge and proficiency in the service. Eventually, Henderson's new officer training initiative became institutionalized within the Marine Corps, and is the precedent for today's Officer Basic Course at Quantico, Virginia.²⁸ Although modern Marine officers undergo an extensive screening process before commissioning, the Corps' leaders nonetheless believe that the benefits derived from having every new officer undergo a six-month period of training and evaluation outweigh the costs involved in administering the

program. In his time, Henderson also believed the effort worth the expense and subsequent Commandants continued the practice, making it one of several of Henderson's reforms that shaped the modern Marine Corps.

Henderson also consistently sought ways to increase opportunities for officer education, either at the entry level or later in one's career. One of Commandant Henderson's top manpower priorities involved gaining access to service academy graduates who might wish to serve as Marine officers. As early as 1823, Henderson argued for the opportunity to fill vacant officer positions by offering commissions to graduates of the Army's Military Academy at West Point, particularly since some of its attendees did not enter army service on graduation. To Henderson, the academy represented an excellent and underutilized source of qualified men who could help fill the Corps' needs more efficiently than the existent political patronage system did. Although Secretary of the Navy Samuel Southard agreed in his report to Congress in 1825 that "an arrangement will be made with the War Department, by which the officers of this [Marine] [C]orps will be taken hereafter from the graduates at West Point," the initiative was not implemented until 1882.²⁹ Nonetheless, as historian Joseph Dawson observes, it "disturbed Henderson to note that about half of the lieutenants [were] *asked to resign* because they were deficient in skills or leadership," and he viewed the academies as a possible solution to these problems.³⁰ For all of these reasons, Henderson continued to press the point throughout his tenure, stating in 1858 that "I cannot close this report without again calling the attention of the [Navy] department to the urgent necessity of having a standard of education for officers of the corps." His

proffered “remedy could be found by commissioning the officers from the cadets at West Point, a certain number of whom could be appointed with the especial view of entering the corps.”³¹ Although he never gained permission to allocate some commissions to academy graduates, he did not shrink from making his opinion known on the issue and his stance helped later commandants press the point with successive departmental and congressional leaders.

Concurrent with his push for increased officer education, Henderson also pursued reforms to improve the quality of life, quarters and morale of his enlisted Marines. He lobbied vigorously for better pay and living conditions, sought to increase the numbers of Marines so that smaller detachments could better spread out workloads, struggled to eliminate or reduce extraneous and arbitrary duties, and banned the practice of flogging as a means of punishment at shore commands. Henderson proved to be a tireless advocate to gain fair pay, equitable enlistment bounties, and increases in allowances and entitlements to make compensation for Marines comparable with that received by men in other services. Henderson also lobbied hard to acquire modern, more accurate rifles to replace the Corps’ older musket-type shoulder weapons. He emphasized marksmanship training, resulting in an increase in the range, accuracy and capability of Marines. Furthermore, he enhanced the overall quality of the training of enlisted Marines by adopting and adhering to standardized training programs. He also solicited the support of Congress to gain better clothing and equipment, and expanded the use of the Headquarters element and Marine Band in the many ceremonial opportunities that presented themselves in the capital district. In addition, Henderson designated Sunday as

a day off for personnel not on watch, and also pushed for a limitation in the liquor ration to minimize the problems caused by alcohol abuse in the barracks. And to both ensure that his reforms were being implemented while better assessing problem areas within the Corps, Henderson began the tradition of scheduling and conducting regular inspections of all shore posts and selective ships' detachments. As Joseph Alexander explains, "one of his most admirable practices as commandant was his willingness to leave his Headquarters each year and inspect each barracks command. Each tour took weeks, but these visits brought him in intimate contact with every shore-based officer and non-commissioned officer, gave him firsthand knowledge of the conditions in which his Marines had to live and work, and reaffirmed his role as commandant to most of the Corps."³²

Importantly, Henderson began to employ the results of his inspections as a vehicle to keep Navy Department officials notified of both problems encountered and his recommendations for resolving them. By securing the authority to insert his own correspondence regarding the Marine Corps within the secretary's Annual Report to Congress, a major administrative coup that began in 1824, Henderson gained a useful means to inform officials about issues related to the Corps and to argue for increasing manpower and expanding the Corps' roles. Although initially a small and relatively minor portion of the secretary's overall report, once the precedent was established, Henderson used the medium as a way to advance his proposals for the Marine Corps.³³ His reporting on the conditions at various posts and his eloquent commentary regarding proposed solutions often led to more funding for barracks improvements and new

recruits. His correspondence, although small when compared to the volume of the secretary's report, nonetheless provided a visibility to Congress that was nonexistent before.

One of Henderson's most important proposals involved expanding the roles and missions of the organization within the military establishment. Although Henderson firmly believed that Marines "are essentially required on board the vessels of war under all circumstances, but more particularly in action . . . for the protection of our widely scattered commerce," he also envisioned a Marine Corps that did more than just provide "guards, at the various navy yards in the United States, and on board the different armed vessels." He believed that the Marine Corps constituted the "Military Arm of the Navy." With this view in mind, he sought out ways to strengthen the Corps' capabilities to perform that role, particularly in the area of landing party operations. Although Marines had long been a part in such operations, Henderson sought ways to improve the firepower and capacity of Marines when they were committed to fight ashore. Perhaps not coincidentally, landing party operations were being conducted with greater frequency and on successively larger scale by the Navy and Marine Corps, with more than fifty such operations undertaken during Henderson's tenure alone, a notably higher number in contrast to similar missions undertaken before 1820.³⁴

In addition to naval forces making more armed landings on foreign shores, an often ignored naval mission boosted the likelihood of American warships making armed boardings, searches and seizures of ships at sea. In 1819, Congress directed the establishment of an African Squadron to suppress the foreign slave trade, outlawed in the

United States since 1807. And, although historian George M. Brooke, Jr. characterizes the Navy's efforts to suppress slavers between 1820 and 1839 as "spasmodic and ineffective," ships of the squadron still conducted scores of searches of hostile vessels, and sometimes seized half a dozen ships per year. From the 1840s up to 1861 the seizures became more frequent and occurred within the operating areas of the Home and West Indies Squadrons as well. By 1858 and 1859, naval vessels seized about a dozen vessels per year, and annually rescued thousands of slaves from their captors and deadly conditions. In each of these boardings, the Marines played a key role from start to finish. Armed with either their muskets or manning ships' guns (or both), Marines covered the initial hailing and stopping of suspect ships. Once the ships were stopped, Marines often served in the boarding party, and if the naval officer decided to seize the vessel, they both guarded the captive crewmen and performed as the security element for the prize crew. The increasing frequency of such operations contributed to a raising of relative importance of Marines on ships, so much so that a special report by the previously hostile Committee on Naval Affairs not only recommended boosting the size of the Corps, it stated that "if the services of a marine force are necessary at our navy yards, on board ship they are absolutely indispensable."³⁵ Although the sharp decline in the slave trade after 1861 made this function less important, because of these operations an entire generation of junior navy officers observed firsthand the utility of having a Marine detachment aboard ship for operational reasons other than serving with a landing party. At the same time, hundreds of Marines gained valuable experiences in boarding and

seizing hostile vessels, and many soon put that familiarity to the test on blockade duty off Southern ports.

Since becoming Commandant, Henderson had promoted the concept of forming Marine battalions that could be landed from the sea and fight enemies ashore with enhanced combat capabilities. In one of his first official communications with the secretary of the navy and Congress, he explained how he “deemed it important to keep up the skeleton of a battalion” at headquarters to serve several functions. First, it provided the previously mentioned training cadre with a means to instruct “all officers who join the corps in the manual and battalion exercise.” In other words, the skeleton battalion served as a training platform to teach new officers basic infantry tactics and procedures. Second, when needed the battalion structure could quickly be fleshed out with sufficient officers, non-commissioned officers, and privates. Although the skeleton battalion fulfilled its primary function for the majority of the “Henderson Era,” by the late 1830s the Commandant began forming and employing battalions in response to national military requirements. This early “force-in-readiness” concept represented another departure from the Marine Corps’ traditional means of employment as loose collections of shipboard detachments. From the outset, the performance of the Marines in these expanded roles such as the Second Seminole War, the Mexican War, and John Brown’s Raid caught the eye of the public and enhanced the positive reputation of the Corps, thus setting the stage for future battalion operations.³⁶

Using his official correspondence, Henderson distributed ideas to improve Marine battalion composition and purpose, and he modified his overall concept

accordingly. With keen foresight, he looked for ways to enhance the capabilities of Marines fighting ashore, regardless of the size of the committed unit. Exhibiting a clear awareness of the changes taking place in naval warfare, as noted in the previous chapter, Henderson looked for ways to enhance the firepower and lethality of landing parties through the addition of an organic artillery capability. To help sell the idea to his superiors, Henderson encouraged Marines afloat to serve in the ships' batteries and he argued for organic artillery pieces and ammunition to better train the men in gunnery drills. From the Navy's perspective, ships' captains gained qualified gun crews for their vessels, always a problem at sea. Navy commanders also benefited by having the Marines perform a more relevant combat function than their traditional firing of muskets from the rigging, a task made increasingly obsolete due to the changing face of naval warfare. For Henderson, Marines performing gunnery duties afloat also justified his oft-repeated requests for ordnance, ammunition and qualified instructors. By 1842, after nearly two decades of experience with Marines manning ships' guns, the Committee on Naval Affairs reported that "Naval men unite in the opinion that one marine to each gun is the smallest number required, of efficiency, on board a man of war."³⁷ Slowly, yet steadily, Henderson's Marines became a more valued element aboard warships, sometimes winning over former opponents of the Corps in the process.

Henderson had long advocated the building of an artillery capability in the Corps. Correspondence dating from 1823 establishes his early thoughts to "introduce a knowledge of artillery duty" among his Marines. Following the Mexican War, he asked the Navy Department for "four light artillery pieces for training purposes," but to no

avail. However, in the 1850s, strengthened by the successes of his men in several high-profile landing operations that pitted sailors and Marines fighting more determined (and better equipped) enemies ashore in Argentina and Nicaragua, he began to argue with greater conviction the necessity of strengthening the firepower projected ashore by creating an organic artillery capability in the Marine Corps. Basing his requests in part on recent operations in China and the Far East, he relentlessly pushed his message home with the many successive secretaries, patiently explaining his plan to each. Seeing greater challenges in future landings, Henderson observed in 1853 that “the present drill of the corps on shore is exclusively that of the infantry,” but he contended that “artillery drill, especially that of light artillery, would be highly beneficial in case of landing a force in a foreign country.” This statement is important for several reasons. First, Henderson correctly recognized that future enemies might prove more powerful than those that naval landing forces had encountered in the past. Although Marine infantry had fared well when pitted against threats such as those faced by the landing party that rowed ashore at Quallah Battoo in 1832, the same force might find itself outmatched if committed against a modern, well-disciplined force. Henderson advocated adding artillery to the battalion located at his headquarters, so as to unite “the artillery with the infantry drill” already conducted there, “and thus adding greatly to the efficiency of the soldiers of the corps.”³⁸

Second, the statement clearly illustrates Henderson’s concept for an amphibious force, one that combines infantry and artillery capabilities in an integrated unit to be employed from ships to fight ashore. His idea reflects both a prescient understanding of

the modern theory of combined arms warfare, wherein different combat arms are merged to gain a synergistic effect that can be employed to great advantage over an enemy, and a perceptive appreciation of the potential inherent in amphibious warfare.³⁹ In this manner Henderson became the first Commandant to embrace, albeit on a limited scale, the amphibious mission that would come to define the Marine Corps a century later.

Third, Henderson hoped to make use of the Marine Corps' respected skills as gunners aboard ship to gain a similar capability that would add to the firepower of Marines deployed ashore. By taking on the task of training Marines to man the heavy naval artillery on ships, he achieved two important goals: he made the Marine detachments more relevant aboard ships in light of rapid changes in naval warfare; and the training in naval artillery served the primary purpose of preparing Marines to employ light artillery pieces that could be used to great effect on shore. Furthermore, if the navy agreed that training Marines for gun crews on ship would be beneficial (and evidence shows that it did), Henderson could then use that requirement to justify the purchase of light artillery pieces and ammunition to train them properly.⁴⁰

Fourth, understanding the importance of officers in the training effort, Henderson employed the issue of training to again call for opportunities for educate his officers on a par with that found in the other services. Pointing out in 1853 that both the Army and the Navy now had academies that provided each with educated, trained and screened officers, "the marine corps . . . cannot long maintain a comparative efficiency with either the navy or army . . . and consequently [are] wholly unprepared for any service requiring an application of science." He properly pointed out that "graduates from West Point

would supply this deficiency, and place the corps on a just and equal footing with the other arms of the service.” He also argued for the creation of a retired list, to weed out officers too infirm or aged to perform their duties in a satisfactory manner.

Unfortunately for the Marine Corps, neither of these initiatives reached fruition under Henderson’s commandancy, yet the seeds he planted would bear fruit in the future.⁴¹

Although he failed to gain academy graduates during his tenure, Henderson did succeed in gaining permission to have some of his officers attend a course at West Point on both light and heavy artillery. Leveraging in part off the recent success of a landing party operation in which Marines successfully employed field artillery against heavily fortified Chinese positions, Henderson argued for the necessity of having qualified instructors at his headquarters to gain “knowledge of Artillery for the purpose of introducing it into the Marine Corps.” In the summer of 1857, Lieutenant Israel Greene became the first of several Marine officers to attend the West Point course. On completion, Greene became the Corps’ first Instructor of Artillery, an achievement that Henderson believed represented “an important step forward” for the organization. In his 1858 report, Henderson proudly announced that he had “established at headquarters a school for drill both in the use of the musket and of light and heavy artillery,” and that the school had been in operation for about a year.⁴²

Also in 1857, the Marine Corps gained the final piece needed to achieve its organic artillery capability, the acquiring of actual ordnance to support its artillery training program. The Navy Department delivered a complement of heavy and light artillery pieces and an allocation of ammunition to the Corps’ Headquarters battalion.

The Marines now had everything they needed to adequately train recruits and new officers in artillery skills. Henderson's vision became a reality and, in customary fashion, he confidently reported in 1858 that the ordnance "authorized with the sanction of the [Navy] department" had already proven itself useful in his training of an *ad hoc* battalion for service with the upcoming Paraguay Expedition. That operation, a punitive mission then still in transport to the objective area, represented the largest employment of military muscle outside the United States since the Mexican War, and Henderson's Marines would play a part in it.⁴³ Typically, though, he used the situation to justify an increase in manpower, obviously hoping to fill his battalion on a full-time basis, to provide military authorities with a permanent force-in-readiness to employ in contingencies.

Moreover, as asserted by historian Joseph Dawson, Henderson continued to expand his concept of the Marine battalion, hoping to add other capabilities to make it an even more nimble force. In his 1857 report to Secretary Toucey, Henderson reminded him of the progress made in training infantry and artillery skills to Marines, yet boldly stated that the effort "is not enough." The Marine officer, he contended, "should be not only an infantry and artillery officer, but an engineer" as well. He argued that "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." With clear logic, Henderson pointed out that "there is no officer aboard the ship that would be expected to do this but the marine officer, and it would not be fair to expect it of him without military education." And, as before, he suggested that this

deficiency could be easily resolved through the appointment of some West Point graduates to the Marine Corps.⁴⁴

In addition to improving the Corps' capabilities in landing party operations with the navy, Henderson also looked for opportunities to serve with the army in land operations, something that no previous commandant had envisioned or desired. Henderson's intent was threefold: to prove the ability of Marines as a professional fighting organization to its critics; to make the Corps more valuable as a force in readiness for the military establishment; and to increase opportunities for both training and employing Marines outside of traditional naval operations. Although Henderson achieved some success in reaching these goals and helped blunt some of the arguments of those who still wished to see the Marine Corps reduced or disbanded, he first had to face one of the most formidable threats to the institution, from no less a personage than the President of the United States himself.

When Andrew Jackson became president in 1829, one of his goals involved trimming excess in the government structure, and he believed the military constituted part of that surplus. In an address to Congress, Jackson outlined his concern: "Neither our situation nor our institutions require or permit the maintenance of a large regular [military] force." He contended that "if . . . war should come upon us, our regular force should be increased to an extent proportioned to the emergency, and our present small army is a nucleus [*sic*] around which such force could be formed and embodied." Jackson's military concept envisioned a small standing army that could be expanded in time of need with militia and volunteers.⁴⁵

The Marine Corps drew special attention in Jackson's quest to reduce excess, particularly the size of its headquarters element and the staff. In his first annual message to Congress, Jackson stated caustically that "marine service could well be made from the [Army's] artillery or infantry – there being no particular training requisite for it." He also asserted that the unit had too many senior officers for its size, making that service more costly than an army regiment of the same approximate size "without rendering proportionate service." As Dawson concludes, Jackson "used a political ploy" by raising the subject of brevet promotions, implying that the Marine Corps currently paid for five more lieutenant colonels than it rated by law. "Therefore," Dawson argues, "Jackson struck personally at Henderson's claim to operate the most financially efficient branch of the military." After airing his allegations, Jackson recommended that "the Marine Corps be merged in the [Army's] artillery or infantry, as the best mode of curing the many defects in its organization."⁴⁶ In reality, in light of the decentralized nature of its employment and extended service at sea, Jackson's comparison of the Corps' organization and training requirements with that of standard Army infantry or artillery regiments was akin to comparing apples with oranges. Nonetheless, his comments and the resultant response from Congress revealed just how politically vulnerable the Marine Corps was. As a result of Jackson's comments, despite having made a decade of progress against various critics of the Corps, Henderson found himself facing one of the most significant challenges of his career, one that required all of his resourcefulness.

The president's criticism ignited a flurry of activity in Congress and within the Navy Department. Congress's Committee on Naval Affairs initiated several inquiries

into “The Expediency of Dispensing with the Marine Corps as Part of the Armed Equipment of a Vessel-of-War.” In response, Navy Secretary John Branch, a Jackson appointee, ordered the fitting out of the sloop-of-war *Erie* “without the usual allotment of marines, expressly with a view to test” that idea. Branch also solicited the opinions of sixteen of the most senior navy officers, asking them to respond to four questions constructed to gauge the value of Marines aboard navy vessels, and whether some of their tasks might not be performed by sailors. As one might expect, the responses were mixed, with some navy officers stating that Marines could be dispensed with, while others declared they could not. Overall, seven officers believed Marines were not needed, and nine argued that the Corps was a necessary element aboard warships and within the Navy Department. Branch himself admitted that “there appears to be much diversity of opinion” over the subject, although he interestingly arranged the reports so that the opinions of supporters of doing away with Marines appeared first in his communication to the Committee on Naval Affairs.⁴⁷ Also conspicuously absent from Branch’s document was any rebuttal or remarks from the Commandant’s office, indicating that Henderson was not included in the staffing process.

Henderson counter-attacked by corresponding directly with many of the Navy’s ship captains and yard commandants, asking them to forward to him their opinions as to the value of Marines within their commands. This grass-roots approach yielded many testimonials to the usefulness of the Marine detachments both afloat and ashore that he wielded like a club in his frequent correspondence with departmental officials, as well as with various members of the House Committee on Naval Affairs. In the letters,

Henderson addressed not only the day-to-day performance of his men at sea, but also mentioned how Marines were often used to restore order in civil disturbances, riots or slave rebellions. Additionally, he focused the attention of legislative leaders on several discrepancies in existing law that resulted in Marines being paid less than soldiers or sailors. Appealing to their sense of justice and fairness, he began to make headway and won several decisions in the favor of the Marine Corps.⁴⁸

Because of the scope of issues raised, Congress took on the task of reorganizing the Marine Corps, and Commandant Henderson helped shape those plans. With some vigorous lobbying and selective sharing of the fruits of his naval correspondence campaign, he gained more than he lost when Jackson signed the resulting bill into law. The “Act for the Better Organization of the Marine Corps,” the first major legislative work since the Corps’ inception, permanently settled the question of whether the Corps should exist as a separate service under the Navy Department: it would. It also continued the posts of Commandant and the three staff officers (Adjutant and Inspector, Quartermaster, and Paymaster), and even promoted the Commandant to the rank of colonel (see Figure 3-1). The Act also authorized a significant increase in manpower as well as placing the officers of the Marine Corps on an equal footing with the Army as regards to rank equivalency, pay, allowance, and emoluments. For the first time, the law contained a clause that left the Marine Corps open to being “detached for service with the army by order of the President of the United States.” It also recognized previous awards of brevet promotions made under earlier acts and specified a minimum term of four years for enlistments, vice the previous five, a measure that would help the

recruiting effort. Through this act Henderson won approval for many of the issues that he had been fighting to achieve since 1821. Most importantly, Congress's Act meant the Marine Corps would continue as a separate service, headed now by a Colonel Commandant of Marines, and assisted by a staff selected from officers of that Corps.⁴⁹ Because Congress specified that Marines could be detached for service with the army, Henderson was able to argue that he had an implied mission on his part to prepare his men for that eventuality. And, within two years, he would seize an opportunity to fulfill that clause by volunteering his unit for army service, thereby changing forever the dynamics of where the Marine Corps fit within the military establishment.

Officer:	Colonel Commandant (1)	
	Lieutenant Colonel (1)	
	Major (4)	
	Captain (13)	
	First Lieutenant (20)	
	Second Lieutenant (20)	
	Adjutant and Inspector (1) *	
	Paymaster (1) *	
	Quartermaster (1) *	
	Assistant Quartermaster (1) *	Officer Total: 63
Enlisted:	Sergeant Major (1)	
	Quartermaster Sergeant (1) *	
	Drum Major (1) **	
	Fife Major (1) **	
	Sergeant (80)	
	Corporal (80)	
	Drummer (30)**	
	Fifer (30)**	
	Private (1,000)	Enlisted Total: 1,224
		Service Total: 1,287
Notes:	* Staff	** Band

Figure 3-1. The Marine Corps' Organization after the 1834 Act.⁵⁰

However, Henderson did not like everything in the 1834 Act. He lost one element of the fight: henceforth, Marines assigned to shore installations such as navy yards were placed under the rules and regulations of the Navy, and that required the Marine Barracks commander to report to the Yard Commandant in the same way that officers of detachments at sea fell under the command of the ship's captain. Although several commanders of Marine Barracks "fought" this provision, it remained intact, providing a source of festering discontent to some Marine officers.⁵¹ Nonetheless, the Marine Corps as an institution gained far more than it lost in this legislation.

In 1836, the War Department found itself in a quandary. The United States became engaged in a growing insurgency in Georgia, Alabama and Florida as a mixed group of Native American tribes and runaway slaves resisted government attempts to resettle Indians in the West. The Army, much reduced in size, proved ineffective at regaining control and Jackson faced pressures from constituents to resolve the problem. Seizing on this opportunity, Henderson volunteered to lead a Marine Battalion to fight alongside the Army. Jackson accepted the offer and Henderson quickly formed a battalion through the expedient method of reducing guards at Navy Yards to a bare minimum and by pulling some men back from sea duty. By June, Henderson had raised a battalion of thirty-six officers and about four hundred enlisted men. Arriving in southern Georgia on 23 June by steamboat and road march, Henderson found he had missed the fight against the Creek Indians.⁵²

There were, however, still Seminoles to fight in Florida. By September, the Marines arrived at Fort Brooke, near Tampa Bay, and began conducting patrols and

larger operations to gain control of the area. At the same time, Marines serving aboard naval warships within the theater also engaged the Seminoles, patrolling aggressively up and down the many waterways in search of the elusive enemy. Henderson and his men began the difficult task of rooting out the enemy from some of the most challenging terrain imaginable. In one of the few meaningful engagements of the war, the Marines managed to penetrate the “Great Cypress Swamp” and conducted an operation that deprived the Seminole warriors of a base camp, capturing supplies and several support persons. The results of the engagement forced some Seminole warriors to negotiate a settlement. Moreover, Henderson found himself commanding several Army units in succession, and by mid-1837, controlled “the most active zone of combat—the southern part of the [Florida] peninsula.” In June, Henderson received orders to return to his Washington, D.C., duties, and by 1838, many of his Marines had followed him, with the exception of the ships’ detachment serving with the “Mosquito Squadron,” that continued to patrol Florida’s waterways until 1842.⁵³

The Marine Corps was probably the only organization that benefited from its service during the Creek and Second Seminole Wars. Its performance as a regular combat unit established the precedent for subsequent deployments with the army. Marine officers also forged close personal and professional relations with army officers that lasted a lifetime. Moreover, the Marine Corps’ service with the Army of the South yielded another reward. Because of the Army’s acute shortage of regular officers in the theater of operations, many Marine officers gained the rare opportunity to command regular army units in combat or to serve in critical staff positions. Henderson himself

served alternately as the commander of the Army's 4th Artillery Regiment, and later as a brigade commander, when he earned his brevet rank of brigadier general.⁵⁴ These operations also yielded an important second bonus: they formed the foundation for a rich and colorful shared history that helped promote a sense of *esprit de corps* in the ranks while elevating the reputation of the unit in the eyes of the public.

Thus, the Marine Corps' timely and successful service in the Second Seminole War opened the door for similar operations in the future. It also justified Henderson's long-standing (yet frequently criticized) practice of maintaining several officers and enlisted men in Washington, D.C., to serve as a cadre staff for forming a battalion in contingencies. The training cadre also produced other important gains by helping to educate and evaluate all new Marine officers in the military arts before shipping them off to their distant posts. That practice served two functions; it trained officers for the rigors of duty at sea and also afforded Henderson and his trusted officers the opportunity to get to know each and every officer in the Marine Corps despite the decentralized nature of its employment scheme.⁵⁵ Through this common training the headquarters staff managed to instill common Marine Corps customs and traditions into new officers who only months before had been civilians with little knowledge of military life.

At the onset of the Mexican War, Henderson, in a move reminiscent of his actions in 1836, gained presidential permission for both a significant increase in the manpower of the Corps and to form a battalion for service with the army in the invasion of Mexico. Playing off the absence of any significant threat from the small Mexican navy, he reallocated Marines from shipboard service to fill the new battalion and had

them transported to New York to await embarkation. Unfortunately, the battalion did not arrive in Mexico until three months after the army's amphibious landing at Veracruz, but Marines aboard ships of the Gulf Squadron participated in the landings and the subsequent operation to seize the city and the fortress that guarded it. The ships' detachments had also assisted in the prior seizures of several port cities up and down Mexico's Gulf coast, conducting landing operations that placed much of the area under American control, thereby facilitating the Vera Cruz landing. The battalion did arrive in time to join General Winfield Scott's forces as it fought into "the Halls of Montezuma" in Mexico City. There, according to Navy Secretary John Mason, the Marines "performed their duties with the highest honor, and displayed the qualities of veteran troops."⁵⁶

Meanwhile, Marines played a larger role on the Pacific, filling the void caused by the relative absence of regular army units. Ships' detachments provided the fighting nucleus for landing parties that seized most major cities and ports up and down the coast, helping to gain control of California for the United States and defeat Mexican forces in Lower California and the Sea of Cortez. Significantly, Marines from ships stationed off San Diego participated in a rescue of Brigadier General Stephen Kearny's overland force and later formed an *ad hoc* battalion under Lieutenant Jacob Zeilen (the future seventh Commandant) that seized Los Angeles. Henderson's Marines were proving themselves adept at operating amphibiously and, according to Secretary Branch, their "most important service with the squadrons of the gulf and Pacific . . . entitled [them] to the most favorable consideration of Congress."⁵⁷ Its Mexican War service added to the

battle honors of the Marine Corps and proved just how versatile the organization had become: it served not only in its traditional role of fielding small shipboard detachments, but also nimbly reformed into larger landing parties and as separate battalions capable of fighting for extended periods on land.

Following the Mexican War, Henderson continued to seize every opportunity to commit the Marines for service either afloat or ashore. He consistently volunteered his Corps for assignments outside of their normal mission areas to prove its value as a flexible and expeditionary force. Marines successfully handled domestic crises at home that ranged from quelling prison riots to restoring order on the streets of Washington and New York, and also participated in naval actions and interventions abroad. Through these actions the Corps honed its public reputation and demonstrated its versatility to the nation in the years before the Civil War.

As evidence of that trust and confidence, in June of 1857 President James Buchanan directed that Henderson's Marines restore order to the capital in the wake of several days of violent riots that overwhelmed city police forces. In his last action in the field, General Henderson called out his Headquarters and Washington Barracks Marines and addressed them personally. Under the command of his Adjutant and Inspector, Captain Henry B. Tyler, Sr., the Marines marched on the mob of about a thousand that had gathered near the City Hall, fixed bayonets, and backed up the mayor's calls to disperse. With the rioters threatening both the crowd and the Marines with violence, Henderson, dressed in civilian clothes, placed his body against the muzzle of a cannon brought by the demonstrators and warned them, "Man, you had best think twice before

you fire this piece against the Marines.” Several in the crowd brandished weapons and even fired at the Marines, who quickly overwhelmed them, seized the cannon, and dispersed the mob. After restoring order to the area, the Marines marched back to their barracks, having accomplished their mission in dramatic, yet effective fashion.⁵⁸

To senior leaders such as President Buchanan, General Winfield Scott, and Secretary of the Navy Isaac Toucey, the Marines were proving their value in times of crisis. Yet just when it seemed that the Corps was advancing as a trusted military institution, the architect of its success, Commandant Archibald Henderson, died in office in January 1859. Under his tutelage the Marine Corps had made considerable progress, and yet much work remained unfinished. Since his assumption of command, the Marines had fought in over fifty landings “under conditions short of war.” Members of the Corps had also participated, both with the Army and Navy, in two wars that taxed the resources of the nation, and had acquitted themselves with honor. The unit also supplied men to deal with domestic riots, disturbances, and violent demonstrations, resolving each situation with professionalism. Henderson had also trained his Corps as an expeditionary force-in-readiness, and gained weapons, instructors and resources to continue that effort. The Marines of 1859 were better trained, clothed, equipped, paid and fed than their predecessors. They also benefitted from being led by officers and non-commissioned officers who had been trained, and to some extent screened, under the watchful eye of the Commandant and his staff. The size of the Corps had also doubled, and the duties of its members were better defined and regulated. In short, contrary to Millett’s observations that “the Marine Corps that Archibald Henderson left behind was

little different than the force that he had commanded for the first time in 1820,” a lot had changed, and Henderson was personally responsible for making it happen. For all that work, as Joseph Dawson points out, Secretary Toucey’s remarks in his 1859 report that “the Marine Corps is an indispensable branch of the Naval Service [and] a gallant little band upon which rests the most widely extended duties at home and in every sea and clime, without sufficient numbers to perform them,” prove a fitting epitaph indeed.⁵⁹

It must be acknowledged that Henderson did fail in at least three general areas. The first of these, as will be explained in the following chapter, is that he failed to fully institutionalize some of his initiatives within the Marine Corps. Although many of his training and education programs would continue beyond his tenure, they survived through institutional inertia, and not through an ingrained adoption of the measures by all senior Marine officers. The Marine Corps’ performance at Harpers Ferry in October 1859 might more properly be regarded as the last action of the Henderson Era than as the first action of John Harris, his successor.⁶⁰ Second, Henderson failed to identify, train and prepare a successor to keep the Marine Corps on the trajectory he established. As a result, some of his initiatives and reforms fell by the wayside as the next Commandant assumed command and established different priorities. Third, although Henderson had always kept his superiors advised of his reforms and ideas, the initiative remained on his shoulders and died with him. Through sheer force of personality coupled with longevity, Henderson remained the single driving force for modernizing the Corps. Although he continuously pushed from below, seldom did his superiors in the Navy Department get behind the initiatives and make them truly their own. In the next chapter, these three

failings combine with dramatic effect on the Marine Corps, and changed how that organization was employed in the next war.

Endnotes

- ¹ Quotes and content from Letter, Archibald Henderson to his Wife [Anne], Camp on the Hillsborough [River, Florida], 4 May 1837, Box 2 of 3, Alexander Henderson Papers (PC 3251), folder entitled “General Archibald Henderson,” Archives and Special Collections, Gray Research Center, Quantico, Va. (hereafter GRC).
- ² Letter content from *ibid.*; Brevet nomination from Andrew Jackson to the Senate of the United States, Washington, D.C., 2 March 1837, printed in U.S. Congress, *Journal of the Executive Proceedings of the Senate of the United States of America* (hereafter *Senate Executive Journal*), 4: 623-24, quote from 624; Senate action from *Senate Executive Journal*, 6: 184. For information regarding Henderson’s service as commanding officer of the 4th Artillery Regiment, see U.S. War Department, “Report of the Secretary of War, 1836,” *American State Papers* (hereafter *ASP*) 021, Military Affairs, vol. 6, 24th Cong., 2nd Session, Publication 699, 824. For details regarding his service as brigade commander during the Seminole War, see John K. Mahon, *History of the Second Seminole War, 1835-1842*, rev. ed. (Gainesville: University Presses of Florida, 1985), 195-208. Tellingly, Mahon credits Henderson with commanding the troops within “the most active zone of combat” of the three areas of operation (208).
- ³ Allan R. Millett, *Semper Fidelis: The History of the United States Marine Corps*, ([1980]; Revised and expanded ed., New York: Free Press, 1991), 52-86, quotes from 55 and 56.
- ⁴ Joseph G. Dawson III, “With Fidelity and Effectiveness: Archibald Henderson’s Lasting Legacy to the U.S. Marine Corps,” *Journal of Military History* 62 (October 1998), 727-53, quotes from 727 and 753.
- ⁵ Joseph Alexander, “Archibald Henderson,” in *Commandants of the Marine Corps*, eds. Allan R. Millett and Jack Shulimson (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2004), 54-73, quotes from 54 and 55.
- ⁶ Background information drawn from a variety of sources, including: Ralph Donnelly, “Archibald Henderson, Marine,” *Virginia Cavalcade* 20 (Winter 1971), 39-47; Letter, R[ichard] H. Henderson to Mrs. Charlotte Henderson DuPont, Baltimore, 8 February 1867 (hereafter “Henderson Family History”), typescript copy in Ralph Donnelly Collection, Box 5, Folder 2 of 3 (“Archibald Henderson”), GRC; and Workers of the Writer’s Program of the Works Progress Administration in the State of Virginia, *Prince William: The Story of its People and Its Places* (Richmond, Va.: Whittet and Shepperson, 1941), 93, quote from 93. See also the characterizations in Millett, *Semper Fidelis*, 52-86, Alexander, “Archibald Henderson,” 54-73; and Dawson, “With Fidelity and Effectiveness,” 727-753.

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- ⁷ Donnelly, "Archibald Henderson, Marine," 39; "Henderson Family History," Ralph Donnelly Collection, GRC.
- ⁸ Background information on the USS *Wasp* and USS *Constitution* from: Navy Department, *Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships* (hereafter *DANFS*) (Internet Reference Publication) (Washington: Naval Historical Center), available on Internet at: <http://www.history.navy.mil/danfs/index.html>, last accessed on 29 May 2009. Henderson biographical information from Donnelly, "Archibald Henderson, Marine," 39-40; "Henderson Family History," Donnelly Collection, GRC; Letter, W.J. Morgan, Head, Historical Research Branch, Naval Historical Branch to Ralph Donnelly, 15 February 1971, Donnelly Collection, GRC; Muster Roll for USS *Constitution*, 1 December 1807, copy in Donnelly Collection, GRC.
- ⁹ *DANFS*; "The *Constitution* Again. Another Brilliant Naval Victory," *National Advocate* (New York), 10 April 1815, 2; "*Cyane* and *Levant*," *American Advocate* (Hallowell, Maine), 22 July 1815, 3, quote from 3; "Captors of the British Ship of War *Levant* Rewarded," ASP 023, Naval Affairs vol. 1, 14th Cong., 1st Sess., Pub. 137, 405-08; Donnelly, "Archibald Henderson, Marine," 39-40; Alexander, "Archibald Henderson," 57; "Henderson Family History," Donnelly Collection, GRC.
- ¹⁰ "General Orders," United States Frigate *Constitution*, 22 February 1815, copy in ASP 023 Naval Affairs vol. 1, 14th Cong., 1st Sess., Pub. 137, 407.
- ¹¹ *Ibid.*, 407; U.S. Congress, *Statutes at Large, 1789-1875*, 18 vols., 14th Cong., 1st Sess., Resolution 3, 16 February 1816, 3: 341; Donnelly, "Archibald Henderson, Marine," 40-42; "Henderson Family History," Donnelly Collection, GRC. For years afterward Henderson received recognition for his part in the action. In 1836, the officers of the Marine Corps presented him with a ceremonial sword-cane that commemorated Henderson's role. Furthermore, in the late 1830s, Henderson became one of nine native-born officers that were formally recognized by the Virginia General Assembly for distinguished service in the War of 1812. As part of that honor, on 22 February 1841, the state presented each of the recipients with a ceremonial sword in a grand reception held in Richmond, an elite event attended by personages such as President-elect William Henry Harrison and his Vice-President-elect, John Tyler.
- ¹² Donnelly, "Archibald Henderson, Marine," 42-46; "Henderson Family History," Donnelly Collection, GRC; "Head-Quarters of the Marine Corps, Washington," *Spectator* (New York), 22 September 1818, 3; U.S. Congress, *Journal of the*

House of Representatives of the United States (hereafter *House Journal*), 10: 723; *Senate Executive Journal*, 10: 231.

- ¹³ As noted in “Henderson Family History,” Donnelly Collection, GRC; and repeated in Alexander, “Archibald Henderson,” 59.
- ¹⁴ Henderson to Sec. Thompson, HQMC, Washington, D.C., 1 February 1819, Record Group (hereafter abbreviated as RG) 80 (General Records of the Dept. of the Navy, Records of the Office of the Secretary of the Navy), Entry 14 (“Letters From the Commandant and Other Officers of the Marine Corps, January 1828-December 1886”) (hereafter “Letters Received”), National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C. (hereafter abbreviated as NA).
- ¹⁵ Quotes from Henderson to Lt. Col. Commandant Gale, 8 November 1819, HQMC, RG 127 (Field Organization Records, Records of the United States Marine Corps), Entry 4 (“Letters Sent, August 1798- June 1810 and March 1804-February 1884”) (hereafter “Letters Sent 1798-1884”), NA. See also the characterization in Alexander, “Archibald Henderson,” 59.
- ¹⁶ Navy Dept., “Register of the Navy for the Year 1820,” *ASP* 023, Naval Affairs, vol. 1, 16th Cong., 1st Sess., Pub. 176, 6 January 1820, 640; Navy Dept., “Register of the Navy for the Year 1821,” *ASP* 023, Naval Affairs, vol. 1, 16th Cong., 2nd Sess., Pub. 195, 19 January 1821, 710; and Alexander, “Archibald Henderson,” 59-60.
- ¹⁷ For example, when Henderson entered the office of Commandant, one of his first official tasks involved answering an inquiry by the House Committee on Naval Affairs regarding whether “any changes [could] be made in the marine corps, which would promote economy, without injuring its efficiency,” Navy Dept., “Retrenchment of Expenditures for the Navy and Marine Corps,” *ASP* 023 Naval Affairs, vol. 1, 16th Cong., 2nd Sess., Pub. 192, quote from 684. Another official question originating from the same source was more pointed and asked whether Congress should not abolish altogether the billets of Commandant, quartermaster, and adjutant and inspector, and simply provide for all of those functions at the Navy Dept. level directly: U.S. Congress, House Committee on Expenditures in the Navy Dept., *ASP* 023, Naval Affairs, vol. 1, 16th Cong., 2nd Sess., Pub. 200, 741-42. Also Congress, House, “Marine Corps,” *ASP* 023, Naval Affairs, vol. 1, 16th Cong., 2nd Sess., Pub. 199, 737-39, wherein Henderson is requested to justify the number of Marines within his headquarters and to detail each of their responsibilities.
- ¹⁸ Document, “Charges and Specifications Preferred against Brevet Major Samuel Miller, of the United States Marine Corps, by Lt. Col. Archibald Henderson: Together with the Opinion and Decision of the Court,” copy in Samuel Miller

Correspondence File, Marine Corps Archives and Special Collections, GRC, Quantico, Va.; “Court of Inquiry,” *City of Washington (D.C.) Gazette*, 26 February 1821, 3, quotes from text.

- ¹⁹ See the depiction of the Marine Corps in the post-War of 1812 period in Millett, *Semper Fidelis*, 53-55; also N.A., “Archibald Henderson-An Era,” *Marine Corps Gazette* (July 1960), 28-33.
- ²⁰ Commandant of the Marine Corps and Adjutant and Inspector to “All Officers on Foreign Service or Commanding Posts,” November 1820-April 1822, RG 127, “Orders Issued and Received, HQMC, August 1798 - February 1886,” “Marine Corps Orders, 1815-1822,” NA; “Archibald Henderson-An Era,” 28-33; Millett, *Semper Fidelis*, 56.
- ²¹ “An Act to Fix the Peace Establishment of the Marine Corps,” *Statutes at Large*, 14th Cong., 2nd Sess., 3 March 1817, 376-377; “Marine Corps,” *Newport [Rhode Island] Mercury*, 13 January 1821, 3; Navy Dept., “Register of the Navy for the Year 1820,” ASP 023, Naval Affairs, vol. 1, 16th Cong., 1st Sess., Pub. 176, 6 January 1820, 640; Navy Dept., “Naval Register for the Year 1823,” ASP 023, Naval Affairs, vol. 1, 17th Cong., 2nd Sess., Pub. 219, 9 January 1823, 864; Navy Dept., “Naval Register for the Year 1825,” ASP 023, Naval Affairs, vol. 1, 18th Cong., 2nd Sess., Pub. 257, 4 March 1825, 1091.
- ²² Millett, *Semper Fidelis*, 56; and Alexander, “Archibald Henderson,” 61.
- ²³ Millett, *Semper Fidelis*, 56-57.
- ²⁴ Author’s analysis of the data contained in Richard S. Collum, *History of the United States Marine Corps* (Philadelphia: L. R. Hamersly & Co., 1890), 272-284. For example, between 1815 and 1859, a time when the Marine Corps provided about thirty company grade officers to command detachments aboard navy ships, at least 37 lieutenants and 14 captains died in the performance of their duties, with another being killed in a duel, one dying “at sea,” and only one listed as dying of wounds received in combat. During the same period, fourteen more company grade officers were either dismissed from duty or cashiered.
- ²⁵ Henderson to Sec. of the Navy Smith Thompson, HQMC, Washington, D.C., 7 February 1821, reprinted in “Marine Corps,” ASP 023, Naval Affairs, vol. 1, 16th Cong., 2nd Sess., Pub. 199, 737-38, quote from 737.
- ²⁶ Henderson to Sec. of the Navy Samuel Southard, HQMC, Washington, D.C., 22 November 1824, RG 127, Entry 4: “Letters Sent, 1798-1884,” NA.

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- ²⁷ Analysis of “Report of the Secretary of the Navy, 1858,” *U.S. Congressional Serial Set* 977, Sess. Vol. 4, 35th Cong., 2nd Sess., Sen. Exec. Doc. 1 (hereafter “SecNav Annual Report, 1858”), 22-23; and Collum, *History*, 280, 283, shows that in 1858, Henderson’s last full year as Commandant, the only Marine officers listed as resigning their commissions or being dismissed from service were four second lieutenants, and two of them (Myron C. Riggs and Rufus A. Whittier) served six months or less from accession to discharge.
- ²⁸ See Dawson, “With Fidelity and Effectiveness,” 733.
- ²⁹ Navy Dept., “Opinion of the Secretary of the Navy,” *ASP* 024, Naval Affairs vol. 2, 18th Cong., 2nd Sess., Pub. 266, 10 January 1825, quote from 45.
- ³⁰ Dawson, “With Fidelity and Effectiveness,” quote from 735, with original emphasis.
- ³¹ Henderson to Sec. of the Navy Isaac Toucey, HQMC, Washington, D.C., 20 November 1858, reprinted in “Report of the Secretary of the Navy, 1859,” *Serial Set* 1025, Sess., Vol. 3, 36th Cong., 1st Sess., Sen. Exec. Doc. 1 (hereafter “SecNav Annual Report, 1859”), 682-83, quote from 683. Henderson and several of his officers, in conjunction with Navy officers, had long fought for the establishment of a Naval Academy. Yet when that institution was created in 1845, it did not allow graduates to select Marine service until 1885. Henderson’s efforts to change that policy never bore fruit, and he may have come to see the Army’s academy as an alternative solution, particularly since some West Point graduates did not go on to serve with the Army.
- ³² Commandant of the Marine Corps and Adjutant and Inspector to “All Officers on Foreign Service or Commanding Posts,” November 1820-April 1822, RG 127, “Orders Issued and Received, HQMC, August 1798-February 1886,” “Marine Corps Orders, 1815-1822,” NA; Millett, *Semper Fidelis*, 56. Concerning pay and allowances, numerous examples exist wherein Henderson argues for equality with other services. Alexander, “Archibald Henderson,” 63-66, quote from 63
- ³³ Navy Dept., “Condition of the Navy and Marine Corps,” *ASP* 023, Naval Affairs vol. 1, 18th Cong., 2nd Sess., Publication 249, 7 December 1824 (hereafter “SecNav Annual Report, 1824”), 1023, represents the first time that a formal report from the Commandant of the Marine Corps was included within the secretary’s annual report.
- ³⁴ Henderson to Sec. of the Navy Thompson, HQMC, Washington, D.C., 7 February 1821, included in “Marine Corps,” *ASP* 023, Naval Affairs vol. 1, 16th Cong., 2nd Sess., Pub. 199, 12 February 1821, 737-38, first two quotes from 738. Third quote from Henderson to Sec. of the Navy Mahlon Dickerson, HQMC,

Washington, D.C., 7 October 1834, RG 127, Entry 4: “Letters Sent, 1798-1884,” NA. For a general history of early landing party operations, see Harry A. Ellsworth, *One Hundred Eighty Landings of United States Marines, 1800-1934* ([1934]; reprinted, Washington: History and Museums Division, United States Marine Corps, 1974).

- ³⁵ See George M. Brooke, Jr., “The Role of the United States Navy in the Suppression of the African Slave Trade,” reprinted in *From Cannon and Cutlasses to Aircraft and Missiles: Readings in the History of U.S. Seapower*, James C. Bradford, ed. (Mason, Ohio: Thomson Custom Publishing, 2002), 143-154, quote from 143; *Statutes at Large*, 3: 532-33; “SecNav Annual Report, 1858,” 5, 13-14; “SecNav Annual Report, 1859,” 1138-39, 1144-45, 1149-50; “Report of the Secretary of the Navy, 1860,” 8-9, 13-14; Congress, House, Committee on Naval Affairs, “Augment the Marine Corps, &c.,” *Serial Set* 407, Sess. vol. 1, 27th Cong., 2nd Sess., House Report 243, 16 February 1842, 57-60, quote from 58.
- ³⁶ “Marine Corps,” *ASP* 023, Naval Affairs vol. 1, 12 February 1821, 737-39, quotes from 738; Millett, *Semper Fidelis*, 70-86; Dawson, “With Fidelity and Effectiveness,” 737-48, 753.
- ³⁷ “Augment the Marine Corps &c.,” 57-60, quote from 60.
- ³⁸ First quote from Henderson to Sec. of the Navy Southard, HQMC, Washington, D.C., 18 November 1823, RG 127, Entry 4: “Letters Sent, 1798-1884,” NA; Henderson to Sec. of the Navy George Badger, HQMC, Washington, D.C., 11 May 1841, RG 127, Entry 4: “Letters Sent, 1798-1884,” NA; Henderson to Sec. of the Navy John Mason, HQMC, Washington, D.C., 28 April 1848, “Letters Sent, 1798-1884,” RG 127, NA (second quotation); Henderson to Sec. of the Navy James Dobbin, HQMC, Washington, D.C., 17 November 1853, included in Navy Dept., “Report of the Secretary of the Navy, 1853,” *Serial Set* 712, Sess. vol. 1, 33rd Cong., 1st Sess., House Exec. Doc. 1, pt. 3, 6 December 1853 (hereafter “SecNav Annual Report, 1853”), 664-67, third and fourth quotes from 666, also note that Henderson recommended the establishment of a second artillery/infantry school at the New York Marine Barracks, a wishful request at best; Alexander, “Archibald Henderson,” 72; for details regarding the punitive landing at Quallah Battoo, Sumatra, see Collum, *History*, 64-66. For other operations mentioned, see Ellsworth, *One Hundred Eighty Landings*, 10-13, 120-21.
- ³⁹ Department of Defense, *Joint Publication 1-02, Department of Defense (DoD) Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms* (Electronic edition), Managed by the Joint Doctrine Division, J-7, Joint Staff, Washington, D.C., as amended through 17 October 2008. Available on the Internet at: http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/dod_dictionary/, last accessed on 24 February 2011.

That reference defines “Combined Arms Team,” as “The full integration and application of two or more arms or elements of one Military Service into an operation.”

- ⁴⁰ Two important congressional documents highlight the increasing importance accorded by Navy and political leaders to the role of Marines as gun crew or gunners aboard ship. They are: the aforementioned “Dispensing With the Marine Corps,” 560-69, containing many statements by ship captains as to the effectiveness of their Marines “both as artillerists and infantry,” (representative quote from 568); and “Augment the Marine Corps, &c.,” 57-60, wherein the Committee on Naval Affairs, cites the importance of the Marine that “takes his turn at the gun . . .,” as part of its justification to increase the size of the Marine Corps and to provide for their training as “field artillerists,” (quotes from 59).
- ⁴¹ “SecNav Annual Report, 1853,” 664-67, quotes from 666, and see 311-14 for Secretary Dobbin’s comments on his concurrence of the need for a retiring board and other promotion reforms. The Navy Dept. authorized the Marine Corps to convene a retiring board in 1861 and in 1885 allowed graduates of the Naval Academy to enter the Marine Corps. Again, both were initiatives first raised during Henderson’s tenure. Also see the discussion in Dawson, “With Fidelity and Effectiveness,” 748-49.
- ⁴² Henderson to Sec. of the Navy Isaac Toucey, HQMC, Washington, D.C., 12 November 1857, RG 127, Entry 4: “Letters Sent, 1798-1884,” NA, first and second quotes; Henderson to Capt. John D. Simms, HQMC, Washington, D.C., 7 May 1857, RG 127, Entry 4: “Letters Sent, 1798-1884,” NA; 1st Lt. Israel Greene to Henderson, 21 March 1856, copy in Archibald Henderson Collection, GRC, Quantico, Va.; Navy Dept., “Report of the Secretary of the Navy, 1857,” *Serial Set* 944, Sess. vol. 2, 35th Cong., 1st Sess., H. Exec. Doc. 2, pt. 3 (hereafter “SecNav Annual Report, 1857”), 934-35; “SecNav Annual Report, 1858,” 682-97, third quote from 682. See also the discussion in Dawson, “With Fidelity and Effectiveness,” 749; and Alexander, “Archibald Henderson,” 72.
- ⁴³ “SecNav Annual Report, 1858,” 682-83, quote from 682. Commandant Henderson also had a personal interest in the Paraguay Expedition, since his oldest son, Capt. Charles Henderson, served as a senior Marine officer in the battalion.
- ⁴⁴ Dawson, “With Fidelity and Effectiveness,” 749; “SecNav Annual Report, 1857,” 934-35, quotes from 935.
- ⁴⁵ President Andrew Jackson, “Message from the President of the United States,” *Serial Set* 233, Sess. vol. 1, 22nd Cong., 2nd Sess., H. Doc. 2, 4 December 1832, 12-13, quotes from 13.

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- ⁴⁶ President Andrew Jackson, “Message from the President of the United States, to the Two Houses of Congress,” *Serial Set* 192, Sess. vol. 1, 21st Cong., 1st Sess., Sen. Doc. 1, 8 December 1829, 18, Jackson quotes from 18; concerning the allegations of improper paying out of pay and allowances to brevet holders, see the initial investigative attempts by Jackson supporter Amos Kendall, see: Fourth Auditor Amos Kendall to Sec. of the Navy John Branch, 28 May 1829, reprinted in “Statement Relative to the Pay and Emoluments of the Officers of the Marine Corps,” *ASP* 025, Naval Affairs vol. 3, 21st Cong., 1st Sess., Pub. 419, 25 May 1830, 581-88; Dawson, “With Fidelity and Effectiveness,” 737-38, quotes from 738.
- ⁴⁷ Navy Dept., “The Expediency of Dispensing with the Marine Corps as Part of the Armed Equipment of a Vessel-of-War,” *ASP* 025, Naval Affairs vol. 3, 21st Cong., 1st Sess., Pub. 416, 24 March 1830, 560-69, quotes from 560.
- ⁴⁸ For examples of Henderson’s correspondence with Navy Dept. leadership, see: Henderson to Sec. of the Navy Levi Woodbury, HQMC, Washington, D.C., 22 October 1831, RG 127, Entry 4: “Letters Sent, 1798-1884,” NA; Acting Sec. of the Navy John Boyle to Henderson, Navy Dept., Washington, D.C., 17 September 1831, RG 80, Entry 7 (“Letters Sent by the Secretary of the Navy to Officers and Commandants of the Marine Corps”) (hereafter “Letters Sent”), NA; Navy Dept., “Report of the Secretary of the Navy, 1831,” *ASP* 026, Naval Affairs vol. 4, 22nd Cong., 1st Sess., Publication 457, 6 December 1831, 9, 24-27; Navy Dept., “Report of the Secretary of the Navy, 1832,” *Serial Set* 233, Sess. vol. 1, 22nd Cong., 2nd Sess., House Doc. 2, 4 December 1832, 49; and Henderson to Sec. of the Navy Levi Woodbury, HQMC, Washington, D.C., 16 October 1833, RG 127, Entry 4: “Letters Sent, 1798-1884,” NA (wherein Henderson commented on the reports that at Quallah Battoo the Malays “found the Marine Guard fully sufficient for the perilous duty assigned it.”). For examples of pay-related correspondence, see: Navy Dept., “Recommendation that the Pay and Allowances of the Officers of the Marine Corps be Increased,” *ASP* 025, Naval Affairs vol. 3, 21st Cong., 2nd Sess., Pub. 438, 25 January 1831; Navy Dept., “Statement of the Pay, Rations, and Allowances of the Officers of the Marine Corps in 1831,” *ASP* 025, Naval Affairs vol. 3, 21st Cong., 2nd Sess., Publication 451, 1 March 1831; U.S. Congress, House, Committee on Naval Affairs, “On the Claim of Officers of the Marine Corps to the Like Pay and Allowances as Officers of the Army,” *ASP* 026, Naval Affairs vol. 4, 22nd Cong., 2nd Sess., Pub. 513, 26 February 1833.
- ⁴⁹ “Act for the Better Organization of the United States ‘Marine Corps,’” *Statutes at Large*, 23rd Cong., 1st Sess., 4: 712-14, quote from 713; Alexander, “Archibald Henderson,” 67-68; Dawson, “With Fidelity and Effectiveness,” 738-39.

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- ⁵⁰ Compiled from “Act for the Better Organization of the United States ‘Marine Corps,’” *Statutes at Large*, 23rd Cong., 1st Sess., 4: 712-14.
- ⁵¹ “Act for the Better Organization of the United States ‘Marine Corps,’” *Statutes at Large*, 23rd Cong., 1st Sess., 4: 712-14; President Andrew Jackson, “Rules and Regulations for the Government of the Navy,” *ASP* 026, Naval Affairs, vol. 4, 23rd Cong., 1st Sess., Pub. 524, 23 December 1833, 393-443; Alexander, “Archibald Henderson,” 68; Dawson, “With Fidelity and Effectiveness,” 738-39.
- ⁵² President Andrew Jackson, “Message from the President of the United States, to the Two Houses of Congress,” *Serial Set* 301, Sess. vol. 1, 24th Cong., 2nd Sess., House Doc. 2, 6 December 1836, 17-19, 448; Adjutant General’s Office, U.S. Army, Memorandum, “Marines on Duty with the Army in Alabama and Florida During the Years 1836 . . . 1842,” 3 November 1842, copy in Archibald Henderson Papers, GRC, Quantico, Va. (hereafter “Marines on Duty with the Army”); Edwin North McClellan, “History of the United States Marine Corps,” “Indian Campaigns, 1835-1842” (Material and Sources of Chapter VI, vol. 2) (unpublished manuscript, 1932), copy in New York Public Library, New York, N.Y., Offsite Collections, 22-28; Millett, *Semper Fidelis*, 70-71.
- ⁵³ “Marines on Duty with the Army;” Mahon, *History*, 190-210, quote from 208; Millett, *Semper Fidelis*, 71-72; Dawson, “With Fidelity and Effectiveness,” 740-42. For information regarding the activities of the “Mosquito Squadron,” see George E. Buker, *Swamp Sailors: Riverine Warfare in the Everglades, 1835-1842* (Gainesville: University Presses of Florida, 1975), in particular, see 41-42 for an example of how Marines were in such demand that commands fought over their continued presence.
- ⁵⁴ Information regarding the scope of army officer resignations during the Creek and Second Seminole Wars may be found in Department of War, “Officers Resigned in 1836, and Companies Employed in Seminole War,” *Serial Set* 304, Sess. vol. 4, 24th Cong., 2nd Sess., H. Doc. 183, 2 March 1837. See War Dept., “Annual Report of the Secretary of War Showing the Condition of that Department in 1836,” *ASP* 021, Military Affairs vol. 6, 24th Cong., 2nd Sess., Pub. 699, 3 December 1836, 824, for verification of Col. Henderson as commanding the Army’s 4th Artillery Regiment, and Brevet Lt. Col. Miller as commanding the Army’s 4th Infantry Regiment. Henderson later moved up as a Brevet Brig. Gen. to command the Second Brigade. A more detailed listing of Marine officers serving in command and key staff positions in the Army of the South can be found in McClellan, “Indian Campaigns, 1835-1842,” 40-41. See also his chapter “Marines on Duty with the Army.”

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- ⁵⁵ Henderson firmly believed in his training system and he vigorously defended its practice to critics. For an example of his concept in its earliest iteration, see Henderson to Sec. of the Navy Thompson, HQMC, 7 February 1821, reprinted in "Marine Corps," *ASP* 023, Naval Affairs, vol. 1, 16th Cong., 2nd Sess., Pub. 199, 737-38.
- ⁵⁶ James K. Polk, *Diary of James K. Polk*, Milo M. Quaife, ed., 4 vols. (Chicago: McClurg Co., 1910), 3: 23-34; Navy Dept., "Report of the Secretary of the Navy, 1847," *Serial Set* 503, Sess. vol. 1, 30th Cong., 1st Sess., Sen. Exec. Doc. 1, 7 December 1847 (hereafter "SecNav Annual Report, 1847"), 949-50, 957-58, quote from 957; Dawson, "With Fidelity and Effectiveness," 745-46.
- ⁵⁷ "SecNav Annual Report, 1847," 949-50, 957-58, quote from 958; Millett, *Semper Fidelis*, 73-81; Dawson, "Fidelity and Effectiveness," 744-47. See also K. Jack Bauer, *The Mexican War, 1846-1848* (New York: Macmillan, 1974), and K. Jack Bauer, *Surfboats and Horse Marines: U.S. Naval Operations in the Mexican War, 1846-48* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1969), for further details regarding the services of Marines in that conflict.
- ⁵⁸ Washington (D.C.) *National Intelligencer*, 2 June 1857; Washington (D.C.) *Evening Star*, 2 June 1857; Capt. Henry B. Tyler, Sr., to Henderson, HQMC, Washington, D.C., 2 June 1857, RG 80, Entry 14: "Letters Received," NA; Collum, *History*, 104-106, quote from 105. See also the detailed account in Dawson, "With Fidelity and Effectiveness," 750-52.
- ⁵⁹ Dawson, "With Fidelity and Effectiveness," 752-53; also Alexander, "Archibald Henderson," 72-73; Millett, *Semper Fidelis*, 86, 87-88, quote from 87; last quote from "SecNav Annual Report, 1859," 1141.
- ⁶⁰ Michael E. Krivdo, "Harpers Ferry: The Last Action of the 'Henderson Era,'" *Fortitudine* 34, (October 2009), 7-11.

CHAPTER IV

CHANGE OF COMMAND, CHANGE OF DIRECTION

On 6 January 1859, Brevet Brigadier General Archibald Henderson, Commandant of the Marine Corps, lay down on his sofa for his customary afternoon nap. Sometime about 4:15 P.M., the “Grand Old Man of the Marine Corps” died in his sleep, officially ending an era wherein efficiency, zeal, service, and innovation were among its highest qualities. For almost thirty-nine years, Henderson had exerted his influence over the officers and enlisted men of the Marine Corps, and instilled in them a sense of personal and institutional pride in their varied accomplishments. Through his concerned leadership, Henderson had worked to set as priorities certain training and education initiatives to make the Marine Corps a more relevant and valued service to America’s military establishment. Fortunately for the Corps that Henderson so loved and nurtured, his programs and procedures had become so ingrained as to continue for a time in his absence.¹ However, the function of continuing to improve the institution now rested in the hands of the man who replaced him as Commandant.

In that regard, it does not appear that Secretary of the Navy Isaac Toucey expended much time or energy deliberating on the task of identifying who should succeed Henderson. Instead, Toucey reflexively resorted to the traditional practice of finding the next senior officer and nominating him for the post. Apparently, the issue of Henderson’s successor had not been anticipated. Henderson’s death caught his closest staff officers somewhat by surprise; after all, the man had been Commandant longer than

most of his Marines had been alive. It had been a remarkable thirty-nine years since the subject of filling the post of Commandant had last surfaced. If Henderson himself contemplated who should succeed him, he never committed it to paper. In that regard, he missed the opportunity to identify and groom a successor who would keep the Corps on the path he had paved. As a result, on his being informed on 7 January of Henderson's sudden death, Secretary Toucey ordered the next senior officer, Lieutenant Colonel John Harris, to proceed to Washington, D.C., to assume the duties of Commandant. Toucey also forwarded Harris' nomination to President James Buchanan, who endorsed that recommendation without comment. By 8 January, less than forty-eight hours after Henderson's death, Harris had arrived at Headquarters, received a promotion to Colonel, and assumed duties as the sixth Commandant of the Marine Corps.

This chapter examines the leadership Colonel Harris exhibited, from the moment he assumed duties as Commandant to the opening shots of the Civil War. It focuses specifically on Harris' views of where, operationally, the Corps fit within the military establishment. It does this by scrutinizing his correspondence and also reviewing and analyzing his actions to ascertain his perceptions, policies and intentions for how he believed the Marine Corps, as an institution, should be employed. That vision is then compared and contrasted with that of his predecessor, Henderson, and against the requirements of the naval services as described by senior political and military leaders. Particular attention is given to the nature of the relationships established by Harris with superiors and subordinates, and the effect those interactions had on the Corps as an

institution. Harris' priorities revealed much about his concept for what he believed constituted the proper employment of Marines.

Colonel Harris left behind few documents that give a clear picture of his youth or background. Other than the fact that he was born on 20 May 1793 in East Whiteland Township, Chester County, Pennsylvania, little else is known. Although it is not evident where he received his education, his correspondence indicates that Harris was a literate man who could read and write effectively. In any event, the record shows that on 10 November 1813, Harris accepted a commission as a second lieutenant of Marines and soon after fought British forces threatening the nation's capital in Washington, D.C. Because of the wartime shortage of officers, Harris gained promotion to first lieutenant in only eight months, and on 14 August 1814 received orders to sea duty on board the frigate USS *Guerriere* in Baltimore. There, according to historian Joseph Alexander, Harris probably "fought with Marines at Sparrow's Point and Fort McHenry from 11 to 13 September [1814]," but his performance seems to have been "unremarkable," or at least not mentioned in reports.²

After the War of 1812, Harris spent almost twenty years afloat, serving on board a variety of warships. His extensive sea service imparted in him two things: a keen appreciation of the role of Marines aboard naval vessels; and a habit of following the operational command of naval officers. While on sea duty he was awarded a brevet promotion to captain in 1825. In 1837, Harris, and many of his detachment joined Henderson in Florida, where he earned another brevet promotion to major for his "good service" in command of a unit of mounted Marines during the Battle of Hatchee-Lustee.

Alexander insightfully considers that period of time to be “the peak of his career as a fighting marine,” a sober assessment that hints at Harris’ subsequent dearth of accomplishments. Following the Florida campaign, Harris left sea duty for good and spent the rest of his pre-Commandant career at a succession of barracks commands at various Navy Yards, a sequence of non-descript assignments that, Alexander concludes, “seemed to take much of the fire out of [him].”³

When the Mexican War broke out less than a decade after the Florida campaign, opportunities for Marine officers to serve in the conflict abounded and most of the Corps’ officers expressed eagerness to participate in the war effort. But Harris desired instead to remain in his barracks command in Gosport, Virginia (later known as Norfolk). Specifically, when Commandant Henderson queried Harris about his preferences for joining a battalion being formed for service with the army in Mexico, Harris replied that he did not wish to be assigned to the Mexican force unless he could command the battalion; that he “would rather stay at home than go second to an officer of his own grade.” He further added that “I have no desire to go, but if you [Henderson] think the good of the service requires it, I shall not hesitate to do so.”⁴ Having other field grade officers more anxious to go, Henderson passed Harris by, yet one cannot help but wonder what the energetic Commandant must have felt about Harris’ reluctance to seize such an opportunity.

John Harris showed none of that hesitation, however, in assuming the job of Commandant. In little more than a day after Henderson’s death Harris began tackling the various administrative duties of the post with competence and confidence. At first

blush, he seemed to continue unabated the various initiatives of his predecessor and, as Alexander notes, his initial correspondence indicated that he “was determined to run a taut ship.” In reality, the day-to-day responsibilities of the Commandant were not too challenging at that time: the actual assigning of officers, approving of leaves and promotions, convening of courts-martials, etc., were all tasks performed by the navy secretary and his office. Harris’ job was merely to advise on those matters. The Commandant could not even directly appoint his own staff officers, although Henderson had long wielded his influence to gain officers supportive of his initiatives.⁵ Harris would never reach that same level of influence with his superiors that his predecessor enjoyed, so he had to be content to work with staff officers who were often supportive of Henderson’s goals and, as we shall see, some of those relationships grew strained over time for several reasons.

The main issue with Harris’ tenure as Commandant was not his administrative competence, but rather his limited vision for the Corps’ place within the military structure and his restricted outlook regarding the types of roles the unit should pursue as a service. In contrast to Henderson’s actions, it is questionable that Harris worked to ensure that the Marine Corps was meeting the needs of the naval services and nation in the most efficient and best manner. Although Harris did not directly commit his thoughts to paper regarding his ideas on what constituted valid roles and missions for his unit, his concepts for employing Marines nonetheless can be inferred from a careful examination of his actions in office. Gradually, and somewhat subtly, Harris developed his own set of conservative priorities for the organization.

It was notable that, when Harris took over as Commandant, Marines were in the midst of one of the largest peacetime military deployments since the Mexican War. Working in concert with the navy, Henderson had organized, trained and deployed an *ad hoc* battalion of about 200 Marines, with its own organic artillery, to provide a formidable landing party for the navy's Punitive Expedition to Paraguay. That battalion epitomized the vision Henderson foresaw of Marine units with their own artillery capability serving as the core of naval landing parties, essentially constituting "the military arm of the navy"⁶ in projecting power ashore. Importantly, Henderson also made good use of such deployments as a means of advertising the capabilities of the Corps and lobbying Congress for support. For instance, writing to Secretary Toucey, he invoked the example of the Paraguay battalion to emphasize the "propriety of having established at headquarters a school for drill in both the use of the musket and of light and heavy artillery." Henderson argued that "every practicable facility should be afforded to instruct them on all the duties of their profession," and noted that "comfortable and healthy barracks with sufficient space for drill" were needed, hoping that "provision will be made for their erection" as soon as practicable. After all, the old Commandant continued, "the same drill should be imparted to every soldier, whether of the army or of the marine corps; the marines having more than once taken the field with the army as in Florida and Mexico."⁷ Just as he had done for decades, Henderson cited examples of actual deployments as a rationale for gaining the support that he wanted to enhance his various programs.

Henderson also had used examples of operational employment of Marines to justify increases in the authorized numbers of officers and men within the Corps, and Secretary Toucey endorsed his requests. Arguing that the utility of having a battalion of trained Marines ready for operations such as the Paraguay Expedition outweighed the costs, Henderson hoped to gain the manpower to officially flesh out his Headquarters training cadre so he would not have to keep diverting resources from the ships' detachments. Interestingly, in his annual report the Commandant also compared the individual proficiency levels of the two groups of Marines that accompanied the Paraguay Expedition, those with the battalion and those with the separate ships' detachments, and concluded that the battalion's men were better trained. Again highlighting the merits of having a centralized training center, he remarked that the ships' detachments, not having benefited by the battalion's training program might, "by being properly distributed among drilled [battalion Marines] . . . soon acquire the steadiness of their immediate associates in the ranks on the right and left." In short, the process of training and employing the Marines as a battalion organization helped increase the overall proficiency of all of the Marines of the fleet, whether they belonged to the battalion or not. Providing him with personnel to permanently maintain that training cadre would ensure future support at the same level of quality.⁸ Similar appeals by Henderson had generated mixed success rates in the past, but under Henderson's experienced and skilled tutelage Secretary Toucey generally seemed to be a supporter of the Commandant's initiatives. Henderson's consistent descriptions of the Corps' accomplishments in his correspondence with Navy Department and congressional

leaders served two functions: reminding senior political leaders of the unit's successes and soliciting continued support.

An analysis of Harris' correspondence and actions as Commandant reveals that he may have had quite different opinions as to the utility of Henderson's non-traditional operations. While to a casual observer Harris may have seemed to be continuing to support some of Henderson's improvements, a closer study uncovers a quite different situation: Harris may not have been as ardent a supporter of Headquarters' involvement in the planning, training and directing of Marines as Henderson intended. Where Henderson had long publicized the accomplishments of Marines in his official letters, Harris mentioned very little about them, and much of what he did say focused on negatives. For example, with regard to the aforementioned Paraguay Expedition, both Secretary Toucey and Henderson devoted a sizeable portion of their 1858 report on the subject. Toucey also took time to note that "at no period when we were not actually engaged in war has the navy been more actively employed than during the past year." By extension, that also included the Marine Corps, a fact that Henderson highlighted. In his 1859 report, Toucey led off his narrative of the Navy's accomplishments for the year with a recap of the expedition's achievements, assessing the operation as a success. In contrast, Harris *made no mention at all* of the part his men played in the largest deployment of combat power outside the United States since the Mexican War. Instead, he focused on the state of barracks buildings at the various Navy Yards; important, but somewhat routine business.⁹ Where Henderson focused his attention outward and to the

problems of the future, Harris seemed to look inward and concentrate on issues of the present.

Nowhere is this difference in operational focus more evident than during the Marine Corps' most visible military accomplishment of the prewar years: its successful handling of John Brown's Raid at Harpers Ferry, Virginia, in October of 1859. Harris' part in the Marine Corps' response to the raid and what he had to say (or not say) about the Marines' role is quite revealing, and appears in stark contrast with that of his predecessor. Close scrutiny leads to better understanding of John Harris' notions for what he believed constituted valid roles and missions for the Marine Corps.

On 17 October 1859, Secretary of War John B. Floyd received a series of frantic telegrams from Baltimore and Ohio Railroad officials reporting that an abolitionist force of "one hundred and fifty strong" had seized the Federal Arsenal at Harpers Ferry and blocked the rail line that ran through the area. Subsequent reports of "a formidable negro insurrection" raised the specter of another Nat Turner's Rebellion and fanned the flames of apprehension throughout the slaveholding Virginia and Maryland countryside, prompting a wide-ranging activation of militia units to combat the threat of insurrection. In nearby Washington, D.C., Floyd and President James Buchanan conferred on the state of affairs and decided it required the immediate presence of regular military troops to stabilize the situation. The problem was, the nearest army regulars were located at Fort Monroe, a two-day journey, at a minimum. Deciding that a quicker response was necessary, Floyd met with Secretary Toucey to request that Marines from the Washington Barracks be deployed immediately to quell the crisis.¹⁰ The fact that both

Floyd and Buchanan entrusted the Marines with such a politically sensitive mission is indicative of the high degree of trust and confidence that they had in the abilities of the Marine Corps.

In this instance, the driving force for the employing of Marines in time of crisis would not be the unit's Commandant, but rather the Navy Secretary and politicians outside the Navy Department. This situation is the direct opposite from that posed when Henderson was still alive, wherein navy secretaries more often than not tried to rein in Henderson's drive to commit Marines to action. In the Harpers Ferry operation, decision makers outside the Corps pushed for it to take action, and Commandant Harris passively implemented orders as he received them. Toucey, on being briefed by Floyd on the state of affairs at Harpers Ferry, concurred with the need for immediate military action and directed his Chief Clerk to personally deliver an order to Harris. In a concise, yet detailed written directive, Toucey instructed Harris to "Send all available marines at Head Quarters, under charge of suitable officers, by this evening's train of cars to Harpers Ferry, to protect the public property at that place, which is endangered by riotous outbreak." Furthermore, Toucey specified that "the men will be furnished with a proper number of ball cartridges, ammunition and rations, and will take two howitzers and schrapnel [sic]," the last items being an indicator of the degree of uncertainty as to the scope of the threat the Marines might face. The order also specified instructions regarding the command and control of the operation, placing the Marine detachment under the operational control of the "Senior Army Officer" at the site.¹¹ Toucey's directive contained all the elements of a modern mission order, clearly addressing the

specifics of who, what, where, when, and why of the task to be accomplished, leaving Harris with little to add except to assign personnel and work out minor details.

Harris assigned the only officer available at that time, First Lieutenant Israel Greene, to command the detachment, and he provided eighty-six Marines to fill out the unit. Greene quickly formed the men and put them to work gathering the weapons and equipment that they would need for the job. While that was going on, it appears that Secretary Toucey was growing concerned that Harris was not doing everything necessary to brief the Marines or to provide the degree of supervision necessary for success. To assuage his fears, the navy secretary took several steps that he never felt compelled to do when Henderson was Commandant. First, Toucey forwarded Greene a copy of his order to Harris, as if insinuating that the Commandant might not have provided that information already. Second, apparently concerned that only one Marine officer, Greene, was available at the time to lead the force, Toucey took it upon himself to order another Marine officer, Paymaster Major William W. Russell, to accompany Greene's command, ostensibly to provide the junior officer with support or assistance. Harris apparently agreed with this arrangement, or at least he did not oppose it. In any event, the inclusion of Russell may have proved, in the end, more of a distraction than an asset to Greene.¹²

On arrival near Harpers Ferry, Greene met the overall commander of the force, Army Brevet Colonel Robert E. Lee, and helped plan and coordinate the actions of his Marines. When it became evident that the Marines would lead the assault against Brown's raiders and free the hostages taken early in the raid, Greene organized his men into specific elements, provided each with detailed instructions, and supervised

rehearsals of their tasks. His level of planning is comparable with that of modern military units, and the discipline of his men was superb. As evidence of the last point, Greene ordered his lead Marines to assault John Brown's position with unloaded, bayonet-tipped weapons to prevent possibly wounding of the hostages within, despite having to brave enemy fire in the process. On order, Greene's men executed their plan with precision, adapting rapidly to the changing situation with little loss of momentum, and quickly killed or captured all of Brown's men and freed all the hostages without injury. Greene himself led the charge into the fire of the raiders and personally captured Brown. From start to finish, Greene's assault lasted less than three minutes, ending an ordeal of terror that had captured the attention of the entire nation. Lee, as overall commander, seemed entirely pleased with the performance of Greene and his men, inserting his "commendation of the conduct" of the Marines to his report on the action, and adding that they "were at all times ready and prompt in the execution of any duty."¹³

Greene's men had been at the heart of an action that transfixed the nation and polarized its people regarding the issue of slavery in America. Not surprisingly, many leaders were quick to praise Greene and his men for their performance. Colonel Lee, in addition to "express[ing his] thanks to . . . Major Russell, and Lieutenant Green[e] for the aid they afforded me," also wrote Harris a personal note, stating "Your Corps has captivated so many hearts in Virginia, that you must not be surprised at the desire of its sons to enter its ranks." As proof, Lee included a letter from a "young & hearty" prospect who, along with several friends, soon enlisted into the Corps.¹⁴

Secretary Toucey also congratulated the Harpers Ferry Marines. He forwarded copies of Lee's official report to both Greene and Russell, adding his appreciation for the "gallant part taken by the Marines under your command" in the action. With a sense of pride, he congratulated the officers and proclaimed that the "conduct of yourself and your command on that occasion meets with the highest commendation of the Department."¹⁵

Newspapers and magazines covered the action in detail for months afterward, telling and retelling the events to a national audience that hung on every word. Everyone, it seemed, had some words of thanks or praise for the role the Marines played at Harpers Ferry. Everyone, that is, except the one person who commanded the Marines, Commandant John Harris, who remained strangely silent on the action. If, as Sullivan asserts, "Harris was well-pleased with the performance of his Corps during the trouble at Harpers Ferry," he missed many opportunities to say so in his official correspondence. Somewhat surprisingly, in Harris' contribution to Secretary Toucey's annual report to Congress, written only four weeks after his men's successful handling of the Harpers Ferry incident, Harris says *not one word* about the part his men played in that action. This omission is particularly unusual since in that report Harris asks Congress to consider a request for adding almost one thousand more officers and men "to meet the wants of the service," yet neglecting to cite the one example still fresh in the minds of the nation that clearly illustrated the tangible benefits that could be reaped for the country if such a request were granted.¹⁶ The failure to even mention the noteworthy performance of his men at Harpers Ferry in the report, certainly the most important

contribution to national defense made that year, is a curious omission that suggests that Harris might not have been fully supportive of the practice of employing Marines in such a non-traditional fashion.

There are other examples that suggest Harris may not have welcomed the use of Marines outside the traditional missions of ships' detachments or guarding naval property. In early 1861, the Marine Corps again found itself thrust into the center of a growing national crisis. As smoldering sectional disagreements over the "peculiar institution" of slavery were fanned aflame by rhetoric surrounding the upcoming presidential election, some military officers and men from all services began to waver in their loyalties to the Federal government, prompting many to resign or even desert their posts. The outcome of the election further aggravated the situation and the trickle of resignations and desertions became a deluge, particularly in the South. The Washington, D.C., area, sandwiched as it was between two slaveholding states, proved especially hard hit with manpower losses that left many of the capital's defenses with inadequate men to man the posts. Historian B. Franklin Cooling, III, bluntly described the situation in the Spring of 1861: "Prior to the fall of Fort Sumter, Washington's military defense was much more an illusion than a reality [and] could boast of little more than the usual number of dottery old bureau chiefs, and a sprinkling of gold-laced officers from the Navy Yard."¹⁷

According to Cooling, the city's new Inspector General, army Colonel Charles P. Stone, reported that "The only regular troops near the capital of the country were three or four hundred marines at the Marine barracks, and three officers and fifty-three men of

ordnance at the Washington Arsenal.” Stone also noted that the District’s “old militia system had been abandoned (without being legally abolished), and Congress had passed no law establishing a new one.”¹⁸ Furthermore, Cooling asserts that “Volunteers in the District of Columbia formed but four innocuous organizations whose loyalty was open to question.”¹⁹ With the nation teetering on the cusp of war and the capital left with few defenses, the Marine Corps seemed ideally positioned to step into the vacuum as the protector of Washington, an opportunity that seemed too good to pass up even for a hard-pressed organization with so many critical needs.

However, Harris seemed not to relish the role of being the most likely defender of the capital. In fact, his correspondence illustrates a reluctance to expand his security obligations outside traditional responsibilities. Yet the realities of the deteriorating national political situation dictated that the Marine Corps must operate outside its norm and assume a greater role in the capital’s defense. On 5 January 1861, Secretary Toucey ordered Harris to “send a detachment of 40 Marines, under the charge of proper officers and properly manned and equipped, to occupy Fort Washington for about fifteen days and to protect public property.” That position, located a few miles south of the District of Columbia on the Maryland side of the Potomac, controlled the river approaches into Washington and was considered to be one of two critical defensive positions for the capital region, the second being Fort McHenry, near Baltimore. The threatened loss of such important forts spurred even the lethargic Buchanan administration to take action to ensure they remained in Federal control. To give Harris a hint of the urgency of the

request, Toucey also advised him that “a conveyance will be furnished by the Navy Department which, will receive them at the Navy Yard wharf.”²⁰ Speed was paramount.

Harris quickly organized and dispatched a force of forty-eight Marines under the command of Brevet Major George Terrett, to garrison Fort Washington. Terrett, then commander of the Marine Barracks in Washington, was a seasoned and quite capable officer who had earned a brevet promotion during the Mexican War. Terrett also took with him two second lieutenants to assist him in commanding the detachment. With a sense of urgency that reflected the circumstances, Terrett rapidly mustered and equipped his men, marched them to the wharf, embarked aboard their transport, and proceeded to Fort Washington. On their arrival, the men stored their gear and excess equipment, and then commenced their duties as a garrison force.²¹

Three days later, Harris received another order to “provide a detachment of thirty Marines” to Fort McHenry to “garrison the fort until relieved by army troops.” Again, Toucey requested that Harris act fast, giving him until “tomorrow morning” to have the detachment in place. With almost fifty men at Fort Washington, and with no reduction in his requirement to protect both his headquarters and the Navy Yard, Harris looked elsewhere for forces to meet this new commitment. He telegraphed his commanders at the Brooklyn and Philadelphia barracks to determine which post could best handle this new assignment. After receiving personnel reports from both barracks, Harris directed First Lieutenant Andrew Hays to lead a detachment of thirty-nine Marines and to proceed with them for Baltimore aboard the next morning’s 4:00 A.M. train. With no time to waste, Hays quickly organized, equipped and prepared his men for the task. The

detachment embarked on the specified train and Hays soon after reported their safe arrival at Fort McHenry. By that same afternoon the detachment was already conducting patrols of the area outside the fort, seeking to “guard against arson” or any other threats.²²

Harris now had Marines occupying key positions around the capital: the Navy Yard, his Headquarters Barracks, and both Fort Washington and Fort McHenry. His rapid actions in filling the military vacuum around the District would seem to leave him well-positioned to argue convincingly for the authorization to increase his organization’s overall personnel strength, should he push the issue (see Figure 4-1). Certainly, Congress would have found it a hard request to turn down. Instead, Harris looked for reasons to withdraw Marines from the fort garrisons, arguing that such missions were not technically Marine responsibilities. Citing the same Act of 1834 that Commandant Henderson had used to gain permission for Marines to fight with the army in Florida, Harris now argued that the situation at Fort McHenry had raised the question of who, by law, could control Marines in the field.²³ Harris’ own words and actions speak volumes of what he thought about having his Marines detailed to postings with the army.

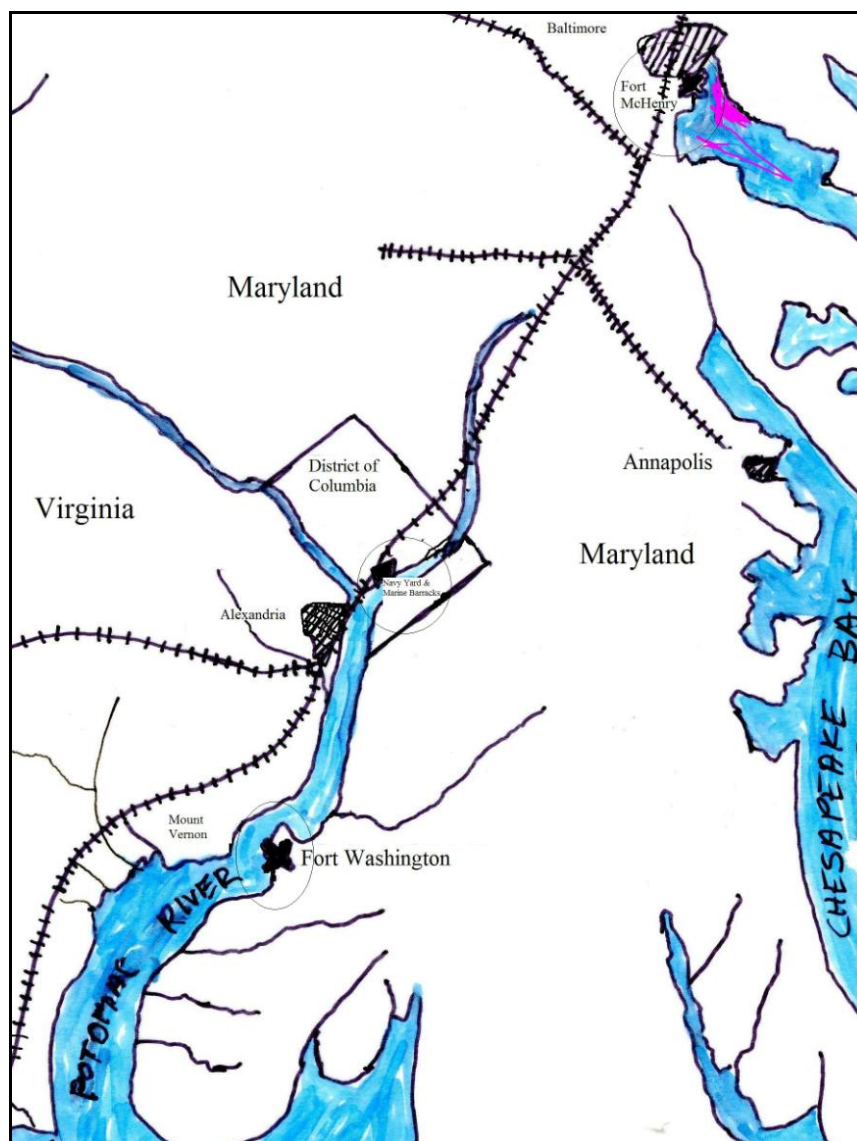


Figure 4-1. Capital Area Defenses Occupied by Marines, January 1861.²⁴

One would think, as some indeed must have, that national military requirements would trump individual service parochialism. The issue of who could exercise control over Marines in the field, while a germane and valid concern, hinged on technicalities that could have been worked out to the benefit of all parties, and yet Harris stubbornly dug in his heels. On 10 January, the day after he arrived at Fort McHenry, Lieutenant

Hays forwarded Harris a copy of a general order from army Lieutenant General Winfield Scott that ordered one of his officers, Lieutenant Colonel Harvey Brown, to assume command of the garrison, including the Marine detachment. Incensed, Harris wrote Toucey to protest what he perceived as an illegal and improper encroachment of his command authority. Marines, he argued, could only be ordered to serve under army control in the field by the president. Without presidential authority, Scott's order was, by law, invalid. Harris went on to point out that the secretary should protest Scott's actions, facetiously commenting that Scott "might, with the same propriety, order an [Army] officer to assume command of the Head Quarters of the Corps," if Toucey did not challenge that authority.²⁵ The tone of Harris' letter reflects righteous indignation, and it was apparent that he wrote it in the passion of the moment.

Technically, Harris was entirely correct in his assertion: absent a presidential order to provide Marines to serve with the army, Scott did not have authority to issue an order placing the Marine detachment under command of an army officer. However, instead of offering up a solution that might have satisfied all parties while still accomplishing the mission of defending critical government installations, Harris polarized the issue and made Marine participation seem to be an all or nothing proposition: either the president should order Marines to serve with the army, or the Marines would not participate. Alternatives wherein the Marines might have still supported those missions while also maintaining their chain of command were not addressed. An easy solution, although uncommon at that time, might have been that the Marines coordinate their operational activities with the local commander, while still

maintaining a Navy/Marine command structure. With the army in dire need of manpower, such an arrangement might have been acceptable, but Harris' preference seemed to be not to work with the army under any circumstance.

In the end, despite siding with Harris' point regarding the issue of command of Marines, Toucey still kept the detachment in place until the army could relieve it. Rather than make a hard decision or policy for how to handle this and similar situations in the future, Toucey tried to tread the middle ground, acknowledging Harris' point, yet not rescinding his order to deploy the Marines. Perhaps the secretary acted out of a broader knowledge of events transpiring throughout the nation: on 10 January, Florida joined South Carolina in seceding from the Union, and on 11 January Alabama passed its own secession ordinance. On 12 January, in a direct, precise missive, the secretary ordered Hays to return to the Washington, D.C., area immediately "on arrival of Army troops at Fort McHenry," fulfilling the intent of the original assignment. Three days later, a smugly satisfied Harris notified Toucey that Hays and his men had returned, ignoring the fact that their deployment to Fort McHenry might have helped forestall drastic action by some of Maryland's more ardent Southern sympathizers. Uncharacteristically, Harris also noted that Hays "reports [his] detachment as behaving remarkably well, obeying all orders promptly and cheerfully."²⁶ For Hays' unit's short six-day deployment, Harris heaped on it more praise than for any other unit since he had become Commandant.

To make matters worse for him, the very next day, 16 January, Harris received a letter from Captain Algernon S. Taylor of the Fort Washington garrison. Taylor, who had several days earlier replaced Major Terrett as commander of that Marine

detachment, wished to inform Harris fully of the situation at his post. Believing that the fort was in a “defenseless and pregnable condition,” he felt that the garrison needed reinforcing. As proof, Taylor relayed the blunt observation of First Lieutenant George W. C. Lee, an army engineer assigned to the fort, that “150 tolerably organized men could enter this place against the force now here.” To remedy the problem, “Lieutenant Lee is now preparing some of the embrasures to mount howitzers in, but, when mounted, I have not men sufficient to work them and at the same time protect other assailable portions of the fort.” Since “I do not wish to be placed in a position to detract from the high character of my Corps, I feel myself bound to make this report.”²⁷ Taylor looked to Harris to provide him with additional assets to properly carry out the mission.

Instead, Harris seemed to want to withdraw his men from Fort Washington altogether. On 18 January, Harris forwarded Taylor’s report to Secretary Toucey, asking “that such action may be taken as the case requires.” However, as a hint of the course of action Harris would prefer, he reminded the secretary that “the fifteen days for which the Marines were sent to Fort Washington expire tomorrow,” the 19th. Although Toucey’s reply to Harris has not been found among the records, it is known that Harris sent a small force to augment Taylor’s unit, despite his earlier reluctance to do so. Also, despite Harris’ reminder of the end of the fifteen-day commitment, Taylor’s men remained at Fort Washington for another week past that deadline, staying until another army unit formally relieved the detachment.²⁸ Harris’ comments and the two-day delay in forwarding Taylor’s report suggests reluctance on his part to send more men to the fort, and a desire to conclude Marine participation in its defense as soon as possible.

Harris' earlier protestations to Secretary Toucey about Lieutenant General Scott ordering Marines without authority of the president did not stop Scott from including the Marine Corps from his contingency planning for capital defense. Perhaps Scott was reminded of the last war, wherein a Marine battalion was assigned to his command in Mexico. In any event, within a confidential general order dated 12 February 1861, Scott reasonably assigned the Marines to a prominent role in the event of an attack or threat in the District of Columbia. "In case of alarm, outrage, or mob violence, at or near any of the public buildings or in the streets or squares of this city," the order specified that "Colonel Harris, chief of the Marine Corps, will please put in rapid march to Capitol Square, there to await for further orders, as many of his marines as he can spare from other duties."²⁹ Although the need to dispatch Marines as a reaction force in case of civil disobedience never materialized, the plan to do so quite sensibly remained in effect despite the protestations of Harris.³⁰ Scott's order clearly indicates that senior army officials believed that it was entirely within their authority to include Marines within their military plans, particularly where national security was concerned. Unfortunately, Scott's personal observations regarding Harris' protests against that authority are missing from the historical record.

Concurrent with his taskings to help man Washington defenses, Harris found himself also dealing with problems at his most remote barracks, the Warrington Navy Yard near Pensacola, Florida. Rumors and indicators of Florida's possible secession had been surfacing since the presidential election in November 1860. For example, in December, the commander of the Pensacola Marine Barracks, Captain Josiah Watson,

forwarded to the Corps' Quartermaster, Major William Slack, a copy of a letter he had received from the civilian contractor who provided the Marines with their rations. In it, the contractor advised Watson that he would continue to "furnish rations under my contract [for] 1861 till I give you notice," adding as a postscript "that if Florida goes out of the Union I will not furnish [rations] afterwards." On being notified of the ominous development, Toucey took minimal action: he authorized Watson to draw rations from the Navy Yard if the Marines were cut off, and a concerned Harris closely monitored the situation.³¹

The threat of being deprived of their rations was not the only problem the Marines (and navy) faced in Pensacola. On 6 January, news reached the Navy Yard that the Federal installations of Fort Morgan and Mount Vernon Arsenal in nearby Alabama had surrendered to forces loyal to that state's governor. Rumors began to circulate about large military formations moving on the Pensacola area. Workers at the Navy Yard stopped coming to work, and stories of deliberate sabotage and talk of sympathy with secessionists abounded. Despite this, the Commandant of the Navy Yard, Captain James Armstrong, did little to prepare his installation against an attack, even after Florida passed a secession ordinance of its own on 10 January. Evidence suggests that several of the senior members of his staff, including his executive officer, Captain Ebenezer Farrand, USN, sympathized with rebel forces and may even have collaborated with them to hand over the installation to the South. To the beleaguered Armstrong, the only trustworthy forces he felt he could muster were the thirty-seven Marines of Captain Watson's detachment and perhaps thirty workmen.³²

Captain Watson's men faced several obstacles to providing a good defense of the Navy Yard. First, they had few men to effectively cover such a large area. Second, the yard had two main entrances and three pedestrian gates to guard, and part of the perimeter wall was in disrepair. To make matters worse, at low tide intruders could simply walk around the wall. Third, the Marines' own barracks was physically located outside the yard compound, making it necessary to defend both positions, thus further dissipating the strength of the detachment. Fourth, the post's artillery pieces were either unserviceable, improperly mounted, or had some components missing, rendering them all useless. Fifth, many of Watson's initiatives to bolster security were undermined by several of Armstrong's subordinates, probably purposefully done so that a takeover could be more easily accomplished. As an example of this last point, when Captain Farrand discovered that Watson had taken it upon himself to equip his sentries with live ammunition, he "gave [Watson] an order for the guard not to fire at any person, but . . . to call [Farrand]," so that Farrand could personally take charge of the situation.³³

Not surprisingly, that is precisely what happened. According to witnesses to the day's events, at about 9:00 A.M. on 12 January, a messenger from the guard sought out Captain Farrand to inform him that a party was waiting for him at the main gate. Farrand went and met with the men, later identified as commissioners from the state of Florida, and shook hands with them. Witnesses later testified that it was as if he had been expecting them. As Farrand greeted the commissioners, several companies of armed men appeared, and the guards were ordered not to interfere. Farrand then escorted the two commissioners to Captain Armstrong's office. Soon afterward, another of

Armstrong's officers, identified as Navy Lieutenant Francis Renshaw, came out of the office, crossed the courtyard, and issued orders to haul down the American flag, stating that Armstrong had surrendered the post. At that point, the armed state forces were allowed to enter the Navy Yard, where they soon occupied the post's magazine and assembled in the courtyard. On discovering these developments, Captain Watson went to Armstrong's office to see what was transpiring, and the yard commandant advised him that he had, in fact, surrendered.³⁴ There would be no fight.

Watson was further ordered by Armstrong to have his men stack arms, confine themselves to two rooms on the upper level of the Marine Barracks, and to turn the remainder of the facility over to the state troops that had already occupied the Navy Yard. To the chagrin of his Marines, Watson made them lay down their arms and allowed the Florida troops to occupy his barracks. The first direct confrontation between U.S. Marines and Southern rebel forces had ended without a shot being fired. Watson and his men were paroled a couple of days later and allowed to embark on the navy store ship *Supply* for passage back to the North.³⁵ Although critics attributed the loss of the Pensacola post to timid leadership by the yard commandant and treasonous actions by some of his former officers, the Marines were nonetheless tarred with the same brush of that embarrassment because of the high expectations many had for their capabilities.

The events in Pensacola were mirrored at many other Federal properties throughout the South. As the United States divided itself and war loomed on the horizon, John Harris and his Marines would find themselves faced with many challenges. From the time of his assumption of the commandancy to the days just before the start if

the Civil War, John Harris believed that his major responsibility lay in providing administrative oversight for a decentralized organization, and to manage the personnel and equipment in a competent manner. Where Henderson had sought to increasingly centralize certain functions, such as organization, command, and the training of officers and men, Harris remained content to decentralize and push those same functions back to the various detachments and barracks officers. His actions demonstrated that Harris saw his duty as predominantly being a provider of personnel and resources to those units.

Prior to 1859, Henderson perceived his headquarters as being the central core of the Marine Corps, providing the guidance, direction and training for all Marines, who could then be assigned to other units as needed. He also understood the strengths and advantages of operating in larger, battalion-sized formations. The larger units benefitted from a centralized approach to training, and could always form smaller detachments as needed with little loss in proficiency or cohesion. The same could not be said for the reverse: a battalion formed from many smaller, disparate units needed additional training and exercising to be able to effectively operate as a unit. It is for precisely this reason that Henderson habitually maintained a training cadre at his Headquarters even when field units were short on manpower. He believed that the central training effort was so important to the overall organization that it was worth the relatively minor inconvenience of some units having to function shorthanded.

After becoming Commandant, Harris indicated that the opposite approach was more important: although he understood the importance of schools of practice, he felt compelled to report that “from want of accommodations and of numbers we find it

impossible to instruct the men as infantry and as light and heavy artillery.”³⁶ By granting a higher priority for the assigning of Marines to barracks and detachments rather than maintaining appropriate levels at the centralized training cadre and schools, Harris reversed Henderson’s long-standing effort to centrally control the training and evaluation of new Marines.

Another sharp difference between Harris and his predecessor lay in their divergent concepts of employing Marines, as well as in their ideas of what constituted valid roles and missions for the Corps. Henderson sought out service with the army and rarely turned down a mission, seemingly understanding that the unit owed its existence to the fact that it could be depended on to competently serve in any number of roles, and not just in its traditional ones. Henderson also understood that those long-established roles were dated and some were in danger of becoming irrelevant as society and technology effected changes on naval warfare and practices. For all of these reasons, Henderson experimented with new roles and sought out opportunities to undertake missions outside of the norm, as a way of enhancing the value of the Corps to the Navy and the nation.

Conversely, Harris seemed to take comfort in traditional assignments and felt uneasy when ordered to do anything outside the normal routine. Harris also repeatedly issued arguments that his men should not serve under army control, even when such assignments would have benefitted the Corps in the long-term, as it had in the past. In resisting such service, army leaders may have begun to find dealing with the sensitivities of Marines too difficult and not worth the effort expended. Certainly, Winfield Scott and

others were finding that working with Harris was proving itself a complex proposition. Harris, in expending so much energy to extricate Marines from army command in early 1861, may have closed some doors that might have led to more harmonious and mutually beneficial relationships in the future.

As the secession crisis deepened, Harris seemed not to actively support several important initiatives that Henderson had worked towards for decades. Harris appeared more interested in the formalities of command than on the realities of dealing with the situation the nation faced. Furthermore, Harris lacked the practiced skills and diplomacy of his predecessor, but that is perhaps expected when comparing Harris' abilities to a leader with the longevity and experience of Henderson. In such a comparison, Harris appears ill-prepared for the job, although, as both Millett and Alexander point out, it would be hard to see which of the most likely candidates would have been better prepared to fill Henderson's shoes.³⁷ Furthermore, the duty of preparing junior leaders for increased responsibility is a function of the senior officer, and neither Henderson nor any of the many navy secretaries seemed to expend much time or effort towards training subordinates to take over their jobs. As a consequence, the Marine Corps entered America's Civil War with John Harris at the helm, largely unprepared for the challenges to come.

Endnotes

- ¹ *New York Times*, 7 January 1859, 1; Michael E. Krivdo, “Harpers Ferry: Last Action of the ‘Henderson Era’,” *Fortitudine* 34 (October 2009), 8-11; Joseph G. Dawson III, “With Fidelity and Effectiveness: Archibald Henderson’s Lasting Legacy to the U.S. Marine Corps,” *Journal of Military History* 62 (October 1998), 727-53.
- ² An effective biographical sketch of John Harris is Joseph Alexander, “John Harris,” in *Commandants of the Marine Corps*, eds. Allan R. Millett and Jack Shulimson, (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2004), 74-84, quotes from 76. Information regarding date and place of entry into the USMC can be found in U.S. Navy Department, “Register of the Navy for the Year 1820,” *American State Papers* (hereafter *ASP*) 023, Naval Affairs, vol. 1, 16th Congress, 1st Session, Publication No. 176, 640.
- ³ Alexander, “John Harris,” 75-77, quotes from 77, 76 and 77, respectively.
- ⁴ Quote from Harris Biographical File, September 1949, Reference Section, History and Museums Division, Headquarters, Washington, D.C., and as cited in Alexander, “John Harris,” 77.
- ⁵ Alexander, “John Harris,” 77-78, quote from 77. For details regarding the limitations of the Commandant’s office, see U.S. Congress, “Act for the Better Organization of the United States ‘Marine Corps,’” *Statutes at Large, 1789-1875*, 23rd Cong., 1st Sess., 4: 712-14; the discussion in Chapter III; and Allan R. Millett, *Semper Fidelis: The History of the United States Marine Corps* ([1980]; Revised and expanded ed. New York: Free Press, 1991), 68-69.
- ⁶ Quote from Henderson to Sec. of the Navy Dickerson, HQ, Washington, D.C., 7 October 1834, Record Group (hereafter abbreviated as RG) 127 (Field Organization Records, Records of the United States Marine Corps), Entry 4 (Letters Sent, August 1798 - June 1810 and March 1804- February 1884) (hereafter “Letters Sent 1798 -1884”), National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C. (hereafter abbreviated as NA).
- ⁷ Navy Dept., “Report of the Secretary of the Navy, 1858,” *U.S. Congressional Serial Set* 977, Sess. vol. 4, 35th Cong., 2nd Sess., Senate Executive Document 1 (hereafter “SecNav Annual Report, 1858”), 3-4, 11, 682-83, all remaining quotes from 682. See also Navy Dept., “Report of the Secretary of the Navy, 1859,” *Serial Set* 1025, Sess. vol. 3, 36th Cong., 1st Sess., S. Exec. Doc. 1 (hereafter “SecNav Annual Report, 1859”).

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- ⁸ “SecNav Annual Report, 1858,” 3-16, 682-83, quote from 682. For a discussion of Henderson’s use of a “shell game” system of manning his headquarters training cadre by shorting detachments, see the previous chapter and also Dawson, “With Fidelity and Effectiveness,” 745-46.
- ⁹ “SecNav Annual Report, 1858,” 3-16, 682-83, quote from 16; “SecNav Annual Report, 1859,” 1134-35, 1356-57.
- ¹⁰ First quote from Telegram, A.J. Phelps to W. P. Smith, Monocacy, Maryland, 17 October 1859, reprinted in Maryland State Senate, *Correspondence Related to the Insurrection at Harper’s Ferry, 17th October, 1859 (Document Y)* (hereafter *Document Y*) (Annapolis, Md.: B.H. Richardson, 1860), 5; second quote from Telegram, Anonymous to Baltimore Newspaper Press, Frederick, Maryland, 17 October 1859, reprinted in *Document Y*, 7. For an excellent narrative showing the early confusion related to John Brown’s Raid, see David M. Sullivan, *The United States Marine Corps in the Civil War – The First Year* (Shippensburg, Pa.: White Mane Publishing, 1997), 1-11.
- ¹¹ Sullivan, *The First Year*, 6-9; quotes from Toucey to Harris, Navy Dept., Washington, D.C., 17 October 1859, RG 80 (General Records of the Dept. of the Navy, Records of the Office of the Secretary of the Navy), Entry 1 (Letters to the Commandant and Other Officers of the Marine Corps) (hereafter “Letters Sent”), NA.
- ¹² Toucey to Russell, Navy Dept., Washington, D.C., 5 November 1861, RG 80, Entry 1: “Letters Sent,” NA; Toucey to Greene, Navy Dept., Washington, D.C., 17 October 1861, RG 80, Entry 1: “Letters Sent,” NA; Sullivan, *The First Year*, 10, 287, see remarks in note 27. Also, see Greene’s published accounts of the Harpers Ferry action in Israel Green[e], “The Capture of John Brown,” *North American Review* 141 (December 1885), 564-69; and “Capture of John Brown, Major Greene’s Simple Story of the Affair,” *Sioux Falls [South Dakota] Argus Leader*, 28 May 1909. As historian David Sullivan notes, the twelve-year veteran Greene had five more years of experience as a line officer than Russell, and proved most capable of leading the unit. Furthermore, Russell, as a staff officer, was not authorized by law to command, making his inclusion the unit an awkward one, at best. Sullivan correctly asserts that Russell’s presence might have been considered by Greene to be an affront to his own capabilities to command, and he backs that observation with Greene’s own failure to mention or even acknowledge Russell’s presence in Greene’s own written accounts of the Harpers Ferry action.
- ¹³ Col. [Robert E.] Lee to the Adjutant General, HQ, Harpers Ferry, [Virginia,] 19 October 1859, reprinted in “Mason Report,” 15 June 1860, *Serial Set* 1040, Sess. vol. 2, 36th Cong., 1st Sess., S. Rpt. 278, 40-43, quote from 43.

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- ¹⁴ Lee to Harris, Arlington, near Washington, D.C., 24 December 1859, with enclosure, RG 127, "Letters Received – HD," NA.
- ¹⁵ Toucey to Greene, Navy Dept., Washington, D.C., 5 November 1859, RG 80, Entry 1: "Letters Sent," NA; Toucey to Russell, Navy Dept., Washington, D.C., 5 November 1859, RG 80, Entry 1: "Letters Sent," NA.
- ¹⁶ Sullivan, *The First Year*, 26-27, quote from 26; Harris to Toucey, HQ, Washington, D.C., 21 November 1859, reprinted in "Report of the Secretary of the Navy, 1859," 1356-57, quote from 1356.
- ¹⁷ B. Franklin Cooling, III, "Civil War Deterrent: Defenses of Washington," *Military Affairs* 29 (Winter 1965-66), 164.
- ¹⁸ Statement of Colonel Charles P. Stone with regard to the D.C. Militia, in House Rpt. 3336, 49th Cong., 1st Sess., as quoted in Cooling, "Defenses of Washington," 164.
- ¹⁹ Cooling, "Defenses of Washington," 164.
- ²⁰ Toucey to Harris, Navy Dept., Washington, D.C., 5 January 1861, RG 80, Entry 1: "Letters Sent," NA.
- ²¹ Harris to Terrett, HQMC, Washington, D.C., 5 January 1861, RG 127, Entry 4: "Letters Sent, 1798-1884," NA; Muster Roll for Marine Barracks, Washington, D.C. for Month of January 1861, RG 24 (Bureau of Naval Personnel, Deck Logs), Muster Rolls of the United States Marine Corps, NA; Navy Dept., *Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of the Rebellion*, 30 volumes and index (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1894-1922), Series I, 4: 409 (hereafter referred to as *ORN*, and all citations are to Series I, unless otherwise noted).
- ²² Toucey to Harris, Navy Dept., Washington, D.C., 8 January 1861, RG 80, Entry 1: "Letters Sent," NA, first quote from letter; Harris to Toucey, HQ, Washington, D.C., 8 January 1861, RG 80, Entry 14 (Letters From the Commandant and Other Officers of the Marine Corps, January 1828-December 1886) (hereafter "Letters Received"), NA; Harris to Andrew Hays, HQ, Washington, D.C., 8 January 1861, RG 80, Entry 14: "Letters Received," NA; Hays to Harris, Marine Quarters, Fort McHenry, 9 January 1861, RG 127, Entry 10 (General Records), NA.
- ²³ See the discussion of this point in Chapter III of this dissertation. For specifics on the content of the 1834 Act, see: "Act for the Better Organization of the United States 'Marine Corps,'" *Statutes at Large*, 23rd Cong., 1st Sess., 4: 712-14.

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- ²⁴ Graphic design by Dianne G. Krivdo, 2011.
- ²⁵ Hays to Harris, Fort McHenry, 10 January 1861, RG 80, Entry 14: “Letters Received,” NA; General Order No. 1, HQ, Fort McHenry, 10 January 1861, RG 80, Entry 14: “Letters Received,” NA, wherein Lt. Gen. Scott orders Lt. Col. Brown to assume command of the Marines, and also three companies of artillery enroute to the fort from Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. Harris to Toucey, HQ, Washington, D.C., RG 80, Entry 14: “Letters Received,” NA, quote from text.
- ²⁶ Toucey to Hays, Navy Dept., Washington, D.C., 12 January 1861, RG 127, Entry 4: “Letters Sent 1798-1884,” NA, first quote from text; Harris to Toucey, HQ, Washington, D.C., 15 January 1861, RG 80, Entry 14: “Letters Received,” NA, second quote from text. See also the characterization of Toucey’s propensity for indecisiveness, particularly where political sensitivities were concerned: Harold D. Langley, “Isaac Toucey,” *American Secretaries of the Navy*, 2 vols., Paolo E. Colletta, ed. (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1980), 1: 316.
- ²⁷ Algernon S. Taylor to Harris, Fort Washington, 16 January 1861, RG 80, Entry 14: “Letters Received,” NA, also reprinted in *ORN*, 4: 409-10.
- ²⁸ Harris to Toucey, HQ, Washington, D.C., 18 January 1861, RG 80, Entry 14: “Letters Received,” NA, reprinted in U.S. War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, 128 vols. and atlas (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1880-1901), Series I, 51, pt 1: 313, quote from text (hereafter cited as *OR*, and all citations are to Series I, unless otherwise noted); Sullivan, *The First Year*, 34, although Sullivan neglects to mention Harris’ letter to Toucey forwarding the report of Taylor with his reminder.
- ²⁹ Lt. Gen. [Winfield] Scott, Headquarters of the Army, Washington, D.C., 12 February 1861, reprinted in *OR*, 51, pt. 1, 314, quotes from text.
- ³⁰ In his own correspondence, Scott seemed to understand the significance of Harris’ earlier argument about giving orders Marines, but Scott took a larger view of the urgency of the situation. Writing about the plan to Secretary of War Joseph Holt, Scott remarked “No doubt that Colonel Harris [. . .] would comply with any call that I might make of him, but to make everything regular, I will ask that the Secretary of the Navy be requested to issue his order to Colonel Harris.” See Scott to Holt, 12 February 1861, Winfield Scott Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Accession No. 10, 943; also Harris to Toucey, HQ, Washington, D.C., 15 February 1861, RG 127, Entry 4: “Letters Sent 1798-1884,” NA. Scott’s order was not rescinded.

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- ³¹ Capt. Josiah Watson to Maj. William B. Slack, Marine Barracks, Warrington, Florida, 31 December 1860, with enclosures and endorsements, reprinted in *ORN*, 4: 6-7, quotes from 6.
- ³² Based on the information contained in Navy Dept., “Proceedings of a Naval Court-Martial, Convened at Washington City, March 12, 1861, for the trial of Captain James Armstrong,” included in: Congress, Senate Select Committee on the Surrender and Destruction of Navy Yards and United States Property, “Hale Report,” 18 April, 1862, *Serial Set* 1125, Sess. vol. 1, 37th Cong., 2nd Sess., S. Rpt. 37, 125-236.
- ³³ “Hale Report,” 138-43, 161-69, quote from testimony of Capt. Josiah Watson, USMC, 163.
- ³⁴ *Ibid.*, 131-33, 138-43, 152-57, 161-69.
- ³⁵ *Ibid.*, 131-33, 138-43, 152-57, 161-69.
- ³⁶ Harris to Toucey, HQ, Washington, D.C., 21 November 1859, in “Report of the SecNav, 1859,” 1356-57, quote from 1356.
- ³⁷ See the characterizations in Millett, *Semper Fidelis*, 88-89; and Alexander, “John Harris,” 77-78.

CHAPTER V

**CRACKING IN THE CRUCIBLE OF FIRE:
FROM THE SECESSION CRISIS TO BULL RUN**

Reacting to the election of Republican Abraham Lincoln to the U.S. presidency, several southern states pursued a path to withdrawal from the Union, precipitating the Secession Crisis, a crisis of loyalty to the Federal government. Within a brief period of time about nine hundred former Federal government officials and military officers resigned or abandoned their positions and “went South” to accept posts within the rebel government rapidly taking shape in Montgomery, Alabama, the provisional Confederate government’s capital city. There, a Confederate government coalesced and made plans for its own defense.¹

The Secession Crisis led to filling the ranks of the new Confederacy’s armed forces with experienced leaders, as former Federal soldiers, sailors and Marines sought military appointments in the South. That crisis affected the U.S. Marine Corps in several important ways; exposing leadership failings and personnel problems, creating additional pressures on its officers, and disclosing shortcomings in the way the Corps recruited new prospects and how it employed them in the fight. Most importantly, it revealed Commandant John Harris’ vision of where he believed the Corps fit within the Union military structure, and events soon demonstrated the shortcomings of that concept. Finally, Harris’ early actions in the war had far-reaching consequences as they

established the pattern for how the Corps would be employed, a pattern that proved difficult to break even as the requirements of the war changed and grew.

These flaws in the leadership of John Harris were quickly exposed during the Secession Crisis. Immediately following Lincoln's inauguration and the standard change in Navy Secretaries, Harris performed his duties in a routine manner despite the indicators that war was looming on the horizon. Like other service chiefs, Harris behaved as though oblivious to the slow depleting of his officers and men. Likewise, Harris had not only failed to anticipate security issues when performing emergency duties around the capital, he had seemed to find all manner of reasons to resist performing those same duties. But unlike other service leaders, Harris' timidity of action and recalcitrance to change affected his service more profoundly.

Beginning with South Carolina's unanimous passing of an Ordinance of Secession on 20 December 1860, all of the Union's military services experienced alarming numbers of officers resigning their commissions, and the Marine Corps was no exception. As other states joined South Carolina in seceding and subsequently entering the new Confederate States of America, the tempo of defections increased. Yet early in the crisis some civilian leaders observed that Marine officers seemed to be resigning in higher percentages than did Navy officers. To make matters worse, neither Secretary of the Navy Isaac Toucey nor Commandant Harris took any steps to stop the exodus until they were forced to by the incoming Lincoln administration. Harris actually recommended approval of many of the early resignations, making it easier for some officers to leave the service honorably, instead of punishing them with a swift and harsh

dismissal. That policy may have exacerbated the problem within the Corps, and account for why it was affected to a greater extent by the losses of its leaders. Even more amazing, Harris wrote glowing letters of introduction for resigning officers, apparently without any thought that his remaining men might soon be facing them across the field of battle.

The first U.S. Marine officer to tender his resignation in the Secession Crisis was Second Lieutenant Calvin L. Sayre, of Alabama, who returned from a shipboard deployment the day after his home state seceded on 11 January 1861. Sayre desired “desperately to return home and discuss his future with family and friends,” so he petitioned for and received a leave of absence. Nonetheless, he soon changed his mind about continuing his Federal service and instead submitted his resignation. Harris favorably endorsed Sayre’s request and Secretary Toucey approved it on 14 February 1861. That same day, while clearing his affairs with Headquarters prior to departing the Washington, D.C. area, Sayre received separate letters from the Corps’ most senior staff officers. The Marine Corps’ Paymaster, Major William W. Russell, remarked that Sayre’s “resignation from the Marine Corps for the purposes of following the fortunes of your state, will be a source of regret to your fellow officers.” The Corps’ Adjutant and Inspector, Major Henry B. Tyler, Sr., added that “should your lot be cast in military life that you will rise to eminence in the estimation of your Countrymen.”²

In Harris’ letter, he summed up Sayre’s two and a half years of service, observing that “all of [that] time his bearing as an officer and a gentleman has met my entire approbation.” Furthermore, Harris expressed regret “that the unsettled state of the

Country makes it, in [Sayre's] opinion, necessary that he should resign."³ Therefore in this, the first of several important resignations of its kind, Harris established the model for how he would handle succeeding defections. He and his senior staff officers not only made the process simple and straightforward, but they also provided the departing officer with documents that eased their transition. These actions could hardly dissuade other like-minded officers of attempting the same thing. Furthermore, the letters imply that the writers knew Sayre might seek some form of military service in the South, and he did. These actions could hardly dissuade other like-minded officers of following their colleagues "South."

On his arrival a week later in Montgomery, Sayre presented copies of those same letters and earned a position in the Confederate government. Days later, Sayre was delivering official dispatches to Texas for the Confederacy's new Secretary of War and soon after that received a commission as a first lieutenant of the newly formed Confederate States Marine Corps. Within three months of leaving the U.S. Marines, Sayre faced his former comrades over the muzzle of a cannon aimed at the Union Fort Pickens across the waters of Pensacola Harbor.⁴

Slowly at first, then with greater rapidity, other officers followed Sayre's example. On 27 February, First Lieutenant Jacob Read of Georgia forwarded his letter of resignation. Months before, on 1 November 1860, Read had been involved in an incident at the Marine Barracks, Brooklyn, wherein he allegedly prevented enlisted Marines from leaving the post to vote in the presidential election if they expressed an interest in voting for Lincoln. According to an account of the incident, Read was officer

of the day and posted at the gate of the Marine Barracks at the Brooklyn Navy Yard. Marines would come to Read to request permission to depart the yard to vote, and a witness overheard Read exclaim to one “If you are going to vote for Lincoln, by G-d, you should not stir a step” out of the gate. The story quickly found its way into the *New York Times*, and soon after landed on the desk of Secretary Toucey.⁵

The commanding officer of the Marine Barracks, Captain Abraham N. Brevoort, realized the gravity of the situation and arranged to publish his “disapproval of the conduct of Lieut. Jacob Read,” adding that Read’s “conduct has been by me reported to the commandant of the corps.” Brevoort forwarded copies of the newspaper clippings and a detailed report of the circumstances to Colonel Harris, who shared them with Secretary Toucey. Brevoort recommended that Read be charged for disobeying orders prohibiting Marine recruits on drill from leaving the Navy Yard, and also for actions “calculated to bring discredit on the service.” In turn, Read justified his allowing of some Marines off-post by stating that they were actually in the custody of non-commissioned officers who returned them to the yard after voting. While admitting his own actions were careless and not well thought-out, Read nonetheless blamed the incident on “a reporter permitted to hang around the Barracks and pick up for use the unguarded words which sometimes very naturally and excusably escape the lips, even of older and more habitually discreet persons than myself.”⁶ In essence, Read faulted the reporter for revealing his indiscretion, instead of accepting responsibility for precipitating the incident through his own actions.

The embarrassing episode provided Secretary Toucey and Colonel Harris with an ideal opportunity to address the open political partisanship that had precipitated the event. Instead, Toucey weakly replied that he did “not deem the offense of Lieut. Read of sufficient importance to demand a Court-Martial.” Telling Harris to “reprimand him for disobedience of orders,” he also directed Harris to “inform Captain Brevoort that the Department disapproves of his course in the matter in giving publicity [to the incident] through the newspapers.” Read did not receive a reprimand and Brevoort, guilty only of trying to defuse the episode after the fact and rightfully report the incident to superiors, instead found himself being unfairly chastised for an offense committed by one of his officers.⁷ In this case, the senior Navy and Marine Corps leaders failed to support a subordinate commander who only wanted to maintain good order and discipline in his unit. To add insult to injury, the lesson learned by Brevoort and others was to not get involved in such matters.

In any event, Read resigned on 27 February, and the following week accepted a commission as a captain in Company D, 1st Georgia Regulars. Although the USMC did not know it at the time, Read had apparently already been selected for induction into the Regular Army of the State of Georgia at least two weeks prior to his actual resigning. Read also received a commission as a captain in the CSMC. Captain Brevoort was undoubtedly pleased to see him depart and probably would have been doubly gratified to know that Read faced a southern court-martial less than two years later for, among other charges, conduct highly prejudicial to good order and military discipline, a finding that Brevoort might have seconded.⁸

The next officer to resign was also not a surprise to his fellow Marines. Second Lieutenant Becket K. Howell, brother-in-law to Jefferson Davis, resigned on 27 February, and Toucey approved his request on 1 May. Howell had communicated with Davis by wire the day he resigned, and Davis encouraged his young relative to join him in the South. Howell's family ties to the former secretary of war and sitting senator were well known in Washington, and Harris provided Howell with a parting letter that included "my sincere wishes for his prosperity in whatever walks of life his future may lead him." By 29 March, that walk had taken him to Montgomery, where Howell gained a commission as a first lieutenant in the Confederate Marines.⁹

Three other officers resigned at the same time as Howell: First Lieutenant George Holmes, Second Lieutenant Henry L. Ingraham, and First Lieutenant Andrew J. Hays. Holmes had long military experience, having served as a company commander in the Florida Volunteer Rifles in the Mexican War before entering the Marine Corps. Harris wrote a favorable letter for him as well, stating that "his deportment [during his twelve-year service in the USMC] has been that of a high-toned gentleman." Furthermore, he added that "Should he decide to enter any other Military Corps, I take pleasure in recommending him as a gentlemen, to be relied upon at all times." Less than one month later, Holmes received a commission as a captain in the CSMC and began raising his own company for war service.¹⁰

Harris was, incredibly, behaving almost as a referral agent for the South as the Confederacy scrambled to build up its military capability. Even the most casual observer of the news on the streets of Washington at that time was alarmed at what was

transpiring in the South. To bring the situation into focus, Harris had already painfully experienced having one of his posts, the Marine Barracks in Pensacola, Florida, forcibly seized by state militia only two months earlier. Nonetheless, Harris set aside the implications of that event and instead wrote letters of recommendation for subordinate officers who were essentially abandoning their posts in time of need. The most charitable explanation for his action is that he put the parochial interests of the Marine Corps, i.e. maintaining its autonomy from the army, above the security needs of the nation.

One aspect of Hays' departure was even more disturbing and raised serious questions about Harris' actions during the crisis. Hays, from Alabama, had gained a commission from the Marine Corps in 1847, and served on several ships and stations. In 1860-61, Hays had been assigned to the Marine Barracks in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Significantly, when Harris was ordered in mid-January to provide garrisons at key defensive positions around the nation's capital, he assigned Hays to lead a detachment of Marines at Fort McHenry in Baltimore, after mass desertions from the army garrison left that position vulnerable. Soon after, Harris became concerned when Hays intimated that he did not like the command relationship being proposed by Army reinforcements. Harris then supported Hays' request to withdraw the Marines, a move that certainly left the garrison weaker in their absence.¹¹ The Commandant seemed not to consider the tactical consequences of the move at the time, and in light of Hays' defection shortly afterward, Harris' support of Hays raises questions regarding his judgment in the event.

Whatever Hays' motivation at Ft. McHenry, it did not stop Harris from providing him with a laudatory letter of recommendation similar to that given to Holmes. Harris even took "great pleasure in recommending him as a gentleman to be relied upon at all times," a referral that helped gain Hays a commission as a captain in the CSMC. But Hays' story does not end there. In mid-April, USMC Sergeant James Thompson walked into the office of the Corps' assistant quartermaster in Philadelphia and was surprised to see Hays in the office in civilian attire. Thompson, who knew Hays personally from having served with him in the past, said that Hays got up, greeted Thompson with a warm shake of his hand and asked him if he knew of any non-commissioned officers or other men who might be interested in joining him in the South. Unknown to Thompson at the time, only two weeks earlier Hays had become a captain in the Confederate Marine Corps. Hays was therefore an enemy officer in mufti. Hays talked with Thompson for a while, recommending the Confederate Marine Corps as an opportunity for some U.S. Marines to better themselves, particularly since he could guarantee them "good positions."¹²

When Thompson finished his business and returned to his post on the USS *Princeton*, he immediately reported the incident to the ship's commander, Captain Henry K. Hoff. Hoff in turn relayed the information directly to Gideon Welles, who had just taken over as the new secretary of the Navy. Welles in turn fired a copy of Hoff's report to Harris, along with several pointed questions as: Why was this happening? Did Harris know of it? Why did the assistant quartermaster (Captain William A.T. Maddox, USMC) not report it himself? A furious Welles directed Harris to immediately

investigate the situation and to question Maddox regarding Hays' business with him on that day. Harris, doubly embarrassed by the incident occurring in his Corps and involving a man he had earlier proclaimed to be "very sincerely his friend," said he would look into the matter. Although Maddox claimed to know nothing of Hays' conversations with Thompson, Welles regarded him with some suspicion after the incident, particularly when Maddox came up for promotion in later years. Maddox originated from Maryland, a hotbed of secessionist activity, and that probably did not help his standing with Welles or other administration officials in general.¹³ In the meantime, Hays had retreated safely back to the South, and it is not known if his recruiting trip to the North bore fruit since relatively few enlisted Marines left the Corps to become Confederate Marines.

In the case of Second Lieutenant Henry L. Ingraham, of South Carolina, his resignation also surprised no one. A relative newcomer to the Corps with only two-and-a-half years of service, his father was Captain Duncan N. Ingraham, USN, a senior officer who also resigned to accept a position in the Confederate States Navy. Like Hays, Holmes and Howell, in less than a month after resigning, Henry Ingraham had received a commission as a first lieutenant in the CSMC, and soon after reported for duty with the Confederate Marine battalion in Pensacola, Florida.¹⁴

In only two weeks the Marine Corps had lost six officers representing fifteen percent of its active lieutenants, more than would normally resign in a three or four-year period of time. Furthermore, each was allowed to resign rather than be dismissed, and most carried with them letters of recommendations from Harris and his staff. At that

same time the Navy was also experiencing the same phenomenon of large numbers of officers resigning their commissions, and some in Congress grew alarmed. In response, the House formed a select committee of five representatives whose Chairman, Henry L. Dawes, soon proposed a resolution censuring Toucey for “accepting, without delay or inquiry” the resignations, a practice “prejudicial to the discipline of the service, and injurious to the honor and efficiency of the navy.” The House passed the resolution of censure on 2 March 1861 by a vote of 95 for to 62 against.¹⁵ Strangely, Harris was not personally censured for his part in the routine approval and forwarding of Marine officer resignations. Although Harris’ actions were in part responsible for Toucey’s censure, he was not punished in any direct fashion, despite Congress’ realization that the Marine Corps’ response to the officer resignations was part of the problem. But the damage by then was done. Officers continued to resign, but instead of gaining automatic approval as the earlier ones had, most were instead quickly and summarily dismissed.

Not all of the officers who left the USMC during the Secession Crisis were predestined to do so. Many agonized over their decision and circumstances other than birthplace may have helped influence their choice. With one exception, none of those who resigned in 1861 were slaveholders in their own right, and several had participated in suppressing the foreign slave trade. And the one slaveholding exception, Major Henry B. Tyler, Sr., continued to deliberate his future for more than two weeks following his home state’s departure from the Union. Tyler, a Virginian who owned twelve slaves, was one of the last from his state to depart the Marine Corps and seemed to have weighed several other factors before deciding to leave. Furthermore, Tyler had a

significant financial incentive to stay: years earlier he had posted a surety bond as security for the Corps' Paymaster, Major William W. Russell. Any dismissal from service would cause him to forfeit that bond.¹⁶

Slave ownership and financial incentives aside, Tyler's personal relationships with Commandant Harris had long been rocky, and on several occasions the Corps' Adjutant and Inspector corresponded with Secretary Toucey directly to try and resolve some of their professional differences. In a series of lengthy and technical exchanges, Tyler argued that Harris frequently overstepped his bounds and would not let him perform his duties as Inspector as Tyler comprehended them. Having held that position since June 1857, Tyler laid out a case that Harris consistently undermined Tyler's efforts to teach proper tactics and to enforce existing regulations at the several Marine Barracks. He argued that Harris prevented him from training the new men in accordance with new Army tactics and procedures. For his part Toucey listened patiently to Tyler's arguments, but consistently backed Harris' prerogatives. An extensive correspondence issued back and forth between Tyler and Toucey regarding Harris, as the level of frustration built in Tyler.¹⁷

To make matters worse, in April 1860 Major Tyler and his son, Lieutenant Henry B. Tyler, Jr., had placed Commandant Harris on report for alleged improprieties in assignments, and won their case. Both Tylers then continued to work directly under Harris in Washington for the next year. In the interim, their daily relations with Harris were most likely strained. It seems likely that the elder Tyler's uneasy relationship with Harris and his concerns over what he believed were dilutions of initiatives begun under

Archibald Henderson played a role in his eventual decision to leave. Tyler's concerns about Harris' leadership may even have been the deciding factor. In any event, the abrasive relationship he had with the Commandant undoubtedly made it easier for Tyler, Sr., to walk away from an otherwise successful thirty-eight year career.¹⁸

State loyalty may have been another contributing factor. Major Tyler had earlier hinted that he might not be able to fight against his fellow Virginians. Miss Emily Thorn, a guest of Tyler's in April 1861, suggested that might be the case, but similar allegations against other Marine officers are difficult to substantiate. Yet one fact remains clear: Harris did nothing to dissuade Tyler or any other officer from departing. In fact, the only regret Harris seemed to have regarding the loss of Tyler was that the officer Welles selected to replace him as Adjutant and Inspector was not one of Harris' choosing.¹⁹

Virginia's secession prompted a new wave of officer resignations, with the Marine Corps losing seven of its twelve officers from that state, or just over 50 percent. Tyler and his son accounted for two of them. The younger Tyler went out with a bang, having been placed under arrest in June for being drunk, disorderly, and vocally abusive toward anything or anyone associated with President Lincoln, the Federal government, or its policies. After making his appearance in a colorful article in the *New York Times* and spending about a week in jail, Lieutenant Tyler was "stricken from the rolls" of the USMC and soon afterward joined the CSMC.²⁰

Other Virginians resigning included Brevet Major George H. Terrett, hero of the Marine battalion's exploits in Mexico City during the Mexican War, senior captains and

veterans Robert Tansill and Algernon S. Taylor, Brevet Captain John Simms of T'ai Ping Rebellion fame, and First Lieutenants George P. Turner and Alexander W. Stark. With the exception of Lieutenant Stark, who returned from an overseas naval deployment too late to secure a posting in the CSMC, all the other Virginians gained Confederate Marine commissions. Stark instead joined the Confederate army as a major of artillery and advanced to the rank of lieutenant colonel while commanding an artillery battalion.²¹

Other Marine officers with indirect or even no direct ties to the South also resigned, and some of them joined their southern comrades in the CSMC. On 20 April 1861, Captain Jabez C. Rich of Maine and First Lieutenant Adam N. Baker of New Hampshire left their posts in the Gosport (Norfolk) Navy Yard, the same night that Secretary Welles ordered the destruction of that station to keep it from falling into the hands of Virginia state military forces. The sudden absence of two of Gosport's most senior Marine commanders from their posts added to the confusion of the day, creating even more gaps in the already difficult task of supervising Union sailors and Marines detailed to destroy the ships and munitions in the yard. Therefore, much useful equipment and stores came into the possession of Virginia, and subsequently the Confederate military.²²

On top of losing two more of its officers, the fact that Gosport was given up so soon after the surrender of the Navy Yard in Pensacola, Florida, did not improve the reputation of the Marine Corps. To complicate matters, neither Captain Rich nor Lieutenant Baker were southerners, hinting that factors other than sectional loyalties

might have existed to influence them to resign. Although Rich had a long, but spotty career, Baker's prospects seemed promising, and his sudden departure from the Marine Corps came as a complete surprise to his fellow officers. Neither officer fit well in the Confederate military establishment; each soon left the South, further strengthening the supposition that the command climate in the USMC may have pushed some officers to believe that better opportunities lay elsewhere.²³ Unfortunately for them, these two officers' experiences soon proved otherwise, but by then it was too late to reverse their decision.

All told, in 1861 the USMC lost a total of twenty-eight officers. The majority of them were company grade officers, and several of those possessed decades of experience leading Marines. Some, such as First Lieutenant Israel Greene of Wisconsin, the commander of the Marines who captured John Brown's raiders and restored order following that incident in late 1859, had proven themselves in difficult combat assignments with sensitive political overtones. Similarly, Captain John Simms of Virginia had served in the Marine battalion during the Mexican War and in 1856 commanded the almost 300-man landing force that attacked and reduced the Barrier Forts in Canton, China, during the T'ai P'ing Rebellion.²⁴

The leadership of these officers, representing slightly more than half of the

critical company-grade ranks, would be sorely missed in the USMC and heartily welcomed in the CSMC (see Table 5-1). Historian Allan Millett astutely observes that “the [rate of] defections did little for the Marine Corps’ status with the Lincoln administration or with social Washington.”²⁵ With these officers also went an unknown number of non-commissioned officers and enlisted Marines, some possibly influenced by the same departing officers. In addition to losing a majority of the critical source of mid-level leadership for the many detachments, the Corps also lost (and the South consequently gained) two important field grade officers: Major Henry Tyler, Sr., the units’ Adjutant-Inspector; and Major George Terrett, commander of the Marine Barracks in Washington, D.C. These two officers, both intimately involved with the training of new personnel, resigned just as the USMC began its wartime expansion. To cap it all off, one of the respected former commandant’s youngest sons, Richard Henderson, decided to accept a commission as a lieutenant in the CSMC rather than enter his father’s U.S. Marine Corps.²⁶

Table 5-1. Listing of U.S. Marine Officers Who Resigned or Were Dismissed Between December 1860 and December 1863.²⁷

Name	Rank	Separation Type	Later Service
Terrett, George H.	Major	Dismissed	CSMC, CSA
Tyler, Henry B. Sr.	Major	Dismissed	CSMC
Rich, Jabez C.	Capt	Dismissed	Va. MC
Simms, John D.	Capt	Dismissed	CSMC
Tansill, Robert	Capt	Dismissed	CSMC, CSA
Taylor, Algernon S.	Capt	Dismissed	CSMC
Baker, Adam N.	1 st Lt	Dismissed	CSMC
Greene, Israel	1 st Lt	Dismissed	CSMC
Hays, Andrew J.	1 st Lt	Resigned	CSMC
Henderson, Charles A.	1 st Lt	Dismissed	CSMC
Holmes, George	1 st Lt	Resigned	CSMC
Kidd, Robert	1 st Lt	Dismissed	Unknown
Matthews, S. H.	1 st Lt	Dismissed	Unknown
Meier, Julius E.	1 st Lt	Dismissed	CSMC
Read, Jacob	1 st Lt	Resigned	CSMC
Stark, Alexander W.	1 st Lt	Dismissed	CSA
Tattnall, John R.	1 st Lt	Dismissed	CSMC
Turner, George P.	1 st Lt	Dismissed	CSMC
Tyler, Henry B. Jr.	1 st Lt	Dismissed	CSMC
Wilson, Thomas S.	1 st Lt	Dismissed	CSMC
Cummins, George W.	2 nd Lt	Dismissed	Unknown
Grant, Oscar B.	2 nd Lt	Resigned	Remained In North (Civilian)
Howell, Becket K.	2 nd Lt	Resigned	CSMC
Ingraham, Henry L.	2 nd Lt	Resigned	CSMC
Rathbone, J. H.	2 nd Lt	Resigned	Remained In North (Civilian)
Reber, J. M.	2 nd Lt	Dismissed	Remained In North (Civilian)
Sayre, Calvin L.	2 nd Lt	Resigned	CSMC
Sells, D. M.	2 nd Lt	Resigned	Remained In North (Civilian)

To compound the damage done to the U.S. Marine Corps through the loss of several valued leaders, the Confederate Marine Corps benefited greatly from the transfer in experience. Through some of the more gifted leaders the CSMC came to be infused with the spirit of former Commandant Henderson's reforms and imagination. A significant number of the new CSMC officers had previously been intimately involved in implementing Henderson's initiatives, and many continued that work in their new Corps. Major Tyler, Adjutant and Inspector for both Henderson and Harris, went on to command a Confederate Marine battalion for a critical period of time in the unit's infancy and then afterward served in the CSMC headquarters. Major Israel Greene, former artillery instructor to the USMC and the leader of the Marines who captured John Brown in 1859, became the CSMC's Adjutant and Inspector. Major George Terrett, previously the commander of the Washington, D.C., Marine Barracks during the time when that post served as Henderson's main training ground for new recruits, later commanded a Confederate Marine battalion at Drewry's Bluff, successfully integrating Marine infantry and artillery gunners into a force that helped defeat the Union Navy's drive toward Richmond. Drewry's Bluff eventually served also as the training center for the CSMC, a location at which most new officers and many enlisted received their initial screening and training. This centralization of training served to standardize techniques, procedures and traditions throughout the new Corps, under the watchful eyes of former Henderson disciples. Other examples exist as well that support the contention that Henderson's influence permeated the new Corps through these men.²⁸

The departing Federal Marine officers constituted a valuable nucleus of leadership at a time the Corps most needed them. Their leaving created an experience and leadership vacuum in the USMC, a hole that contributed to the Corps' sometimes poor or uneven performance, particularly in the critical first engagements in the war. As Millett correctly points out, the defections stripped the USMC of much of its company level leadership, leaving the large numbers of raw recruits who entered the Marines without effective instruction, leadership or supervision, particularly during their crucial first weeks in uniform.²⁹

There is no evidence that Commandant Harris took any measures whatsoever to prevent or even minimize the extent of the defections of his officers and men. Rather, Harris' actions from the beginning encouraged or aggravated the situation by making it easy to leave under honorable conditions. Harris' actions were irresponsible and inexcusable. Furthermore, considering the high percentages of Marine officers that resigned (higher than either the Army or Navy), and taking into account the aberrant defecting of some officers with no direct ties to the South, Harris' performance should have elicited greater scrutiny by superiors. And as a service chief, he should probably have been included in the House's censure of Secretary Toucey or even replaced when Welles became secretary.

Even without an official censure, Harris suffered administratively when Gideon Welles replaced Isaac Toucey as Secretary of the Navy on 5 March 1861. Tellingly, one of Welles' first official functions was his approval of a request from Harris to be absent from Washington until 9 March. From that point on Welles' correspondence with Harris

is curt, concise, detailed and direct. The secretary critically examined all of Harris' work and did not hesitate to take corrective action when needed. Welles advised Harris and other senior Marine officers to cease their practice of having officers linger around in Washington, D.C., for days or weeks waiting to provide brief testimony in courts-martial proceedings. Instead he directed Harris to send them back to their commands until specifically needed in court. And soon afterward, Welles admonished Harris for botching a court-martial of Lieutenant Edward McD. Reynolds. He scolded Harris for routinely forwarding the court's finding of Reynolds being found guilty of "disobeying a lawful order of his superior officer," yet given a sentence "to be restored to duty." Welles pointed out the inconsistency of the court's actions, stating that the court failed in its duty and Harris neglected his since "under the circumstances [the court members] attach no criminality to the offense proven." In summary, if the party is guilty, sentence him accordingly; if not guilty, he need not be sentenced. Welles then formally disapproved of Harris' and the court's findings of guilt. The secretary wanted to hold Harris accountable and to coax him to critically examine his correspondence before forwarding it to the department.³⁰ Furthermore, Welles seemed impatient with what he believed were excessive legal and administrative details that consumed resources and distracted officers from the larger issues of fighting the war.

Welles began to assume more control over the administration and employment of Marines and rarely solicited advice or recommendations from Harris. From the start, Welles' exerted great influence over the day-to-day running of the Marine Corps. Harris, for his part, seemed to accept his reduced role and simply implemented Welles'

orders as he received them. Other than routine requests for more officers and men, Harris forwarded few new ideas of his own. Conversely, the secretary's directives to Harris were specific -- requests to add or remove Marines to/from certain ships or stations, to transfer Marines from one post to another, or even to reposition them from Harris' own headquarters. As an example of the latter, on 27 April 1861, Welles notified Harris that he was advised by the commander of the Washington Navy Yard that there were insufficient Marines to guard it. Welles then directed the Commandant to dispatch thirty more Marines immediately, a move that could just as easily have been done by the yard commander talking directly with his subordinate Marine Barracks, Washington, commander, who was located on his same post.³¹ In any event, Welles left no doubt who was administratively running the Marine Corps, and that person certainly was not Harris. Harris merely executed the orders received from the Navy Department.

These same unsettled conditions and leadership problems negatively affected Marine Corps field operations during the first six months of the war. For at least two decades before the war, Marines were called upon to perform a wide variety of assignments with little advance warning, and the Corps effectively carried out those tasks. Yet the Marine Corps, when called upon in 1861, generally failed to perform as well as before. Marines displayed difficulties deploying in the defense of Washington, D.C, protecting the Navy Yard at Pensacola, and destroying war materiel at Gosport. How to account for these failures and strings of problems?

In early April, 1861, Union forces held only two positions in the South: Fort Sumter, in Charleston Harbor, South Carolina, and Fort Pickens, guarding the mouth to

the harbor at Pensacola, Florida. President Lincoln and Secretary Welles grew concerned that if Fort Pickens were lost to the Union, the Navy would have no secure base within the entire Gulf Coast from which later operations could be supported. Accordingly, on the night of 12 April, the same day that Confederate forces began bombarding Fort Sumter, Welles ordered the Marines to land and reinforce Fort Pickens. Operating at night, one hundred and sixteen Marines from four separate warships under the overall command of First Lieutenant George R. Graham rowed ashore and ran across the 600 yards of exposed beach to the safety of the fort's ramparts. The bold move caught the besieging Rebel troops by surprise and gave the Union garrison enough manpower to adequately guard the approaches against Confederate attack. The reinforcement most likely forestalled an attempt by Southern forces to emulate the success achieved at Fort Sumter. After additional Union Army troops and artillery landed on 17 April, the Marines rejoined their ships. A correspondent from the *New York Times* who witnessed the operation had nothing but praise for the Marines, calling them the "one bright spot on the Navy." The new garrison commander of Fort Pickens, Colonel Harvey Brown, must have agreed with that assessment, for less than a week later he recalled the Marines back to shore from their ships and incorporated them into his garrison to serve as a reaction force for the next month.³² Yet unaccountably, Harris made no mention of these creditable actions in his official correspondence.

Following the fall of Ft. Sumter, the military situation began to heat up around the nation's capital and Marines were again involved in the action. On 1-2 June 1861, Marines aboard the USS *Pawnee* participated in an exchange of cannon fire between

ships of a Union flotilla under Navy Commander James H. Ward and Confederate batteries at the mouth of Aquia Creek. Hundreds of rounds were exchanged between the ships and the shore batteries as the Union Navy sought to maintain control over the Potomac River and the approach to the nation's capital. For the next several weeks, Ward's small unit engaged other Confederate batteries and landed Marines and sailors at several points to conduct reconnaissance and to destroy enemy gun positions.³³ These actions, too, went generally unmentioned by the Corps' leader.

Up to this point in the war, all of the Marine Corps' direct participation had been at a modest scale, involving primarily small ships' detachments. Unaccountably, the Marine Corps had not yet taken the significant step it had done in both the Second Seminole War and the Mexican War: it had not yet formed a standing battalion-sized unit to serve in larger-scale operations. In that regard Harris' Corps was way behind its own competition, the Confederate States Marine Corps, which had by 24 April already successfully formed and deployed a Marine battalion for service in the Pensacola area.³⁴

Harris' landing force that reinforced Fort Pickens consisted of an *ad hoc* grouping of detachments from four separate warships; the *Brooklyn*, *Sabine*, *Wyandotte* and *St. Louis*. In that instance, as with the subsequent relief force dispatched to destroy the federal property at Gosport, the senior Marine officer took charge of the makeshift unit and relied heavily on his junior leaders to execute his orders. Although each Marine had received some level of military training beforehand, the system was certainly less efficient and less capable than if a unit had been formed that had the opportunity to train together as a team, even if only for a short while. In purposely-formed units, the defined

chain of command promoted command and control and also leaders at all levels could better know the individual strengths and weaknesses of their men and resolve identified deficiencies prior to actual combat. All of these measures enhance the chances of a unit's success in combat. The Army also entered the war with similar disadvantages due to its wide pre-war scattering of units, yet it quickly realized the advantages of organizing and training in larger formations. The Marine Corps seemed not to have learned that lesson and instead operated mostly as small units throughout the war.

The next major combat operation the Marines participated in brought all of these problems to the surface, with disappointing results. On 12 July 1861, Secretary of War Simon Cameron, with the concurrence of Gideon Welles, requested a battalion of Marines be formed "and held in readiness to march on field service." In apparent confirmation of the strains between Harris and Welles, the Commandant was not consulted about the committing of a battalion of his Marines until after the decision was made. Perhaps his exclusion was deliberate. And while historian David Sullivan speculates that Harris was likely "outraged and humiliated at being kept in the dark while plans for his Corps were being made," and that "Welles was similarly proud and equally jealous of his prerogatives," he does not address the key issue of why Harris was not included in such an important decision. As further evidence of the degree that Harris was excluded, Welles had already selected leaders for the battalion. The secretary had already issued orders to Major John G. Reynolds and Captain Jacob Zeilen to depart their respective posts and report to Washington, D.C., for duty with the battalion.³⁵

In addition to deciding to field a Marine battalion and personally selecting its leaders, Welles also dictated its organization. He notified Harris that “you will be pleased to detail from the barracks four companies of eighty men each, the whole under the command of Major Reynolds, with the necessary officers, non-commissioned officers and musicians, for temporary field service under Brig. Genl [Irvin] McDowell.” Command relationships and logistics were also specified; Reynolds would report to McDowell, and the army would provide necessary “camp equipage, provisions, etc.” for the unit.³⁶ Harris was left with little to do except execute the orders as received.

Welles’ approach to the forming of the Marine battalion is telling and confirms that Harris held little influence in operational decision-making. Welles continued to issue direct and specific instructions to Harris regarding the battalion, perhaps reacting to Harris’ own unaccountable inactivity in this area. Welles probably knew that what he was doing went against normal protocol, yet he may have felt that such measures were needed to gain results. The nation had already been at war for three months, little seemed to be getting done, and Lincoln’s administration was beginning to feel the pressure to take action against the rebels.³⁷

As directed, Harris provided the unit with the officers and non-commissioned officers he had at hand. But when it came to filling the ranks, Harris departed from the precedent established by his predecessor, Archibald Henderson, and simply assigned *new recruits* to Reynolds’ battalion instead of experienced Marines. Harris’ decision produced dire consequences. In past instances when Henderson had formed battalions he had filled the ranks with qualified Marines pulled from the various ships’

detachments and shore stations, later backfilling the ships and barracks with new recruits once they had been trained. Harris took the opposite approach, leaving his experienced men scattered throughout the fleet while men fresh from civilian pursuits topped off the battalion.³⁸

This last point was not lost on Major Reynolds and his subordinate leaders. One of the officers, Second Lieutenant Robert E. Hitchcock, himself a new addition to the Corps, summed up the situation as he saw it in a sober letter home: “. . . tomorrow morning will see me and five other Lieut[enant]s with 300 Marines (raw recruits in every sense of the term) on our way to Fairfax Court House to take part in a bloody battle.” Hitchcock observed further: “This is unexpected to us, and the Marines are not fit to go into the field, for every one of them is as raw as you please, not more than a hundred of them have been here over three weeks.” Of the 324 Marine privates in the battalion, only 2 percent (or seven total Marines) had served for more than three months. Many had been in uniform less than a week before departing for Manassas. The senior leaders were not in much better shape: although half of Reynolds’ twelve officers were combat veterans, only one of the twelve non-commissioned officers had seen combat. Historian Allan Millett describes the battalion best when he states that while it “looked disciplined and smart, it was a pitiable group of raw recruits.” Furthermore, “some had just been issued weapons,” probably for the first time in their lives.³⁹ Certainly only a few, if any, were proficient with the weapons they now carried into battle.

Meanwhile, Marine privates stationed aboard ships in various ports heard rumors of the battalion being formed and some volunteered to take the place of the recruits. One

collectively authored letter from the detachment on the USS *Richmond*, then in New York, advised Harris they had seen battle before and ventured that “There are a number of recruits in the Barracks who would willingly take our place on board ship and do ship duty equally well.”⁴⁰ Some of those writing, themselves veterans of the Marine battalions that served in the Indian and Mexican Wars, probably also wondered why their Commandant did not think of that on his own, or accept their logical suggestion after they made it.

Untrained and green as his men were, Reynolds mustered them in the early afternoon of 16 July and marched them across the Long Bridge over the Potomac into Virginia to take its place with McDowell’s forces. McDowell assigned the Marines to his First Brigade, commanded by Colonel Andrew Porter. Porter in turn assigned the Marines to protect Captain Charles Griffin’s mounted “flying artillery” battery. The horse-drawn artillery set a murderous pace for the foot-mobile Marines, and Reynolds’ subordinates were challenged to maintain order and discipline during the blisteringly hot movement south.⁴¹

On the evening of 20 July, Reynolds’ battalion made camp near Centerville, Virginia, and prepared for a movement the next day against Confederate forces believed to be occupying defensive positions along Bull Run, near the town of Manassas. Before dawn on the 21st, Reynolds’ Marines joined the long column of troops jamming the road into the Warrenton Turnpike, inching forward at an excruciatingly slow pace. With Federal plans now behind schedule, the Marines struggled to maintain their support for Griffin’s battery as it repositioned to the far right of the Union lines. In the early

afternoon heat, Griffin's battery sprang forward from the lines to establish firing positions oriented toward Henry House Hill to bring enfilade fire down the Confederate ranks. Another battery commanded by Captain James B. Ricketts also moved up, reinforcing Griffin's guns. Reynolds' Marines "followed promptly," and as they moved in trace of the Union artillery and left the concealment of woods behind them they became the target of Confederate fire that inflicted the first Marine casualties (see Figure 5-1).⁴² The Marines found themselves at what many later identified as a critical juncture in the battle.

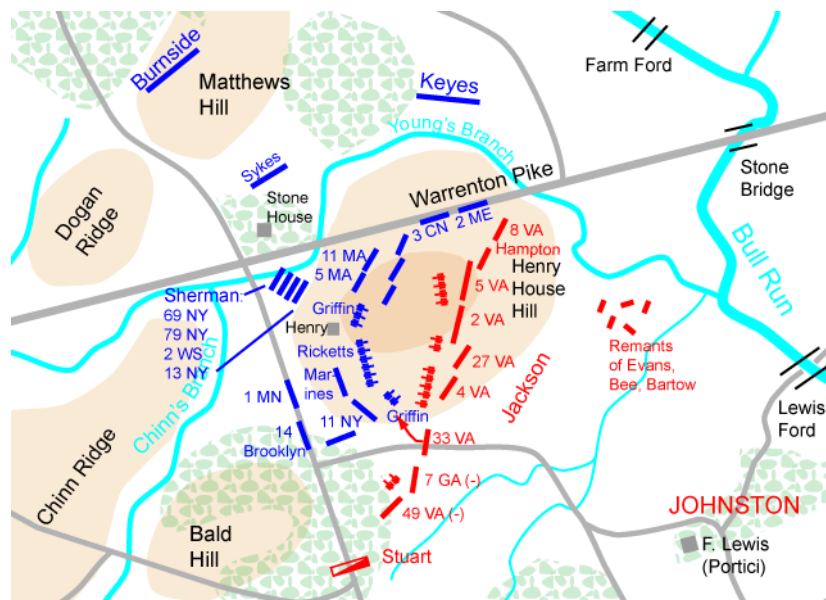


Figure 5-1. Situation at Bull Run, 12:00-2:00 P.M., 21 July 1861.⁴³

The battle intensified and the Confederate forces counterattacked against the Union artillery. According to Reynolds, "the battalion was exposed to a galling fire," and McDowell sent orders for the Marines to move up so as to protect the batteries, now

dangerously exposed to Confederate infantry. In Reynolds' own words, "The battalion, in consequence, took the position indicated by the general [McDowell], but was unable to hold it, owing to the heavy fire which was opened upon them." Griffin's position was swept by rebel artillery and an assault by the 33rd Virginia Regiment. Along with two New York regiments also ordered to protect the artillery units, Reynolds struggled to push his men forward so as to better protect the batteries from the fires of the enemy infantry. However, like the other Union units on that flank, the battalion "broke three [*sic*] several times, but as frequently formed and urged back into position, when finally a general rout took place, in which the marines participated."⁴⁴

Rout accurately describes the retreat of McDowell's army from the field of battle. Set in motion by a hysterical withdrawal of the 11th New York "Fire" Zouaves located at the right of the Marines, many of Reynolds' men followed suit and the rearward movement quickly escalated into a complete disintegration of the Union lines. Reynolds confirmed this collapse; "No effort on the part of their officers could induce them to rally." Yet the Marines were hardly alone in the panicked frenzy of retreat toward the perceived safety of the capital. Roads became almost impassably clogged as individual Union soldiers threw away equipment and supplies, joining frightened civilian observers jockeying for position in the sea of humanity flowing back towards Washington. Nothing could halt the retreat and a witnessing congressman exclaimed that "the further they ran, the more frightened they grew." The Marines commingled with this mob, and it took several days after the battle for exhausted officers to sort out exactly who died, who was wounded, and who had been captured or deserted. In his

official accounting to Harris several days later, Reynolds reported one officer and eight men killed, nineteen men seriously wounded and sixteen men still missing and unaccounted for. Slowly, word would come back over the next few weeks that some of the men listed as missing were in fact prisoners of the Confederates.⁴⁵

In the aftermath of the Union's humiliating defeat at the First Battle of Bull Run, one fact was certain; there was no shortage of people to blame for the loss. The Marine battalion made a convenient target of criticism. As a regular military unit and not a volunteer outfit, many observers had expected more out of the battalion than the green Marines could provide. Some of the Marine officers marching out to war thought as well, with one remarking about the battalion's presence that: "I ought perhaps to say that the Corps will have the post of honor [in the formation], which of course is the post of danger." Analysts then and since have disagreed as to the extent to which Reynolds' men should be held accountable for their part in the loss, but the fact of their retreat was a hard blow to recover from. Millett labels their participation "a disaster, an omen for most of [the Corps'] battalion-size operations for the rest of the war." Furthermore, "the Marine battalion suffered as severe a defeat as any of the Army's amateur regiments." Sullivan is a little more forgiving, reminding readers that "the Marines were no different than other troops" in the battle. Jeffrey Ryan somberly remarks that "The performance in battle . . . left little impression on either their foes or comrades," observing also that "even the battalion's own commander seemed to think that the unit's greatest accomplishment was in staying intact for as long as it did, before joining in the general rout." These are hardly the epitaph any warrior would wish. The Marine Corps' official

histories mention the event, but provide little analysis of the performance.⁴⁶ In truth, the Marine battalion failed to live up to expectations at Bull Run, and its defeat had a long-term, negative effect on the forming of similar units during the war, particularly regarding service with the Army.

Commandant Harris' own perceptions of the outcome are telling and reveal much about his thoughts on having Marines serve with the Army. On 24 July 1861, in his forwarding of Major Reynolds' report on the action at Bull Run, Harris recommended that Reynolds' Marines "again be assigned, as they are wanted, *to their more legitimate duties* in the Corps" (emphasis added).⁴⁷ Those "more legitimate duties," in Harris' mind, involved reassignment to the ships' detachments and shore installations, traditional duties that Marines had long filled, and presumably would always fill. And, at the time, Harris still had lots of vacancies to fill on ships.

In immediately taking that stance, Harris distanced himself from Henderson's established practice of having Marines formed into battalions for detached service with the Army. In Harris' annual report for 1861, he felt compelled to mention that "In July last, *under orders from the department*, I prepared a battalion [. . .] for duty with the army under General McDowell" (emphasis added). He evidently needed to mention that the Bull Run battalion was not something that he did on his own initiative, but rather was undertaken on an order from Welles. Furthermore, he asserted he had misgivings from the onset: "I could not but feel great anxiety lest the battalion should fail." If he had genuine concerns about the success of the Marines, those misgivings were never communicated or shared with his superiors beforehand, as one might expect. Harris

went on to blame the failure of the unit primarily on the fact that “the battalion was necessarily composed almost entirely of recruits, many of whom received their arms only a day or two before leaving the barracks, and probably some of them had never had arms in their hands before,” a point of emphasis shared with Reynolds. Furthermore, Harris lamented that the experiment resulted in “the first instance in [the Corps’] recorded history where any portion of its members turned their backs to the enemy,” harsh criticism, indeed.⁴⁸ What Harris failed to mention was the critical role he himself played in deciding to fill the battalion with raw recruits rather than provide it with experienced men from his various barracks and ships’ detachments, as his predecessor always did. By not manning the battalion with seasoned men, Harris essentially doomed it to failure.

Harris exhibited equal reluctance for supporting similar efforts in the future. Later in his report, he reminded the reader that “In September last, *under orders from the department*, I organized another battalion” of Marines (emphasis added). Again, Harris felt compelled to mention that the forming of that second unit was not undertaken on his own initiative, but instead done as the result of an order from Welles that another battalion be raised. Nonetheless, despite the protestation, he added that “I have every confidence that if brought into action they will acquit themselves with credit and honor.”⁴⁹ And importantly, on that second iteration the battalion went out with officers and men specially selected and trained for the task, making it the first purposely organized Marine battalion of the war. Still, a close reading of his report supports the

contention that Harris was not fully behind the concept of fielding separate battalions for operations, even one that would operate under Navy command.

The Marine Corps had been badly mauled in its first major engagement of the war. It had started off out of step with the administration and senior military leaders and never regained the same confidence and respect that it had enjoyed before the war. Institutionally, it appeared sluggish and hesitant in reacting to the demands of the conflict. Its senior leaders moved lethargically, even reluctantly in response to urgent calls for action on their part. Harris' own behavior was at times matter-of-fact and routine, with no real sense of urgency or of being adaptive to the changing national situation. His leadership during the Secession Crisis was anemic and substandard. When the Corps most needed an assertive, even aggressive hand at the helm, Harris failed to provide it.

Harris had relinquished the operational command of the Marine Corps to Welles. In fact, he seemed to prefer that approach. Every time something original was demanded of the organization, he resisted it. He grudgingly formed a battalion to serve with the Army at Bull Run only when ordered to, and manned the unit with the least capable individuals he had. A second battalion was created soon afterward, but one gets the impression from his correspondence that Harris was unconvinced, or at least ignorant, of the inherent and potential advantages that those units afforded the organization. Instead, he consistently and predictably dissipated the Corps' manpower and resources by fielding small, mostly independent detachments for scattered service throughout the fleet rather than seeking alternatives that would have allowed the Marine

Corps to maximize on its strengths and potentially carve out a distinct niche for itself in the war.

By August of 1861, Harris had failed as a Commandant and the Corps desperately needed a new leader. But several factors in the relationship between Welles and Harris combined to ensure that Welles would keep Harris in place, not the least of which is the fact that Harris had generally conceded total control of the Corps to the more forceful secretary. Under Harris' tired and unimaginative leadership the Corps would continue to limp on as an institution, ignoring any internal impetus for change and relying instead on outside influences to provide it with direction. This state of affairs appeared in sharp contrast with the organization that had exhibited such imagination and resourcefulness in the Mexican War only thirteen years before, and had quite recently been a force the government had earlier relied on in challenging circumstances.

Endnotes

¹ See the discussion in James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 202-75. For a complete accounting of the Army, Navy and Marine Corps officers that left their service during the Secession Crisis, see: Edwin M. Stanton to Hannibal Hamlin, War Department, Washington, D.C., 13 January 1864, contained in *U.S. Congressional Serial Set* 1176, Session vol. 1, 38th Congress, 1st Sess., Senate Executive Document 7, 1-9; and Gideon Welles to Hannibal Hamlin, "Report of the Secretary of the Navy, Transmitting in Answer to a Resolution of the Senate of the 21st of December, 1863, a List of Officers of the Navy and of the Marine Corps, Who Between the First Day of December, 1860, and the First Day of December, 1863, Left the Service, With the Grade and Rank of Each," Navy Dept., Washington, D.C., 29 December 1863, contained in *Serial Set* 1176, Sess. vol. 1, 38th Cong., 1st Sess., S. Exec. Doc. 3 (hereafter "List of Officers"), 1-12. The Provisional Confederate Congress unanimously adopted a Provisional Constitution on 8 February 1861, and the next day selected Jefferson Davis to serve as President for a period of one year. Confederate States of America, *Journal of the Congress of the Confederate States of America*, 7 vols. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1904-1905), 1: 103, 151 (hereafter referred to as *JCC*); Confederate States of America, *Acts and Resolutions of the First Session of the Provisional Congress of the Confederate States, Held at Montgomery, Ala.* (Richmond: Enquirer Book and Job Press, 1861), 48-49, 98-105 (hereafter referred to as *Acts, First Session*); Confederate States of America, *Acts and Resolutions of the Second Session of the Provisional Congress of the Confederate States, Held at Montgomery, Ala.* (Richmond: Enquirer Book and Job Press, 1861), 39, 86-87 (hereafter referred to as *Acts, Second Session*). For more detail regarding the forming of the Confederate States Marine Corps, see Michael E. Krivdo, "The Birth, Life and Death of the Confederate States Marine Corps" (M.A. thesis, Texas A&M University, College Station, 2006), 16-18; William S. Dudley, *Going South: U.S. Navy Officer Resignations and Dismissals on the Eve of the Civil War* (Washington, D.C.: Naval Historical Foundation, 1981).

² Secretary Isaac Toucey to Calvin Sayre, Navy Dept., 15 January 1861, 9 February 1861, 14 February 1861, Record Group (RG) 80 (General Records of the Department of the Navy, Records of the Office of the Secretary of the Navy), Entry 7 (Copies of Letters Sent by the Secretary of the Navy to the Commandant and Officers of the Marine Corps) (hereafter "Letters Sent"), National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C. (hereafter NA); David M. Sullivan, *The United States Marine Corps in the Civil War – The First Year* (Shippensburg, Pa.: White Mane Publishing Company, 1997), 43-44, first quote from 43; William W. Russell to Calvin Sayre, HQMC, 14 February 1861, RG 109 (War Department Collection of Confederate Records), Entry 193 (Compiled

Military Service Records), Part 1 (Staff Officer Files), File of Calvin L. Sayre, Major, Provisional Army of the Confederate States (P.A.C.S.), NA, second quote from text; Henry B. Tyler, Jr., to "My Dear Sir," Marine Barracks, Washington, D.C., 14 February 1861, RG 109, Entry 193: "Compiled Military Service Records," Part 1, Sayre's File, NA, third quote from text.

- ³ John Harris to Calvin Sayre, HQMC, Washington, D.C., 14 February 1861, RG 109, Entry 193: "Compiled Military Service Records," Part 1, Sayre's File, NA.
- ⁴ Calvin Sayre to Jefferson Davis, Montgomery, Ala., 22 February 1861, RG 109, Entry 193: "Compiled Military Service Records," Part 1, Sayre's File, NA; Ralph W. Donnelly, *Biographical Sketches of the Commissioned Officers of the Confederate States Marine Corps*, David M. Sullivan, ed. ([1973]; 3rd ed., Shippensburg, Pa.: White Mane Books, 2001), 190-91.
- ⁵ "Perversion of Military Authority to Party Ends," *New York Times*, 3 November 1860, 8.
- ⁶ "The Marine Corps and the Election," *New York Times*, 5 November 1860, 1, first quote from article; Brevoort to Harris, Marine Barracks, Brooklyn, 5 November 1860, RG 80, Entry 14 (Letters From the Commandant and Other Officers of the Marine Corps, January 1828-December 1886) (hereafter "Letters Received"), NA, second quote, and containing newspaper clippings of 3 and 5 November 1860; Read to Harris, Marine Barracks, [Brooklyn], 5 November 1860, RG 80, Entry 14: "Letters Received," NA, last quote from text.
- ⁷ Harris to Toucey, HQMC, RG 80, Entry 14: "Letters Received," NA; Harris to Toucey, HQMC, RG 80, Entry 14: "Letters Received," NA, with SecNav endorsement on reverse, quote from endorsement.
- ⁸ Read to Toucey, Marine Barracks, Brooklyn, 27 February 1861, RG 80, Entry 14: "Letters Received," NA, with SecNav endorsement; Augusta [Georgia] *Chronicle & Sentinel*, 17 February 1861, 1; RG 109 (War Department Collection of Confederate Records), "Collected Bound Records of Confederate Executive, Legislative, and Judicial Offices ("Rebel Archives"), 1860-65," Chapter II (Military Commands), Volume 182, Department of South Carolina, Georgia and Florida, General Court Martial Orders, 1863; Donnelly, *Biographical Sketches*, 169-70.
- ⁹ Telegram, Howell to Davis, Washington, D.C., 27 February 1861, Jefferson Davis Collection, Howard-Tilton Memorial Library, Tulane University, New Orleans, La., Howell to Toucey, Washington, D.C., 28 February and 1 March, RG 127 (Field Organization Records, Records of the United States Marine Corps), Entry

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- 42 (“Letters Received, 1818-1915”), NA; Harris to Howell, HQMC, 2 March 1861, RG 127, Entry 4: “Letters Sent, 1798-1884,” NA, quote from text; Confederate States Navy Dept., *Register of the Commissioned and Warrant Officers of the Navy of the Confederate States, to January 1, 1862* (Richmond, Va.: Tyler, Wise, Allegre and Smith, 1862), 15 (hereafter *Register, 1862*); Donnelly, *Biographical Sketches*, 105-06.
- ¹⁰ Service Record of Second Lieutenant/Captain George Holmes, RG 94 (Records of the Adjutant General’s Office, 1780s to 1917), Compiled Service Records of Volunteer Soldiers Who Served During the Mexican War in Organizations From the State of Florida, NA; Toucey to Holmes, Navy Dept., 1 March 1861, RG 80, Entry 7: “Letters Sent,” NA; Harris to Holmes, HQMC, 2 March 1861, RG 127, Entry 4: “Letters Sent 1798-1884,” NA, quotes from text; *Register, 1862*, 15; Donnelly, *Biographical Sketches*, 101-02.
- ¹¹ Toucey to Harris, Navy Department, 8, 10 and 12 January 1861, RG 80, Entry 1: “Letters Sent,” NA; Harris to Toucey, HQMC, Washington, D.C., 9 and 12 January 1861, RG 80, Entry 14: “Letters Received,” NA; Harris to Andrew Jackson Hays, HQMC, Washington, D.C., 8 January 1861, RG 80, Entry 1: “Letters Sent,” NA; Hays to Harris, Fort McHenry, Md., 11 January 1861, RG 80, Entry 1: “Letters Sent,” NA; Harris to Toucey, HQMC, Washington, D.C., 15 January 1861, RG 80, Entry 14: “Letters Received,” NA.
- ¹² Harris to Hays, HQMC, Washington, D.C., 2 March 1861, RG 127, Entry 4: “Letters Sent 1798-1884,” NA, quote from text, with emphasis added; Orderly Sergeant James Thompson to Captain Henry K. Hoff, USN, USS *Princeton*, Philadelphia, Pa., 17 April 1861, RG 127, Entry 42: “Letters Received,” NA.
- ¹³ *Ibid.*, RG 127, Entry 42: “Letters Received,” NA; Sullivan, *The First Year*, 49-50.
- ¹⁴ Toucey to Ingraham, Navy Dept., 1 March 1861, RG 80, Entry 7: “Copies of Letters to the Commandant and Officers of the Marine Corps,” NA; “List of Officers,” 12, 2; *Register, 1862*, 15; Donnelly, *Biographical Sketches*, 111; “Correspondence of the Pensacola Observer,” Montgomery [Alabama] *Weekly Mail*, 11 April 1861.
- ¹⁵ “List of Officers,” 12; Muster Rolls for the Month of February 1861, RG 127, Muster Rolls of the USMC, 1798-1860, NA; *House Journal*, 36th Cong., 2nd Sess., 2 March 1861, 466-68, quotes from 466 and 467 respectively.
- ¹⁶ U.S Government, *1860 U.S. Census, Population Schedule*, Microform Publication M653, Roll 103, NA, 195; Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles to Tyler, Navy Dept., 1 May 1861, RG 80, Entry 7: “Letters Sent,” NA.

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- ¹⁷ Henry B. Tyler, Sr. to Toucey, HQMC, 26 August 1859 and 1 December 1860, RG 80, Entry 14, NA; Toucey to Tyler, Sr., Navy Dept., Washington, D.C., 31 December 1860, RG 80, Entry 1: "Letters Sent, 1798 – 1884," NA. Several other examples of these exchanges exist within the same source that date back to shortly after Harris became Commandant in January 1859.
- ¹⁸ Alexander, "John Harris," 78; Donnelly, *Biographical Sketches*, 263-69; Alexandria [Va.] *Gazette*, 3 May 1861, 2-3.
- ¹⁹ Emily Thorn to Welles, Washington, D.C., 17 April 1861, Gideon Welles Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.; also see Sullivan, *The First Year*, 50, 52; Harris to Welles, HQMC, 3 May 1861, RG 127, Entry 1: "Letters Sent, 1798 - 1884" NA.
- ²⁰ *New York Times*, 19 June 1861, 8; Washington [D.C.] *Evening Star*, 19 June 1861, 3; Welles to Tyler, Jr., Navy Dept., Washington, D.C., 21 June 1861, RG 80, Entry 7: "Letters Sent," NA, second quote from text; Sullivan, *The First Year*, 50-54, first quote from 51; *JCC*, 1: 394.
- ²¹ Donnelly, *Biographical Sketches*, 310-13; Welles to Alexander W. Stark, Navy Dept., Washington, D.C., 17 October 1861, RG 80, Entry 7: "Letters Sent," NA; Stark to "His Excellency President Davis," Richmond, Va., 19 June 1862, File of Alexander W. Stark, RG 109 (War Department Collection of Confederate Records," Entry 193 (Compiled Military Service Records), Part 1 (Staff Officer Files), NA; Donald Ray Gardner, "The Confederate Corps of Marines" (M.A. thesis, Memphis State University, 1973), 16-17. Other Virginians remained on active service as USMC officers: Lieutenant Colonel William Dulany, Captain Addison Garland, and Lieutenants George R. Graham, David M. Cohen and Clement D. Hebb.
- ²² Major William W. Russell to Welles, HQMC, 8 November 1861, reprinted in "Hale Report," *Serial Set* 1125, Sess. vol. 1, 37th Cong., 2nd Sess., S. Rep. 37, 18 April 1862, 88; "List of Officers on Duty at the Norfolk Navy Yard and Station on the 20th April, 1861, Together with their Present Places of Service," "Hale Report," 90-92; Russell to Welles, HQMC, Washington, D.C., 12 November 1861, reprinted in "Hale Report," 93-94. For details of the events at the Norfolk Navy Yard on and around 20 April 1861, see "Hale Report," 22-123.
- ²³ Donnelly, *Biographical Sketches*, 8-15, 173-82. The best discussion of the case of Jabez Rich is found in Sullivan, *The First Year*, 51.

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- ²⁴ Concerning Greene at Harpers Ferry, see Michael E. Krivdo, "Harpers Ferry: Last Action of the 'Henderson Era'," *Fortitudine* 34 (October 2009), 7-11. For an account of Simms' China action, see Bernard C. Nalty, *The Barrier Forts: A Battle, a Monument, and a Mythical Marine*, Marine Corps Historical Reference Series, No. 6 (Washington: Historical Branch, G-3 Division, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, 1962), 6-10.
- ²⁵ Quote from Allan R. Millett, *Semper Fidelis: The History of the United States Marine Corps* ([1980]; rev. and exp. ed., New York: Free Press, 1991), 92.
- ²⁶ Millett, *Semper Fidelis*, 92; "List of Officers," 12; Donnelly, *Biographical Sketches*, 95-98, 238-39, 264-65.
- ²⁷ Material included in this Table is compiled from two sources: "List of Officers," 12; and biographical information found in Donnelly, *Biographical Sketches*, 8-11, 84-85, 91-92, 101-02, 105, 111-12, 129-31, 168-70, 189-90, 197-99, 224-25, 230-33, 236-39, 259, 263-65, 267-69, 286, 4, 77, 213, 17, and 243, respectively. The Table is also found in Krivdo, "Confederate States Marine Corps," 28. Charles Henderson, son of former Commandant Archibald Henderson, was added to the list erroneously at the request of Gideon Welles, who mistakenly believed Henderson had accepted a commission in the CSMC.
- ²⁸ Individual sketches of these and other CSMC officers can be found in Donnelly, *Biographical Sketches*; and the specific role of Greene in building an artillery capability to the USMC under Henderson's tenure can be found in Chapter 3. For information on the Confederate States Marine Corps see Michael E. Krivdo, "Confederate States Navy and Marine Corps," in *A Companion to American Military History*, 2 vols., edited by James C. Bradford (Malden, Mass.: Wiley-Blackwell Publishing Co., 2010), 1: 460-71; and Krivdo, "Confederate States Marine Corps."
- ²⁹ Millett, *Semper Fidelis*, 94-95.
- ³⁰ Welles to Harris, Navy Dept., Washington, D.C., 7 March 1861, RG 80, Entry 7: "Copies of Letters to the Commandant and Officers of the Marine Corps," NA; Welles to Tyler, Sr., Navy Dept., Washington, D.C., 5 April 1861, RG 80, Entry 7: "Letters Sent," NA; Welles to Harris, Navy Dept., Washington, D.C., 17 April 1861, RG 80, Entry 7: "Letters Sent," NA, quotes from text.
- ³¹ Welles to Harris, Navy Department, Washington, D.C., 27 April 1861, RG 80, Entry 7: "Letters Sent," NA. Correspondence from Welles to Harris in RG 80, Entries 7 and 14, illustrates the degree that Welles assumed and exercised close control over the administration of the Marine Corps.

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- ³² *ORN*, 4: 114-16; Francis and George Gardner Papers, 1/8 Seaman, Library of Congress, Manuscript Collection; *New York Times*, undated clipping in Marine Corps Historical Division, "Civil War File," Archives and Special Records, Alfred M. Gray Research Center (hereafter GRC), Quantico, Va., and as reprinted in Sullivan, *The First Year*, 76-77, quote from 76; Orders No. 46, Headquarters, Fort Pickens, Fla., 26 May 1861, RG 127, Entry 42: ("Letters Received, 1818-1915," NA.
- ³³ *ORN* 4: 491-92, 495-96, 535-38, 565-66; Deck log of the USS *Pawnee*, 1-2 June and 5-6 July 1861, Muster Rolls of United States Ships, RG 24 (Bureau of Naval Personnel, Deck Logs), NA. The action at Aquia Creek occurred adjacent to the site of the present-day Marine Corps Base at Quantico, Virginia.
- ³⁴ Krivdo, "Confederate States Marine Corps," 141-42.
- ³⁵ Secretary of War Simon Cameron to Welles, War Dept., Washington, D.C., 12 July 1861, RG 107 (Records of the Office of the Secretary of War, "Military Books," Book no. 45, 1 July – 31 August 1861, NA, first quote from text; Telegram, Welles to John Reynolds, Navy Dept., Washington, D.C., 13 July 1861, copy in RG 127, Entry 4: "Letters Sent, 1798-1884" NA; Telegram, Welles to Jacob Zeilen, Navy Dept., Washington, D.C., 14 July 1861, copy in RG 127, Entry 4: "Letters Sent, 1798 - 1884," NA; Sullivan, *The First Year*, 115, second quote from 115.
- ³⁶ Welles to Harris, Navy Dept., Washington, D.C., 15 July 1861, RG 80, Entry 7: "Letters Sent," NA, quotes from text.
- ³⁷ For a description of the political pressure to take action, see Chapter 10, "Amateurs Go to War," of McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 308-38.
- ³⁸ Joseph G. Dawson III, "With Fidelity and Effectiveness: Archibald Henderson's Lasting Legacy to the U.S. Marine Corps," *Journal of Military History* 62 (October 1998), 737-48, 753.
- ³⁹ Second Lieutenant Robert Hitchcock to "Dear Parents," Marine Barracks, Washington, D.C., 14 July 1861, Robert Hitchcock Papers, Archives and Special Records, GRC, Quantico, Va., first two quotes from text. Hitchcock actually overestimated the extent of the Marines' experience. Analysis of the makeup of Reynolds' battalion is based on examination of "Muster Rolls for Marine Barracks, Washington, D.C., July 1861," RG 127, Muster Rolls of the USMC, 1798-1940," NA; the observations of historian David Sullivan, *The First Year*, 119-21; and Millett, *Semper Fidelis*, 94, last two quotes from 94.

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- ⁴⁰ Privates James Stuart, William Firth, James Gurley and others to Harris, U.S. Steamer *Richmond*, New York, 24 July 1861, RG 127, "Letters Received - HD," NA.
- ⁴¹ Major John G. Reynolds to Harris, Marine Barracks, Washington, D.C., 24 July 1861, reprinted in "Report of the Secretary of the Navy, 1861," *Serial Set* 1119, Sess. vol. 3, 37th Cong., 2nd Sess., Senate Exec. Doc. 1, Pt. 3 (hereafter "SecNav Annual Report, 1861"), 37-39.
- ⁴² *Ibid.*, 37-39; "Report of Col. Andrew Porter, 16th U.S. Infantry, Commanding 2nd Division and 1st Brigade, 2nd Division," U.S. War Dept., *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, 128 vols. and atlas (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1880-1901), Series I, 2: 383-87 (hereafter cited as *OR*, and all citations are to Series I, unless otherwise indicated), quote from 383.
- ⁴³ Map created by Hal Jespersen for the public domain, located on the Internet at: http://www.posix.com/CWmaps/First_Bull_Run_July21_2pm.png, last accessed on 12 April 2010.
- ⁴⁴ "SecNav Annual Report, 1861," 37-38, quotes from 38.
- ⁴⁵ *OR*, 2: 383-87; "SecNav Annual Report, 1861," 37-39, first quote from 38; Congressman Albert Riddle quoted (second quote) in McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 345, also cited in Samuel S. Cox, *Three Decades of Federal Legislation, 1855-1885* (Providence, R.I.: J.A. & R.A. Reid Publishers, 1885), 158; Sullivan, *The First Year*, 136-45.
- ⁴⁶ Letter, Second Lieutenant Robert W. Huntington to "My Dear Kate," 18 July 1861, Washington, D.C., Robert W. Huntington Papers, Folder 6, Archives and Special Records, GRC, Quantico, Va., first quote from text; Millett, *Semper Fidelis*, 94-95, second and third quotes from 94 and 95, respectively; Sullivan, *The First Year*, fourth quote from 94; Jeffrey Ryan, "On Land and Sea: The United States Marine Corps in the Civil War," (Ph.D. dissertation, Temple University, 1997), fifth and sixth quotes from 78; Bernard C. Nalty, *The United States Marines in the Civil War*, Marine Corps Historical Reference Series, no. 2 (Historical Branch, G-3 Division, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, Washington, D.C., 1961), 3; Bernard C. Nalty, "At All Times Ready . . .," *The United States Marines at Harper's Ferry and in the Civil War*, Marine Corps Historical Reference Pamphlet (Historical Branch, G-3 Division, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, Washington, D.C., 1966), 9-10.

⁴⁷ Harris to Welles, HQMC, Washington, D.C., 24 July 1861, RG 80, Entry 14: “Letters Received,” NA, quote from text with emphasis added.

⁴⁸ “SecNav Annual Report, 1861,” 515-16, quotes from same, with emphasis added.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, quotes from 516.

CHAPTER VI

THE CORPS STAGGERS OFF TO WAR: ORGANIZING, RECRUITING AND EMPLOYING MARINES

On the afternoon of 26 August 1861, the Federal military commenced its first major amphibious operation of the war. A naval force composed of five warships, the Revenue steamer *Harriet Lane* and three transport ships carrying about 860 Army troops departed Fort Monroe, Virginia, for their target, two fortified artillery batteries that guarded the sea approaches of the barrier islands near Cape Hatteras, North Carolina. Since the idea for the “expedition originated in the Navy Department,” the respective service secretaries agreed on Flag-Officer Silas H. Stringham, U.S. Navy, as overall commander of the mission, and Major General Benjamin F. Butler, as the commander of the attached Army troops that made up the landing force. To form his own landing element, Stringham providentially decided to combine the four separate Marine detachments aboard the warships of his squadron into one unit of about 100 men commanded by Captain William L. Shuttleworth. Facing the Union squadron were 700-800 Confederate sailors and volunteer soldiers under the overall command of former U.S. Navy Commodore James Barron.¹

At about 4:00 PM on the 27th, the flotilla arrived off Hatteras Inlet and made ready to disembark the landing party. Complications surfaced from the onset but Stringham did his best to deal with each problem as it arose. The weather had begun to deteriorate, making any seaward landing impossible. Stringham directed his ships to

pass over the bar and into the inlet, and made preparations to land troops the next morning. At daybreak on the 28th several Union warships began firing on the Confederate forts while Marines and soldiers loaded into flatboats and made for their landing point on shore (see Figure 6-1). The weather, however, refused to cooperate and worsening surf conditions swamped some of the boats, forcing a halt to the landing after only 315 men were ashore. Of that number, about sixty Marines were in the first boats landed and consequently made up about one-fifth of the total Union force ashore. Aided by innovative fire support provided by the Federal warships, the small element advanced against the Confederate positions with “the Marines in front” and soon occupied Fort Clark after its garrison had been driven out by the bombardment. The Marines then “hoisted the American colors on the battery,” signaling to the gunners afloat that the position was in friendly hands. With the weather continuing to deteriorate and night fast approaching, the Union landing force then established defensive positions at both the original landing site and at the captured fort, preparing for a counterattack that never materialized.²

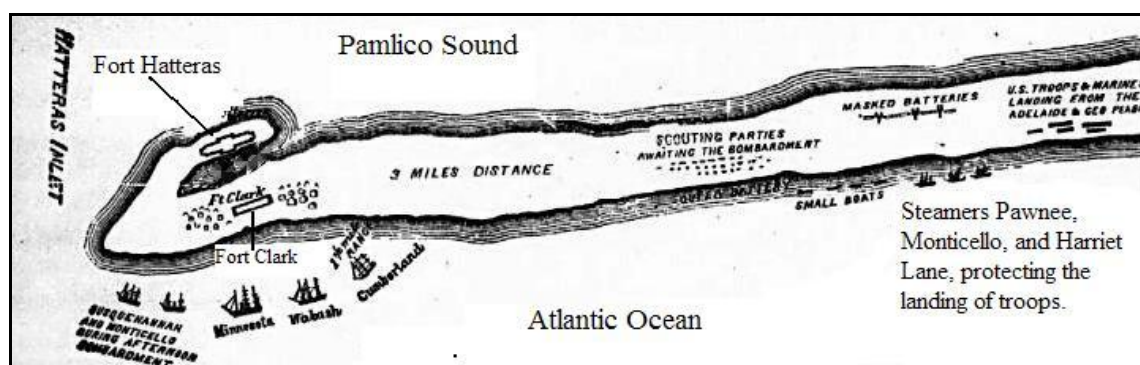


Figure 6-1. Hatteras Forts and the Union Scheme of Maneuver.³

Stringham's squadron resumed its bombardment of the last remaining Confederate stronghold at Fort Hatteras at about 7:40 the following morning. The naval guns were joined by a land-based rifled 6-pounder battery that the Union forces had brought ashore the previous day. For several hours the Federals continued their barrage until the Confederate garrison ran up a white flag, signifying their surrender. The Union landing force then moved on the fort (with Marines again in the lead), took possession of it, and rounded up over 700 Confederate prisoners. Despite numbering less than half the strength of the enemy, the Federal landing force had sustained no serious casualties. Stringham's ships now controlled the entire inlet and the mouths of several prominent rivers and waterways.⁴

To better understand the circumstances of Marines and their officers early in the war a number of factors must be addressed. These include how the Federal military establishment employed Marines in the war's early amphibious operations and the ways service leaders and expedition commanders interacted. Furthermore, Marine recruiting limitations, organizational restructuring, and administrative problems shaped Marine corps capabilities well into 1862. And Marine leadership, especially that exhibited by Commandant Harris, remained a limiting factor even beyond Harris' death. Finally, Navy officer initiatives also influenced precisely how the Corps contributed to Federal actions.

Although relatively small in scale when compared to the size of later landing operations, the Federal victory at Hatteras Inlet was important for several reasons. First, it represented the only significant Union victory among the several disappointing losses

of 1861. Admiral David Dixon Porter called it “our first victory of any kind, and . . . the moral effect of this affair was very great.” Second, it gave the U.S. Navy control of a shore base to facilitate the expanding of its nascent blockade effort. Third, it established a model for the conduct of other amphibious operations along the coastal areas of the South, and underscored the importance of allowing the naval commander great latitude in forming his plans. Fourth, the Navy gained valuable experience in the techniques of providing naval gunfire against fixed shore fortifications while still underway, a procedure that helped to negate the previous advantages of land-based forts against stationary ships firing from anchor. Naval officers refined and applied this technique in subsequent actions, with great success.⁵

However, the seizing of the Hatteras forts also revealed some problems that would continue to plague the Federal military for several years. First, the issue of placing these early joint operations under the unified command of one officer continued to be a source of friction. Basically, the concept of designating a single officer to have command authority over senior officers from other services was still a controversial idea at that time; indeed it remained one until late in the twentieth century, despite its obvious merits. By failing to invest absolute command in one officer, the success of future joint operations were greatly dependent upon the degree of cooperation offered by the various other commanders associated with that action. Basically, by not designating one unified commander during multiservice operations, Union leaders violated the long-recognized military principle of unity of command. Without unity of command, the separate Army

and Navy commanders could (and sometimes did) pursue different courses of action simultaneously.⁶

It was here that the Marine Corps presented the Navy with a solution to this problem. Although technically separate and distinct services, the Navy and the Marine Corps both reported to a single source, the Navy Department, for orders, direction and guidance. The naval services shared a long tradition of joint action under unified command. This quality greatly simplified naval operations, providing a clear, single command and control structure that subordinated all of the actions of the separate elements toward achieving a common goal. Historically, that feature had proved successful in many instances, most recently in the seizing of the Barrier Forts in Canton, China, in 1856. It made great military sense to simply increase the scale of the Marine Corps' participation in these larger landing party operations to meet the greater requirement of the significantly enlarged naval force. Unity of command would be easily achieved, and the longstanding level of commonality and familiarity of each service's procedures would also enhance the chances of achieving a successful outcome. However obvious as it seems in hindsight, the Marine Corps did not offer up any such recommendation at the time of the Hatteras expedition and the Army consequently filled the void. And early problems with recruiting and organization compounded the difficulty of the Corps assuming a greater role in amphibious operations. In the process, the Army formed its own specialized "Marine-like" units organized to perform missions obviously best suited for Marines. In frustration, several Navy commanders attempted

to form their own Marine units as a way to work around problems with the Army, trying to create a ground combat element that was responsive to the needs of the Navy.⁷

Second, as commanders, both Stringham and Butler displayed the same timidity and lack of initiative that would continue to plague Lincoln's upper military ranks for years to come. Despite decisively defeating Confederate forces at the objective, Stringham and Butler failed to exploit their success by moving on to nearby exposed and weakened enemy positions. Instead, both commanders quickly disengaged their forces and departed, leaving behind only a token force to occupy the captured forts. As a result, the initiative passed to the enemy, who scrambled to reorganize their defenses and strengthen their fortified positions in the area. And when Secretary Welles criticized Stringham for not pressing the attack and enlarging the Union's foothold in North Carolina, the naval commander resigned in protest. Welles did, however, use Stringham's parting as an opportunity to split the Atlantic Blockading Squadron into two zones, each commanded by younger, more aggressive officers.⁸

As concerns the Marine Corps, Stringham's departure as commander of the expedition meant that key lessons regarding the employment of Marines in similar operations would go unlearned. Early in his planning, Stringham had decided he wanted Marines in his landing party. He also understood the value of having them organized in larger combat formations than that of the normal ship's complement of about twenty. However, when the Corps offered up no unit of its own for the mission, Stringham instead created his own by combining his four Marine detachments to form an *ad hoc* unit. He then planned to land it early in the operation, thereby ensuring the landing party

contained a regular military unit with its own organic artillery support, a pair of boat-howitzers. That unit subsequently performed well in the potentially disastrous circumstances that followed. Stringham obviously valued the capabilities and qualities his Marines provided to the landing party, yet when he left that information departed with him, forcing successors to relearn similar lessons on their own.⁹

Third, the assignment of political general Benjamin Butler to duties as the amphibious landing force commander proved unfortunate for the Union in the long run. Butler was a mediocre military leader at best, and sometimes his actions bordered on incompetency. Even at this early stage in the war there were signs of this. Several officers involved in the Hatteras operation commented on Butler's many deficiencies in the battle, the greatest probably being his complete lack of a cohesive plan for landing and supporting his troops. Marine Lieutenant William Cartter bluntly observed that, despite the glowing newspaper accounts praising Butler's role in the victory, "he had nothing to do with it. He did not even land with the landing parties." But Cartter did, and he believed that Butler's failure to do so made him "not fit to command a company of school children."¹⁰

Navy Lieutenant John S. Barnes levied an equally harsh assessment, also including Stringham in his criticism. While admitting that the expedition had been a success, Barnes stingingly wrote that "the enemy never had more faithful allies than they had in the brutal folly, supreme ignorance and want of ordinary military and naval perception" as the two leaders, Stringham and Butler. Butler's botched landing plan placed a loose collection of under-strength elements from five separate commands in

harm's way ashore, essentially marooning the small group without food, water, supplies or equipment in the face of a numerically superior, well-entrenched enemy force. Had the landing party faced a more determined foe, the outcome might easily have proved disastrous. Nonetheless, Army commanders continued to serve in similar expeditions and make some of the same mistakes, culminating in December 1864 with Butler's failed attempt to seize Fort Fisher, North Carolina, in the largest amphibious operation of the war.¹¹

All of these points were of particular concern to the Marine Corps. For decades the Corps had been central in the forming of almost every landing party that the Navy conducted. The Marines had been fully integrated into the Navy's command structure, and were well familiar with shipboard procedures and small boat operations. For decades, Marines had worked side-by-side with the Navy in landings all over the world, and had gained great experience in these small-scale amphibious operations. During Henderson's tenure, the Commandant had taken great pains to enhance the capability of Marines to perform that role, to the extent that in the late 1850s, Marines were even entrusted with command of landing parties in combat ashore. To increase their combat power ashore, the Navy Department provided artillery pieces for the training of Marines and sponsored the attendance of some officers to West Point's artillery course. And from time to time, the Corps created Marine battalions and employed them in increasingly larger naval expeditions. The battalion units provided enhanced command and control capability as well as a greater combat potential than could be achieved

through the less efficient method of simply combining several small detachments together right before a landing.¹²

Thus, Marines were, during the early stages of the war more experienced and qualified at conducting amphibious operations than any Army unit of that time. It would seem a logical step to continue to assign Marines to those operations once the war began, particularly since Welles' Blockade Strategy Board and his developing naval strategy emphasized the seizure of advanced naval bases in the South and the forcible closing of port cities.

Yet when the time came to plan for the Hatteras operation, the Marine Corps volunteered no battalion. Major John R. Reynolds' previous battalion had been quickly dismantled after the First Battle of Bull Run and its personnel sent to fill shortages at various barracks and ships' detachments. Therefore, lacking a dedicated battalion for the task, Stringham resorted to the traditional, yet less efficient method of creating his own from his own Marines. For his part, Commandant Harris seemed quite content to leave those decisions to local commanders, passing up another opportunity to make improvements to the Marine Corps' structure that could enhance their overall capabilities to conduct landing party operations on the scale required by the accepted naval strategy of the North.

The only major difficulty the Marine Corps faced lay in the scale of operations to be conducted, an obstacle that the Army also needed to overcome as it transitioned from small collections of peacetime units to forming large-scale military units. Yet Secretary Welles and others turned to the Army to fill the mission. No Marine leader stepped

forward to volunteer the unit for the job, despite having had recent experiences as a landing party. And the war would not wait for the Corps to catch up. The Hatteras expedition therefore served as the baseline model for future operations of its type, establishing a precedent that left the Marines, arguably the best qualified for the amphibious task at the time, to instead fill a marginal role in those operations. Indeed, even after the successful conclusion of the Hatteras battle, Harris made no mention in any of his correspondence of the key part his men played in making the victory possible.¹³

Furthermore, the assigning of Butler as the landing force commander signaled the Union military establishment's departure from the pre-war traditional landing party arrangement. From that point on, it became accepted practice to assign an Army officer to that role, essentially pre-empting any serious discussion to having Marines fill that position. And by placing men of the caliber of Butler in charge of many of these expeditions, the Army intimated that it considered these actions to be secondary to the larger fight on land.

In the last half of 1861 the Marine Corps, like other services, grew substantially in structure as a result of the national realization that an unprecedented military effort would be needed to win the war. The Marines also underwent fundamental changes within its officer corps as a result of several administrative reforms long considered, but not implemented until forced to by the pressures of war. Each of these factors is examined to determine how the initiatives shaped the unit during the critical early stages of the war.

Congress had always been slow to respond to requests to increase the structure of the Marine Corps, but the prospects of a large-scale, long war soon muted any resistance to expanding the service. In July 1861, Congress passed “An Act for the Better Organization of the Marine Corps,” adding almost one thousand more Marine privates; several dozen non-commissioned officers and about thirty more officers to the unit (see Figure 6-2). The Corps also benefitted from two separate 610-man discretionary increases to the organization authorized by President Lincoln to meet critical shortfalls on ships and shore stations. Although the presidential increases did not add permanent structure, they did authorize the commandant to recruit, feed, house, equip and cloth Marines in excess of Congress’ limit. On paper, Harris should have commanded a unit of about 4,500 Marines and officers. Yet by the end of October, 1861, there were only 2,354 on the rolls, slightly more than half the men authorized.¹⁴

Officer:	Colonel Commandant (1)	
	Colonel (1)	
	Lieutenant Colonel (2)	
	Major (4)	
	Captain (20)	
	First Lieutenant (30)	
	Second Lieutenant (30)	
	Adjutant and Inspector (1) *	
	Paymaster (1) *	
	Quartermaster (1) *	
	Assistant Quartermaster (2) *	Officer Total: 93
Enlisted:	Sergeant Major (1)	
	Quartermaster Sergeant (1) *	
	Principal Musician (1) **	
	Drum Major (1) **	
	Sergeant (200)	
	Corporal (220)	
	Musician (30)**	
	Fifer (60)**	
	Private (2,500)	Enlisted Total: 3,014
		Service Total: 3,107
Notes:	* Staff	** Band

Figure 6-2. Marine Corps Organization after Congress' Act of 24 July 1861.¹⁵

The Corps' recruiting effort proved to be a weak link in its drive to fulfill its expectations. Despite being allowed to induct more officers and Marines as a result of the war, the service consistently failed to meet its manpower needs and could not even fill its authorized ranks. At the end of 1862, Harris dejectedly reported that "The corps is now six hundred men short of our complement." Furthermore, "I fear our numbers will rather diminish than increase." Among the three services, the Marine Corps drew a distant last place in terms of meeting its manpower requirements.¹⁶

Several factors accounted for the Marine Corps' disappointing performance in recruiting. First, Harris and the service responded slowly to the increased need for

recruits. They reacted rather than acted, and conducted recruiting in the same unimaginative manner that the Corps had before 1861. The Corps failed as an institution to adapt its recruiting practices to meet the greater demand for men, and therefore realized only partial gains from the patriotic response of the people who enlisted in large numbers after Fort Sumter and the First Battle of Bull Run. Instead of surging its recruiting effort at that time as did the Army, the Marines routinely established rendezvous in their traditional enlistment locations of New York City and Philadelphia. In addition, where the Army established full-time recruiters, Harris and other senior officers treated recruiting as an additional duty instead of assigning the task to certain officers on a permanent basis, and then holding those recruiters personally accountable for their success or failure. To make matters worse, the Corps had no successful tradition or model to emulate since it had never, in its eight decades of existence, conducted its recruiting in an efficient manner. It had always achieved marginal success at enlisting quality persons in the amounts needed to fill its structure, and that spotty past performance made it doubly hard to fill even greater needs.¹⁷

Second, for far too long after the commencement of hostilities the Marine Corps concentrated on enlisting the same type of individual that it did before the war, deliberately excluding a large segment of the population that could have yielded good Marines. Since 1857, in part due to pressure from political leaders, Marine recruiters had been instructed to seek out only native-born U.S. citizens. Many of those prospects were thirty or more years in age and most hailed from the Atlantic seaboard, putting the Marine recruiters in constant competition with those of the Navy. The few recruits who

signed on represented the disadvantaged of the urban areas, with a few inexperienced farm boys thrown in for good measure. In all, the enlistees “had few skills, little education, and no political ties of benefit to the Marine Corps.” In November 1861, a frustrated Harris instructed his recruiters to seek out younger, unmarried men, and as a result they achieved better success in not only recruiting, but gained ground by increasing the retention rate of those who did sign up. However, by not expanding the recruiting effort into sizeable non-traditional population groups typified in immigrant centers and pursuing prospects in other large cities such as Chicago, Cleveland, and Detroit, as well as rural towns, the Marine Corps missed out on many men that soon filled Army regiments in great numbers. Tellingly, when the Navy expanded its recruiting effort into the Great Lakes and elsewhere along the Atlantic coast it doubled its number of seamen in only three months. Meanwhile, Marine recruiting sputtered along producing its usual substandard results.¹⁸

The Marine Corps also failed to seek enlistments among another important segment of the population: African Americans. Significantly, the Navy began soliciting recruits from the rapidly blossoming numbers of unemployed emancipated slaves along the Mississippi River Valley in late 1862 as a solution to the Mississippi Squadron’s critical shortage of sailors. The squadron commander, Admiral David Dixon Porter, signed on as many as were qualified for the task, even replacing some of the substandard white sailors with so-called “contrabands.” Writing to the pro-emancipation Assistant Secretary of the Navy, Gustavus Vasa Fox, Porter seemed very pleased with the performance of these former slaves on his squadron’s ships. “What injustice to these

poor people, to say they are only fit for slaves. They are better than the white people here, who I look upon as brutes, and half savages. I have shipped about four hundred able bodied contrabands and owing to the shortness of my crews, have to work them at my guns.” The Army also began recruiting African Americans in earnest, soon fielding entire regiments with black soldiers eager to fight their former masters and prove their worth. Meanwhile, the Marine Corps never even considered a similar move that might have solved all of its manpower woes at once. With that decision, the Corps became the only American service to not recruit African Americans, a policy that remained in place until 1942.¹⁹

Third, the Marine Corps shared with the Navy several serious obstacles to recruiting that proved hard to overcome. One involved the fact that the naval services were regular services, with fixed four-year enlistments and no provisions for volunteer, militia or reserve-type service that otherwise gave prospects the choice of being able to sign on for shorter periods of time. The Army offered all those appealing options. The Navy tried to make some concessions by reducing their service obligation to one year, but the Marine Corps’ remained unchanged. The Corps’ longer service obligations dissuaded many potential recruits from signing on when they knew they could invest shorter times in militia or volunteer Army units. Volunteer and militia units also presented the young recruit with the popular incentive of serving with family and friends under generally lax discipline standards, enticements that the Marines definitely did not offer.²⁰

Another factor that worked against Navy and Marine recruiters involved enlistment bounties. In general, Marine bounties were always considerably less than those offered by the Army. Congress established the Marine bounty at two dollars, far below the one hundred dollars paid to Army prospects. To make matters worse, in some cases Army enlistees could gain additional bounties from their home state, city, and other sources, a significant financial incentive to some that the Corps could not hope to match. Therefore, in some areas the disparity in bounty money proved an insurmountable hurdle for recruiters. When the naval services opened a yard at Cairo, Illinois, Admiral David Dixon Porter wrote to Harris that “The recruiting here did not amount to much, there was no bounty, and our people are all so patriotic they cannot fight without it.”²¹ In all, the inconsequential two dollar bounty offered by the Marines for signing up for four years of strict discipline and sea service proved practically worthless as an enlistment tool. It is no wonder that the Marine Corps’ recruiting effort fell far behind that of even the Navy, with which it shared some of the same obstacles.

Predictably, some Marine recruiters resorted to creative, extreme, or even illegal methods to fill the ranks. One creative method involved some recruiters offering to pay the bounty to third parties who provided enlistees. This essentially harnessed the civilian population behind the task and several relatives cashed in when they enlisted their son, a method one historian referred to as a “finder’s fee.” Records also reveal that some civilians took advantage of that program, in essence becoming unofficial recruiters. A few were fairly successful, with one enterprising individual signing on forty-three enlistees and another thirty. Of course, recruiters also placed advertisements

in newspapers and periodicals, often highlighting in dramatic fashion the prospects of gaining prize money through the capture of enemy ships, a claim that grew increasingly remote as the war progressed. And in June, 1862, Harris himself made the remarkable and wholly erroneous interpretation that the Army's enlistment bounty of \$100 applied to his Marines as well. Not surprisingly, Harris' higher bounty offer proved attractive and was accepted by many recruits. Unfortunately for Harris, his ingenious solution to the recruiting problem came to a sudden end in mid-1863 when it was determined that the Army bounty money *did not* extend to Marine enlistments. The realization caused anger and consternation throughout the ranks and acute embarrassment for the Commandant. But one thing was certain among the recruiters: however wrong he might have been, Harris had, in a roundabout fashion, temporarily provided the Corps with a recruiting tool that actually worked.²²

In late 1862, Harris became so concerned about his recruiting shortfalls that he consented to a desperate new tactic. He authorized his recruiters in Cairo, Illinois, to seek out Confederate prisoners of war as prospects. The following year, in the aftermath of the Battle of Gettysburg, Harris expanded that policy to the recruiters in Philadelphia, provided that the prisoners agreed to take an oath of loyalty to the Union. He also recommended that any former Confederates who were enlisted be distributed so that "they could do no mischief." One Philadelphia recruiter, Captain James Lewis, expended considerable effort among the prison camps in search of prospects, and produced fairly successful results. One selling point was that former Confederates

serving with the Marines could take some comfort in knowing that such duty “made it highly unlikely [they] would be called upon to fight their old comrades in the field.”²³

The net effect of this recruiting shortfall was that it kept the Corps in a permanent state of manpower crisis. The deficit of Marines forced Harris to deal with many competing demands for the few available men. This state of affairs caused him to focus almost exclusively on fulfilling the most immediate priority requirements that lay before him, leaving him with no excess to expend on anything outside of those needs. Faced with a continual scarcity of Marines, he could not afford the luxury of entertaining notions of creating new units, such as the various special battalions, unless ordered to do so by higher authority. In short, Harris felt he could not support plans to divert already scarce manpower toward projects not specifically called for in his understanding of the roles and missions of Marines that would only increase his already desperate need for men.

Although the Marine Corps would struggle for years with enlisted recruiting, it quickly and easily filled the vacancies in its officer corps opened by the Secession Crisis and the increase in structure. Letters from prospects seeking commissions flooded the offices of both Secretary Welles and Commandant Harris. So many requests came in that the Marine Corps found itself in the position of having to formalize a process to select the most qualified of the applicants. For the first time, it could be selective of who gained a commission. And with backing from Welles, a screening process was devised and included as a provision of the July 1861 “Act for the Better Organization of the Marine Corps.” The Act fixed many of the problems associated with the previous

method of gaining officers: it specified age requirements for Marine officer candidates (twenty to twenty-five years of age); it mandated medical screening to ensure the candidates could meet the rigors of the duty; and it empowered the Navy Department to form a board to ascertain the candidate's fitness for the job. Accordingly, the secretary soon designated "a competent Board of Officers . . . for the examination of such candidates for admission into the Marine Corps." He charged the members to "examine each candidate to ascertain if his mental and moral qualifications are such as fit him for the duties of a Second Lieutenant." Welles mandated that the candidates would first be screened by a medical board that would certify their fitness, and then subjected to a battery of written and practical tests. Board members posed questions to gauge the level of education and mental capacity of prospective officers. This initiative represented a great step forward by thoroughly screening candidates before granting commissions, a reform only made possible by the requirements of the war. It also helped ensure that the positions vacated by the officers who "went South" were filled with competent junior leaders, although it was recognized that it would take some time for them to reach the same level of experience as the men they replaced.²⁴

Of equal importance, the Corps benefitted materially from a clearing of the log-jam of over-age and physically incapable officers that had long clogged the upper level of the organization and inhibited promoting of more capable officers. On 3 August 1861, Congress passed an "Act providing for the Better Organization of the Military Establishment" that mandated that all military officers with more than forty years active service or those incapable of active service by reason of poor health be placed on a

retired list. Officers not willing to retire under their own volition were to appear before a formal Retiring Board consisting of between five and nine officers, and including two medical officers. Within the Marine Corps, six officers had served for more than forty years and five of them were ordered to appear before the board: Lieutenant Colonels James Edelin and William Dulany, Majors Thomas English and Ward Marston, and Captain Abraham Brevoort. Although the number six might seem a small number, it represented every line major or above in the Marine Corps with the exception of Major Reynolds, who had only recently been promoted as a result of the death of Major Benjamin Macomber, then in his late sixties. Once these senior officers were identified, Welles then ordered the sixth Marine officer with over forty years service, Colonel Harris, to preside over their Retiring Board.²⁵

Harris' board convened on 7 November 1861 to examine the case of its first officer, Captain Brevoort. Brevoort had first entered the Marine Corps in 1820 and had held the rank of captain since 1833, almost thirty years. After a week of probing questions and thorough physical examinations, all conducted with the same icy procedural formality as a court martial, Brevoort decided to spare himself further embarrassment and instead to voluntarily retire, a request that was approved on 22 November. In the interim, having observed the fate in store for them, Edelin and English also submitted requests for transfer to the retired list. However, in the case of Dulany, despite his forty-four years of active service the medical officers pronounced him remarkably fit for his age and his excellent military record helped tip the scales in his favor. The board members decided to retain him on active duty.²⁶

The final candidate, Ward Marston, also proved successful, despite having a year earlier been relieved from his command at the Marine Barracks in Philadelphia by Harris himself. Marston, like Dulany, had passed the physical portion of the examination. He decided to defend himself during the competency phase and prepared exceedingly well for that task. In an ironic twist, when Harris testified against Marston, the embattled officer grilled Harris so thoroughly and efficiently that he confused and flustered the Commandant, leaving some who witnessed it wondering if Marston was not the more competent of the two. To Harris' dismay, the board pronounced Marston fit for active service by a narrow margin and ordered him to Marine Barracks, Portsmouth, New Hampshire. The board also examined the physical competency of two other officers and added one of them, First Lieutenant Charles Henderson, suffering at the time from terminal heart disease, to the retired list, creating a total of four officer vacancies.²⁷ Those four vacancies translated to the opportunity to bring in four new second lieutenants, and promote ten other officers accordingly.

In the flurry of promotions that followed, the Retiring Board helped to clear out some of the Corps' ossified upper ranks, providing younger, more physically capable officers with opportunities to hold positions of increased responsibility. These newer officers brought with them fresher ideas, increased knowledge of newer weapons, technology and tactics, and the physical ability to endure the hardships of field service. Concerning the latter point, some of the officers retired by the board had not served outside of the relatively sedentary environment of naval shore facilities for decades, and had little inclination to do field service in the future. Even Dulany, despite his being

certified as fit for active service, stubbornly resisted any attempt by Harris to send him to sea or any field assignment. In any event, because of the actions of the Retirement Board, several senior positions were filled with officers who could better endure the rigors of combat and lead their Marines by personal example. As a result, the Marine officer corps was to some extent revitalized.

However, a serious question remained: why did Secretary Welles exempt Harris from also appearing before the Retiring Board? By law Harris should also have been subjected to the same proceeding and inquiry as the other senior Marine officers were, and it would have given Welles the opportunity to select a new Commandant, possibly opening up all sorts of new approaches for deploying Marines. Yet Harris was not evaluated. Part of the answer may be that such a decision would have required Welles to arrange for senior officers from outside the Corps to preside over the board.²⁸ Arranging for officers from another service to sit in judgment of Marines and decide on questions of individual competence would probably have been an unpleasant and sensitive development for all concerned. Certainly, Welles had other pressing issues at the time. Furthermore, among the senior officers of the Corps, no single candidate to fill Harris' shoes was evident (as will be addressed in due course in the next chapter). In the end, Welles probably just decided that it was safer and easier to stick with Harris since at least he was a known quantity, despite his weaknesses.²⁹

Concerning Welles' relationship with Harris, it seems clear that Welles did not hold Harris' performance as Commandant in any high regard. In Welles' personal diary, he recorded his most open and intimate thoughts. Despite having *daily contact* with the

secretary, Harris appears in the diary only three times, and each of the occasions dealt with unpleasant circumstances. In the first instance, on 20 August 1862, Welles recorded that he had just “Sent a letter of reproof to Colonel Harris” and Lieutenant Colonel Reynolds, “between whom there is a bitter feud.” His frustration became apparent when Welles frankly remarked that “Almost all the elder officers are at loggerheads and should be retired.” On that day, Welles was highly dissatisfied with how Harris had handled a court-martial of Reynolds that split the loyalties of the Corps’ officers at a time when they should have been concentrating on fighting the war. Instead, on the same day that a Marine earned the service’s first Medal of Honor, one-third of the Corps’ officers were participating in the two-week public spectacle in Washington, D.C., that Reynolds’ trial had become. The farcical trial disgusted Welles, and his belief that “partisanship, not merit, governed the decision” of guilt, led the secretary to decide to refuse to approve the court’s decision. His great fear was that if he did nothing to stop similar actions, the Corps’ officers might “plunge into a series of courts martial for a year to come.”³⁰ The trial showcased to a public audience all the petty weaknesses of the upper ranks of the Corps, and Welles hoped his letters censuring the actions of the two protagonists might dissuade future outbreaks of unprofessional conduct.

Harris appeared in Welles’ diary a second time on 14 May 1864, when the secretary commented on having attending Harris’ funeral. Welles somberly observed that Harris’ “death gives embarrassment as to a successor. The higher class of marine officers are not the men who can elevate or give efficiency to the corps.” Based on his

experiences with the Corps' senior officers, he believed that "Every man who is over-slaughed [passed-over for promotion] and all his friends will be offended with me." Yet he also realized that "there is a duty to perform" in deciding who should replace Harris as Commandant. However, since Welles had essentially been directing the administration of the Corps for several years, he did not feel any need to rush the decision.³¹

Welles mentioned Harris in the diary for only a third time -- five months after the Commandant's death. On 10 October 1864, Welles described a meeting with President Lincoln concerning Harris' earlier mistaken authorization to pay recruits the same \$100 bounty as the Army. The secretary recalled his earlier disapproval of Harris' action, but admitted he wholly underestimated the scope of Harris' error. In July 1863 Welles had asked Harris when he had begun authorizing the \$100 bounty payments. "He said in June, and I supposed it was the preceding June and therefore covered but one month." However, he later learned "it commenced in June, 1862, and consequently covers thirteen, instead of one month, and that there are over eleven hundred or so enlisted" under the error. The grand scale of the mistake changed the situation entirely, since it covered about *one-third* of the total number of Marines in the Corps at that time! After discussing the ramifications of the situation with Lincoln, Welles curtly concluded: "He concurs with me and decides it is best to pay the bounty." Harris disappointed Welles even in death.³²

Concurrent with the Corps' manpower, leadership and administrative issues, the unit faced several significant logistical problems that also threatened to degrade its

overall performance in the war. At the outset of the war, the Marines possessed no single standard rifle. Instead, the unit held a wide variety of weapons, ranging from .69 caliber smoothbore and rifled bore muskets left over from the Mexican War to top-of-the-line .58 caliber Springfield rifles. The Marine Corps also owned a number of older converted muskets fitted with the Maynard priming system, wherein a roll of paper primers, vice metal percussion caps, was used to ignite the powder charge. Muskets equipped with this system, susceptible as it was to damp conditions that rendered the paper primer unusable, were useless to Marines stationed aboard ship.³³

Without a standard shoulder weapon, the task of logistically supporting (let alone training men to operate) such a wide variety of weapons was inefficient and burdensome. On more than one occasion the various commanders of Marine units had to be reminded to specify numbers, calibers and types of weapons when requisitioning supplies. With only a few thousand Marines, it should have been a simple task to provide the Corps with one standard weapon, yet that goal eluded Harris. To make matters worse, the Navy's Ordnance and Hydrography Bureau, also frustrated with the confusing number of weapons and types, threatened to cease providing ammunition for the Corps. The inability of the service to gain one standard shoulder weapon, preferably of a type that was accurate, dependable, and well-suited for duty at sea, indicates the low priority level the organization possessed within the Navy Department and the Ordnance and Hydrography Bureau. It also hinted of the service's status within the national military establishment, that at the same time when tens of thousands of new soldiers were being armed, some system to arm a service of less than 4000 total men could not be

devised. Some of the failure to gain better weapons support must be levied on Harris, since he failed to elevate the problem to a level of attention that might have resolved it. Evidently, bad as the situation was, Harris did not feel compelled to mention it in any of his wartime annual reports.³⁴ However, each of these problems might have been more easily resolved, and both the Corps' and the Navy Department's interests better served, by the simple expedient of having Marine representation within the Bureau of Ordnance. Such an arrangement could have been easily brought about within the department as a way of solving the many problems related to support for the Marine Corps.

Harris' solution to the ordnance issue provides yet another example of his priorities for the Corps. To Harris, the various ships' detachments came first. Therefore, he ensured that the ships' detachments were provided with the best weapons and equipment, and then filled orders for other units. When forced to decide among ships, those serving in active war zones were taken care of first before those with the Pacific or Africa Squadrons. This made good sense, yet when the various battalions were formed, also having a high expectation of combat service, those units were not accorded the same priority but were instead provided with whatever was left, often only days before embarking for their operations.³⁵ Although this problem was partly resolved in 1862, it showed for a time that the battalions did not have the same priority in the mind of Harris that the individual ships' detachments did.

Even before the Union's successful expedition to Cape Hatteras, developments were underway that might have had a profound impact on how the Marine Corps would be employed in the war. On 3 August 1861, Secretary Welles met with Captain Samuel

DuPont, then President of the Blockade Strategy Board, to discuss DuPont's selection to command a proposed naval expedition to seize a coastal area along the shores of South Carolina. Welles desired to use that area as a base to support the new South Atlantic Blockading Squadron being formed to prevent the South from gaining foreign goods, equipment, weapons and supplies. Welles granted DuPont the "full authority necessary" over the operation "to insure success." DuPont had given that type of mission much thought and believed that a battalion of Marines under his direct control was necessary to ensure success. He asked Welles to provide him with one.³⁶

Welles agreed to DuPont's condition and on 8 August ordered Harris to form a battalion of 300 Marines "for important operations on our coast." Welles also advised Harris that DuPont had asked specifically for Major Jacob Zeilen, recently the second in command of the battalion that served at Bull Run, to lead the unit. To that end, Harris notified Zeilen of the mission and requested that he begin planning for a tentative embarkation date of 1 October. In the interim, Harris, in a departure from the manner in which he fielded the previous Marine battalion, ordered his barracks commanders to provide their "best drilled men" for the job. He also used the occasion to push for arming the battalion with new .58 caliber Springfield rifled muskets, one of the finest shoulder weapons available at the time. And, in a move displaying the level of support the Marines had from the Navy Department, Secretary Welles provided the unit with its own surgeon, a significant move with surgeons in such demand at that time.³⁷ Unlike the rushed Bull Run unit, Harris and the Navy Department invested the time and resources to see that this unit possessed everything it needed to succeed.

However, things did not proceed as smoothly as Harris desired. Zeilen, still recovering from wounds received at Bull Run, was not yet fit enough to command the battalion. Harris then assigned Reynolds, as his only available and capable field grade officer, to that duty. And, concerned that so many of the junior officers lacked experience, Harris also decided to assign his Adjutant and Inspector, Major Augustus Nicholson, as Reynolds' second in command, a move that again revealed the fragility of relations between the Corps' senior officers. Nicholson took the assignment as an affront to his perceived seniority as a staff officer and a personal "injury which I feel has been unintentionally put on me." Incredibly, Nicholson, who had previously served under Reynolds at Bull Run without incident, now argued that he received his promotion to major twenty four days before Reynolds and should therefore not fall under a more junior officer. Tellingly, he did not offer to replace Reynolds as the commander of the battalion: he just did not want to go. Nicholson went straight to Welles in protest, further aggravating Harris. In return, Harris felt compelled to advise Welles that Reynolds had held a brevet major's rank when "Nicholson held that of a second lieutenant but six months." Harris fully expected Welles to back him and issue Nicholson "due reprimand," yet the exasperated Welles, no doubt irked from having to deal with the incessant bickering that continued to issue from the Corps' senior officers, instead simply ordered Nicholson's transfer rescinded.³⁸ The incident provided Welles with just one more example of the nonstop squabbling among the senior Marine officers.

On the morning of 15 October 1861, Reynolds embarked his battalion on board the USS *Pawnee*, part of a fleet of more than fifty warships, transports and support

vessels. Also joining the expedition were 12,000 soldiers under the command of Brigadier General Thomas W. Sherman, a volunteer officer. Each commander's orders reminded them of the president's expectation of "the most cordial and effective cooperation" between them. Strangely, the orders also reminded each commander that "no officer of the Army or Navy, whatever may be his rank, can assume any direct command, independent of consent, over an officer of the other service, excepting only when land forces are expressly embarked in vessels of war to do the duty of marines." This had the effect of telling them to play well together, but that they were not bound to comply with what the other wanted. The arrangement would prove a far cry from having unity of command in a joint environment.³⁹

Presciently, as early as 26 July 1861, before he had even been selected to lead the naval force, DuPont had already expressed concern over Sherman as the Army's choice for commander of the landing force. In a letter to his wife, DuPont observed that "I hear [Sherman] is a very superior military man," but added that "I learn he is ugly-tempered and morose – bad, this, for a naval cooperation where the two branches are apt to come in collision." Nonetheless, DuPont hoped to make the relationship work.⁴⁰

The Marine battalion experienced bad luck from the start. No sooner had the Marines embarked on the *Pawnee* at the Washington Navy Yard than Welles ordered them to disembark and load instead on a lighter draft steamboat, the *Mount Vernon*, over concerns that the deeper draft *Pawnee* might be forced to navigate too close to Confederate batteries while transiting down the Potomac River. Once at Fort Monroe, the Marines moved back onto the *Pawnee*, but concern soon grew that the ship was

overcrowded. It seemed that little real preparation had been made for accommodating the Marines, who were simply grouped in the open on the main deck, exposed to the elements with no provision for sleep or mess. At that late stage in the operation, just prior to movement to the objective area, there were but two choices: redistribute the battalion throughout the fleet, with consequent loss of cohesion and control; or keep it intact aboard one ship that could accommodate them. After some debate, DuPont decided to keep the battalion together and chartered a civilian steamer, the *Governor*, which had just discharged its cargo at Fort Monroe. Reynolds' men and equipment were soon transferred to it. The *Governor* would prove a fateful choice.⁴¹

On 29 October the fleet departed Hampton Roads for the open seas. On the morning of 1 November, the ships were buffeted by a sudden gale that scattered the fleet before it. For several hours the *Governor*, its captain drunk and insensible, rode out the ever-increasing swells that began to cause damage to the ship. With no one in authority, John Weidman, a passenger on the ship, assumed command from the intoxicated captain and attempted to restore order among the crew, who he described as "very, very worthless." At about 4:00 PM, having suddenly been struck hard by a series of large waves, the port side hog brace broke in two places, followed quickly by the failure of the other port braces. The ship shuddered and groaned, and soon afterward lost its smokestack. Then a steam pipe broke, forcing the ship to reduce speed. Things did not look good. Throughout the rough night the Marines fired off the ship's signal rockets, hoping to attract assistance, then fired musket volleys when the rockets ran out. At about 3:00 AM, the belabored engine quit altogether and the *Governor* was kept afloat

only through the herculean efforts of about one hundred Marines manning the pumps and buckets in shifts. With the situation growing grim, the USS *Sabine* came to the aid of the sinking ship and began taking on personnel. Heavy seas aggravated the transfer of men, but the *Sabine* was able to rescue most of the crew and embarked Marines, along with the majority of their weapons and equipment before the *Governor* sank. All told, seven Marines lost their lives in the mishap and the battalion missed its opportunity to participate in DuPont's invasion of South Carolina.⁴²

However, other Marines played an important role in DuPont's seizing of Port Royal. In the wake of the storm, DuPont mustered as many of his ships as he could contact, and converged his fleet off Charleston harbor. By the morning of 4 November DuPont counted twenty-five vessels at anchor, and viewed several others inbound. That afternoon DuPont dispatched his shallower draft vessels toward Port Royal, and just before dark some of his gunboats opened fire on several Confederate steamers, driving them back to the safety of their shore batteries. The following morning, 5 November, several of DuPont's warships conducted a reconnaissance in force to draw fire from the enemy batteries, so that those locations could be accurately plotted by the invasion fleet. And in the absence of his Marine battalion, DuPont fashioned a reserve force from the *Wabash*'s Marine detachment and some sailors, to employ as might be needed. His preparations complete, DuPont nonetheless decided to postpone his assault until the morning of 7 November because of impending signs of bad weather.⁴³

The attack commenced at 9:23 AM with a four-hour bombardment of the Confederate batteries located at Forts Walker and Beauregard by Union warships firing

from ranges of 800 to 600 yards (see Figure 6-3). The ships fired on the move as they maneuvered through an elliptical course, further refining the gunnery tactics first practiced at Cape Hatteras just two months before. The moving bombardment of the forts worked: from the deck of the *Wabash*, Lieutenant Barnes recorded that “The air over the fort was filled with clouds of sand, splinters, and fragments of gun carriages and timbers, caused by the bursting of the ten-, nine-, eight-, and eleven-inch shells, poured in at a rate of about 60 a minute. Human nature could not bear up under such a fire.” By about 2:00 PM, observers reported that Fort Walker appeared deserted, and DuPont immediately ordered his reserve landing party to occupy the position. Quickly rowing ashore, the sailors and Marines moved into the fort and rapidly established a defense to repel any Confederate attempts to retake it. Meanwhile, DuPont ordered up one of the Army transports, and by 5:45 PM transferred responsibility for the defense of Fort Walker to one of Sherman’s brigade commanders, Brigadier General Horatio G. Wright. The *Wabash*’s Marines remained at the fort until the Army was fully established, then returned to their ship. Part of South Carolina had been restored to Union control.⁴⁴

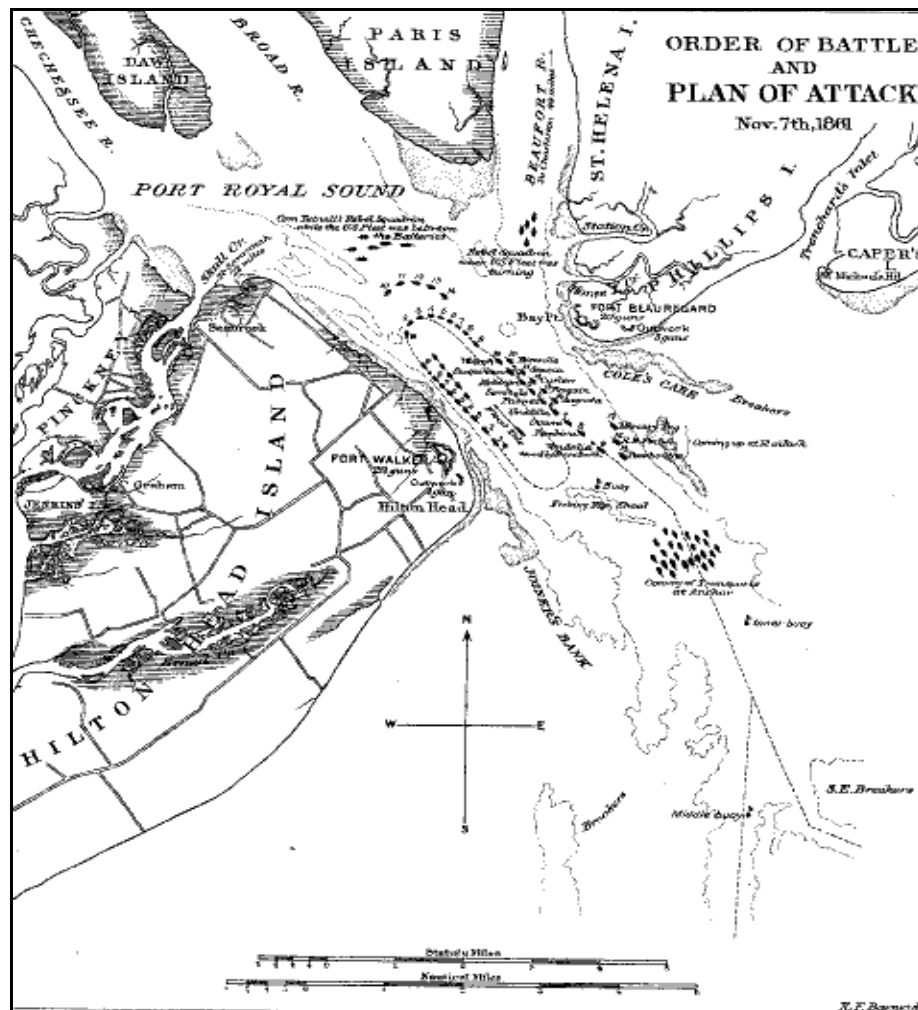


Figure 6-3. DuPont's Seizure of Port Royal, South Carolina.⁴⁵

Before sunset of that same day, a Union vessel made a close pass by Fort Beauregard on Bay Point, seeing that it too might be abandoned. At dawn the next morning, Navy Lieutenant Daniel Ammen, commander of the gunboat *Seneca*, took a party ashore and verified that defenders had evacuated the post. Ammen then hoisted the Stars and Stripes on the fort's flagpole and DuPont called in another Army transport. By noon, DuPont had transferred the responsibility for the fort to Brigadier General Isaac I. Stevens. Later that afternoon, Reynolds' Marine battalion arrived off Port Royal

and was also landed at Bay Point, where it assisted in the occupation duties of that area for several months.⁴⁶

The combined effects of the gale, the delay in getting to Port Royal, and the complete evacuation of the Confederate forts by their defenders relegated the contribution of Reynolds' battalion to a minor support role. Thus for the Marine Corps, the potential of having a specially trained Marine battalion employed in an amphibious operation remained unrealized. DuPont also felt that frustration, writing only that "The *Sabine* has brought the marines; they have been nothing but trouble to me." He later softened that stance, even praising the Marines for the moral courage they showed when their ship sank, yet his disappointment at not being able to commit them as planned remained. But to Reynolds' credit, he drilled his unit repeatedly and prepared them for whatever future challenges DuPont might have for them. That fact was not lost on his men, and one memorialized their stay in Bay Point in verse: "Our commander's name was Reynolds; On that you may depend; And out of eleven hours; It's he will drill you ten."⁴⁷

Reynolds' battalion remained in Bay Point for more than three-and-a-half months, training, drilling, and assisting Sherman's men in occupation duties. In the meantime, DuPont made plans to seize another area further south. To the great joy of the Marines, the unit embarked on 23 February 1862 aboard the steam transport ship *McClellan* for movement to DuPont's next objective, a series of Confederate fortifications and the former Federal Fort Clinch, located on Amelia and Cumberland Islands, near the Georgia and Florida border. On the morning of 2 March, Reynolds'

Marines landed at the southern tip of Cumberland Island and quickly occupied the deserted fortifications. The day before DuPont's force landed the Confederates had abandoned most of their positions in the area, so the Marines faced little resistance as they moved from one objective to another. As DuPont described it, "We captured Port Royal, but Fernandina and Fort Clinch have been given to us." Again, the Corps missed an opportunity to showcase the battalion's capabilities, due to no fault of its own.⁴⁸

Not wanting to tie his Marines down with occupation duties he thought were best suited for the Army, Admiral DuPont arranged for Reynolds' Marines to be sent back to Bay Point on 8 March. But a week later he recalled the battalion to St. Augustine, Florida, when that city appeared to be threatened by the appearance of about 400 Confederate guerrillas. DuPont wanted the Marines to occupy and guard St. Augustine (and possibly Jacksonville) from the threat, but Brigadier General Sherman had different ideas. On 19 March, Sherman visited DuPont on the *Wabash*, and the admiral knew that the general was disturbed when he uttered his first comment: "Well, Commodore, you have taken the whole coast." According to DuPont, "I saw further he was particularly disappointed at our having captured St. Augustine, and at my sending for the marines to hold it." DuPont believed Sherman had little interest in fighting, yet wanted to share in the glory of the success. His correspondence expressed little confidence in the fighting abilities of Sherman or his men. "Poor General, he flies about like a shuttlecock, imagining great things about Savannah or Charleston, and if he attempts either with his present force he will be whipped so thoroughly that I doubt if there will be a man of them to pick up by the gunboats." DuPont began to be concerned that Sherman would

protest every attempt to employ the Marine battalion out of some belief that it might overshadow the actions of his own soldiers. If that proved to be the case and continued, Dupont declared “I will send the battalion home; they are too well-trained men to be lost out here any longer.” The cooperation between the commanders seemed at an end. In particular, the naval element of the expedition easily controlled all of the area’s considerable waterways, but the Army did not adequately control the shore. Frustrated, DuPont knew that his Marine battalion gave him the capability of controlling events both afloat and ashore, and he angrily predicted “I could not only take St. Augustine – of course, without asking him if I please – but hold it too.”⁴⁹

Two days before the Marines were to land in St. Augustine, DuPont discovered that Sherman had already ordered a lieutenant colonel and two companies of soldiers there. Sherman knew that the presence of the higher ranking officer would preempt DuPont’s desire to employ the Marines because it would give Sherman superior authority over Reynolds and the battalion. The petty nature of the move caused DuPont to remark it was “the most unhandsome thing he has done.” It signaled to DuPont that Sherman would continue to pursue every means of protesting or blocking his every effort to use the battalion in support of DuPont’s own plans. And if DuPont could not employ his Marines as he saw fit, neither would Sherman. The admiral reluctantly decided to “send the battalion home now – it is idle to attempt to fit it in anywhere and they are a fine body of well-drilled and disciplined troops and should be employed.” Accordingly, Reynolds’ battalion departed on the 26th for Washington, D.C. However, the tactical situation along the St. Johns River soon changed for the worse, indicating

that DuPont's decision to send the Marines back was hasty and probably done out of spite. Of course, DuPont probably also assumed that if he sent Reynolds' unit back to Washington that it would be kept intact and made ready for the next similar task, but that did not happen.⁵⁰

Reynolds' battalion arrived at the Washington Navy Yard on 31 March 1862, and promptly landed in a firestorm of controversy. On Reynolds' arrival, Commandant Harris relieved him of his command and informed him that he would face formal charges of being drunk on duty and insubordination, the latter charge stemming from an intemperate letter Reynolds had written to Harris while still stationed at Bay Point, South Carolina. In a fit of anger, Reynolds had corresponded with Harris regarding some rumors and allegations that his wife told him were circulating around the Headquarters while he was deployed with the battalion. Harris took some of the statements as a personal attack and therefore proffered charges.⁵¹

Meanwhile, true to his outdated priorities, Harris parsed out the rigorously trained and now highly disciplined battalion to fill the many open billets in ships' detachments and barracks throughout the Corps. With the impending court martial of the unit's commander absorbing all the attention, little effort was taken to extract and capture all of the lessons learned from the months of experience as the Marine Corps' first specially formed amphibious battalion. Although many of the participants would, from time to time, come together to perform similar tasks, the naval services missed another opportunity to build on what had already been accomplished. Coincidentally, two major amphibious expeditions were underway at the same time the battalion was

being dissolved: the seizure of New Orleans and the Peninsula Campaign with its drive up the James River. In addition, the naval services were also establishing a presence at Cairo, Illinois, to wrest control of the Mississippi River from the Confederates. The battalion would have benefitted any of those efforts, but that was not to be. It would be more than a year before a similar unit would be formed.⁵²

Winfield Scott's "Anaconda Plan" became the basis for Union strategy in the Civil War. A critical element of that plan involved the imposition of a blockade on Southern ports to prevent the export of cotton or import of goods that could support the Confederate war effort, and involved the closing of port cities by force. These tasks required an increased amphibious capability within the Union military establishment.⁵³ Yet from the first application of amphibious force, the Marine Corps missed the opportunity to step forward and assume its logical role in that type of operation. Indeed, the Corps' leaders made no effort either to advertise their unit's existing capabilities or to propose ways that the unit might better support the increased requirements as dictated by the national strategy. By not shaping its own role in the war effort the Marine Corps was swept aside by the Army, which simply assumed the role that had been executed by Marines for decades.

Tellingly, the impetus for employing the Marine battalion in the Port Royal expedition came not from within the Marine Corps, but from Admiral DuPont. DuPont viewed such a unit as a natural extension of the same role that Marines had served in for decades during countless landing parties, where the Marines provided combat power ashore in the accomplishment of a primarily naval mission. The major difference

between past landing party operations and those envisioned by DuPont was the scale of the mission; greater sized missions would require correspondingly larger landing parties.

Yet Harris only provided battalions when he was specifically tasked to do so by the Navy Secretary. Evidently he viewed the creation and fielding of battalions not as a positive development that highlighted the importance and relevance of Marines in those operations. Instead, he saw it as a distraction that diluted his manpower and strength, keeping him from his traditional, but less strategic mission of providing small detachments for a large number of vessels. An imaginative leader would have created and volunteered such a specialized battalion as a natural extension of the detachment or *ad hoc* battalion, and then employed any success they achieved as leverage to gain greater structure and support. But Harris was far from being either visionary or bold.

Marine leaders proved equally unimaginative in adapting to the increased demands of the war to ensure that the Corps could fill gaps in its increased structure. For decades the Marine recruiting effort had been criticized as producing marginal results in terms of both the quantity and quality of persons enlisted. Yet when the war brought the requirement for large numbers of men, little change was made to improve how that task was performed. Although some of the reasons that the Marine Corps was not as competitive as the Army in recruiting were outside the service's control, it nonetheless responded too sluggishly to the challenge in ways that might have produced better results. Instead, it continued to pursue recruits in the same inefficient and unimaginative manner that it did before the war, reaping the same, predictably poor

results. The fact remains that the Marine Corps did not even do half as well at recruiting as the Navy, with which it shared many of the same disadvantages.

Part of the problem with recruiting was systemic and reflected a failure in the Corps' leadership at the highest level. From the outset of the war, the Marine Corps had participated heroically in several engagements, yet most of those experiences went unreported by Harris and were consequently little noticed by the public at large. Some actions, like that of Reynolds' battalion at Bull Run, or the Marines' role in the loss of the Navy Yards at Pensacola and Norfolk, probably went unheralded because they resulted in defeats. But there were many other examples where Marines had fought valiantly and performed well yet were largely unknown even within the Marine Corps itself. For his part, the Commandant failed to mention the many achievements of his own men, not realizing that by bringing their exploits to the public's notice people would gain an appreciation for the job they did.⁵⁴ Perhaps Harris simply did not believe it was part of his duty, or his role as Commandant to publicize the service, but if he did not, who would? As a result, Marines remained a small, nearly anonymous group, their few numbers operating within a larger group of sailors led by Navy officers, with few outside those closely associated with them understanding what they did and how well they did it. Yet by not informing the public at large on the roles of Marines and how they contributed to the war effort, Harris made it doubly hard for the recruiters to do their job, or Congress and the public to appreciate their service.

Endnotes

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- ¹ U.S. Navy Department, *Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of the Rebellion*, 30 volumes and index (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1894-1922), Series I, 6: 119-24 (hereafter referred to as *ORN*, and all citations are to Series I, unless otherwise noted); U.S. War Dept., *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, 128 vols. and atlas (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1880-1901), Series I, 4: 573-74, 579-86, 592-94 (hereafter cited as *OR*, and all citations are to Series I, unless otherwise noted), quote from 580; Navy Dept., “Report of the Secretary of the Navy, 1861,” *U.S. Serial Set* 1119, Sess. vol. 3, 37th Cong., 2nd Sess., Senate Executive Document 1, Pt. 3 (hereafter “SecNav Annual Report, 1861”), 7, 46-47.
- ² *OR*, 4: 582, 585-86, 589-90; *ORN*, 6: 121, 125-27, 134-35, 138-40; “SecNav Annual Report, 1861,” 7, 46-47; Letter, Daniel O’Connor to “Dear Timothy,” USS *Cumberland*, 7 September 1861, Daniel O’Connor Papers, copy in Archives and Special Collections, Alfred M. Gray Research Library (hereafter GRC), Quantico, Va., quotes from text.
- ³ Adapted from a sketch in *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, 7 September 1861, 271.
- ⁴ *OR*, 4: 582, 585-86, 589-90; *ORN*, 6: 121, 125-27, 134-35, 138-40; “SecNav Annual Report, 1861,” 7, 46-47; O’Connor to “Dear Timothy,” USS *Cumberland*, 7 September 1861, copy in Daniel O’Connor Papers, Archives and Special Collections, GRC, Quantico, Va.
- ⁵ David Dixon Porter, *Naval History of the Civil War* ([1886]; reprinted, Minneola, N.Y.: Dover Publications, 1998), 44-47, quote from 46; William R. Trotter, *Ironclads and Columbiads: The Civil War in North Carolina, The Coast* (Winston-Salem, N.C.: John F. Blair, Publisher, 1989), 38-41.
- ⁶ As described in 2010, the principle of unity of command dictates that “all forces operate under a single [commander] with the requisite authority to direct all forces employed in pursuit of a common purpose.” See the discussion of the subject in Joint Pub 3-0, *Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 2009), I-1-I-5, IV-1, quote from IV-1, available on the Internet at: http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/new_pubs/jp3_0/, last accessed on 20 May 2010.
- ⁷ For details regarding the actions against the Chinese Forts, see Bernard C. Nalty, *The Barrier Forts: A Battle, a Monument, and a Mythical Marine* (Marine Corps

Historical Reference Series, No. 6) (Washington: Historical Branch, G-3 Division, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, 1962). In Rowena Reed, *Combined Operations in the Civil War* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1978), 15-18, the author peripherally addresses the point that at Hatteras, in addition to experiencing other significant problems in the planning and executing of the action, “the ‘cooperating’ troops proved more of a handicap than an asset, except for the interdicting fire of the boat howitzers, which could have been managed by a handful of Marines” (16). As a note, Reed employs the term “combined operation” in the manner widely used during the Civil War to describe what are more properly termed joint operations today in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. For a discussion of the Army’s creation of its own amphibious-type units, see this and succeeding chapters, and works on the Mississippi Marine Brigade as covered in Chester G. Hearn, *Ellet’s Brigade: The Strangest Outfit of All* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2000).

- ⁸ See *OR*, 6: 162-63; Bern Anderson, *By Sea and by River: The Naval History of the Civil War* ([1962], reprinted, New York: Da Capo Press, 1962), 51-52; Kevin J. Weddle, *Lincoln’s Tragic Admiral: The Life of Samuel Francis Du Pont* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press), 126-27.
- ⁹ Flag-Officer Silas H. Stringham to Navy Secretary Gideon Welles, U.S. Flagship *Minnesota*, New York Harbor, 2 September 1861, reprinted in “SecNav Annual Report, 1861,” 46-48, also 51 of same report.
- ¹⁰ For assessments of the military career of Benjamin Butler, see: *OR*, 34, pt. 3: 332-33; Chester G. Hearn, *When the Devil Came Down to Dixie: Ben Butler in New Orleans* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press), 1997, 5; James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: the Civil War Era* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 328-29, 820; David K. Work, *Lincoln’s Political Generals* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009), 45-46, 230; and other characterizations. William H. Cartter to “Dear Mother,” USS *Minnesota*, 13 September 1861, Cartter Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
- ¹¹ John D. Hayes and Lillian O’Brien, eds., “The Early Blockade and the Capture of the Hatteras Forts, From the Journal of John Sanford Barnes, July 19 to September 1, 1861,” *New York Historical Society Quarterly* 46 (January 1962), 78-85, quote from 84-85.
- ¹² See the discussion of Marine participation in landing party operations in Chapter 3.
- ¹³ Welles to Samuel F. DuPont, A. D. Bache, Charles H. Davis, and John G. Barnard, 27 June 1861, Record Group (hereafter RG) 45 (Naval Records Collection of the

Office of Naval Records and Library), Confidential Letter Book of the Secretary of the Navy, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C. (hereafter NA); Weddle, *Lincoln's Tragic Admiral*, 106-24; "SecNav Annual Report, 1861," 515-16.

- ¹⁴ Congress, "An Act for the Better Organization of the Marine Corps," 37th Cong., 1st Sess., *Statutes at Large, 1789-1875*, 12: 275; Welles to Colonel Commandant John Harris, Navy Dept., Washington, D.C., 22 April 1861, 30 May and 22 November 1861, RG 80 (General Records of the Dept. of the Navy, Records of the Office of the Secretary of the Navy), Entry 1 (Letters to the Commandant and Other Officers of the Marine Corps) (hereafter "Letters Sent"), NA; Welles to "President of the United States," Navy Dept., Washington, D.C., 20 November 1861, RG 127 (Field Organization Records, Records of the United States Marine Corps), "Letters Received – HD," NA; Harris to Welles, Headquarters, Marine Corps (HQMC), Washington, D.C., 18 November 1861, RG 80, Entry 14 (Letters From the Commandant and Other Officers of the Marine Corps, January 1828 - December 1886) (hereafter "Letters Received"), NA; "SecNav Annual Report, 1861," 519.
- ¹⁵ Compiled from: Congress, "An Act for the Better Organization of the Marine Corps," 37th Cong., 1st Sess., *Statutes at Large*, 12: 275.
- ¹⁶ Navy Dept., "Report of the Secretary of the Navy, 1862," 1 December 1862, *Serial Set* 1158, Sess. vol. 3, 37th Cong., 3rd Sess., H. Exec. Doc. 1, Pt. 3 (hereafter "SecNav Annual Report, 1862"), quote from 902.
- ¹⁷ Jeffery T. Ryan, "On Land and Sea" (Ph.D. dissertation, Temple University, 1997), 141-42.
- ¹⁸ Allan R. Millett, *Semper Fidelis: The History of the United States Marine Corps*, ([1980]; rev. and exp. ed., New York: Free Press, 1991), 88, 92-93; Navy Dept., "Secretary of the Navy Annual Report, 1857," 8 December 1857, *Serial Set* 944, Sess. vol. 2, 35th Cong., 1st Sess., H. Exec. Doc. 2, Pt. 3 (hereafter "SecNav Annual Report, 1857"), 584; Harris to L. V. Pierce, Esq., HQMC, Washington, D.C., 14 September 1861, RG 127, Entry 4: "Letters Sent," NA; Charles Oscar Paullin, *Paullin's History of Naval Administration, 1775-1911* (Annapolis: Naval Institute, 1968), 303.
- ¹⁹ Admiral David Dixon Porter to Assistant Secretary of the Navy Gustavus Vasa Fox, Arkansas River, 16 January 1863, reprinted in Gustavus Vasa Fox, *Confidential Correspondence of Gustavus Vasa Fox: Assistant Secretary of the Navy, 1861-1865*, Robert Means Thompson and Richard Wainwright, eds., 2 vols. (New York: Naval History Society, 1918-19), 2: 151-55, quotes from text; Ari

Hogenboom, *Gustavus Vasa Fox of the Union Navy* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), 199; Millett, *Semper Fidelis*, 374-75.

- ²⁰ Ryan, "On Land and Sea," 143-48; Millett, *Semper Fidelis*, 93, Paullin, *Naval Administration*, 303.
- ²¹ Ryan, "On Land and Sea," 143-48; Millett, *Semper Fidelis*, 93; Porter to Harris, Cairo, Illinois, 14 November 1863, RG 127, Entry 42 (Letters Received, 1818 – 1915) (hereafter "Letters Received"), NA, quote from text.
- ²² Ryan, "On Land and Sea," 143-48, quote from 144; *Philadelphia* [Pa.] *Inquirer*, 3 October 1863, 6; [Philadelphia, Pa.] *Press*, 1 April 1864, 3; *Daily Evening Bulletin* [Philadelphia, Pa.], 23 April 1864, 5; RG 127, "Correspondence Files," "Records of the Quartermaster's Dept.," "Letters Sent, October 1857-April 1860, August 1860-January 1863," and "Letters Received, 1861-1872," NA; Harris to Captain Matthew R. Kintzing, HQMC, Washington, D.C., 7 June 1862 and 21 July 1863, RG 127, Entry 4: "Letters Sent, 1798-1884," NA; Harris to Major Ward Marston, HQMC, Washington, D.C., 19 June 1862, RG 127, Entry 4: "Letters Sent, 1798-1884," NA; Colonel Jacob Zeilen to Kintzing, HQMC, Washington, D.C., 24 August 1864, RG 127, Entry 4: "Letters Sent, 1798-1884," NA; Zeilen to Orderly Sergeant E. A. Clark, HQMC, Washington, D.C., 17 October 1864, RG 127, Entry 4: "Letters Sent, 1798-1884," NA; Gideon Welles, "Diary of Gideon Welles," Entry for 10 October 1864, reprinted in *Diary of Gideon Welles, Secretary of the Navy Under Lincoln and Johnson*, 3 vols., Welles, Edgar Thaddeus, ed. (Boston, Ma.: Houghton, Mifflin & Co., 1911) (hereafter Welles, *Diary* [1911]), 2: 174.
- ²³ Harris to Kintzing, HQMC, Washington, D.C., 3 November 1862, RG 127, Entry 4: "Letters Sent, 1798-1884," NA; Harris to Captain Lucien L. Dawson, HQMC, Washington, D.C., 15 July 1863, RG 127, Entry 4: "Letters Sent, 1798-1884," NA, first quote from text; Harris to Captain James Lewis, HQMC, Washington, D.C., 1 December 1863, RG 127, Entry 4: "Letters Sent, 1798-1884," NA; Lewis to Harris, Philadelphia, Pa., 21 December 1863, RG 127, Entry 42: "Letters Received, 1818-1915" (hereafter "Letters Received"), NA; Kintzing to Harris, Cairo, Ill., 27 January 1864, RG 127, Entry 42: "Letters Received," NA; Ryan, "On Land and Sea," 148-51, second quote from 150.
- ²⁴ Congress, "An Act for the Better Organization of the Marine Corps," *Statutes at Large*, 12: 275; Welles to Harris, Navy Dept., Washington, D.C., 15 August 1861, RG 80, Entry 1: "Letters Sent," NA, quotes from text. For a detailed summary of the selection process, see David M. Sullivan, *The United States Marine Corps in the Civil War – The First Year* (Shippensburg, Pa.: White Mane Publishing Company, 1997), 157-63.

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- ²⁵ Congress, “An Act providing for the Better Organization of the Military Establishment,” 37th Cong., 1st Sess., *Statutes at Large*, 12: 287-91; Welles to Harris, Navy Dept., Washington, D.C.: 2 November 1861, RG 80, Entry 1: “Letters Sent,” NA; Edward William Callahan, ed., *List of Officers of the Navy of the United States and of the Marine Corps from 1775 to 1900*, Compiled from the Official Records of the Navy Dept. (New York: Haskell House Publishers, 1969), (hereafter *List of Officers of Navy and Marine Corps*), 691.
- ²⁶ See the Case Files of Abraham N. Brevoort, William Dulany, Ward Marston, Charles Henderson, and John L. Broome, RG 125 (Records of the Office of the Judge Advocate General [Navy]), Entry 57 (Records of the Proceedings of Marine Retiring Boards) (hereafter “Marine Retiring Boards”), Volume 1, NA; Callahan, *List of Officers of Navy and Marine Corps*, 681.
- ²⁷ Case File of Ward Marston, RG 125, Entry 57: “Records of the Proceedings of Marine Retiring Boards,” vol.1, NA; Welles to Marston, Navy Dept., Washington, D.C., 6 December 1861, RG 127, Entry 4: “Letters Sent, 1798 - 1884,” NA; Case Files of Charles Henderson, and John L. Broome, RG 125, Entry 57: “Records of the Proceedings of Marine Retiring Boards,” vol.1, NA; John L. Broome Papers, GRC, Quantico, Va. Marston had long been a thorn in the sides of Welles and Harris, having launched an almost weekly letter writing campaign protesting his relief from command. Marston even included President Lincoln in his correspondence, and the secretary’s files are filled with samples of Marston’s letters and Welles’ responses. Harris would likely have felt vindicated in his judgment of Marston had he known that the officer would be court-martialed and dismissed in disgrace in 1865 for the charges of swindling over \$8000 dollars of his Marines’ bounty money that had been entrusted to his care in the intervening years. See Ryan, “On Sea and Land,” 153-54, for a complete description of Marston’s troubles.
- ²⁸ Section 15 of Congress, “An Act providing for the Better Organization of the Military Establishment,” *Statutes at Large*, 12: 287-91, states “that any commissioned officer of the army, or of the marine corps, who shall have served as such for forty consecutive years, may . . . be placed upon the list of retired officers.” Those officers over forty years in service who did not voluntarily retire were to appear before a board as described in section 17 of the law, “to determine the facts as to the nature and occasion of the disability.” And if the board found an officer “incapacitated for active service, will report whether, in its judgment, the said incapacity result[ed]” from age or infirmity.
- ²⁹ No contemporary source, not even Welles’ detailed *Diary*, revealed why the secretary did not put Harris before the Retiring Board.

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- ³⁰ Welles, *Diary* [1911], 1: 89, quotes from same; Joseph Alexander, "John Harris," in *Commandants of the Marine Corps*, Allan Millett and Jack Shulimson, eds. (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2004), 81-82.
- ³¹ Welles, *Diary* [1911], 2: 31, 47, quotes from 31.
- ³² Welles, *Diary* [1911], 2: 174, quotes from text.
- ³³ Harris to Colonel Henry Knox Craig, HQMC, Washington, D.C., 20 April 1859 and 7 April 1860, RG 127, Entry 4: "Letters Sent, 1798-1884," NA; Harris to Navy Secretary Isaac Toucey, HQMC, Washington, D.C., 26 April 1861, RG 127, Entry 4: "Letters Sent, 1798-1884," NA. As an aside, these were the rifles issued to Reynolds' Marines for use at Bull Run.
- ³⁴ Harris to various Marine commanders, HQMC, Washington, D.C., 19 July 1861, RG 127, Entry 4: "Letters Sent, 1798-1884," NA; Captain Duncan N. Ingraham to Harris, Bureau of Ordnance and Hydrography, 2 May 1860, RG 127, Entry 42: "Letters Received," NA; "SecNav Annual Report, 1861," 515-16; "SecNav Annual Report, 1862," 902; Ryan, "On Land and Sea," 59-61.
- ³⁵ Harris to Lieutenant Colonel James Edelin, HQMC, Washington, D.C., 4 September 1861, RG 127, Entry 4: "Letters Sent, 1798-1884," NA; Major William B. Slack to Major John Reynolds, HQMC, Washington, D.C., 16 May 1861, RG 127, "Letters From the Quartermaster of the Corps," NA; Reynolds to Harris, Marine Barracks, Washington, D.C., 24 July 1861, RG 80, Entry 14: "Letters Received," NA; "SecNav Annual Report, 1861," 37, 515.
- ³⁶ *ORN*, 12: 201-209, quote from 207; Harris to Major Jacob Zeilen, HQMC, Washington, D.C., 9 August 1861, RG 127, Entry 4: "Letters Sent, 1798-1884," NA; Harris to Reynolds, HQMC, Washington, D.C., 15 February 1862, RG 127, Entry 4: "Letters Sent, 1798-1884," NA.
- ³⁷ *ORN*, 12: 209; Harris to Zeilen, HQMC, Washington, D.C., 9 August 1861, RG 127, Entry 4: "Letters Sent, 1798-1884," NA, first quote from text; Welles to Harris, Navy Dept., Washington, D.C., 19 September 1861, RG 80, Entry 1, NA; Harris to Welles, HQMC, Washington, D.C.: 23 September 1861, RG 80, Entry 14: "Letters Received," NA; Harris to Edelin, HQMC, Washington, D.C., 24 September 1861, RG 127, Entry 4: "Letters Sent, 1798-1884," NA, second quote from text; Harris to Reynolds, HQMC, Washington, D.C., 15 February 1862, RG 127, Entry 4: "Letters Sent, 1798-1884," NA; Welles to War Secretary Simon Cameron, Navy Dept., Washington, D.C., reprinted in *ORN*, 12: 210; Assistant

Surgeon David F. Ricketts to Reynolds, Marine Battalion, Bay Point [S.C.], 20 November 1861, RG 127, "Letters Received by the Adjutant and Inspector," NA.

- ³⁸ Nicholson to Welles, Adjutant and Inspector, Washington, D.C., 3 October 1861, RG 80, Entry 14: "Letters Received," NA, first quote from text; Harris to Welles, HQMC, Washington, D.C., 3 October 1861, RG 80, Entry 14: "Letters Received," NA, second and third quotes from text; Harris to Nicholson, HQMC, Washington, D.C., 7 October 1861, RG 127, Entry 4: "Letters Sent, 1789-1884," NA.
- ³⁹ Telegram, Welles to Harris, Navy Dept., Washington, D.C., 8:42 AM, 15 October 1861, RG 127, "Letters Received – HD," NA, also reprinted in *ORN*, 12: 217; *ORN*, 12: 214-15, quotes from 215; Sherman's orders may be found at *ORN*, 12: 220. See also President Abraham Lincoln's guidance at *ORN*, 6: 293. Thomas W. Sherman should not be confused with his more famous namesake, William T. Sherman; although many contemporaries referred to Thomas as "the other Sherman."
- ⁴⁰ Samuel F. DuPont to "My Dear Sophie," Navy Dept., Washington, D.C., 26 July 1861, reprinted in Samuel DuPont, *Samuel Francis DuPont: A Selection From his Civil War Letters*, 3 vols., John D. Hayes, ed. (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1969), 1: 112-15, quotes from 113.
- ⁴¹ DuPont to "My Dearest Sophie," [USS] *Wabash*, [off Hampton Roads, Va.,] 19 October 1861, reprinted in *Civil War Letters*, 1: 174-78, *ORN*, 12: 223.
- ⁴² *ORN*, 12: 232-47, quotes from 237; "SecNav Annual Report, 1861," 82-84.
- ⁴³ "SecNav Annual Report, 1861," 82-84; *ORN*, 12: 255- 61, John D. Hayes, ed., "The Battle of Port Royal, S.C., From the Journal of John Sanford Barnes, October 8 to November 9, 1861," *New York Historical Society Quarterly* 45 (October 1961), 84.
- ⁴⁴ *ORN*, 12: 261-63, "SecNav Annual Report, 1861," 86-88, 90; Hayes, ed., "Barnes' Journal," quote from 391.
- ⁴⁵ *ORN*, 12: 262A.
- ⁴⁶ "SecNav Annual Report, 1861," 88-92, 97-98; *ORN*, 12: 264- 70.
- ⁴⁷ DuPont to "My Dear Mr. [Gustavus Vasa] Fox," *Wabash*, Port Royal, [South Carolina,] 9 November 1861, reprinted in DuPont, *Civil War Letters*, 230-32, quote from 232; DuPont to "My Precious Sophie," *Wabash*, Port Royal, 13

November 1861, reprinted in DuPont, *Civil War Letters*, 235-42; Major William Russell to Reynolds, HQMC, Washington, D.C., 19 November 1861, RG 127, Entry 4: "Letters Sent, 1789-1884," NA; Private William Gould, "The Wreck of the *Governor*," Civil War Miscellaneous Collection, U.S. Army Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, Pa., quote from text. An interesting side note of the operation was that the fight for Fort Walker almost precipitated an engagement between Federal and Confederate Marines. When the Union fleet appeared off of Port Royal, the commander of the Confederate Navy's Savannah Squadron, Flag-Officer Josiah Tattnall, formerly of the U.S. Navy, mustered all of his forces to oppose any landing. When DuPont's ships opened fire on Fort Walker, Tattnall's small flotilla, made up of a converted river steamboat, the CSS *Savannah*, and several armed tugs, attempted to return fire but its guns could not adequately reach the Union ships. Soon after, perceiving that the fires from Fort Walker were slacking off, Tattnall landed a group of sailors and his company of Confederate Marines, led by former twelve-year veteran of the USMC Captain George Holmes, at nearby Skull Creek to reinforce the garrison of the fort. However, as the relief force moved toward the fort it collided with the soldiers abandoning that post. And around that same time Dupont's Marines and sailors were already entering Fort Walker. Believing his mission impractical with the fort to already in the hands of the Union forces, the senior Confederate officer ashore gave the order to fall back to Tattnall's ships, and the rebel relief group was withdrawn. Their retreat left the Federal Marines and sailors free to consolidate their defense of Fort Walker without interference. See Ralph Donnelly, *Biographical Sketches of the Commissioned Officers of the Confederate States Marine Corps*, David M. Sullivan, ed. (Shippensburg, Pa.: White Mane Books, 2001), 101-03; Savannah, [Ga.] *Republican*, 12 November 1861, 1, reprinted in *ORN*, 12: 295-98; *ORN*, 12: 300-314.

⁴⁸ *ORN*, 12: 566-68, 572-75, quote from 575.

⁴⁹ *ORN*, 12: 603-04, DuPont to "My Precious Sophie," *Wabash*, Off St. Johns, [Fla.], 19 March 1862, reprinted in DuPont, *Civil War Letters*, 367-76, all quotes from text.

⁵⁰ DuPont to "My Precious Sophie," *Wabash*, Off Mosquito Inlet, Coast of Florida, 23 March 1862, reprinted in DuPont, *Civil War Letters*, 376-86, all quotes from text; DuPont to Major John Reynolds, *Wabash*, Off St. Augustine, [Fla.], 25 March 1862, reprinted in DuPont, *Civil War Letters*, 386-87; *ORN*, 12: 657-58.

⁵¹ Reynolds to Harris, HQ, Marine Battalion, Bay Point, Port Royal, S.C., 22 February 1862, RG 80, Entry 14: "Letters Received," NA; John G. Reynolds, *Proceedings of a Marine General Court Martial, Convened at Washington City, May 7, 1862, for the Trial of Lieut. Col. John Geo. Reynolds, U.S. Marine Corps* (Washington, D.C.: Henry Polkinhorn, Printer, 1862), 5-6; Court Martial of Lieutenant Colonel

John G. Reynolds, RG 45, Naval General Courts-Martial and Courts of Inquiry, NA; Welles, *Diary* [1911], 1: 89. See also the narrative on the incident in Sullivan, *The First Year*, 1: 238-42.

⁵² Muster Rolls for the Marine Barracks, Washington, D.C. for the Months of April and May 1862, RG 24 (Bureau of Naval Personnel, Deck Logs), Muster Rolls of the United States Marine Corps, NA.

⁵³ For an overview of Union naval strategy in the Civil War, and its implications for amphibious warfare, see Clark G. Reynolds, *Navies in History* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1998), 121-130; and Anderson, *By Sea and by River*, 33-40.

⁵⁴ See Harris' annual reports at "SecNav Annual Report, 1861," 515-16; and "SecNav Annual Report, 1862," 902.

CHAPTER VII

EMPLOYMENT AND OPERATIONS: BLOCKADES, RAIDS AND LANDINGS

Most Marines were employed during the Civil War in one of four ways: as guards posted to garrison units (Marine Barracks) located on naval facilities; as separate Marine detachments assigned to warships; as *ad hoc* groupings of ships' detachments that served as part of larger combat formations; and as battalion units specially formed for specific purposes.

Marine Barracks

Marine Barracks are garrison units located at Navy Yards or other shore facilities. The Marines assigned to the various barracks performed routine non-tactical security duties involving the protection of the public property in those yards. The barracks commander, in coordination with the Commandant of the Navy Yard, posted Marines as guards and sentries about the facility, controlling access to specific areas and responding to any emergency or threat that might arise. The nature of the work does not normally require duty in the field, yet on a few occasions barracks Marines were directed to assist local authorities in restoring or maintaining order. In those cases, the men did perform tactical missions under field conditions. For example, during the Draft riots in New York City in July 1863, the Marines from the Brooklyn Navy Yard performed well in helping to quell civil unrest by patrolling the streets to put down mob action, by

guarding federal gold at the Sub-Treasury on Wall Street, and by forcibly recapturing stolen weapons that rioters had earlier seized from a militia armory. In the process the Marines helped save lives and protect property.¹

Of particular concern to this study, efforts by the military establishment to expand the Marine Corps' mission to include the garrisoning of several large fortifications at the outset of the Civil War were rebuffed by the Commandant himself. As described in Chapter IV, in early 1861 the War Department, with full concurrence from the Navy Department, directed the Corps to man several strongpoints around the national capital to fill a security vacuum created by large-scale Army resignations and desertions during the Secession Crisis. The Marine Corps was assigned a central role in contingency plans for the defense of the capital and key government locations. These assignments presented the Marine Corps with a fleeting opportunity to provide a valuable service to the nation during a time of vulnerability. Performing those tasks would have tangibly supported any requests the Commandant might have made for additional Marines to continue the assignments, particularly since the Corps was protecting the political establishment. Instead, Commandant Harris resisted using Marines for such missions, and in the process squandered valuable political capital that might have benefitted the Corps.²

That said, some of the Marines assigned to the barracks units found ways to actively participate in the war by conducting tactical missions. In late 1864, when parts of Kentucky continued to be plagued by guerrilla attacks, Admiral David Dixon Porter authorized the Marines from the Mound City, Illinois, Marine Barracks to conduct

“expeditions” into threatened areas. Marine Lieutenant Henry Clay Cochrane led two such patrols. “In the first detail, I had 75 men, and in the second, about 45 men and a 4 gun steamer.” His men “Scouted many miles into Kentucky, captured a boat and lot of contraband goods (books, dry goods, coffee, &c., &c.) and returned to the barracks without losing a man.”³ Though these operations were as close as the barracks commands came to actual combat, they afforded junior officers and Marines an excellent opportunity to hone their fighting skills.

Following the losses of the Pensacola and Norfolk yards in the opening months of the war, all of the remaining naval facilities guarded by Marines were located safely within the confines of Union-held ground. In late 1861 the USMC had Marine Barracks at five Navy Yards: Washington, D.C.; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Brooklyn, New York; Boston, Massachusetts; and Portsmouth, New Hampshire. By the end of 1862 it had also established new barracks at Cairo, Illinois, and Mare Island, California (see Table 7-1). The Cairo barracks moved to nearby Mound City, Illinois, in May 1864. During the war, with the exception of the previously mentioned Pensacola and Norfolk Navy Yards, none of those posts were directly threatened by enemy action, making the duties routine.

Table 7-1. Location and Approximate Size of Marine Barracks, November 1862.⁴

Location of Barracks	Approximate Number of Marines
Washington, D.C.	10-13 officers, 300-400 Marines
Brooklyn, New York	1-2 officers, 130-150 Marines
Boston, Massachusetts	1-2 officers, 80-100 Marines
Cairo, Illinois (later Mound City, Illinois)	2-3 officers, 150-170 Marines
Mare Island, California	2-3 officers, 150-170 Marines
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania	3-4 officers, 100-150 Marines
Portsmouth, New Hampshire	1 officer, 60-70 Marines

The manning of these barracks had both advantages and disadvantages for the Marine Corps. The most obvious disadvantage was that these facilities required personnel who could otherwise be assigned to detachments or battalions. The size of the garrison at each post varied, but in total equaled more than 20 percent of the Corps' total manpower. The barracks commands did, however, have advantages in that they provided the Corps with shore-based facilities where vital tasks like recruiting, receiving and the initial training of recruits could take place in relative safety. The several barracks also provided the service with a manpower pool from which personnel needed for higher priority tasks might be drawn. In addition, the posts were duty locations wherein Marines finishing combat assignments might be rotated to for necessary rest, retraining, and reorganizing.⁵

Marine Detachments

On any given day the majority of Marines were assigned to small units that served on board individual Navy warships. The size of a particular ship's Marine detachment depended in part on the size of the vessel and ranged in numbers from large forty to eighty-man units commanded by one or two company-grade officers to smaller, ten or twenty-man detachments led by a senior non-commissioned officer (see Table 7-2). As the Navy expanded the number of ships in service to meet its war requirements, the requirement for Marines to serve on those new warships also increased. And since this form of employment constituted the primary priority for the Corps' manpower during the war, the dramatic growth in the Navy's number of warships led to increased pressures on the Marine Corps to provide trained men to fill the need. Although certain sized detachments were traditionally paired with specific classes of ships, the actual size was not written in stone, and exceptions to any standard were plentiful and often the subject of some debate among ships' captains and the Navy Department.⁶

Table 7-2. Representative Sizes of Marine Detachments on Board Warships, 1861.⁷

Type of Ship and Example	Officers	NCOs	Privates	Total
Frigate (<i>Potomac</i>)	1	7	42	49
Steam Frigate (<i>Niagara</i>)	2	7	51	60
Receiving Ship (<i>North Carolina</i>)		6	45	51
Screw Frigate (<i>San Jacinto</i>)	1	5	34	40
Screw Sloop (<i>Hartford</i>)	2	5	36	43
Steam Sloop (<i>Mohican</i>)		3	10	13
Sloop of War (<i>Cumberland</i>)	1	7	42	50
Sloop (<i>Cyane</i>)		3	22	25

Tactically, these detachments performed duties little changed from those of their predecessors who served on ships from the time of the Revolutionary War. Marine detachments aboard ship were responsible to the ship's captain for the enforcement of good order and discipline. During combat in the days of the frigate Navy, Marine sharpshooters typically positioned themselves in the ship's rigging to fire on enemy officers and gunners. Elsewhere, they also ensured that their own ship's gunners and sailors remained at their assigned posts in the heat of battle. In addition, Marines served as the vital core for boarding parties, landing parties, and as guards for prisoners of war captured as a result of an engagement.

However, changes in the character of naval warfare threatened to make obsolete some of the combat tasks of Marines in ships. With the advent of steam propulsion, higher-powered, longer-ranged naval artillery, armor plating and the consequent increased ranges of combat, Marine marksmen were no longer needed in the rigging of ships and boarding parties were rarely employed. In addition, the implementing of new naval reforms in recruiting and discipline undertaken in the 1850s minimized the incidence of disciplinary problems of sailors.⁸

In response, for several decades Marine leaders broadened their shipboard roles in an effort to increase their detachment's importance on naval vessels. One way they did this was through training their men to man one or more of the ship's naval artillery batteries, thereby keeping the Marines intact as teams, yet fully integrated within the ship's combat firepower. Many times the leaders at the lowest level of command recognized and implemented such actions without prompting by the Navy. To most, it

seemed like a natural extension of the Marines' purpose aboard ship. For example, as the Gulf Squadron prepared for Admiral Farragut's fight past Forts Jackson and St. Philip guarding the approach to New Orleans on the night of 23-24 April 1862, Lieutenant James Forney, commander of the Marines aboard the USS *Brooklyn*, recognized the situation clearly and exercised initiative. "There not being any use for my Marines with their muskets, I volunteered to Mr. Lowry, the executive officer of the ship, to allow me two guns for the action. I had abundance of time to drill them so that when the engagement came off on the morning of the 24th, they behaved themselves like men."⁹

It was in their role as shipboard gunners that historian Allan Millett convincingly argues that Marines made their greatest contribution in the war, asserting that "Marine gun crews participated in some of the Navy's finest hours in the Civil War." As evidence, he reveals that "of the seventeen Marines awarded the new Medal of Honor . . . thirteen were sergeants and corporals serving as gun captains and gun division commanders." The actions described in the citations are representative of the highlights of the U.S. Navy's fiercest battles of the war. Seven Marines earned the award manning great guns when Farragut damned the torpedoes and steamed his fleet into Mobile Bay on 5 August 1864. Two Marines distinguished themselves as gunners by reducing enemy artillery positions at Fort Fisher, North Carolina, supporting the ground attacks on that position in December 1864 and January 1865. Corporal John F. Mackie earned his award (the Corps' first) for suppressing sharpshooters along the banks of the James River at the First Battle of Drewry's Bluff on 15 May 1862, and for manning a great gun

“with skill and courage” when the original gunners were killed or injured. His example particularly illustrates the degree of flexibility and versatility that Marines provided ships’ captains in the heat of combat. Similarly, during the Union Navy’s desperate fight for Port Hudson on the Mississippi River on 14 March 1863, Sergeant Pinkerton Vaughn operated one of his ship’s guns until the vessel, the USS *Mississippi*, literally began to sink beneath him. He then bent to the task of calmly assisting survivors in evacuating the ship while still under enemy fire, setting a positive example to others and saving many lives in the process.¹⁰

Initiatives to enhance a detachment’s firepower and capabilities when operating in landing parties have been discussed in detail in previous chapters. The expansion of Marine shipboard duties to include their manning and directing of gun batteries achieved the same effect on board ship that their improved combat capabilities in landing parties did on land: it made Marines more versatile, it better integrated them within warship crews, and it consequently made them more relevant and valuable to naval commanders. As one might expect, ships’ captains generally welcomed such developments and many later vigorously defended continuing the Marine Corps as a separate service because of their favorable experiences with Marines on board ships. Perennially short-handed, warship captains were, for the most part, quite pleased to add the discipline, esprit, teamwork and courage of Marine gun teams to supplement their combat capabilities.¹¹

In what might be one of the most famous of such examples, Marines manned and directed several of the great guns aboard the USS *Kearsarge* in its famous duel with the Confederate commerce raider CSS *Alabama*. In its sensational history, the *Alabama* had

managed to sink or seize 64 Union merchant ships, striking fear into the maritime community and even forcing large numbers of American ships to reflag with other nations as a way to avoid the carnage. The *Alabama* and its captain, Rafael Semmes, formerly of the U.S. Navy, had roamed the oceans and seas of the world in search of victims for about twenty-two months, until the battle with the USS *Kearsarge* off Cherbourg, France, on 19 June 1864.¹²

Furthermore, the *Alabama* had a special significance for the Federal Marines, since that vessel had earlier dealt the Corps a great embarrassment in late 1862. In November of that year, Commandant Harris organized a detachment of 137 Marines for duty at the newly established Mare Island Navy Yard located in San Francisco Bay, in California. Harris assigned Major Addison Garland to command the detachment and made arrangements for Garland and his men to book passage to Panama aboard the mail steamer *Ariel*, scheduled to depart on 1 December 1862. On 7 December, the *Alabama* intercepted the *Ariel* off Cuba and demanded its surrender. Calling his Marines to prepare to repel boarders, Garland's actions provoked a panic from the 700 civilian passengers, who pleaded with the mail ship's captain to capitulate. Meanwhile, two well-placed shots from the *Alabama* quickly convinced everyone on the *Ariel* of the futility of the relatively unarmed mail steamer fighting Semmes' well-armed raider. The *Ariel*'s captain surrendered his vessel, including the Marines, whom Semmes' lieutenants unsuccessfully tried to recruit for the Southern cause. Semmes' men confiscated 200 new Enfield rifles and 2000 rounds of ammunition from the Marines, who signed paroles not to take up arms against the Confederates. After posting a bond

of \$261,000, the *Ariel* and the Marines continued on to Panama, where the detachment boarded the USS *Constitution* for further transport to San Francisco. Secretary Welles, on receipt of a report on the action, prophetically remarked that “Abuse of the Navy Department will follow.”¹³ Although Garland had little alternative to ordering the surrender of his Marines, the incident resulted in yet another embarrassment for the Corps and another feather in the cap of Semmes and the *Alabama*.

Eighteen months later, Marines helped even the score. At about 9:00 A.M. on 19 June 1864, a smugly confident Semmes steamed out to meet the *Kearsarge*, determined to fight his way back out to the open seas to continue his commerce raiding. The crew of the *Kearsarge*, including the twelve-man Marine detachment that manned the ship’s forecastle pivot gun, proved equally determined to put an end to the *Alabama*’s escapades. Interestingly, the *Alabama* was the only Confederate raider to not have its own Marine detachment, having instead only one Marine officer to train its sailors to perform Marine tasks. The *Kearsarge*, though, had expended great effort and time practicing gun drills and honing the skills of its crew to a fine edge. As the *Alabama* approached, the *Kearsarge*’s crew manned their stations and readied their guns for action. At a distance of about 1000 yards, the *Alabama* loosed a broadside and continued to close, both combatants steaming in ever-shrinking circles. When the warships were within 700 yards of each other, the *Kearsarge*’s captain, John A. Winslow, ordered his men to return fire and his Marines fired the first round. For more than an hour the two combatants traded shots, the Confederates firing rapidly and with less effect, and the Federals “firing as though we were at target firing,” averaging about

one shot to every two of the *Alabama*'s. Finally, the *Alabama* raised a white flag and began sinking rapidly. Captain Winslow ordered his guns to cease firing and began recovering survivors. The *Alabama*'s raiding days were over at last. In the wake of the action the Marines received commendations for their "great coolness and efficiency" at their gun while "openly exposed to the fire of the *Alabama*."¹⁴

Marines also played an important role in the seizure of another Confederate raider, the CSS *Florida*, in Brazilian waters after midnight on 7 October 1864. The USS *Wachusett* (Commander Napoleon Collins, USN) had confirmed the presence of the *Florida* three days earlier in the harbor of Bahia, where the raider had taken refuge under the friendly Brazilian flag to refit and resupply. Collins decided to move offshore and ambush the *Florida* when it attempted to depart the harbor to resume commerce raiding. At about 3:15 A.M. on the 7th, the *Wachusett* bore down on the *Florida*, surprising the raider, and striking the Confederate ship on its starboard side. The *Wachusett*'s Marines manned the rails with their muskets and let loose a volley of fire before boarding the *Florida*. After a short fight at close quarters, Union sailors fastened a tow cable to the *Florida* and the *Wachusett* pulled its prize out into international waters and away from a Brazilian cruiser attempting to intervene on the raider's behalf. After a run of two years during which it captured or sank forty-two American merchant vessels, the *Florida*'s raiding days were over.¹⁵

Detachment Marines made valuable and material contributions to their ship even when they did not operate their ship's guns. For example, when the Confederate ironclad rams CSS *Palmetto State* and CSS *Chicora* made a surprise attack on the Union

ships blockading Charleston, South Carolina, in the pre-dawn hours of 31 January 1863, the situation looked grim for the Federal forces. In the first two minutes of the engagement, the *Palmetto State*'s forward rifled gun pierced the hull of the USS *Mercedita*, leaving it to sink into the shallow water. The *Chicora* similarly surprised the USS *Keystone State*, inflicting heavy damage on the Union warship and forcing it to flee. The *Keystone State*'s Marines tended to the growing number of wounded and assisted in evacuating them to the ship's surgeon, placing themselves in danger. In the short engagement, the *Keystone State* suffered almost one-fourth of its crew dead or wounded, and by the time the two Confederate rams withdrew back towards Charleston, only five of the ship's twenty Marines were left untouched.¹⁶

When resistance did appear to the notion of Marines manning shipboard batteries, it originated from a small minority of Marine officers and not from the Navy, since few ship captains would object to any initiative that enhanced the effectiveness of his crew or increased the combat capabilities of his ship. On a very few occasions, it came to Harris' attention that some of his subordinates concluded that Marines need not serve as gunners aboard ship. Moreover, one of his Marine Barracks commanders went so far as to insinuate that Marines should have as little to do with the Navy as possible. To Harris' credit, when he uncovered such behavior he took immediate action and expressed his displeasure in a forceful fashion. After all, Harris had served the majority of his career with the Navy and had already demonstrated reluctance to provide forces for duty with the Army. Harris rightly understood that the Navy and Marine Corps were symbiotic, and that each service depended on the other to accomplish their missions.

And the shipboard Marine detachments were an excellent demonstration of that relationship.¹⁷

Although assigning Marines to small detachments on individual warships was not the most efficient means of employing them, their presence gave ships' captains great flexibility in dealing with a wide array of military situations. Marines provided warship commanders with an enhanced capability to conduct small-scale raids ashore, helping to keep the enemy off balance and improving Union tactical positions. There were many examples of this during the war, ranging from Commander William Macomb dispatching the Marine detachments from the USS *Shamrock* and USS *Chicopee* ashore at Elizabeth City, North Carolina, the morning of 10 September 1864 to search for Confederates who had been harassing the shipping lanes, to those same Marines (reinforced by the detachment off the USS *Otsego*) landing and capturing enemy positions near Plymouth, North Carolina, on 31 October 1864. The latter operation, described as "a gallant affair," allowed Admiral David Dixon Porter to control Plymouth and most of the Roanoke River. On 4 December, with Marines first scouting out a route up the Chowan River in a small boat, the USS *Chicopee* swooped down on a Confederate logistics base at Pitch Landing, where a raiding party captured weapons, money, valuable stores, and almost 100 bales of cotton.¹⁸ The expansion of Union control up the Roanoke allowed Porter to then proceed to his larger goal, the capture of Fort Fisher, guarding the last major port still in Southern hands.

For another example, when Confederate troops operating in and around Murrell's Inlet near Charleston, South Carolina, persisted in attacking groups of sailors from the

several Union blockaders in the region, Admiral John A. Dahlgren resolved to “administer some corrective to the small parties of rebels that infest that vicinity.” He ordered a landing party of 100 Marines, equipped with four howitzers and adequate boat support to eliminate the threat. On the night of 1 January 1864, an element of Dahlgren’s Marines landed, and with one of the boat howitzers fired on a Confederate schooner that had been readying to run the blockade. The schooner, loaded with resin and turpentine, caught fire and soon after exploded in a ball of pyrotechnic violence, putting a damper on enemy activity in that area for some time afterwards.¹⁹

Marine detachments performed similar duty during Admiral David Porter’s near-disastrous Red River Campaign of March-May 1864. Since Porter realized his squadron would be moving into territory solidly in the hands of Confederate forces, he tasked his Marines early on to provide close-in surveillance and security of the nearby riverbanks as the joint Army and Navy force moved upriver toward Shreveport, Louisiana. Even prior to leaving the Mississippi River to push up the Red River, Marine skirmishers protected working parties ashore, a duty that often placed them in contact with the enemy and gave them a taste of things to come. By mid-April, when the squadron moved up the Red River to Grand Bayou, Louisiana, the Union ships were being fired on daily by guerrillas hidden along the river banks. In response, Marines posted sharpshooters on deck to help provide protection to exposed sailors and officers, as well as guarding them on shore.²⁰

At Grappe’s Bluff on 13 April 1864, a group of about one hundred guerrillas suddenly opened fire on Porter’s flagship, driving the sailors below decks. The Marines

quickly returned fire with their Spencer rifles, and even brought a twenty-four pound howitzer into action to drive the larger enemy off. The tactics worked, but the constant watches began to take their toll on the relatively small number of available Marines. And by the end of April, the Confederates had also changed their tactics and were incorporating artillery batteries into their boat ambushes, resulting in greater loss of life aboard the gunships. The gauntlet appeared to be tightening around Porter's besieged vessels. On 26 April the situation took a turn for the worse as Porter's new flagship, the "tinclad" USS *Cricket*, sustained a terrible beating from rebel batteries arrayed along the shore. The hostile fires killed or wounded half the *Cricket's* crew and caused significant damage to the ship's engine that threatened to immobilize the ship under the enemy guns. In that same action, the Confederates also disabled and subsequently captured one of the Army transports, killing over 180 soldiers in the process. That desperate fight represented the height of the enemy action on the squadron, since Porter had already decided to retreat back down the Red River to safety. Although the Confederates continued to harass the boats on their withdrawal, their effort was less intense or coordinated. Nonetheless, Porter's sailors and Marines breathed a heavy sigh of relief when they steamed back into the Mississippi River.²¹

Marine detachments performed similar duties on board Union warships stationed on the James River in mid-1864. But those sailors and Marines faced another threat in addition to the ever-present enemy sharpshooters and artillery pieces that lurked in the brush-lined river banks; they faced the fearsome new weapon called "torpedoes." These early sea mines, capable of being detonated either by contact with a ship or

electronically detonated by an observer on the shore, struck fear into the hearts of anyone navigating the waters of the James, having already claimed several victims. On the afternoon of 6 May 1864, a submerged torpedo holding about 1000 pounds of powder exploded beneath the hull of the *Commodore Jones* by remote detonation, completely destroying the gunboat and killing forty sailors. The USS *Mackinaw* (Commander J. C. Beaumont) had been escorting several ships and immediately dispatched its Marines in small boats to search for survivors as well as sweep the bank for enemy. One party of Marines discovered and killed a Confederate soldier located in a pit along the riverbank, later determined to be the person who set off the charge. Enlarging their search, the Marines discovered three other pits, each containing galvanic batteries and wires leading into the river to other torpedoes, and captured two Confederates who had manned one of the positions. Several documents captured with one of the prisoners allowed the Union Navy to map out probable mine locations (see Figure 7-1). The Marines' actions forestalled other mine detonations, potentially saving several ships and many lives.²²

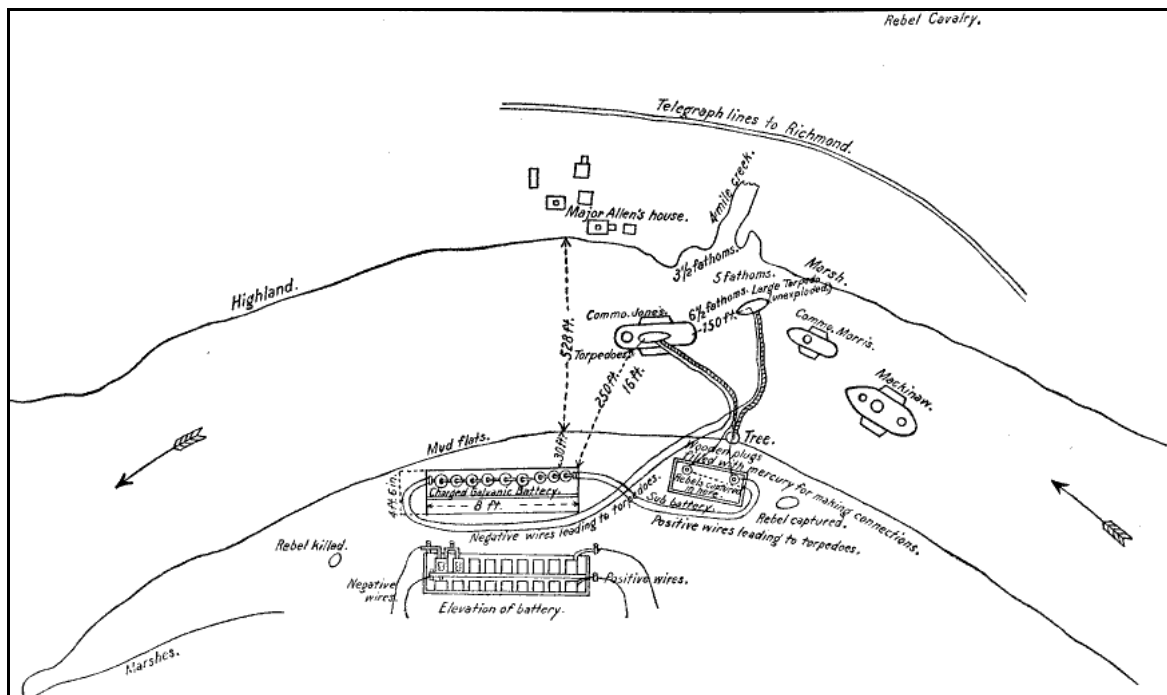


Figure 7-1. Sketch Map of Confederate Mines in the James River, May 1864.²³

Marines from ship's detachments also reinforced Army units on occasion. For example, when Major General Quincy A. Gillmore, USV, overextended his forces' reach and underestimated enemy resolve in northern Florida in February 1864, some of his subordinates looked to the Navy and Marine Corps for help. The sudden loss of seven artillery pieces to enemy action near Jacksonville, Florida, prompted the Army commander to ask the USS *Mahaska's* captain (Commander J. Blakely Creighton) if he could provide the Army with naval howitzers and Marines. Creighton agreed and the Marines and their batteries were incorporated into the Army's defenses. As a precaution, the USS *Pawnee's* Marines with two more howitzers stood ready to join them ashore, if needed. For more than a month the *Mahaska's* Marines served side-by-side with the Army fighting off Confederate forces moving on Jacksonville until relieved

on 4 April 1864. For their part, the Marines received the Army's "thanks for efficient naval cooperation."²⁴

These examples of Marine detachments participating in the fighting are but a fraction of available examples throughout the war. Since Marines served on the majority of Union warships, they consequently participated in any action the ship engaged in. The nature of this type of employment, wherein the detachment was considered as part of the ship's crew, in some ways masked the overall contribution of Marines by ascribing their efforts to ship's crew. In many cases achievements of Marines are anonymously included in ship's actions, making it difficult to assess their role in various battles and engagements. This is made even more difficult since Marine detachments did not routinely generate independent reports on engagements, but were rather mentioned (or not) within their ship's captain's report. And since Commandant Harris rarely commented on the actions or achievements of his men in his own official reports, it is easy to understand how many contemporary observers failed to grasp the scope of Marine contributions in the war effort. Furthermore, with many of the enlisted Marines being either foreign-born, illiterate, or both, few of them generated the correspondence or historical documents that would shed greater light into their service.

This form of employing Marines in small detachments on board many of the Navy's ships had both advantages and disadvantages. On the positive side, the detachment provided its ship with a trained and disciplined security force or infantry unit to deal with any problems it might encounter. Ships so equipped could muster their own protective element to confront a wide array of threats that required ship-based combat

power, the landing of troops ashore, or some combination of these options to resolve the situation. Detachments that integrated themselves into the ship's weapons systems as gunners were even more versatile and valuable. And, since the detachment belonged to the ship's captain, it was wholly responsive to his needs and required minimal external coordination when being committed to action. Furthermore, the ship's Marines could also be detached for security service with prize crews, shore details, or as guards for prisoners, all relatively frequent tasks during the war.

The greatest disadvantage of an organization featuring wide-scale employment as detachments is that it essentially diluted the overall combat power of the Marine Corps by spreading it thinly throughout the Navy. In effect, as far as the Marines were concerned, it was the least effective means to employ its limited assets. The decentralized nature of that system made it more difficult to ensure a commonality of training for all Marines and complicated the dissemination of common tactics, techniques, and procedures throughout the institution. Maintaining a high level of proficiency became dependent on individual leaders at far-flung posts, and otherwise simple functions such as supplying and even paying the Marines proved difficult to administer. It also made it difficult for the Marine Corps to concentrate its manpower to deal with larger threats, and the lack of a defined, permanent combat command structure above the detachment level complicated matters when operating as impromptu companies or battalions. Basically, the detachment system benefitted the Navy on the whole while the Marine Corps reaped all the problems associated with it.

***Ad hoc* Units Formed from Detachments**

However, while separate Marine detachments met the needs of individual naval commanders, the increased scale of warfare during the Civil War led logically to the requirement to create larger Marine units to fulfill the expanded combat tasks of squadron commanders.

As the emphasis in naval warfare shifted from single ship combat at sea to flotilla or squadron-sized formations operating in close proximity of land the Navy's leaders needed larger units of Marines to handle the important tasks of supporting their operations or projecting combat power ashore. To do this, many were guided by experiences in past conflicts, such as the Mexican War or expeditionary operations overseas, where company and battalion-sized Marine formations had successfully performed as elements of larger landing parties. Their study and experimentation led to the third method of employing Marines in the Civil War; the forming of *ad hoc* units by combining several Marine detachments located within particular squadrons into larger combat organizations. The immediate advantage was that the larger unit could focus more combat power ashore than could smaller, separate detachments. And with proper preparation time, the companies or battalions created in this fashion could even task-organize elements to perform other combat tasks, such as artillery or combat support missions, granting them even greater potential.

Essentially, when a naval squadron commander perceived a need for a larger group of Marines to deal with some specific enemy threat or to seize an opportunity, he would combine several small detachments into a larger company or battalion. Although

not as efficient or cohesive as purpose-built battalions, these *ad hoc* arrangements had the advantage of being quickly formed from the Marine assets at hand, and proved effective in many cases. Despite having the obvious disadvantages of not having a set of established and practiced procedures in common to the unit as a whole, the Marines made up for this in part by relying heavily on their common entry-level training, as well as keeping their movements and formations as simple as practicable. In these cases, the plethora of different weapons and equipment found in the many Marine elements that made up these *ad hoc* battalions often proved a logistical challenge, even for the generally short time of these units' existence. These improvised units were also typically short-handed on officers, forcing the commander to operate without an adequate staff or subordinate leaders to assist him. In many instances, some of the lower units were led by senior non-commissioned officers whose many years of experience helped make up for the absent authority of an officer's rank.

The first *ad hoc* Marine battalion of the war involved the combining of Marines from the detachments of several warships sitting off besieged Fort Pickens, Florida, in April 1861. As described briefly in Chapter V, the Marines from four separate warships were combined to create a one hundred-twenty man landing force detailed to reinforce Fort Pickens to prevent that post from being lost to the Union in the event the surrounding Southern military forces attacked it. On the night of 12 April 1861, Navy Secretary Gideon Welles ordered the battalion to land under cover of darkness. The Marines rowed ashore in small boats, ran across the broad, exposed beach to the fort, and reinforced the small garrison over the next six weeks. Although the unit did not

engage in combat, their bold landing likely preempted a Confederate attempt to seize that base, the only fort in the South still in Federal hands at the time.²⁵ Overall, the Marines' successful landing helped offset the Union's loss of Fort Sumter, South Carolina.

The second instance of forming an impromptu battalion also occurred early in the war and again reflected a desire on the part of senior military leaders to attempt to salvage a desperate circumstance. On 19 April 1861, with the Navy Yard at Norfolk, Virginia, under siege by Virginia militia, Secretary Welles ordered Commandant Harris to form a "battalion" of 100 Marines to reinforce the beleaguered naval personnel then attempting to either save or destroy the ships, equipment, and facilities so the material could not be used by the Confederate military. The Marines from the Washington Barracks were turned out, organized, equipped, and marched to the Navy Yard to board ships for transport to Fortress Monroe, Virginia. The following day, 20 April, the makeshift battalion arrived in time to participate in the abortive destruction of the yard before being ordered to withdraw at 3:30 A.M. the next morning. The battalion then reported back to the Washington Marine Barracks where it was dissolved, having been in existence only a few hectic days.²⁶

Remarkably, Harris failed to comment on the obvious utility of having a battalion available to react to the various emergency situations that appeared with increasing frequency. And since the impetus for that battalion originated with Welles personally, it was possible that the secretary would have supported the concept of creating a more

capable, permanent battalion to deal with those types of contingencies. Unfortunately for the Marines, the idea, if considered at all, was not forwarded in any official capacity.

Another example of this type of unit is the improvised Marine battalion that was employed by Flag-Officer Silas Stringham in the Cape Hatteras amphibious operation described in Chapter VI. In that instance, Stringham's Marines served as a stabilizing force to the conglomeration of several Army units that were landed (and essentially abandoned) ashore in the first day of the operation. As regular military men possessed of a keen familiarity of naval procedures and experienced in landings, the Marines carried on the fight with great success against a numerically superior foe.²⁷ Their proficiency in infantry tactics and artillery gunnery made them a valuable asset and represented an effective means of utilizing Marines for larger-scale landing parties.

Admiral Dahlgren used this same method, to a lesser degree, when he formed his reaction force to rid Murrell's Inlet near Charleston, South Carolina, of Confederate activity on 1 January 1864. Having lost his purposely formed Marine battalion in November 1863, Dahlgren created his own impromptu unit out of the detachments from the ships *USS Wabash*, *New Ironsides*, *Canandaigua*, *Housatonic*, and *South Carolina*. Once formed, he ordered the 100-man group to land and destroy a Confederate ship readying to run the blockade. Dahlgren then fashioned another makeshift battalion on 5 February 1864, when he anticipated that a planned drive by the Army to take the Florida capital might need the additional manpower. However, on receiving glowing reports from the Army as to their progress, Dahlgren then dissolved the battalion and reposted the Marines back to their original ships.²⁸

One of the last *ad hoc* Marine battalions raised during the Civil War was that of Admiral David Porter in preparation for his second attempt to seize the Confederate stronghold of Fort Fisher that guarded the approach to the important Southern port city of Wilmington, North Carolina. The Union's first major attempt to seize the fort began the month previous on 23 December 1864, with the deliberate exploding of about 250 tons of gunpowder aboard an aging warship that had been placed approximately a mile off the center of the fort and set afire. The ship exploded soon afterward, creating a powerful, yet disappointingly ineffective shockwave that accomplished little except confirm to the defenders that the long-anticipated Union attack had commenced. Any remaining doubts were soon dispelled by the loosing of a non-stop barrage by Union vessels that lasted from dawn on the 24th until about 5:30 P.M. that afternoon, during which time the Federal warships fired almost 10,000 shells against the gun emplacements of Fort Fisher.²⁹

The first attack failed largely as a result of a lack of cooperation between the two Union commanders, Admiral Porter and Major General Benjamin Butler. The plans called for Butler's Army troops to land under cover of the Navy's massive barrage and, when the fires were lifted, begin their assault. Initially, things seemed to developing well for the Federal forces. During that first day of bombardment, one of the most intensive of the war to that point, most defenders did little except hunker down in bomb-proofs to avoid the effects of the fires, leading Union observers to incorrectly conclude that the lack of return fire meant the ships had silenced most of the Confederate guns. Accordingly, early on 25 December the Federals began the long process of landing their

assault troops, covering their movements with a second barrage from the warships. That afternoon, Butler's Federal soldiers massed for a concerted attack on the fort. To stop them before they could form, the Confederate commander, Colonel William Lamb, ordered a company of Confederate Marines to help reinforce his defense at the threatened point. The Southern Marines quickly double-timed almost a mile from their positions and arrived just in time to meet the attackers, repelling them from the ramparts with a ferocity that forced the Union soldiers to withdraw. Meanwhile, Lamb's cannon began firing into Butler's massed forces. In the face of this unexpectedly stiffened defense, the Federals fell back, leaving their dead and wounded on the field. Butler's men withdrew to their ships and retreated to the catcalls of the defenders.³⁰

In the wake of the failed Union attack, Major General Alfred H. Terry, USV, replaced Butler as the Army commander, and his force was expanded to about 9,000 men. Terry and Porter planned a second attack, but this time Porter wanted to make sure that the Navy did not absorb any blame in case the second assault failed. Together they made preparations for what became the largest amphibious assault in history, a massive undertaking that would not be surpassed until the assault on Gallipoli, Turkey, during World War I. All told, two separate landing forces of about 11,000 soldiers, sailors and Marines were supported by about sixty warships, a considerable concentration of combat power. In addition to making greater provision for supporting the landing of Terry's forces on the landward side of the fort with the fires of his ships, Porter ordered the formation of a Naval Brigade composed of about 2,000 sailors and Marines (see Figure 7-2).³¹

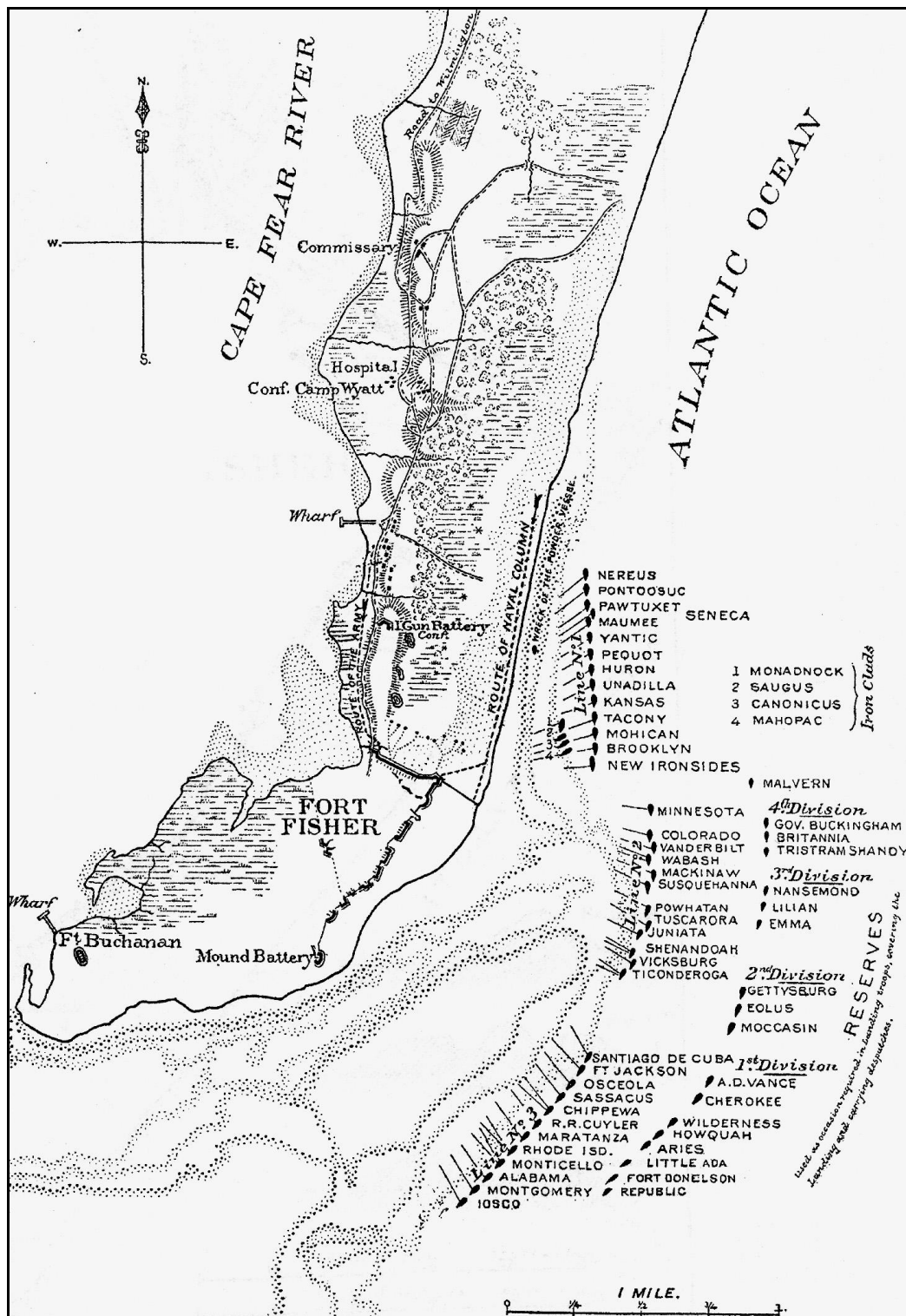


Figure 7-2. Sketch of the Plan for the Second Attack on Fort Fisher. ³²

Porter's plan for the Naval Brigade was dangerously simplistic:

That we may have a share in the assault when it takes place, the boats will be kept ready, lowered near the water on the side of the vessels. The sailors will be armed with cutlasses, well sharpened, and with revolvers. When the signal is made to land the boats, the men will get in, but not show themselves. When a signal is made to assault, the boats will pull around the stern of the monitors and land right abreast of them, and board the fort in a seaman-like way.

The Marines will form in the rear and cover the sailors. While the soldiers are going over the parapets in the front, the sailors will take the sea face of Fort Fisher.

We can land 2,000 men from the fleet and not feel it. Two thousand active men from the fleet will carry the day.³³

At about 6:40 A.M. on 13 January 1865, Porter's warships began bombarding Confederate gun positions in the fort as General Terry's men began landing. By early that afternoon, most were ashore about four miles to the north of the fort. The next day, Terry's men moved into attack positions and the two overall commanders set the time for the assault at 3:00 P.M. on 15 January. On the morning of the 15th, Porter's landing party of 1,600 sailors and 400 Marines under the command of Lieutenant Commander Kidder R. Breese, USN, began landing by small boats about two miles to the north and east of Fort Fisher. The first division of sailors, armed predominantly with shovels, moved to about 600 yards from the fort's ramparts and began digging furiously, preparing shallow trenches for the Marines to occupy. Breese then ordered some Marines forward into the shallow trenches and began making them deeper with hands and bayonets. The Marines then advanced to within 200 yards of the fort, seeking occasional cover from the Confederate grapeshot and canister. Yet once in position, Breese deviated from Porter's plan and ordered the force to move left towards the beach, believing that location offered better cover. The whole column then moved toward the beach, becoming even more congested into a very narrow front. The Naval Brigade

started drawing a preponderance of the defenders' attention and fire, since its massed and exposed forces presented the Confederates with an abundance of lucrative targets. The landing force suffered increasing numbers of casualties as the Marines and sailors slowly crawled forward through flying grape, ball and canister.³⁴

With seemingly infinite slowness to the exposed Marines and sailors before Fort Fisher, the clock approached the time for Terry's attack, 3:00 P.M., and passed it. At about 3:25, the signal Breese and his men awaited finally appeared. Breese commanded "Charge!" and the sailors sprang up and began moving toward the fort as the Federal Navy ceased its bombardment. But incredibly, there was no movement visible from Terry's side of the lines. The Naval Brigade, already dangerously exposed, appeared to be moving onto the fort by itself, rather than as part of a coordinated Army-Navy attack. With no suppressive fires to keep them under cover, the Confederates lost no time taking advantage of the opportunity and redoubled their fire into the sailors and Marines. The Marines, led by Captain Lucien L. Dawson, practically double-timed under fire to try and reach the ramparts before the sailors to provide them with covering fire (see Figure 7-3). Meanwhile, the first division of sailors moved over the wall only to be repulsed by Confederate sharpshooters. Now in a frenzy, the survivors and succeeding waves of sailors and Marines began piling up behind the dubious shelter of a wooden palisade that soon became dangerously crowded. Before long, several men broke and ran, and when some shouted out "Retreat!" others picked up that cry and headed to the rear of the column. With most of the Naval Brigade's officers by then located up front by the fort, there were few leaders in the rear to maintain order or keep the men from falling back.

Nonetheless, Dawson managed to keep some of his Marines in place and for about two hours they delivered rifle fire against the Confederates.³⁵

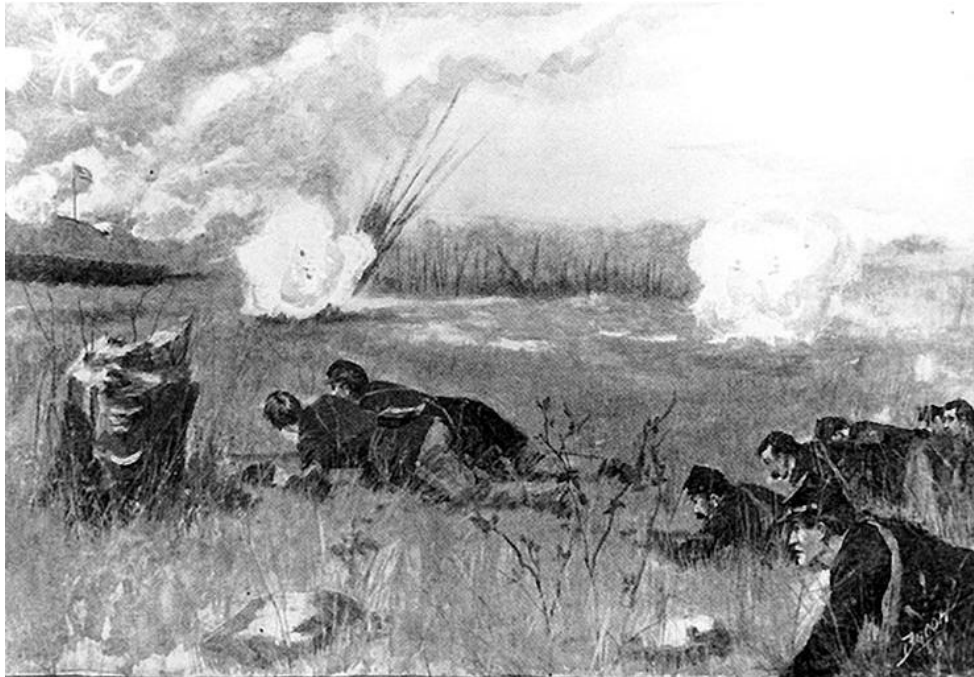


Figure 7-3. Contemporary Drawing of Marines Moving on Fort Fisher, 1865.³⁶

The Confederate defenders believed they had won a second time, but their hopes were soon dashed when Terry's men launched their assault and gained the wall. With most of the Confederate attention focused on fighting the Naval Brigade, Terry's men had an easier time and they began to pour into the fort in large numbers. Slowly, but deliberately, Terry's men forced the Confederates from each succeeding position, until the defenders were forced to withdraw to Battery Buchanan to the south of the fort proper. Darkness aided the Confederates and slowed the Federal advance, but did not halt it. Hoping to free up one of his regiments, Terry requested that Breese provide him

with the “Marines and sailors who had muskets to occupy the right of his lines.” In response, Captain Dawson and two of his shattered companies, along with a few sailors, moved into the designated position. By dawn the Federals were in control of the fort.³⁷

For the U.S. Marine Corps in particular, the Second Battle of Fort Fisher proved bittersweet. Many individual Marines garnered considerable praise for their performance during the fight, but the Marine Corps as an institution found itself under attack from an unexpected source: Admiral Porter himself. Porter’s naval landing party suffered fearful casualties in the attack; of the approximately 2000 sailors and Marines who participated in the assault, 393 were killed, wounded or missing, fully 20 percent of the force. And although the Marines represented only 20 percent of the brigade’s men, the after-action reports from the Navy officers who participated in the assault commended far more Marines than sailors, a further testament to their courage and tenacity in the fight.³⁸

But the large number of casualties and questionable gains of the naval attack on the whole demanded that someone be held accountable for the loss. Never one to suffer criticism easily, Porter placed the blame directly on the Marines. In his official reports on the battle, Porter faulted the Marines for not clearing the rebel breastworks of enemy infantry for his boarders. He argued that “the marines could have cleared the parapets [of enemy] by keeping up a steady fire, but they failed to do so and the sailors were repulsed.”³⁹ In his judgment, “the marines could have made the assault successful,” but did not, and therefore the brigade “lost about 200 in killed and wounded.”⁴⁰ His detailed report made a more direct indictment: “All the arrangements on the part of the sailors

had been well carried out; they had succeeded in getting up to within a short distance of the fort and laid securely in their ditches. We had but very few killed and wounded up to this point. The marines were to have held the rifle pits and cover the boarding party, which they failed to do.” His analysis was that, “Had the marines performed their duty, every one of the rebels on the parapets would have been killed.” Porter vehemently insisted that his plan was sound, but that the Marines failed to carry it out as specified. Simply put, the attack “would have succeeded without severe loss had the marines performed their duty.”⁴¹

The Marine Corps was a conveniently vulnerable scapegoat. For years afterward, the Corps protested and refuted Porter’s charges, but critics of the Marines found them easy to believe regardless of the evidence presented. The allegations, coming near the end of the war as they did, shadowed the Corps for decades afterward. Unfortunately for the Marines, Porter’s claims echoed loudest within the highest levels of the Navy Department and within the Naval Affairs committee, where Porter’s access and influence held special sway. To his close friend Gustavus Vasa Fox, the quite capable and influential Assistant Secretary of the Navy, Porter slyly confided of the affair that “I expect you were disappointed at our sailors not carrying the works, they ought to have done it, and would but for the infernal marines who were running away when the sailors were mounting the parapets, and every man fighting like a lion poor fellows . . .” In Porter’s eyes the Marines were not only incompetent, but also cowardly!⁴²

The damage done by such allegations from a high-placed officer is difficult to measure, but soon afterward when Fox provided a list of eight things he wanted to accomplish after the war if he did not retire, number four on the list was: “Marines go to the Army where they belong.” Welles may have begun to harbor similar thoughts, perhaps assisted by his rocky relations with the Corps’ senior leaders throughout his tenure. For example, evidence suggests that after the war, Welles arbitrarily removed the names of Marine officers from a combined list of Navy and Marine officers to be recommended for accelerated promotion for combat bravery, leaving the Navy portion intact. Worse still, Welles did not inform anyone he removed the names, and the incident was not uncovered for many years afterward.⁴³

As to Porter’s charges that the Marines were responsible for the failure of his planned assault, the consensus of historical opinion is that Porter made the accusations to avoid his own personal culpability in the events that led up to the debacle. Porter should rightfully absorb responsibility for failing to clearly articulate and coordinate his plan, and for not effectively supervising and directing his men. As their overall commander, Porter was directly responsible for all that his men did, or failed to do. For their part, submerged two layers below Porter in the chain of command, the Marine commanders were simply trying to do the best they could with a poor plan, a bad situation, and conflicting orders. In the end, the shortcomings of the Naval Brigade certainly illustrated the need for better planning, preparing and executing operations as complex as that simplistically described by Porter in his brief order.⁴⁴

For their part, the Marine leaders of the bungled attempt to assault the fort's sea wall should share blame for one aspect of the operation. The officers of the Naval Brigade, both Navy and Marine, had a clear responsibility to air concerns over the plan early on and to make sufficient preparations to ensure that their men could properly carry it out. By not raising questions regarding the practicality of the plan early in the planning cycle and not conducting the training and rehearsals needed to execute it, the officers, Navy and Marine, abrogated their command responsibilities and sent their men into battle unprepared. As a result, "individual gallantry and collective ardor could not overcome inept tactical leadership and romantic planning." And to add further insult to injury, in this one major instance where sizeable elements of the two Marine Corps clashed in combat, the Confederate Marines gained accolades for their performance under horrific circumstances, and the Federal Marines drew condemnation.⁴⁵

One final effect of the Naval Brigade's assault on Fort Fisher is that it tamped down any discussion of further experimentation with the concept of amphibious assault for many years. It would be over half a decade before a successful large-scale landing party operation would begin to reopen discussions of the tactic. In 1871, a Marine "battalion" led by Captain McLane Tilton, composed of two fifty-man companies and attached to a naval battalion conducted a punitive landing that destroyed several fortified positions near the mouth of the Han River in western Korea. Although American naval commanders considered the mission a success, in reality it set U.S.-Korean diplomatic relations back somewhat since the expedition departed Korean soil immediately after the attack, allowing the Koreans to believe that they had therefore won by successfully

forcing the foreign invaders out of their land. Nonetheless, from an operational standpoint, it reconfirmed the utility of having Marines as part of a landing force.⁴⁶

These impromptu units filled a valid combat requirement for naval commanders. The *ad hoc* battalions gave them a vital land combat capability that was responsive to their operational needs that could help them extend combat power ashore. It is notable that every squadron commander formed these units at one time or another to influence land actions. Their employment in every theater of the war led logically to the next method of employing Marines.

Deliberately Formed Battalions

The fourth method of employing Marines consisted of creating semi-permanent battalions purposely organized, trained, and equipped to operate somewhat independently for extended periods of time. These units were usually formed with some overall specific mission in mind. In addition, they were created from Marine Corps assets as a whole, rather than hastily organized from a particular squadron commander's Marines as a result of pooling the men of his various ships' detachments.

The first example of such a unit was the Marine battalion created in July 1861 that served with the Army at the First Battle of Bull Run. That unit was organized into four companies of about eighty men each, and included a small headquarters element. Soon after forming, the battalion marched off to combat and humiliatingly retreated with the rest of the Union Army.⁴⁷

Commandant Harris apparently did not anticipate or believe in the utility of those types of units. When directed to produce the battalion, he hastily filled it with brand new recruits, many of whom had never carried a weapon until mere days before marching off to battle. His method of filling the unit proved to be a recipe for disaster, as similarly handicapped U.S. Army battalions also found out. Finally, almost before the dust on the battlefield had even settled, the battalion was dissolved and the Marines quickly dispersed to what Harris thought were “their more legitimate duties in the Corps,” as parts of various ships’ detachments and garrisons at shore stations.⁴⁸

But the requirement for specially formed Marine battalions did not go away. Instead, it took a new direction in the hands of the Navy. On 5 August 1861, Admiral DuPont, finding he would be spearheading a naval effort to expand control ashore along the South Atlantic coastline, requested as a condition of his assignment that Secretary Welles provide him with a Marine battalion for amphibious operations. DuPont had earlier conducted some research on the several amphibious landings of the Mexican War that convinced him of the value of that capability. In fact, he had long been a proponent of Marines on landing parties, even writing in 1847 that Marine detachments should be doubled as a way to free sailors of that responsibility. Now he wished to put that belief to the test by having his own unit to perform as a large landing party. Welles agreed, and directed Harris to create another battalion for DuPont’s use. That second Marine battalion, also placed under the command of Major Reynolds, benefited from some of the mistakes of the first. Instead of raw recruits, Harris assured the secretary that “the officers and men selected for this important service have been thoroughly instructed in

all the duties of the soldier, are armed and equipped in the most efficient manner, and are as fine a body of men as can be found in the service.” The nineteen officers and 330 Marines were organized into three 100-man companies and a headquarters element with sufficient staff officers, even including a battalion surgeon (a first for such a unit). Reading Harris’ report, one gets the impression that he is assuring Welles that if this battalion fails, it will not be due to any failure of Harris in not providing the unit what it needed to succeed.⁴⁹ Further details regarding the employing of DuPont’s battalion can be found in Chapter VI.

For a number of reasons, including rough weather, lack of enemy resistance, and poor operational planning by DuPont, Reynolds’ battalion did not get the opportunity to provide the decisive result that DuPont hoped for. Nonetheless, when DuPont, frustrated by his inability to get the Marine battalion into action, decided to send the Marines back to Washington, D.C., both he and Reynolds assumed that the unit would remain intact for the next commander in need of their capabilities. However, like the Bull Run battalion before it, this unit also was quickly dismantled and its men sent out to a wide variety of assignments before having the opportunity to prove what it could do.

On 6 July 1863, almost two years after DuPont assumed command of the South Atlantic Blockading Squadron, President Lincoln replaced him with Admiral John A. Dahlgren. Lincoln and Welles had become disappointed at DuPont’s inability to gain control of Charleston, South Carolina. Nevertheless, Dahlgren, one of the most innovative of the Navy’s officers, entertained some of the same ideas as DuPont on how to close Charleston to the Confederates. One of those schemes required employing a

Marine battalion that would be responsive to his combat requirements. To gain such a unit, Dahlgren first resorted to the time-tested means of creating one out of the Marine detachments organic to the ships of his squadron. Beginning on 12 July 1863, Dahlgren ordered all of the Marines from the various ships to land on Morris Island to reinforce the Army troops of Brigadier General Quincy Gillmore. Gillmore's men had previously been unsuccessful in several attempts to seize Fort Wagner, a large earthen position that extended across the island.⁵⁰

The makeshift battalion, comprised of 280 Marines with only three lieutenants to lead them, spent the 16th and 17th of July practicing battalion drill. Although a small force, Gillmore made plans to employ the Marines in front of his right flank, a position that would have guaranteed them a great share of the fight. However, Dahlgren reconsidered committing them in light of the small number of officers in the unit, and after deliberating the issue recalled the battalion back to their ships. He also requested that Secretary Welles provide him with "about 500 Marines under a good officer," stating that "there will be occasion for them" in his plans. Meanwhile, on the morning of 18 July, Gillmore's attack began without the Marines. Like the previous attempts, this one also failed, producing more than 1500 Union casualties in the process. Both Gillmore and Dahlgren believed that the arrival of a Marine unit might be enough to tip the balance of power in the Union's favor.⁵¹

Back in Washington, Welles worked diligently to provide Dahlgren with his requested Marine unit. After corresponding with Harris, Welles decided that a battalion comprised of four, one-hundred man companies could be formed and dispatched to

Dahlgren. Harris proposed Major Jacob Zeilin, one of his most experienced senior officers, to lead the battalion and Welles concurred. Orders were soon issued directing Marines to report to the battalion for duty. However, when several Navy commanders protested the loss of their Marines to fill the battalion, the unit began shrinking in size until it soon consisted of only three eighty-man companies. Nonetheless, the unit contained enough officers to fill the billets of adjutant and quartermaster, and each company was led by a captain assisted by two lieutenants, four sergeants, and four corporals.⁵²

The news of the arrival of the Marine battalion at Port Royal, South Carolina, on 5 August 1863 excited Dahlgren, and he made plans with his Army counterpart to incorporate the new battalion into the overall scheme of maneuver, even directing that his organic Marines be added to the unit, creating a 540-man Marine battalion. He issued orders for Zeilin's Marines to set up camp on the south portion of Morris Island, asking that the unit "be prepared to move on instant notice." He also directed that the Marines become "accustomed" or trained "to use charges of buckshot when close action is expected, particularly in an assault." Dahlgren also recommended dyeing the Marines distinctive white belts so they would better blend into the background, and he provided "contrabands" to free the Marines of camp duties so as to "leave them free for marching, fighting, etc." He also arranged for boats for the unit, and provided additional craft equipped with boat-howitzers to cover their landing. The plan, as relayed by one lieutenant, was for the Marines to assault Fort Wagner at night from the rear while Gillmore's soldiers attacked it from the front, each element supported by fires from

Dahlgren's ironclads. Both Dahlgren and General Gillmore looked forward to the next attempt to seize Fort Wagner, each confidently believing that if they could have earlier committed a regiment of Marines "*to push ashore in the rear of Wagner, as I wished, we would have taken it.*"⁵³

However, Dahlgren soon faced strong resistance to his plan that came from an unexpected source – the Marine battalion commander, Major Zeilin. On 13 August, Zeilin reported to Dahlgren that his force was "incompetent to the duty assigned it." Believing that "Sufficient sacrifice of life has already been made during this war, in unsuccessful storming parties," Zeilin felt compelled to inform the admiral that "it is absolutely necessary that they should have time to become organized and drilled as a battalion and to know their officers and their duties on a larger scale." Driving home the main weakness of the Corps, Zeilin pointed out that "The Marine Corps is accustomed to act in small detachments on board of ship and ashore, and opportunities rarely offer to have more than one company together." In this he was absolutely correct, and yet he ignored the fact that his unit was created specifically to help break that pattern of employment. He had been given the opportunity to move beyond employment by small detachments, much as the U.S. Army had learned to do since the war began, but Zeilin proved reluctant to do so. Furthermore, Zeilin confirmed that these weaknesses were "well-known to the Commandant of the Marine Corps when he was called upon to furnish, as he was, *in the most sudden manner*, and his opinion was decidedly averse to risking so much with such material."⁵⁴ Zeilin thus confirmed, albeit indirectly, something that naval leaders must have been suspecting for some time: that Harris was

not supportive of these attempts to move the Marine Corps beyond detachment-sized operations. And importantly, Zeilin seemed to be of a like mind.

In making his case for his unit's unpreparedness for battle, Zeilin argued that his men were too raw; "men were detailed for this battalion that had not been drilled for one week." He also asserted that "few opportunities occur here for drill," a situation that doubtless applied equally well to the soldiers of Gillmore's command. Reaching further, Zeilin declared that his Marines were "Unaccustomed to living ashore," and that "the various collateral duties of soldiering" made them "out of sorts, sick, and intractable." Yet he appears to have exaggerated his claims to make the point that the unit was unprepared. Historian David Sullivan's close examination of the unit's muster rolls confirm that only ten of Zeilin's Marines had been in the Corps for less than a month (only 2 percent of the total). And if one year's service can be used as the benchmark for describing an "experienced Marine," fully 60 percent of his unit met that definition. Therefore, the facts do not match up with Zeilin's assessment. As to how much time is needed to create a cohesive unit, more time is certainly preferred, but the Marines (and the U.S. Army) had successfully employed battalions in the past with similar makeup. Zeilin's unit was certainly more cohesive, experienced, and had a much larger number of seasoned leaders than the hastily-formed unit that Major John Reynolds led into combat at the first Battle of Bull Run in 1861.⁵⁵

Zeilin's report came as a disappointing surprise to Dahlgren and forced him to alter his plans. The admiral remarked that "The Commander of Marines reports against risking his men in attacking works." He added, "Two of his officers had done the same

in conversation before,” and he exasperatedly exclaimed: “Rather hurtful. What are Marines for?”⁵⁶ It was a pointed and valid question. Dahlgren, like DuPont and Porter, had looked to the Marine Corps’ experiences in past wars and conflicts as the model for how they believed similar units could be utilized in the Civil War. But unlike past wars, the major resistance to their initiatives came from the senior Marines themselves.

Dahlgren’s frustration shone through in his recording of the event.

Furthermore, Zeilin seemed not to be fully committed to the idea of employing Marines in battalions from the very beginning. As early as 4 August, one of his lieutenants intimated in a letter that “Old Zeilen [*sic*]. . . is going to try hard, he says, to go back to New York.” In a vote of no confidence, he added, “I wish he would, and they would send [Lieutenant Colonel John] Reynolds down here.”⁵⁷ That statement may have been an isolated opinion, but in conjunction with Zeilin’s correspondence to Dahlgren less than ten days later it casts a new light on Zeilin’s resistance to serving in a new role with the battalion and the Army in South Carolina.

Part of the battalion’s readiness problems might be attributed to the continuing medical problems suffered by the fifty-seven year old Zeilin. Wounded at Bull Run and convalescing at various shore installations for the intervening two years, Zeilin continued to be frequently absent from his duties with the battalion and his condition soon worsened as a result of some disease contracted after or following his arrival at Morris Island. The debilitating sickness soon landed him in a sick bed on the USS *Wabash*. His extended absence from the battalion no doubt negatively affected the major’s attitudes and his unit’s preparations for combat. Finally, when Harris heard

about Zeilin's infirmity from third parties, the Commandant ordered Lt. Col. John G. Reynolds to South Carolina to replace Zeilin, who immediately returned to New York to take over as commander of the Marine Barracks, Brooklyn. But Lt. Col. Reynolds would arrive too late for the battalion's next action.⁵⁸

In the interim between Zeilin's departure and John Reynolds' arrival, Captain Edward McD. Reynolds assumed command of the unit and aggressively prepared it for a joint assault on Fort Wagner. At about 4:00 A.M. on 7 September, the battalion formed at the front of a long column of Army troops and led the way into Fort Wagner, finding that the Confederates had withdrawn from the position earlier that night. The Marines were presented with a good view of the position's defensive works and the damage that their own heavy guns had inflicted on the garrison. The Rebels left behind stacks of bodies and a crude attempt at a booby trap that was intended to ignite the powder magazine. Fortunately for the Marines, the device was discovered and defused before it could be activated. Fort Wagner was in Union hands at last.⁵⁹

Dahlgren immediately turned his attention to Fort Sumter, and began planning for an amphibious operation to seize that position from the Confederates. The Marine battalion figured centrally in his plans. Dahlgren proposed landing a party of sailors and Marines by small boats on Fort Sumter at night, believing that the element of surprise would work to the attacker's advantage. Unfortunately for the Marines, Dahlgren wholly underestimated the size of the enemy forces on Fort Sumter, stating that "there is nothing but a corporal's guard at the fort," and that "all we have to do is to go and take

possession of it.” In reality, the Confederates had been intercepting Union signals and had accordingly reinforced and alerted the garrison at the fort.⁶⁰

On 8 September 1863, Dahlgren requested that the Marine battalion provide 100 “volunteers” to join with 300 sailors formed into four “divisions” to seize Fort Sumter. Accordingly, Captain Charles G. McCawley and approximately 130 Marines grabbed their weapons and boarded a tug that took them alongside Dahlgren’s flagship. There, McCawley was briefed that he and his men would take part in an amphibious attack on Fort Sumter that very night. The plan seemed simple: the Marines would embark in small boats that would be towed in column and then “lay off the Fort, and protect the landing of the Divisions ahead by our fire, when we were to land ourselves and assist in the assault.” With little opportunity to rehearse, the Marines boarded small boats with the rest of landing force at about 10:00 P.M., and from that point on everything that could go wrong did go wrong, with disastrous results.⁶¹

According to veterans’ accounts, the movement to the objective area quickly became disorganized and confused. Once near the fort, the order came to cast off the boats from the tug, but strong tides scattered the force over a wide area, making it impossible for the officers to maintain control of their men. In addition, some boats snagged on buoys arrayed around the fort, further splitting the group and adding to the confusion. Some boats with sailors rowed to the fort, and when they were fired on by Confederate defenders, the Marines provided covering fires as per the plan. However, when the firing from the fort grew in intensity, the lead boats began to withdraw under orders of Commander Thomas H. Stevens, USN, the overall mission commander. In the

confusion, not all of the boats near the fort received the word to withdraw, particularly the Marines who had instead been instructed to press on with the attack. And of the few boats that did land, grenades and powder kegs thrown by the defenders quickly wrecked the craft and stranded the attackers on the thin stretch of rocky shore between the harbor and the ramparts. With no boats and no place to escape the increasing enemy fire, most of the unfortunate individuals ashore were soon forced to surrender. The attack was a total failure.⁶²

From the Union perspective, the badly planned and poorly executed night amphibious attack proved costly. Among the 400 participants, four were killed in action, twenty wounded, and one hundred-six officers and men were captured. Many of the men captured were subsequently imprisoned in the South's infamous Andersonville, Georgia, prison camp, where some died as a result of the harsh conditions and high rate of disease. The Marine contingent suffered most of all, with forty-four of the one hundred twenty-six participants becoming casualties, or about 35 percent of the total involved.⁶³

Ten days after the Fort Sumter fiasco, Lt. Col. Reynolds arrived to assume command of the rest of the battalion. The unit moved from Morris Island to Folly Island soon after, but the fighting for Charleston had quieted down considerably and there was little for the Marines to do except provide some men as a mobile reaction force on the USS *Pawnee*. In the meantime, a tug-of-war began for the Marine battalion, or rather the men of that unit, once Harris convinced Welles that they might be best employed elsewhere. On 7 October, Welles asked that Dahlgren return the Marines to

Washington, unless their “services . . . are absolutely necessary.” Perhaps he was also trying to goad Dahlgren to further action in Charleston. Dahlgren replied that he wished to keep the battalion as a security force, but Welles was not buying it. On 9 November he ordered Dahlgren to fill up the Marine detachments on his ships with Marines from the battalion, and to “direct the return of the remainder” to Philadelphia. The last specially-organized Marine battalion of the Civil War was broken up and its members ignominiously used as a source of manpower to fill shortages throughout the Corps.⁶⁴

Like the battalion raised for the First Battle of Bull Run and others since, this battalion also had failed to meet the expectations of senior naval leaders. And with its dissolution, the Navy Department would not again form another battalion of its type in this war. Indeed, it would not do so again until the Spanish - American War in 1899, thirty-six years later. Until that time, the Marine Corps would have to make do with small detachments, and the detachment-centered organizational scheme ensured that the Marine Corps’ contributions to the national military establishment remained small in scale. The organizing of the Marine Corps by detachments thus continued to restrict its institutional development for decades.

The detachment-based structure caused other problems as well. Such a system made it nearly impossible to make any long-range personnel plans or projections, since it depended wholly on a tallying of Navy ships requiring detachments. By basing Marine numbers entirely on the transient and changing needs of the Navy at some arbitrary point in time, with no provision for any excess, the Marine Corps functioned in a perennial state of manpower shortage. And since the type and number of Navy ships changed

constantly, the best the Marine Corps could do was to continue to fill the highest priority ships as defined by the Navy Department.

Therefore, it must be emphasized that the primary impetus for forming larger, more capable Marine units during the Civil War came not from the leaders of the Marine Corps, but from the commanders of Navy squadrons, with general approval and backing by the Secretary of the Navy. In fact, senior Marine leaders only grudgingly supported the creating of Marine battalions, and once formed, requested their return on the basis that the men might be best used elsewhere. Despite several excellent opportunities to expand Marine Corps missions and structure early in the war, Harris had to be ordered to provide a Marine battalion for service with the Army at the First Battle of Bull Run in July 1861. Even then, the Commandant expended little effort in providing the unit with the best, most qualified men he could muster, but instead filled the ranks of the unit with the newest recruits. To Harris, the priority for his Marines still resided in filling ships' detachments. Creating the best fighting unit for filling valid naval requirements - - major landings ashore and cooperating with the Army - - were distant seconds in priorities.

It is no small wonder that the various squadron commanders looked first to their own Marines when considering ways to better employ them in support of their particular objectives. Without exception, every squadron commander formed *ad hoc* Marine battalions at one point or another in the war, and many of these units performed very well in the missions assigned them despite being thrown together in a hasty fashion. Another advantage for the naval squadron commanders was that by forming their own

Marine battalions out of their organic assets, they gained a more capable unit that was directly responsible to their own command and prerogatives, a decided benefit for those commanders experiencing problems with “cooperating” Army counterparts who sometimes focused on different objectives.

However, these impromptu units possessed several shortcomings as a result of generally being thrown together right before an action rather than being deliberately organized, trained and equipped for their task. Furthermore, these *ad hoc* units were temporary ones, existing for only a short period of time before being dissolved and the members being sent back to their respective ships. This situation made it difficult to realize valuable lessons learned from their experiences and make institutional changes to improve performances in the future.

Some forward-thinking naval squadron commanders understood the disadvantages of creating their own temporary units and instead asked for specially formed Marine battalions to augment their forces. In general, Secretary Welles supported their requests, but the units created were not made permanent, in part because the Corps’ leaders failed to propose such a solution and instead insisted on the quick return of the units so the manpower might be used for “more legitimate duties.”⁶⁵ Particularly in the early stages of the war, such a proposal for a permanent battalion might have been favorably entertained, and may also have helped jolt the Marine Corps’ own stuttering recruiting effort. But evidently senior marine leaders did not consider the mission of serving in large formations with the Army or as part of a naval expedition to be as important as serving in a ship’s detachment. On the road to creating a more

flexible and capable organization, the Marine Corps had executed an about face and insisted on moving backward along its line of march.

Endnotes

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- ¹ U.S. War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, 128 vols. and atlas (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1880-1901), Series I, 27, pt. 2: 878-82, 887, 894, 896-97, 928 (hereafter cited as *OR*, and all citations are to Series I, unless otherwise indicated), Barnet Schecter, *The Devil's Own Work: The Civil War Draft Riots and the Fight to Reconstruct America* (New York: Holtzbrinck, 2005), 174, 188; Adrian Cook, *The Armies of the Streets: The New York City Draft Riots of 1863* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1974), 84, 103, 107-08, 116-17.
- ² See the discussion in Chapter IV.
- ³ 2nd Lt. Henry Clay Cochrane to "Dear Parents," Marine Barracks, Mound City [Illinois], 15 June 1864, Henry Clay Cochrane Papers, Archives and Special Collections, Alfred M. Gray Research Center (hereafter GRC), Marine Corps Historical Division, Quantico, Virginia; David M. Sullivan, *The United States Marine Corps in the Civil War - The Third Year* (Shippensburg, Pa.: White Mane Publishing Company, 1998), 123-24.
- ⁴ Compiled from Navy Dept., "Report of the Secretary of the Navy, 1861," *U.S. Congressional Serial Set* 1119, Sess. vol. 3, 37th Cong., 2nd Sess., Senate Executive Document 1, Pt. 3 (hereafter "SecNav Annual Report, 1861"), 517-19; and Navy Dept., "Report of the Secretary of the Navy, 1862," 1 December 1862, *Serial Set* 1158, Sess. vol. 3, 37th Cong., 3rd Sess., House Exec. Doc. 1, Pt. 3 (hereafter "SecNav Annual Report, 1862"), 902.
- ⁵ According to "SecNav Annual Report, 1861," 517-19, there were about 400 Marines in Washington, D.C., 150 apiece in Brooklyn and Philadelphia, and close to 80 each at Portsmouth and Boston, representing about 20 percent of total USMC strength at that time; "SecNav Annual Report, 1862," 902.
- ⁶ "SecNav Annual Report, 1861," 517-19;
- ⁷ Compiled by the author from "SecNav Annual Report, 1861," 517-19.
- ⁸ See the discussion in Chapter III of this dissertation.
- ⁹ Navy Dept., *Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of the Rebellion*, 30 volumes and index (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1894-1922), Series I, 18: 190 (hereafter referred to as *ORN*, and all citations are to Series I, unless otherwise indicated), quote from same.

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- ¹⁰ Allan R. Millett, *Semper Fidelis: The History of the United States Marine Corps* ([1980]; Revised and expanded ed. New York: Free Press, 1991), 97-98, quotes from 97; also referencing Jane Blakeney, *Heroes, U.S. Marine Corps, 1861-1955* (Washington, D.C.: Guthrie Lithograph, 1957), 5-6, that provides more detail regarding the various Medal of Honor recipients. For details regarding individual actions, see the award citations and recommendations for: Richard Binder, J. Henry Denig, Isaac N. Fry, Michael Hudson, Martin James, John F. Mackie (quote from citation), Andrew Miller, Miles Oviatt, Willard M. Smith, David Sprowle, and Pinkerton R. Vaughn.
- ¹¹ When critics of the Marine Corps again threatened to disband the unit in 1863, John Harris resorted to the same tactic used successfully by his predecessor, Archibald Henderson. Harris drafted letters to senior Navy officers soliciting their input and support for the Corps' continuance. The effort worked: most of the respondents had good comments about their Marines.
- ¹² John M. Taylor, "Defiance: Raphael Semmes of the *Alabama*," in *Raiders and Blockaders: The Civil War Afloat*, William N. Still, Jr., John M. Taylor, and Norman C. Delaney, eds. (Washington, D.C.: Brassey's, 1998), 30-32.
- ¹³ Harris to Major Addison Garland, HQMC, Washington, D.C., 26 November 1862, RG 127 (Field Organization Records, Records of the United States Marine Corps), Entry 4: "Letters Sent, August 1798 - June 1810 and March 1804 - February 1884" (hereafter "Letters Sent, 1798-1884"), National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C. (hereafter NA); Garland to Harris, California Steamer *Ariel*, Near Aspinwall [now Colon, Panama], 12 December 1862, RG 127, "Letters Received - HD," NA; "Report of Commander [Raphael] Semmes, C.S. Navy, Commanding CSS *Alabama*, of the Cruise of that Vessel from August 24, 1862, to January 4, 1863," CSS *Alabama*, Arcas [Cay] Island, Gulf of Mexico, 4 January 1863, reprinted in *ORN*, 1: 778-80; *ORN*, 1: 782, 577-80, 595; Gideon Welles, *Welles Diary*, Entry for 29 December 1862, quote from text; Raphael Semmes, *Memoirs of Service Afloat, During the War Between the States* (Baltimore: Kelly, Piet & Co., 1869), 532-35.
- ¹⁴ Austin Quimby's "Journal," Entry for 19 June 1864, Catalog number 656/1862-4K, Peabody Essex Museum, Salem Massachusetts, reprinted in Sullivan, *The Third Year*, 206, first quote from text; *ORN*, 3: 649-51, 59-78, second and third quotes from 66; Taylor, "Defiance," 31-32.
- ¹⁵ *ORN*, 3: 631-35, 254-58; Sullivan, *The Third Year*, 190-92; Bern Anderson, *By Sea and By River: The Naval History of the Civil War* (New York: Knopf, 1962), 203.

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- ¹⁶ *ORN*, 13: 579-86, 617-20; William Harwar Parker, *Recollections of a Naval Officer, 1841-1865*, (New York: C. Scribners' Sons, 1883), 294-305; Admiral Samuel F. DuPont to "Mrs. [Sophie Madeleine] DuPont," Wabash, Port Royal, [S.C.], 1 February 1863, reprinted in Samuel F. DuPont, *Samuel Francis DuPont: A Selection From His Civil War Letters*, John D. Hayes, ed., 3 vols. (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1969), 2: 402-06.
- ¹⁷ For examples of Harris correcting subordinates purported to be "unwilling to be associated with the Navy," see Harris to Major Addison Garland, HQMC, Washington, D.C., 28 December 1863, RG 127, Entry 4: "Letters Sent, 1798-1884," NA, quote from text; and Harris to Captain David M. Cohen, HQMC, Washington, D.C., 18 February 1864, RG 127, Entry 4: "Letters Sent, 1798-1884," NA. See the discussion in Joseph Alexander, "John Harris," *Commandants of the Marine Corps*, eds. Allan R. Millett and Jack Shulimson (Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 2004), 83.
- ¹⁸ *ORN*, 10: 457-59; *ORN*, 11: 12-18, 121-24, quote from 12.
- ¹⁹ *ORN*, 15: 61-63, 153-57, quote from 154.
- ²⁰ Frank L. Church, *Civil War Marine: A Diary of the Red River Expedition, 1864*, Annotated and edited by James P. Jones and Edward F. Keuchel (Washington, D.C.: History and Museums Division, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, 1975) (hereafter *Church Diary*), 31, 46.
- ²¹ *Church Diary*, 46-53, 56-57; *OR*, 46, pt. 1: 583-84; also *ORN*, 26: 168-70.
- ²² *New York Times*, 10 May 1864, 1; "Torpedoes Used by the Rebels," *Scientific American* 11, No. 2 (New Series) (9 July 1864), 21; Robert M. Browning, *From Cape Charles to Cape Fear: The North Atlantic Blockading Squadron During the Civil War* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1993), 73; *ORN*, 10: 9-16; Log of the USS *Mackinaw*, RG 24 (Deck Logs), Entry for 7 May 1864, NA; Sullivan, *The Third Year*, 251-53.
- ²³ *ORN*, 10: 13.
- ²⁴ *ORN*, 15: 282, 289-93, 298, 310, quote from 310; Sullivan, *The Third Year*, 222-26
- ²⁵ *ORN*, 4: 114-16; Francis and George Gardner Papers, 1/8 Seaman, Library of Congress, Manuscript Collection; Orders No. 46, Headquarters, Fort Pickens, Fla., 26 May 1861, RG 127, Entry 42: "Letters Received," NA.

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- ²⁶ Colonel Commandant John Harris to Lieutenant A[ugustus] S. Nicholson, HQ, USMC, 19 April 1861, RG 127, Entry 4: "Letters Sent, 1798 - 1884," NA; Testimony of Lieutenant Augustus S. Nicholson, 13 November 1861, contained in "Hale Report," *Serial Set* 1125, Sess. vol. 1, 37th Cong., 2nd Sess., S. Report 37, 18 April 1862, 55-57.
- ²⁷ *OR*, 4: 582, 585-86, 589-90; *ORN*, 6: 121, 125-27, 134-35, 138-40; "SecNav Annual Report, 1861," 7, 46-47.
- ²⁸ *ORN*, 15: 60-63, 153-57, 276-282; Muster Rolls of the USS *Canandaigua*, USS *Housatonic*, USS *New Ironsides*, and USS *South Carolina* for the Months of December 1863, January 1864, and February 1864, RG 127, Muster Rolls of the USMC, 1798-1940, NA; RG 24, Deck Logs, Log of the USS *Nipsic*, Entry for 29 December 1863, and USS *South Carolina*, Entry for 7 February 1864, NA; "Journal Kept by Lieut[enant] H[enry] A. Bartlett, U.S. Marine Corps," Copy in the Henry A. Bartlett File, Historical Reference Branch, Archives and Special Collections, Gray Research Center, Quantico, Virginia (hereafter GRC); Sullivan, *The Third Year*, 220-22.
- ²⁹ William Lamb, "Fort Fisher: The Battles Fought There in 1864 and '65," *Southern Historical Society Papers* 21 (1893), 266-75; *ORN*, 11: 362-69; J. Thomas Scharf, *History of the Confederate States Navy, From Its Organization to the Surrender of Its Last Vessel* (New York: Rogers & Sherwood, 1887), 417-18.
- ³⁰ *ORN*, 11: 362-69; George W. Van Hoose, "The Confederate States Marine Corps," *Marine Corps Gazette* 13 (September 1928), 173; Edwin N. McClellan, "The Capture of Fort Fisher," *Marine Corps Gazette* 4 (March 1920), 61-63, 69; Michael E. Krivdo, "The Birth, Life and Death of the Confederate States Marine Corps," (M.A. thesis, Texas A&M University, 2006), 195-97; Scharf, *History of the Confederate States Navy*, 417-18; Lamb, "Fort Fisher," 266-75. During the bombardment, Marines from over twenty ship's detachments manned naval artillery pieces and fired hundreds of rounds into the fort.
- ³¹ *ORN*, 11: 364-69; Chester Hearn, *Admiral David Dixon Porter: The Civil War Years* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1996), 292-95; Rod Gragg, *Confederate Goliath: The Battle for Fort Fisher* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1991), 255-57.
- ³² Sketch from William Lamb, "The Defense of Fort Fisher," *Battles and Leaders*, 4: 644.

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- ³³ Quoted text from General Orders No. 81, Rear-Admiral David D. Porter, North Atlantic Squadron, Flagship *Malvern*, 4 January 1865, reprinted in *ORN*, 11: 427.
- ³⁴ *ORN*, 11: 429-46, 576-80; 1st Lt. Louis E. Fagan to Colonel Commandant Jacob Zeilin, USS *Wabash*, At Sea, 17 January 1865, RG 127, "Letters Received – HD," NA; Gragg, , 150-54.
- ³⁵ *ORN*, 11: 526-27, 552-54, 576-80; Gragg, *Confederate Goliath*, 154-67.
- ³⁶ *ORN*, 11: 529.
- ³⁷ *ORN*, 11: 526-27, 552-54, 576-80; Gragg, *Confederate Goliath*, 167-87, 191-226; Hearn, *Admiral David Dixon Porter*, 300-301.
- ³⁸ *ORN*, 11: 434, 439-40, 452-54, 496, 499, 504, 524-26, 532, 540, 545, 548; casualty figures at *ORN* 11: 443-44. A total of six Marines earned the Medal of Honor for their exemplary performance in the battle; Blakeney, *Heroes, U.S. Marine Corps*, 5-6.
- ³⁹ "Report of Rear –Admiral Porter, U.S.N.," North Atlantic Squadron, U.S. Flagship *Malvern*, off Fort Fisher, 15 January 1865, in *ORN*, 11: 434-35, quote from 434.
- ⁴⁰ Quotes from *ibid.*, 11: 434 and 435.
- ⁴¹ Millett, *Semper Fidelis*, 99; "Detailed Report of Rear-Admiral Porter, U.S. Navy, Transmitting Lists of Casualties," North Atlantic Squadron, U.S. Flagship *Malvern*, Off Fort Fisher, 17 January 1865, in *ORN*, 11: 436-42, quotes from 439 and 441.
- ⁴² Porter to "My Dear [Gustavus Vasa] Fox," U.S. Flag Ship *Malvern*, Cape Fear River, N.C., 21 January 1865, Gustavus Vasa Fox Collection, New York Historical Society, New York, N.Y., reprinted in James M. Merrill, "The Fort Fisher and Wilmington Campaign: Letters From Rear Admiral David D. Porter," *North Carolina Historical Review* 35 (October 1958), 470-73, quote from 472.
- ⁴³ Fox to James W. Grimes, 1 June 1865, Gustavus Vasa Fox Collection, New York Historical Society, New York, N.Y., quote from text, also cited in DuPont, *Civil War Letters*, 373; Robert Debs Heintz, Jr., *Soldiers of the Sea: The United States Marine Corps, 1775-1962* (second ed., Baltimore: Nautical and Aviation Publishing Company of America, 1991 [1962]), 79; Congress, *House and Senate Bills and Resolutions*, H.R. 607, 38th Cong., 2nd Sess., 1864, U. S. Senate, *Senate Journal*, 38th Cong., 2nd Session, 26 January 1865, 103; House of

Representatives, "Report by the Committee on Naval Affairs, on H.R. 1072," 28 May 1892.

- ⁴⁴ Heinl, *Soldiers of the Sea*, 82-83; Millett, *Semper Fidelis*, 98-99; Gragg, *Confederate Goliath*, 255-57; Jack Shulimson, "Jacob Zeilin," in *Commandants of the Marine Corps*, 92. For Porter's side of the issue, see David Dixon Porter, *The Naval History of the Civil War*, 2 vols. (New York: Sherman, 1886), especially 2: 716; Chester Hearn's biography, *Admiral David Dixon Porter*, strangely ignores the controversy surrounding who should accept responsibility for the failure. For a detailed account of the controversy, see also David M. Sullivan, *The United States Marine Corps in the Civil War - The Final Year* (Shippensburg, Pa.: White Mane Books, 2000), 167-84.
- ⁴⁵ Millett, *Semper Fidelis*, 98-99, quote from 99; Gragg, *Confederate Goliath*, 255-57; Scharf, *History of the Confederate States Navy*, 417-21.
- ⁴⁶ Collum, *History*, 190-95; Millett, *Semper Fidelis*, 105-06.
- ⁴⁷ Welles to Harris, Navy Department, Washington, D.C., 15 July 1861, RG 80 (General Records of the Dept. of the Navy, Records of the Office of the Secretary of the Navy), Entry 1 (Letters to the Commandant and Other Officers of the Marine Corps) (hereafter "Letters Sent"), NA; "SecNav Annual Report, 1861," 515-16, 37-38.
- ⁴⁸ "SecNav Annual Report, 1861," 515-16, 37-38; Harris to Welles, HQMC, Washington, D.C., 24 July 1861, RG 80, Entry 14 (Letters From the Commandant and Other Officers of the Marine Corps, January 1828 - December 1886) (hereafter "Letters Received"), NA, quote from text.
- ⁴⁹ "SecNav Annual Report, 1861," quote from 516; Welles to DuPont, Navy Department, Washington, D.C., 5 August 1861, reprinted in DuPont, *Civil War Letters*, 1: 126-27; Thornton Alexander Jenkins to DuPont, Washington, [D.C.], 9 August 1861, reprinted in Dupont, *Civil War Letters*, 131-31; DuPont to Sophie DuPont, 4 November 1847, Henry Francis DuPont Collection of Winterthur Manuscripts (Mss 9-1050), Eleutherian Mills Historical Library, Greentown, Delaware; *ORN*, 12, 209-10; Harris to Reynolds, HQMC, Washington, D.C., 30 September 1861, RG 127, Entry 4: "Letters Sent, 1798-1884," NA; John G. Reynolds, *Proceedings of a Marine General Court Martial, Convened at Washington City, May 7, 1862, for the Trial of Lieut. Col. John Geo. Reynolds, U.S. Marine Corps* (Washington, D.C.: Henry Polkinhorn, Printer, 1862), 15, 24, 64-66, 68, 80-81.

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- ⁵⁰ *ORN* 14: 319, 337, 340-41; Logbooks of the USS *Canandaigua*, *New Ironsides*, *Pawnee*, and *Wabash*, Entries for 13-15 July 1863, RG 24 (Bureau of Naval Personnel, Deck Logs), NA; Welles to DuPont, Navy Dept., Washington, D.C., 5 August 1861, reprinted in DuPont, *Civil War Letters*, 1: 126-27; Robert Galbraith to “Dear Mother,” USS *Wabash*, [Off Charleston, South Carolina,] 15 July 1863, Robert Galbraith Papers, New York State Archives, Albany, N.Y.; John Johnson, *The Defense of Charleston Harbor, 1863-1865* ([1889]; reprinted, Freeport, N.Y.: Books for Libraries Press, 1970), 86-87; Navy Dept., “Report of the Secretary of the Navy, 1863,” *Serial Set* 1183, Sess. vol. 4, 7 December 1863, 38th Cong., 1st Sess., H. Exec. Doc. 1, pt. 4 (hereafter “SecNav Annual Report, 1863”), 5, 247.
- ⁵¹ *ORN*, 14: 357-58, 381-82, quotes from 358; Johnson, *Defense of Charleston Harbor*, 101-07; Madeleine Vinton Dahlgren, *Memoir of John A. Dahlgren, Rear-Admiral, United States Navy* (New York: Charles L. Webster & Co., 1891), 401-404; “SecNav Annual Report, 1863,” 247. Interestingly, Dahlgren’s biographers do not discuss the admiral’s thoughts regarding the employing of Marines, despite the presence of clear references to those concepts in his correspondence; see for example Robert J. Schneller, Jr., *A Quest for Glory: A Biography of Rear Admiral John A. Dahlgren* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1996).
- ⁵² Harris to Welles, Marine Barracks, Brooklyn, [New York], 31 July 1863, RG 80, Entry 14: “Letters Received,” NA; Captain John C. Grayson, Commanding, Marine Barracks, Brooklyn, [New York], 2 August 1863, RG 127, “Letters Received – GR,” NA.
- ⁵³ *ORN*, 14: 420-21, 428-29, first three quotes from 429; Frederick Tomlinson Peet, *Personal Experiences in the Civil War* (New York: Printed by the Author, 1905), copy in the Cornell University Library, Ithaca, New York, 79-80; Frederick Tomlinson Peet, *Civil War Letters and Documents of Frederick Tomlinson Peet* (Newport, R.I.: Printed by the Author, 1917), copy in the New York Public Library, New York, 234-38; Dahlgren, *Memoir*, final quote from 406, with emphasis in original.
- ⁵⁴ “Report of Major [Jacob] Zeilen, U.S. Marine Corps, Regarding the Incompetency of the Battalion under his Command for the Duty Assigned,” Zeilen to Dahlgren, Headquarters Marine Battalion, Morris Island, South Carolina, 13 August 1863, reprinted in *ORN*, 14: 439-40, quotes from text, with emphasis added.
- ⁵⁵ *ORN*, 14: 439-40, quotes from the text; Muster Rolls for Companies A, B, C, and D Marine Battalion, Morris Island, South Carolina, August 1863, RG 127, Muster Rolls of the United States Marine Corps, 1798-1940, NA; Sullivan, *The Third Year*, 55-57.

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- ⁵⁶ Lieutenant Robert L. Meade to “Dear Dick” [Lieutenant Commander Richard W. Meade, Jr., USN], Hilton Head, South Carolina, 4 August 1863, Robert Meade Papers, Archives and Special Collections, GRC, Quantico, Va.; Peet, *Personal Experiences*, 76-80; Peet, *Civil War Letters and Documents*, 234-38; Dahlgren, *Memoir*, final quote from 406, with emphasis in original.
- ⁵⁷ Lieutenant Robert L. Meade to “Dear Dick” [Lieutenant Commander Richard W. Meade, Jr., USN], Hilton Head, South Carolina, 4 August 1863, Meade Papers, Archives and Special Collections, GRC, Quantico, Va., quotes from text.
- ⁵⁸ Peet, *Personal Experiences*, 76-80; Peet, *Civil War Letters and Documents*, 234-38; Harris to Zeilen, HQMC, Washington, D.C., 4 September 1863, RG 127, Entry 4: “Letters Sent, 1798 - 1884,” NA; Joseph Alexander, “Jacob Zeilin,” in *Commandants of the Marine Corps*, Allan R. Millett and Jack Shulimson, eds. (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2004), 99-100.
- ⁵⁹ *ORN*, 14: 542-50; Peet, *Personal Experiences*, 80-85; Peet, *Civil War Letters and Documents*, 239-40; Dahlgren to Captain Edward McD. Reynolds, Flag Steamer *Philadelphia*, Off Morris Island, [S.C.], 11 September 1863, Letter Book C, 28 August – 10 October 1863, John A. Dahlgren Papers, Naval Historical Foundation Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.. Captain Edward McDonald Reynolds was the son of Lt. Col. John Reynolds.
- ⁶⁰ *ORN*, 14: 548-49, 625-633, quote from 633; Peet, *Personal Experiences*, 85-86; Peet, *Civil War Letters and Documents*, 245-47; Dahlgren, *Memoir*, 416; Johnson, *Defense of Charleston Harbor*, 72-73; Alfred Roman, *The Military Operations of General Beauregard in the War Between the States, 1861 to 1865*, 2 vols. (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1884), 2: 153-57.
- ⁶¹ *ORN*, 14: 622-24; Peet, *Personal Experiences*, 85-86; Peet, *Civil War Letters and Documents*, 247-49; Document, “Journal of Robert L. Meade,” Meade Papers, Archives and Special Collections, GRC, Quantico, VA, quotes from text.
- ⁶² *ORN*, 14: 622-33; “Retrospective,” GRC, Quantico, Va.; Dahlgren, *Memoir*, 414; Charles M. Remey, ed., *Life and Letters of Rear Admiral George Collier Remey, United States Navy, 1841 – 1928*, 10 vols. (Washington, D.C.: Charles Mason Remey, 1939), 1: 109-10; “SecNav Annual Report, 1863,” 265-75; Sullivan, *The Third Year*, 66-86; Peet, *Civil War Letters and Documents*, 247-50; Johnson, *Defense of Charleston Harbor*, 160-64.
- ⁶³ Peet, *Civil War Letters and Documents*, 247-50, quote from ; Ralph W. Donnelly, Unpublished Manuscript entitled “38 Missing Marines,” Ralph W. Donnelly

Papers, Archives and Special Collections, GRC, Quantico, Va.; “SecNav Annual Report, 1863” 265-75; Sullivan, *The Third Year*, 80-82. Of the Marines sent to Andersonville prison, nineteen did not survive their captivity.

⁶⁴ *ORN*, 15: 9, 25, 71, 104.

⁶⁵ Harris to Welles, HQMC, Washington, D.C., 24 July 1861, RG 80, Entry 14: “Letters Received,” NA, quote from text with emphasis added.

CHAPTER VIII

THE WAR'S END, AND THE PATH AHEAD

Marines fought in one of the last major battles of the Eastern Theater, but they were gray-clad Confederate Marines, not U.S. Marines. On 6 April 1865, a Confederate Marine battalion participated in what the contemporary chronicler John Scharf called the “last of the great battles of the war” as part of a Naval Brigade that guarded the rear of General Robert E. Lee’s retreating Army of Northern Virginia. For several days after abandoning the Confederate capital of Richmond, Virginia, Confederate Marines skirmished with General Philip Sheridan’s pursuing Federal cavalry forces that were increasing pressure on Lee’s army. Now, on the morning of the 6th, the Naval Brigade occupied hasty defensive positions along the trace of Saylor’s Creek, anchoring the right side of the Confederate line. The Confederate Marines were determined to put up a stiff resistance and delay Sheridan’s forces long enough for Lee to pull his army across the Appomattox River. The battle soon developed all along the Confederate lines, and as it progressed, Confederate infantry brigades around the naval force ceased firing and fell back, yet the Naval Brigade held firm. Soon after, Sheridan’s men captured Confederate General Richard Ewell and his command group and Ewell issued orders to surrender to the rest of his corps, including the Naval Brigade and Marines.¹

But the Naval Brigade disregarded Ewell’s command to quit, and instead continued to fight the Federal forces to delay their advance on Lee’s army. The Confederate Marines engaged two Union regiments with a savage determination.

Recalling the ferocity of the fighting, one Union soldier later stated that the battle was “one of the fiercest, most hand-to-hand and literally savage encounters of the war, with the remnant’s [*sic*] of Stile’s battalion and that of the Marines.... They clubbed their muskets, fired pistols into each other’s faces, and used the bayonet savagely.”² Another Confederate participant described with pride that “Those Marines fought like tigers and against odds of at least ten to one.”³ And as the remaining Confederate Army units crumbled and surrendered around them, the remnants of the Naval Brigade continued to fight on as an isolated pocket of fierce resistance, eventually consolidating their thin lines along some dense woods. Before long, the survivors of the Naval Brigade discovered that they were wholly surrounded by Federal troops. Only when forced to confront the realities of how untenable the position was did the Brigade commander, Confederate Navy Flag-Officer John R. Tucker, surrender his force. Yet even then some Marines managed to escape the Union encirclement only to end up surrendering with the remnants of Lee’s Army at Appomattox three days later.⁴

This chapter examines the U.S. Marine Corps’ actions at the end of the war, and whether the lessons emerging from the conflict were applied to improve the structure and organization to create a unit better attuned to the requirements of the nation. In addition, the actions of Congress and the Navy Department are further explored, particularly where opportunities existed to make the changes that might have resulted in a more effective and efficient U.S. Marine Corps. Comparison is also made with other Marine organizations to discern differences and similarities between the roles and missions fulfilled by those organizations that might have suggested where changes in the

U.S. Marine Corps' structure and missions might have been made to make it a better fit within the military establishment. Finally, the effect that the war's experience had on the officer corps is scrutinized to see what changes were produced that influenced future Marines.

For the U.S. Marine Corps, its last major action of the war had been at the seizure of the Confederacy's Fort Fisher near Wilmington, North Carolina. But there would be one final experiment with Marine battalions. In late January 1865, Rear-Admiral John A. Dahlgren ordered that the Marines of his squadron's vessels be consolidated into a single battalion unit. The senior Marine officer, First Lieutenant George G. Stoddard, received an appointment as acting lieutenant colonel and commanded the battalion. His next senior officer, First Lieutenant Charles F. Williams, became his executive officer with an acting rank of major. In all, 350 Marines were organized into companies led by senior enlisted men. Many of the Marines had seen recent service with the Marine battalion that assaulted the sea face of Fort Fisher. The battalion conducted intensive tactical drills for a couple of weeks until it was landed at Bull's Bay near Charleston, South Carolina, on 16 February 1865.⁵

The landing put new pressure on the Confederate forces defending Charleston and, in combination with the actions of Major General William T. Sherman's army advancing north from Savannah, Georgia, helped convince the rebels to evacuate the city. The following day, 17 February 1865, the Confederate army pulled out of Charleston, and Dahlgren wasted no time in ordering his ships to enter the harbor and occupy the city whose capture had long eluded him. The Marines were then ordered to

take Battery White near Georgetown, South Carolina, but that position, too, had already been abandoned by the Confederates some days before. For their role in helping to unhinge the Confederate defenders Dahlgren commended Stoddard in his report to the Navy Department. Stoddard “did good service in the field with the Marines of the Fleet brigade,” again proving that the Corps’ new generation of leaders was capable of handling the challenges of employment as larger formations. Furthermore, Dahlgren remarked that Stoddard “now has command of the largest force of Marines that has been collected for some time,” and recommended he be awarded a brevet promotion. These types of actions, thought Dahlgren in answering his question of eighteen months previous, are what Marines are really for.⁶

For its part, Congress paid very little attention to the Marine Corps during the war and when it did, those efforts generally fell into one of two categories. The first involved several initiatives to simply abolish the Corps altogether or to transfer all of its personnel and assets to the army. Presumably the Army would then provide personnel to fill the roles of Marines in a more efficient manner. The second category of congressional attention involved routine debate concerning the issue of adding personnel to the Marine Corps’ structure to meet the needs of filling the expanding number of warships requiring Marine detachments. To put it bluntly, Congress’s efforts to simply add personnel to the Corps did not solve the problems that brought about the occasional cries to do away with the service. Instead, Congress simply treated the symptoms without curing the illness. The real issues were: what should the Marines be doing? Were the Marines being employed in the best possible manner to meet fleet

requirements? If not, what structural changes should be made to better help the Corps to meet its requirements? Instead, the debate continued to center on the narrow issue of whether the increasingly irrelevant mission of providing separate detachments aboard ships could be better handled by Marines, the Army, or in some other fashion.

For instance, as early as 1862 a movement arose in Congress to abolish the Marine Corps altogether and send the men to the Army as some separate regiment that would then presumably fill ships' detachments. Although that idea had appeared from time to time in the past, the initiative had previously been defeated by antebellum Commandant Archibald Henderson. The latest iteration may have arisen as a response from some in Congress to a remark that Navy Secretary Gideon Welles had made in his 1862 annual report. In it, Welles had written that "There has always been a divided opinion among naval officers in regard to maintaining a distinct organization of marines for service on ships-of-war, even before the great change which the service has undergone by the introduction of steamers." Explaining the incongruity of having a service dictated partly by army regulations and partly by those of the Navy, he recommended that "it would be better were the corps to be permanently attached to either the naval or army service." Unexplained was the fact that in the Navy's rapid expansion, ships were now going to war without Marines. Furthermore, many of the Navy's officers had already expressed their opinion that Marines *did* have a valid function on their ships. Perhaps the secretary was voicing his growing frustration with the antics of some of the Corps' senior leaders: after all, it had only been a few months previous that embarrassing incidents like the Reynolds court-martial prompted Welles to

exasperatedly intimate in his diary that “Almost all the [Corps’] elder officers are at loggerheads and ought to be retired.”⁷

Exactly three weeks after Welles’ report was released, the Senate suddenly adopted a resolution directing the Committee on Naval Affairs to “inquire into the expediency of abolishing the marine corps as a naval organization, and of attaching it to the army as the Twentieth Regiment of Infantry.” The sponsor of the resolution was Senator James W. Grimes of Iowa, a member of the Committee on Naval Affairs and a colleague of Welles. Although the secretary’s diary does not record any specific meeting with Grimes on the subject, it is probable that Welles asked Grimes to take action on the remarks he made in his report. In any event, Grimes felt compelled to raise the issue on the floor of the Senate and formally recommend that it be investigated. And it is highly unlikely that Grimes would do so without coordinating his proposal with other members of the Committee on Naval Affairs beforehand.⁸

The Chairman of the Committee on Naval Affairs, Senator John P. Hale of New Hampshire, may have had ulterior motives that extended beyond simply investigating the best means of organizing and employing Marines. Hale and Welles had a long history of colliding with one another on a wide range of issues related to Navy departmental matters. For his part, Welles believed Hale to be far more interested in political gain than in increasing naval efficiencies. In his diary, Welles confided that Hale, despite being a Republican, was consistently “censorious to all [the Administration,] but especially to the Navy Department, which, instead of supporting, he omits no opportunity to assail and embarrass.” Welles further characterized his relations

with the senator as poor. “In the entire period of my administration of the Navy Department, I have never received aid, encouragement, or assistance of any kind whatever from the Chairman of the Naval Committee of the Senate, but constant, pointed opposition, embarrassment, and petty annoyance.” Hale “does nothing to assist but much to embarrass and counteract the department.” Hale may have supported Grimes’ action out of the hope that some embarrassment might fall on Welles. And in this matter the Marine Corps appeared caught in the middle of a political struggle between some members of Congress and the Navy Department. Therefore, when the news of the strike against the Corps’ institutional existence appeared in the *New York Times*, the service again assumed a defensive posture.⁹

Some Marine officers took immediate action to defuse the effort before it could build. Borrowing a tactic successfully used by Archibald Henderson in the past during similar congressional attempts to disband the Corps, Major William B. Slack wrote to Rear Admiral Dixon Porter to seek his opinion on the matter. Porter answered quickly, despite being in the midst of operations against Fort Hindman, on the Arkansas River. He penned Slack a forceful defense of the Marine Corps that saw wide circulation in the capital. Calling any attempt to place the Corps in the Army “a great calamity,” Porter declared that “a ship without Marines is no ship of war at all.” Furthermore, “The past efficiency of our Marine Corps fills one of the brightest pages in the history of our country.” To Porter, anyone who thought otherwise on the matter “is demented.” These were strong words of support originating from a man who, at that time was one of America’s most famous naval leaders.¹⁰

Porter's testimonial seemed to have some effect in dampening the enthusiasm for eliminating the Marine Corps. He argued that Marines filled an integral part in naval operations and were valued members on warships. Slack's effort seems to have worked because shortly after the letter's circulation the Senate backed away from the initiative. On 28 February 1863, the Senate voted unanimously to relieve the Naval Affairs Committee of any responsibility for further investigating the expediency of abolishing the Corps, seemingly putting the matter to rest. The *Congressional Globe* recorded no debate on the issue, only that the Senate agreed to Grimes' request. The matter was dropped for the time being. The Marines had avoided another political hatchet but others were being sharpened.¹¹

The issue of abolishing the Marine Corps continued to simmer. In December of 1863 the idea resurfaced in congressional debates and rumors of another attempt reached the ears of Marine officers. Like the previous year's effort, part of the impetus for debating the future of the Corps may have evolved out of remarks that Secretary Welles made in his annual report for 1863. In it, Welles indicated he was not pleased with the Marines' efforts to field larger combat organizations such as battalions. The secretary observed that "On a few important occasions a battalion has been detailed for army duty; but the want of equipment and other causes render their employment in a service to which they are not drilled, *and to which they do not belong*, a question of doubtful expediency." He concluded again that it might be "better in every respect to attach the corps permanently to the navy or army, and make it exclusively subject to the control of one or the other branches of the service, instead of occupying an equivocal position as

regards both.” This is an unusual conclusion for him to reach, since as Secretary of the Navy he already exercised complete control over the Marine Corps whether it was a separate service or not. The Corps still fell under the Department of the Navy and the Reorganization Act of 1834 gave Welles close control over the Corps’ administration and activities. Furthermore, the primary impetus for having Marines serve in larger combat formations originated predominantly from his own squadron commanders who were seeking to fill a valid operational requirement. Welles’ remarks may have originated out of a frustration generated by the Corps’ sub-par performance as battalions. Welles rightfully did not fault the individual Marines, or even the performance of the junior officers, who he praised as persons “who would do credit to any service.” Rather, his criticism centered on areas that were the clear responsibilities of the Corps’ senior officers. His comments regarding the reasons for the units’ failing to perform to expectations hinted at problems of command, yet in the same report he recommended that the Commandant be made a general officer. In any event, Welles’ curt and often conflicting comments may have revived the notion that some reorganization of the Marine Corps was in order.¹²

In Commandant Harris’ portion of that same report he asked for an increase of 500 men and permission to offer recruits a bounty of fifty dollars to help the service compete with the army’s recruiting tactics. But Harris did not address Welles’ comments regarding a reorganizing of the Corps. Strangely, Harris admitted that his service’s practice of being “broken up into so many small detachments” adversely affected its ability “to concentrate even a full company for purposes of military

instruction, drill, &c.” That criticism is unusual because it directly contradicted Harris’ long-established priorities and undermined the Commandant’s own concept for employing Marines. On one hand he blamed the poor performances of the battalions on the fact that his men were not regularly assigned to such units and could therefore spend little time training in larger formations. But on the other hand, Harris failed to mention that he was the principle advocate for employing his men in such a manner. Harris also neglected to offer any recommendations to resolve the problem, such as forming a permanent battalion.¹³

Despite ignoring Welles’ criticisms in his own annual report, Harris nonetheless took positive action on the side to forestall any new congressional attempt to abolish or reorganize the USMC. “Hearing that the effort was to be repeated,” Commandant Harris personally penned a series of letters to leading Navy officers. Using much the same verbiage as that successfully employed by Commandant Henderson thirty years before, Harris solicited their opinions “as to the necessity for and efficiency of marines on shore and afloat, in connection with the Navy.” He also asked if Marines had “not been generally effective wherever employed”; were “a necessary part of the crew of a vessel of war”; and also whether “an increase of numbers” was warranted by “the exigencies of the service.” Not surprisingly, Harris received at least forty-nine favorable responses from notable officers ranging from Rear Admirals David Farragut, Samuel F. DuPont, and David Porter, to Lieutenant Commander William Jeffers and Lieutenant Winfield Scott Schley. But Harris took it one step further by publishing the responses for distribution to a wider audience “who may feel an interest in the matter.” In January

1864 he provided copies of the book to Welles and other leaders, hoping to sway them through the collective words of the Navy's own officers.¹⁴ The testimonials proved successful and Congress did not bring up the issue again during the war.

For Harris, it was his last significant accomplishment in office. On 12 May 1864, John Harris died, and his passing rated only a single short sentence from the *New York Times* sandwiched amid more newsworthy capital stories: "Col. John Harris, commanding the Marine Corps, died here yesterday." With Lieutenant General Ulysses S. Grant's Battles of the Wilderness and Spotsylvania Court House just ending and Major General William Tecumseh Sherman's army beginning its drive south into Georgia, there were too many significant military developments taking place to dwell on Harris' death.¹⁵

Undoubtedly Welles felt much the same way, particularly since he was then in the middle of his own crisis over an expensive and flawed light-draft monitor program. Yet Harris' death also provided the secretary with the opportunity to fix the Corps' leadership problems. Accordingly, he invested a little time deliberating on just what course of action to take while he continued to personally handle the day-to-day decision making for the USMC in the same manner he had done since early 1861.¹⁶

The traditional approach of simply advancing the next senior officer to Commandant did not appeal to him, and in his estimation no candidate leaped to the forefront. Indeed, as Welles remarked in his diary, Harris' "death gives embarrassment as to a successor." The problem was that by this time Welles had lost confidence in the capabilities of most senior Marines. The next ranking officer, Colonel William Dulany,

was sixty-four years old and had a well-deserved reputation for being stubborn and irascible. Dulany was also at that time facing charges of misbehavior at his current post as commanding officer of the Marine Barracks at the Norfolk Navy Yard. Still, Dulany boldly forwarded Welles a letter reminding the secretary of his seniority and inquiring when he might assume the commandancy, a missive that Welles pointedly ignored. Next in seniority to Dulany came Lieutenant Colonel Ward Marston, a petulant, vain, and argumentative man, who had been previously relieved by Harris of his command of the barracks in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, for incompetence. Attempts by Harris to retire Marston had been forestalled by a vigorous letter writing campaign that Marston orchestrated to convince anyone he could reach that he was the victim of misunderstandings and malice.¹⁷

Looking deeper into the ranks, Lieutenant Colonel John Reynolds had operationally proven himself as the commander of several of the short-lived battalions, but his recent highly-publicized court-martial and running feud with other officers provided ample enough reason to exclude him from the office. Reynolds proved to be a polarizing force in the Corps. Next in line was Major Jacob Zeilin, another officer with recent tactical command experience, but who had also been reassigned on at least four occasions in the past decade due to periodic bouts of illness and complications from wounds he had received in the First Battle of Bull Run. Major Addison Garland was next senior after Zeilin, but that officer had a somewhat checkered history between his surrender of the Marines aboard the *Ariel* and having developed a contentious relationship with the commandant of the navy yard at Mare Island, California. The two

remaining field grade officers, Majors Isaac Doughty and William Shuttleworth, were competent officers, but had done little during the war to set themselves apart as leaders or to stand out in any way. The options were not appealing.

Of those choices, Zeilin had the best political connections of the bunch through his ties to several prominent Pennsylvanians. In the end, and considering that Welles was already looking ahead to Lincoln's reelection bid, politics may have provided the tipping point in deciding who would become the next Commandant. Faced with so many meager alternatives, Zeilin's selection at least offered the possibility of gaining political favor at a time that the administration needed it. Also a factor was deciding what to do with the more senior officers, since they might prove a hindrance to any more junior officer selected for the commandancy. In the end, Welles "Concluded to retire the marine officers who are past the legal age, and to bring in Zeilin as commandant." Still, he lacked confidence in that decision, woefully confiding in his diary that "There seems no alternative." For a full month after Harris' death, Welles mulled over the situation before notifying Zeilin. The following day he informed Dulany, Marston, Reynolds, and Doughty that "The president has been pleased to direct that your name be entered on the Retired List of Officers of the Marine Corps."¹⁸

Since assuming his office, Welles had not hesitated to retire officers who he believed were past their prime or could no longer competently perform their duties. Right after assuming his post as secretary, Welles summarily dismissed naval officers who exhibited any inclination to sympathize with the South. In 1862, frustrated by a lack of progress in the Mississippi Squadron and concerned about the health of the unit's

commander, Welles replaced Admiral Andrew H. Foote with Charles H. Davis. He then just as quickly relieved the latter, replacing him with David Dixon Porter. Similarly, he relieved Samuel DuPont, Silas H. Stringham, William Mervine, William W. McKean, and others from prominent posts for lack of progress against the enemy or for failing to exploit naval successes to advantage. Welles sought and received permission to institute a Naval Retiring Board to screen out officers who had “become incapable of performing the duties of their office.” At the same time, Welles often resorted to reaching down and promoting officers to higher positions that would have been unheard of before the war.¹⁹

But strangely, Welles unfortunately did not take the same approach with regards to the Marine Corps’ officers. When he did pass over some of the Corps’ most senior officers to promote Zeilin one could argue that he did not dig deep enough since Zeilin simply reflected the same unimaginative ideas that Harris had fostered. As historian David Sullivan bluntly describes him, Zeilin “had both feet firmly planted in the status quo; his vision of the future of the Corps obstructed by the same fog that plagued his predecessor.” This is an accurate picture, as Welles must also have known, yet he selected Zeilin nonetheless. Had Welles acted earlier, and with more decisive officer cuts as he did with the Navy, the Marine Corps might also have benefitted as an institution from the infusion of new blood and new ideas. Furthermore, even after deciding to pass over four senior officers and select Zeilin, Welles then allowed the retired officers to serve out the remainder of the war as commanders of barracks. And at least one of the officers, Lieutenant Colonel Ward Marston, soon made Welles regret the decision to allow him to stay. Marston, as commander of the Marine Barracks in

Boston, bilked thousands of dollars in bounty money that had been entrusted to him by his Marines. Although Marston was court-martialed for the offense and dismissed, the incident further tarnished the already battered reputation of the Corps' senior leaders.²⁰

As Secretary of the Navy, Gideon Welles should be held partially accountable for the Marine Corps' uneven performance during the war. In addition to not selecting and empowering competent leaders who might have better prepared the Corps to meet the new challenges of the war and fill the operational requirements of the various squadrons, Welles also neglected to pay the same degree of attention to the needs of the Corps that he gave to the Navy. More importantly, Welles merely attacked the symptoms of an organization in crisis and did not take positive action to make doctrinal and organizational changes to the way the Corps operated, despite the apparent need to do so. His own field commanders were pressing him to provide Marines who were organized, trained and equipped to fight ashore from the sea, but the Corps' senior leaders continued to insist that men were needed to fill traditional shipboard detachments. With more attention paid to battalion innovations, Welles might have been able to institute real change in the way Marines were employed, but he let the opportunity slip away.

But what structural improvements might have been made that could have enhanced the Corps' abilities to perform as larger tactical units? Comparing the structure of the U.S. Marine Corps with that of similar units from other nations is one way to consider that question. By analyzing how the U.S. Marine Corps was initially organized, a clear picture also emerges of how it was intended to function.

Although the U.S. Marine Corps and the British Royal Marines have some commonality in terms of basic roles and missions, there are some important differences in each organization's structure that affect how they are employed. As a seafaring nation, Great Britain has a long history of raising marine units that date back to at least 1664, when England created a special Lord High Admiral's Regiment to provide a force of soldiers under the direct operational control of the Admiralty. The concept gave naval officers the ability to project their combat power ashore, and, over the decades, a dizzying succession of marine units were formed and disbanded, expanding and contracting with the growth and reduction of the navy itself. Several units and command relationship structures were attempted before Parliament in 1755 authorized for the first time a sizeable permanent marine corps of about 5,000 men organized into fifty companies of about 100 men apiece. These separate companies were further assigned to one of three "Grand Divisions," sited at Britain's major naval installations at Portsmouth, Plymouth, or Chatham. A captain commanded each company, assisted in his responsibilities by one first lieutenant and two second lieutenants. In addition, Parliament allocated each company four sergeants and four corporals to provide mid-level leadership and supervision over the men. A lieutenant colonel commanded each division, one major and an adjutant were added to assist him in performing his largely administrative tasks. The missing piece, a senior officer and staff to administer the Corps as a whole to provide the command link between the Admiralty and the separate divisions, did not come about until several years later when Parliament authorized a "commandant resident." The Commandant, stationed in London where he could best

coordinate the activities and support for the entire British Corps of Marines, finally brought the efforts of the several divisions of marines under one commander.²¹

Several companies and divisions were later added to, or taken away from the total authorized structure of the Corps as Great Britain passed through periods of war and peace. The British marines expanded during the American Revolution to a peak of 146 companies boasting a total of about 25,000 men by 1782, including several *ad hoc* battalions formed specifically for land service in North America. One of those battalions, commanded by Major John Pitcairn, participated in the operation that precipitated the Revolution by firing on American militiamen at Concord and Lexington. And although the Corps of British Marines expanded from time to time, the company-based structure remained generally intact. Additionally, by 1860 the British Royal Marines (the title Royal being granted by King George III in 1802) gained a total of six artillery companies that gave the Marines their own organic artillery support for conducting operations ashore.²²

An important point is that the company-based structure provided great operational flexibility to the Royal Marines. The companies served as the basic tactical unit, promoting a greater standardization of training and proficiency throughout the Corps. This method of organizing the Marines did not preclude the employing of men as separate smaller detachments on board ships, but simply meant that when Marines were assigned that way, they could easily be reformed back into their company structure when needed. This arrangement had several advantages over the practice of establishing large numbers of separate and independent permanent small detachments as practiced by the

U.S. Marine Corps. First, it placed the responsibility for the best allocation of Marines into the hands of the company commander, the officer most familiar with the individual men and their capabilities. The company commander could then easily make adjustments in his unit's training to fill voids, thereby increasing the proficiency of the company as a whole and promoting a sense of *esprit de corps*. Second, the assigning of Marines to companies rather than small detachments promoted group cohesion and stability, important elements that forged close bonds between the members. Third, the company units could easily and simply serve as the building blocks for the creation of larger combat formations if needed (battalions or regiments). By maintaining high levels of readiness at company drill, occasional practice as battalions and regiments gave the Marines increased familiarity with their roles when functioning as part of the larger formations, certainly more than separate detachments would gain when they were rarely, if ever, part of a larger permanent unit.

There are indicators that American leaders originally had the British Marine organizational model in mind when they first considered forming their own Corps of Marines during the American Revolution. However, that concept changed radically between the Corps' first appearance in congressional records and the time that it actually materialized. On 10 November 1775, the Continental Congress resolved to raise two battalions of Marines, yet the same document added that they be "*considered as part of . . . the continental Army,*" and not part of the naval establishment. Nonetheless, when the first five Marine companies were formed later that same year, they were detailed mainly in support of naval operations. And with the permanent transfer in 1777 of three of

those Marine companies to the Army, the few remaining Marines served predominantly in small detachments on warships for the remainder of the war. While operating as detachments, the actions of the Marines were accountable not to some senior Marine officer, but instead to the captain of the vessel they were assigned to. This practice further fragmented the Corps and through time firmly established the precedent for how American Marines should be employed in the minds of the naval officers of the generation. With the Revolution's end, the Continental Marines, like the Continental Navy, were viewed as unnecessary and therefore disbanded, but the precedent for its concept for employment had been solidified in the minds of American naval leaders.²³

When the Corps was recreated on 28 May 1798, it is clear that Congress had the small detachment model in mind when it created the new Marine organization. Discussion among the members of the Committee for the Protection of Commerce and the Defense of the Country illustrated the relatively minor role they expected from the members of the new unit. Congress's interests at that time were predominantly focused on simply ensuring that the vessels of the new Navy went to sea equipped with Marine detachments. Furthermore, they viewed the senior Marine officer's role primarily as personnel administrator entrusted to keep the various ships' detachments filled with Marines. When asked by one committee member whether "these men could ever be [brought] together" to form a battalion, Representative Samuel Sewall of Massachusetts answered that he "could not say that these marines could be brought together to be disciplined," but that the "major [Commandant] would superintend the whole, hear complaints, and attend to the recruiting service." As a parting comment, one member

publicly hoped that “when the bill was brought in, this corps of marines would not be made a permanent part of the Military Establishment.” Although that minority view was overruled in the act produced, the comments reflect that Congress did not contemplate forming an organization that would fight as independent companies or battalions. It intended instead to create a decentralized service comprised of separate ships’ detachments, each reporting to the vessel’s captain. The Corps’ senior officer would administer the unit, but was not expected to command it in the field. In addition, the manpower allotted for the Corps depended principally on the total number of Marines needed to fill the required detachments on board the Navy’s ships, with the only excess being that of the Major Commandant. This was a very different concept of employment than that seen in the Royal Marines’ company organization.²⁴

As years passed, Congress added to the Corps’ numbers, but still the expectation remained that the total number of men came from an aggregate of the amount needed to fill the various detachments. It was not until the commandancy of Archibald Henderson, and in particular his successful fielding of battalions for separate service with the Army during the Second Seminole War and the Mexican War that the concept of larger Marine formations took hold in the American military establishment. Some of the resistance to the idea undoubtedly sprang from frugal bureaucrats eager to wring out perceived excesses from an already sparse national military structure. But Henderson’s successful examples illustrated the practicality and flexibility of employing Marines in that manner, paving the way for other similar units in future conflicts. Nonetheless, no fundamental changes were made to the Corps’ structure to permanently allow a battalion. The Corps’

overall manning levels continued to be predicated on a simple tally of the number of men needed to fill the requirements of ships' detachments and shore barracks commands.²⁵

That same basic concept for staffing and employing the Marine Corps continued well into the post Civil War decades, until in the 1890s the Corps' first permanent battalion appeared in the Spanish-American War. Although during the Civil War many naval squadron commanders requested larger formations of Marines to meet their increased operational requirements, the basic field unit authorized by law continued to be the separate detachment. This placed the Commandant into a dilemma every time he was tasked to provide larger combat units. In order to provide the larger units needed, the Commandant had to eliminate or under-staff ships' detachments to gain the men to create a battalion, a move that both Harris and his successor, Jacob Zeilin, proved reluctant to undertake. Conservative Commandants did not seize on wartime needs to prompt Congress to take action on a simple solution that would have enhanced the Corps. Faced with the clear requirement to provide battalions for service with the various squadrons, it would have been best to have the structure for such units to be included into the authorized organization of the Marine Corps. By doing that, the battalion(s) would have become a permanent part of the Corps' structure and not victims of the whims of politically connected naval officers. But neither Harris nor Zeilin took that step, and instead routinely repeated mundane calls for increases of manpower to merely fill vacancies "both at the yards and on board ship," actions that did not solve the basic structural deficiencies and perpetuated the problems of fielding larger combat

units. Battalions were needed for onshore and riverine operations, as the insistent requests for them by field commanders indicated, and the obvious and most beneficial solution would have been to include the structure for such units into the Corps' overall manpower requirements. And wartime had demonstrated both the political and military needs to make such a basic change.²⁶

Interestingly, that is precisely the course of action that the Confederate States of America pursued when it created its own Marine Corps on 16 March 1861. Instead of simply copying the existing structure of the U.S. Marine Corps (USMC), the easiest solution and one that many of the former USMC officers were intimately familiar with, the Provisional Congress of the Confederate States of America instead originally specified a "corps of marines," as a *battalion-sized unit*. The Confederate Marine battalion, commanded by a major, was further subdivided into six one-hundred man companies, each commanded by a captain (see Figure 8-1), thereby becoming the first American Marine Corps to adopt a tactical field organizational model.²⁷ Although discussions of the reasons for organizing the Confederate States Marine Corps (CSMC) as it did are lost to history, one fact is evident: the organizational structure of the CSMC was distinctly different and unique from its rival USMC. The variation from the traditional model indicates that Confederate leaders may have had a special concept in mind for employing their Marines.

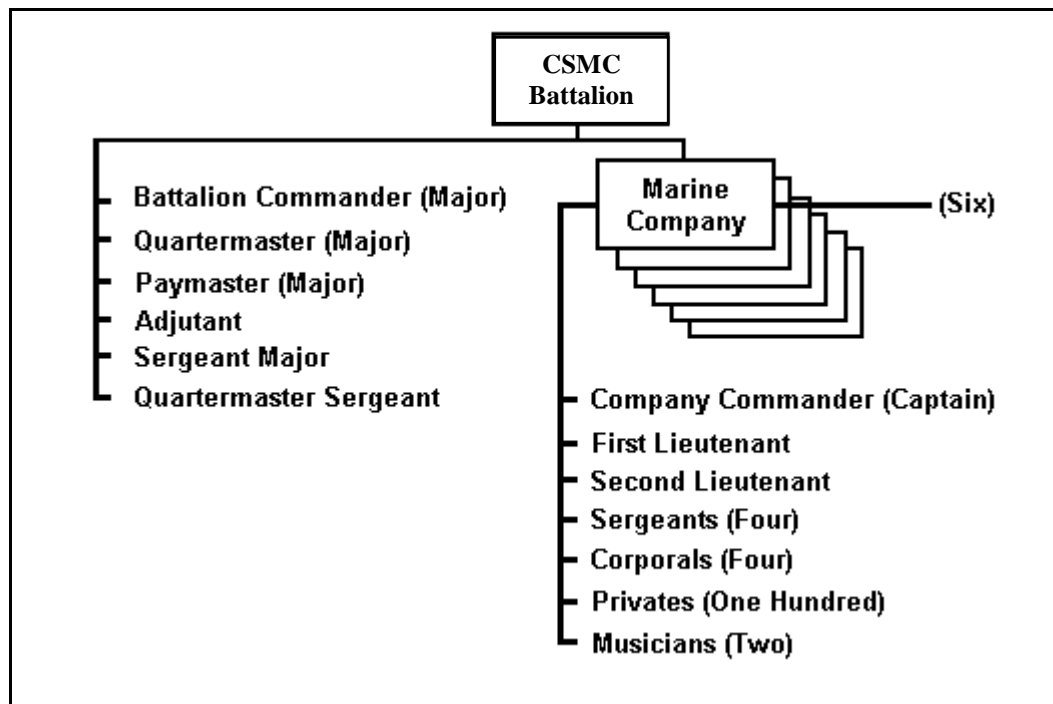


Figure 8-1. Organizational Model of the Confederate States Marine Corps as Created on 16 March 1861.²⁸

With a Marine battalion already actively engaged against Federal forces at Fort Pickens, Florida, Confederate Secretary of the Navy Stephen Mallory convinced Congress to expand the CSMC to meet its commitments. Less than two months after its initial creation, an “Act to Enlarge the Marine Corps” increased the unit to regimental size and authorized a total strength of forty-nine officers and 944 enlisted men (see Figure 8-2). Although early studies of the CSMC have noted that the new structure was “similar to those authorized for an army ten-company regiment,” there was more to it than that. The new organizational structure of the CSMC contained important differences that transcended any superficial similarity with a Confederate Army

regiment and provided clues to how the Confederate leaders envisioned employing their Marines.²⁹

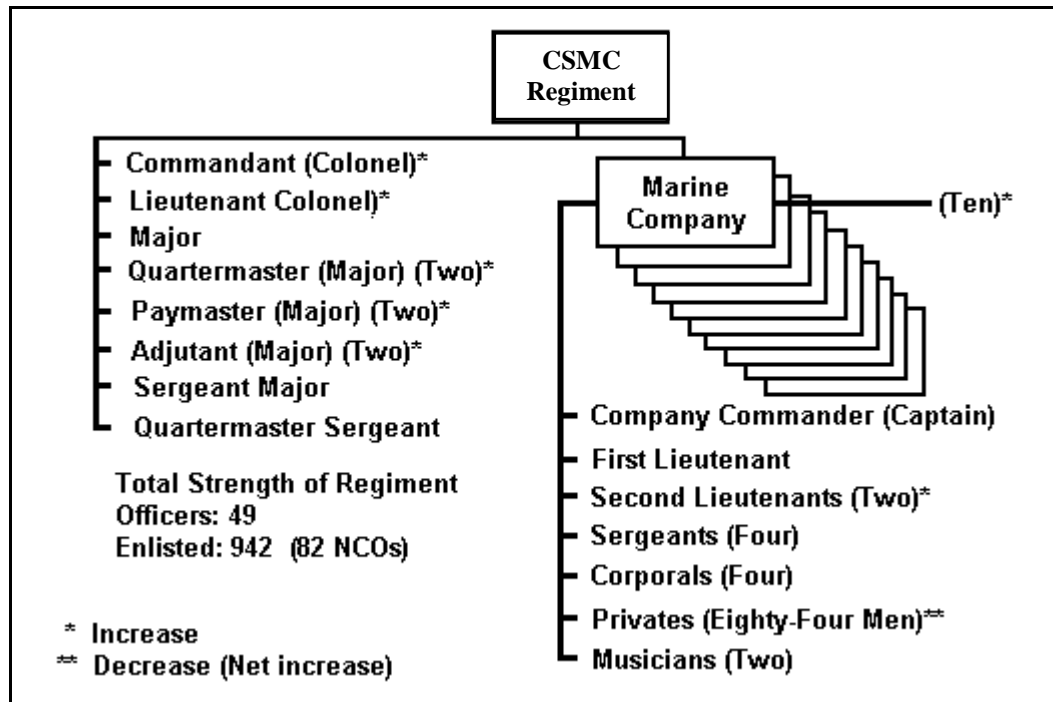


Figure 8-2. Expanded CSMC Structure, 21 May 1861.³⁰

The reorganization act expanding the CSMC to a regimental-sized unit also maintained the company as its base unit, which may be used as evidence that leaders valued the flexibility that the company structure offered the CSMC as a concept of employment. However, other important refinements were included that both acknowledged and supported the CSMC's capabilities to employ Marines in smaller detachments when needed. The new organization increased the numbers of lieutenants and non-commissioned officers in each of the companies, giving those units a sufficient number of small-unit leaders to both facilitate the creation of separate detachments and

to adequately supervise the men when serving away from the direct control of the company commander. Although this newer table of organization did not specify an intermediate battalion level of command, the CSMC continued to form and employ battalions throughout the war, often using its regimental headquarters personnel to fill required battalion command and administrative positions. This structure allowed the subordinate element leaders great flexibility in reallocating their personnel to match their operational requirements, an efficient and frugal way of maximizing their personnel resources.³¹

The expansion act also authorized a billet for a Colonel Commandant, filled three days later through the appointment of Colonel Lloyd J. Beall, formerly of the U.S. Army. After assuming command, Beall soon forwarded several recommendations for further adjustments to be made to the CSMC's structure, citing increased requirements for the extended deployment of Marines afloat. Beall specifically requested that more noncommissioned officers be added to the table of organization to enhance the leadership, supervision, and training capability in small detachments, particularly during extended deployments. Specifically, Beall argued that he had "found by experience that the peculiar service of marines requires a larger proportion of noncommissioned officers and musicians than the land service, from the fact that the Corps is liable to be divided up into small detachments as guards on board of ships and at naval stations, and that these guards are not complete without one or two noncommissioned officers and a musician to each."³²

Administratively and logistically, Confederate Marine detachments, companies, and battalions were normally provided with supplies, arms, ammunition, pay, and other support by the army or navy command to which they were assigned at the time. The CSMC maintained its own paymasters and quartermasters as well, providing the headquarters with some degree of centralized control over its expenditures and the ability to deal with unique payroll and supply issues. For command and control purposes, Marine units in the field relied on a mixture of telegraph, correspondence, and messengers to maintain contact with the headquarters in Richmond, providing reports on events within their area of responsibility, while concurrently cooperating with the local commander to whom they were assigned. Commanders of detachments reported to company commanders, who in turn reported to the battalion commander (if operating under one) or directly to the Marine Corps Headquarters in Richmond. Headquarters provided guidance, direction and orders accordingly to either the battalion or company commander, as applicable. In this manner, Secretary Mallory and Colonel Beall applied a method of command and control that could best be described as “centralized command, decentralized execution,”³³ a type of system that can be highly responsive to the intent of the commander, yet allows for great flexibility and initiative on the part of subordinate leaders.³⁴

The advantages of the CSMC structural model over that of the USMC’s detachment-based organization are clear and distinct. The adopting of companies as the base tactical unit represented a significant advancement in the development of the American Marine Corps experience. Despite having significantly fewer personnel than

its northern cousin, the CSMC demonstrated its ability to rapidly form battalions and redeploy as individual companies several times throughout the war. Companies posted to serve with specific Confederate naval squadrons assigned detachments to individual ships as needed, and then just as quickly pulled the detachments back to reform the companies, giving the CSMC the capability of meeting its combat requirements with little loss of cohesion and minimal personnel turbulence. Those same companies could also be easily formed into battalion units when the situation dictated, and then just as rapidly be reallocated as separate companies to completely different operational areas, depending on the situation. Although the CSMC seldom could boast of having more than 600 Marines, the Corps' operational coverage throughout the Confederacy attested to the superiority of its organizational model. Confederate Marines became quite adept at operating as separate companies attached to specific naval squadrons or as part of an army unit. For example, Company A of the CSMC deployed as a separate unit eight times to six of the eleven states of the Confederacy (see Figure 8-3). The CSMC's prescient structure allowed it to be more flexible in adapting to changing field situations while still maintaining a high degree of cohesion and standardization.³⁵

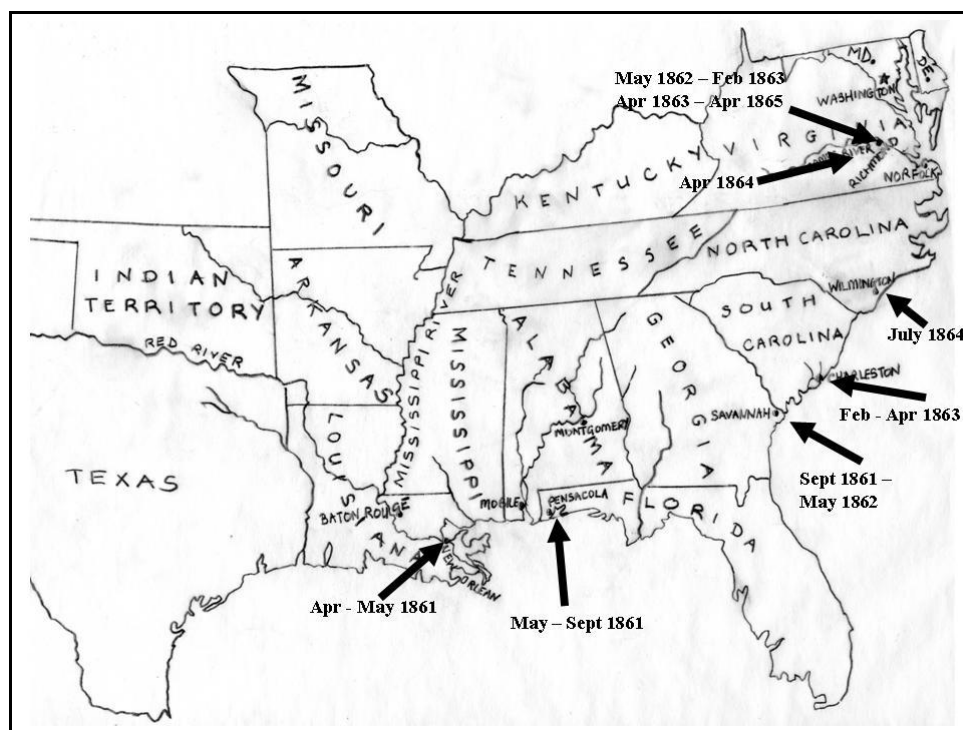


Figure 8-3. Map Showing the Deployments of Company A, CSMC.³⁶

In a similar fashion, Confederate Marine battalions also served at several locations during the war: at Pensacola, Florida; Drewry's Bluff, Virginia (participating in two key battles); Charleston, South Carolina; Wilmington, North Carolina; and finally at Saylor's Creek, Virginia (see Figure 8-4). As mentioned in previous chapters, the first American Marine unit to field a battalion in the Civil War was the CSMC, not the USMC. A Confederate Marine battalion was also ordered to conduct an amphibious raid into Maryland, but the ambitious project was cancelled shortly after embarking aboard ships for movement to the objective area. And although battalion actions account for only a small portion of battles and engagements that Confederate Marines participated in, their services were appreciated and recognized by Confederate leaders. Analysis of

the repositioning of these battalions indicates that Southern naval leaders considered Confederate Marines to be a valued resource. The quick movement of that asset from one area to another in response to enemy threats suggests that the senior Confederate leaders came to consider the CSMC as a force-in-readiness that could be rapidly employed; an expeditionary force for the Confederate Navy that could be relied upon in extreme conditions. It also illustrates the efficiency of the CSMC system whereby the various companies were easily and seamlessly fit into the forming of battalions much like building blocks, and went on to serve in combat as an integrated and well-trained unit. The USMC's forming of battalions, by contrast, involved pooling Marines from a large number of detachments with little or no history of having worked together previously. As a result, the Federal Marine battalions required much more training and preparation to gain the same level of proficiency to operate as a battalion.³⁷ Therefore, a comparison of the structural differences between the CSMC and USMC models indicates that the Confederate Marine Corps' structure was superior in many ways to that of its Northern cousin.

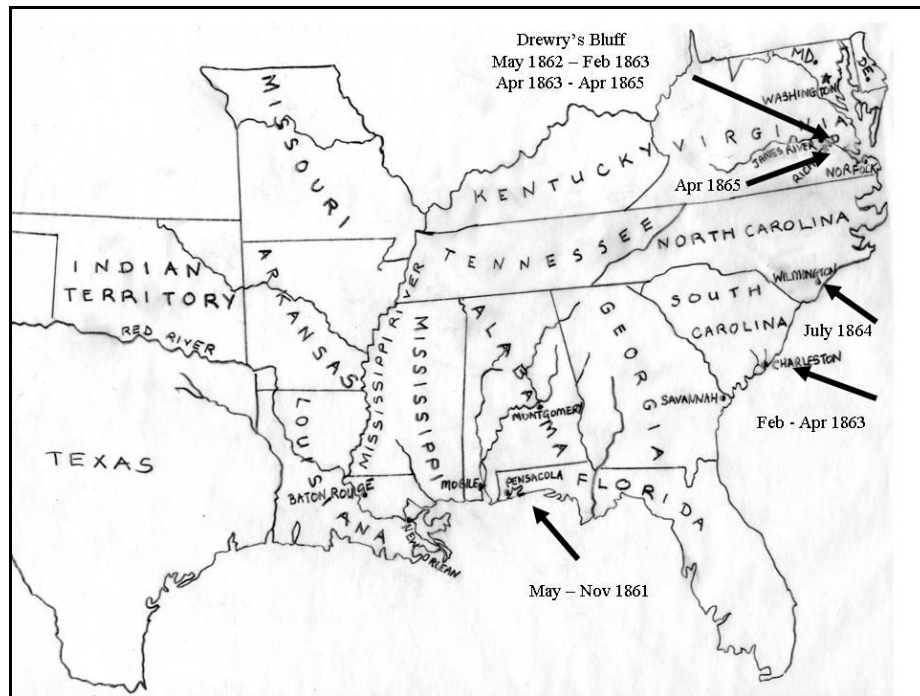


Figure 8-4. CSMC Battalion Deployments during the War.³⁸

Finally, another unit that merits comparison with the USMC is the short-lived and unique Mississippi Marine Brigade that served on the waterways of the Union Army's Western Theater in 1862. Army commanders frustrated with the widely dispersed fleet of Flag Officer Andrew Hull Foote turned to a civilian, Charles Ellet, Jr., for assistance in providing them with transport ships. In conversations with Secretary of War Edwin Stanton in March and April 1862, Ellet convinced the secretary to authorize him to convert several steamers he owned into a "ram fleet" for service with the army operating in the Mississippi River basin. In short order Ellet formed his flotilla, armored the vessels with timber, reinforced the prows for ramming, and received a promotion to colonel, the highest rank Stanton could confer without going to Congress. Ellet then arranged for select officers (including many of his family members) to be transferred to

his command and he formed a composite organization of militia, volunteers, and civilians that reported only to Ellet. In turn, Stanton subordinated Ellet to the flamboyant Major General John C. Frémont. In effect, despite directing Ellet to always cooperate with the appropriate naval commanders, Stanton had created a quasi-military, marine-style organization that operated on the waterways, but was accountable only to the Army for its movements and actions. As one might expect with such an unusual arrangement, quarrels soon broke out between Foote's replacement, Rear Admiral Charles H. Davis, and Ellet, but the latter bluntly rebuffed any attempt at cooperation. The Army now had a naval task force of its own, one that historian Chester Hearn describes appropriately as "Mr. Stanton's Navy."³⁹

Soon, Ellet's unique, makeshift force was conducting operations up and down the river in conjunction with the Army, but with very little coordination with the Navy. On 24 June Alfred Ellet replaced his brother as commander of the ram fleet and the Mississippi Marine Brigade, as it was called. The brigade participated in the Battle of Memphis, and in many of the smaller engagements that took place in and around Vicksburg, Mississippi, as part of the Union Army's drive to seize that position. Plagued by massive desertions from the civilian members of the brigade and the transfer of military members, Ellet nonetheless contributed positively to both the army's and the navy's operations on the river by conducting raids with his mobile infantry, cavalry and artillery "marines" to deter rebel guerrilla attacks that had plagued Union forces. Nonetheless, the independent nature of the brigade grated on the sensibilities of the new

naval commander of the Mississippi Squadron, Rear Admiral David Porter, who soon complained of the situation to Welles.⁴⁰

For his part, Secretary Welles had wasted no time lobbying in both the legislative and executive branches for control over the ships of the Ram Fleet, arguing convincingly that he should control all the nation's warships. On 2 November, the secretary gleefully recorded in his diary that "Congress wisely ordered a transfer of all war vessels on the Mississippi to the Navy. It was not by my suggestion or procurement that this law was passed, but it was proper." Some confusion, however, remained concerning Ellet's flotilla. Congress' action "greatly disturbed Stanton, who, supported by Halleck and Ellet, opposes a transfer of the ram fleet as not strictly within the letter, though it is undoubtedly the intent of the law." The issue, it seemed, centered principally on the desires of the unit's leader, and not on military practicalities and the need for unity of command in all operations. As Welles remarked, "That Ellet should wish a distinct command is not surprising. It is characteristic. He is full of zeal to overflowing; is not, however, a naval man, but is, very naturally, delighted with an independent naval command in this adventurous ram service." But he correctly pointed out the central concern: "there cannot be two distinct commands on the river under different orders from different Departments without endangering collision."⁴¹ Simply put, the military requirements outweighed Ellet's preferences for independent operation.

Eventually, the showdown between the Secretaries of War and Navy was settled by the commander-in-chief personally. On 7 November 1862, President Abraham Lincoln signed an executive order placing Ellet's ships under the command of Admiral

Porter. But Ellet's Marine Brigade remained under Army control. The unit was organized into three components; a regiment of infantry, a battalion of cavalry, and four batteries of artillery, tactically spread over available ships. Although tasked from time to time with conducting counter-guerrilla operations and related tasks, the unit suffered throughout its existence from command problems, chronic desertions and personnel shortages, and was generally considered by the commanders of both the Army and Navy forces in the West more as an operational curiosity than an asset. Although the unit managed to capture a great deal of cotton throughout the war, the overall effectiveness of the brigade has remained the subject of significant debate. Writing on the final mustering out of the last of its men in January 1865, one observer recorded that the brigade "has cost the Government immense sums, and so far as practical good is concerned is not worth one red cent." Furthermore, he sarcastically noted about Ellet's transports that "These arks made very comfortable summer resorts, and as such were largely in demand." Of their performance, he stated "They were generally where they were not wanted and seldom at hand when needed."⁴²

The history of Ellet's Ram Fleet and Marine Brigade represents a clear example of an opportunity missed by both the Navy and Marine Corps. The naval services could easily have capitalized on the situation, and might even have gained the backing of some Army leaders had Welles, Porter, Harris or others offered to create such a unit themselves. A large sum of money and resources had been made available to the Ellets to essentially experiment with the concept of forming a riverine task force, but it seems clear that given the same resources, the Navy Department could have produced a more

effective organization to accomplish similar missions with much better results.

Throughout, in addition to the obvious confusions over command and control of the group, the Ellets' effort proved crippled through their own failures to understand the military complexities of what they were attempting. By stubbornly insisting on family control of all aspects of the unit they created a force filled largely with civilian invalids, military convalescents, and fiercely independent ship captains and crews. These factors and others combined to make the force considerably less efficient in the military arts than if a similar unit had been formed by the Navy, Marine Corps and Army working in concert. Instead, the Ram Fleet and Marine Brigade provided yet another example of an outstanding opportunity missed by the military establishment.

But the lessons learned from the formation of the unit extend beyond the limitations of its employment, most of which are attributed to the weaknesses of the brigade's leaders and the fractious nature of its command relationships. Faced with an acute lack of naval combat assets while fighting a riverine war, the Army leadership attempted to create their own unit to perform what it considered were valid combat requirements. It attempted to create a task-organized military unit with its own organic naval transportation and fire support. However, in creating such a unit, an anxious Stanton placed too much trust and confidence in one man (Charles Ellet) in the hopes of gaining quickly an amphibious strike force. Instead, Ellet, more interested in maintaining independence of his unit from outside interference, became a source of irritation among commanders rather than improving cooperation. Although the original concept made good military sense and was intriguing, the weaknesses caused by the

circumstances of its creation proved impossible to surmount and the unit failed to achieve its potential.

Perhaps the greatest legacy of the Marine Corps during the Civil War era involved its energizing of a new generation of officers who demanded reforms to correct the many problems they observed and experienced in the conflict. Overall, there existed a great disparity between the more senior officers and the junior officers that they led, as illustrated already throughout this study. In particular, few of the older breed of officers led through personal example or exhibited tactical competency that inspired respect and confidence among junior officers for their capabilities and leadership. Many were aged or infirm to the point that they actively avoided serving in field units or on sea duty, jobs that required a higher level of fitness, fortitude, and tactical proficiency. The situation was made more acute when one considers that at the time the Marine Corps ranked last behind the other two services in terms of officer professionalism, a point that was not lost on the junior officers who worked closely with both Army and Navy officers during the war and observed the differences firsthand. One of those junior officers, Captain Robert Huntington, who got his first taste of battle at Bull Run in July 1861, captured this situation well in a letter written to other, like-minded officers. Talking directly about the two camps that split the officer corps, Huntington defined the differences in mindset: “To the one, the present is the best moment; the other looks to the future. It is the irrepressible conflict between conservatism and progress.”⁴³

In his study of the Marine Corps from 1880 to 1898, historian Jack Shulimson agrees with the periodization of military professionalism first forwarded by Samuel

Huntington in his classic book, *The Soldier and the State*. Shulimson argues that the forging of a professional officer corps began during the 1880s and reached its “transitional period” between 1885 and 1889. It was in the 1880s, signaled by the opening of the Naval Academy to those seeking a Marine Corps commission and an intervention in Panama, that he asserts “foreshadowed the employment of future Marine expeditionary forces,” that the work of whom he terms “navy progressives,” began discussing expanded landing operations and proposing larger roles for the Marine Corps in naval operations.⁴⁴

An alternative view advanced here is that the reform movement took root earlier, amidst the friction and frustration experienced by junior Marine officers toward their senior leaders during the Civil War, thereby pushing Shulimson’s transitional period back at least fifteen years. For his part, Shulimson acknowledges that there were officers who advocated reforms earlier than his periodization, but dismisses their efforts as being confined to small numbers with little to encourage them in their crusade.⁴⁵ Nonetheless, the dialogue that these early reformers established and the network of like-minded individuals that they forged served as the foundation for that movement and had far-reaching consequences.

Significantly, most of the individuals that Shulimson depends upon to support his position began their careers shortly before or during the Civil War. Many of these same men began clamoring for reform and change early in their service. Their arguments for the creation of a more professional and relevant force only became more strident and insistent throughout the decades that followed. These officers formed close bonds with

their peers and also many of the officers of other services that they worked with, corresponding frequently and exchanging ideas on how to better the Corps. These same men also contributed to professionalizing their fellow officers by writing articles and opinions concerning their ideas for transforming the Corps, and by publishing books, manuals and related documents that better standardized techniques and procedures.

In the immediate postwar period, the rapid shrinking of the number of active Navy ships prompted predictable debate over what the size of the Marine Corps should be. When the question of whether to abolish or shrink the Marine Corps resurfaced again in 1867 and 1868, few congressmen actually favored outright disbanding of the unit, and more pressing military and budgetary issues almost guaranteed the immediate tabling of any such proposals. Besides, attrition in the enlisted ranks through desertions and lack of reenlistments soon pared the numbers down to just about the same strength that the Marine Corps had in 1861, making it still as difficult as ever for the Commandant to fill even the greatly reduced calls for Marines on ship and shore.⁴⁶

On the officer side, promotions returned to their prewar glacial pace. New officers could expect to be lieutenants for as many as fifteen years or longer. This condition further frustrated the junior officers who saw any possibilities of their being promoted vanish as the more senior officers clogged up the system. At first, the junior officers fought and won some relatively small battles. In 1868, Zeilin reluctantly forwarded a bold petition from discontented junior officers asking that the sword that had been adopted under Harris' tenure be discarded in favor of the traditional Mameluke sword made famous by Presley O'Bannon's exploits against the Barbary Pirates in North

Africa in 1803. Welles acceded, and Marine officers were again armed with the distinctive symbol of the Henderson years.⁴⁷ Other disagreements between junior and senior officers followed, but the frustration over the path the Marine Corps should take in the future eventually broke surface in the 1870s, spearheaded by one of the most outspoken of the group, First Lieutenant Henry Clay Cochrane.

Born on 7 November 1842 in Chester, Pennsylvania, Cochrane left a teaching position after the outbreak of the Civil War and applied for a commission in the Marine Corps. In August 1861, he passed the subsequent examination, but could not actually serve as a Marine lieutenant until his twenty-first birthday. In the interim, Cochrane volunteered as an acting master's mate in the Navy and served aboard the gunboat USS *Pembina* during Admiral DuPont's seizure of Port Royal and Beaufort, South Carolina. He participated also in the Atlantic coast operations at Wassaw Sound, the St. Johns River, and the landings at Fernandina, Florida. On 10 March 1863, Cochrane received his promotion to second lieutenant of Marines and reported to Corps Headquarters in Washington, D.C.⁴⁸

After about five months of duty and instruction, Cochrane received orders to the Marine Barracks at Cairo/Mound City, Illinois, arriving at that post in August. Several months later, Cochrane was selected to accompany a presidential visit to the dedication of a new National Cemetery at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, and it was there, on 19 November 1863, that he witnessed President Lincoln delivering his famous Gettysburg Address. On returning to Illinois, Cochrane was among the few officers of the barracks

assigned by Rear Admiral David Porter to lead long-range combat patrols into Kentucky to conduct anti-smuggling and counter-guerrilla operations.⁴⁹

Cochrane was assigned to command the Marine detachment on board the USS *Black Hawk* in March of 1865, remaining until that ship burned and sank on 22 April 1865. He then transferred to the USS *Tempest* for the duration of the war, receiving a commendation from Rear Admiral Samuel Phillips Lee for his service. Cochrane held a number of billets over the next four decades both on sea and land. He served with a detachment of Marines dispatched in July 1877 to restore order after violent railroad strikes in Maryland and Pennsylvania. Cochrane also commanded a seventy-man detachment to reestablish the American Consulate in Alexandria, Egypt, in July 1882 in the wake of that city's bombardment by British naval forces. The following year he was appointed as the American representative to the coronation of Russian Czar Alexander III, and in 1885 commanded the Marine contingent that restored order in Panama. In 1889 Cochrane was assigned as commander of the Marine detachment that took part in the prestigious Universal Exposition in Paris, France. Cochrane also participated in the employment of the First Marine Battalion to Cuba during the Spanish American War in 1898 and led the Marines assigned to the U.S. Relief Expedition during the Boxer Rebellion in 1900. The following year he commanded Marines in the Philippine Insurrection and retired on 10 March 1905 as a brigadier general. Cochrane had by then served forty-two illustrious years in the Marines.⁵⁰

Cochrane was a prodigious writer, lecturer and, most importantly, a critic with the courage to challenge authority. Throughout his military career he maintained a

steady correspondence with peers, superiors, journals, and newspapers. Cochrane used his acquaintances as a sounding board for ideas regarding one of his favorite subjects – how to make the Corps a more professional and capable organization. In addition, through his many public speaking engagements Cochrane educated his lecture attendees on life in the naval services, promoting a larger awareness of the Navy and Marine Corps. But it was Cochrane’s valiant lobbying efforts to shape a new Corps structure that are most noteworthy. Importantly, Cochrane became frustrated by the Corps’ apparent inability to learn from its past mistakes, and he was not alone. One acquaintance, writing on the same subject, lamented that “The [Civil] War was our great opportunity, & we owlshly neglected it.”⁵¹

In 1875, Cochrane circulated a “confidential,” privately published pamphlet to a circle of peers and newspapers that outlined twenty-five recommendations to reorganize the Marine Corps. In it, Cochrane called for drastic action to conduct either “a resuscitation or a funeral” for the Corps. The current state of the organization demanded that the nation either get rid of the Corps, or fix it. And he had plenty of ideas on how to repair it. Citing a long litany of offenses that senior officers had been guilty of, “murder, adultery, drunkenness, debauchery, fraud,” and so on, he asked that the unit be delivered from their hands and reformed. “Those *who entered the service in 1861* can readily recall instances of every crime I have mentioned being committed by marine officers,” and he proposed a mandatory retiring age of sixty-two. He asked for “respectable and competent men” as officers, specifically recommending they be drawn from the service

academies, a longstanding desire that had basically been ignored. He also indicated that the Corps should seek out “a better class of men” and was certain they could be found.⁵²

Structurally, Cochran recommended drastic reorganization. First, he advocated a brigade organization with regiments, battalions and companies, believing that “competition may encourage effort” between units. Proper regulations were needed, and a better promotion system with parity between services. Rigid mental, moral, and physical examinations were needed to ensure only the fittest officers would be promoted. Furthermore, he argued that the Marine Corps, instead of fixing its problems on its own, adopted instead an “ostrich policy” and merely kept its collective head down while undergoing almost annual attacks on its continued existence by the press and Congress.⁵³ In essence, he asserted that the current state of affairs was intolerable; in fact any of the extreme actions recommended, abolishment or reform, were preferable to continuing to function as it did.

Cochrane’s reforms certainly described improvements that would have significantly increased the professionalization of the Corps, had they been implemented. But the missing piece addressed only peripherally was describing what *missions* the Corps should be performing. Although by this time both the Navy and Marine Corps were wedded to a primary mission of providing ships’ detachments for Navy vessels, few officers had yet to realize that many of the criticisms levied against the Corps were rooted in the decreasing importance of that task. Whatever the merit of the rest of Cochrane’s ideas for fixing the Corps, the closest he came to addressing the issue of identifying a valuable and relevant mission was his peripheral demand for organizing

into field units – regiments, battalions, companies – and his proposal that it become a naval artillery brigade. But those ideas represented only two of the twenty-five separate reforms forwarded.⁵⁴ Although it would be almost another quarter century before the Corps identified that mission, it was certainly a start.

Not surprisingly, Cochrane's pamphlet received greater attention when reviewers discussed its contents in the *Army and Navy Journal*. Further discussion in the commercial press generated intense debate. Cochrane's peers, of course, sided with him and praised his efforts to push for change while the Corps' "old guard" predictably condemned the piece. Captain Louis Fagan, commissioned in June 1862 and a veteran of Zeilin's Marine Battalion, the disastrous Fort Sumter night attack, and the ill-fated Fort Fisher Naval Brigade, congratulated Cochrane. Fagan called the pamphlet "the best & only thing that has been done for the Corps in the last half dozen years."⁵⁵

Earlier, Fagan had published his own thoughts regarding the issue of reforming the Corps in a letter to the editor of a capital newspaper. He bluntly stated that if "the Marine Corps is to be a place for self-seekers, drunkards and timeservers . . . I say the sooner it is wiped out the better." Instead, he prayed that the Corps would be "refreshed and strengthened." His criticism was reprinted in the *Army and Navy Journal* with the comments that it had already "created considerable discussion" among the Corps' own officers interested in fixing its shortcomings. But since actions to implement required reforms, "being almost entirely without the cooperation of the older officers, from whom better things should be expected, it has made little headway." Fagan also had harsh words for the Corps' new Commandant, Charles G. McCawley, who had about that

same time replaced Zeilin, who retired in the Fall of 1876. “How unfortunate that McCawley is sick - - to [*sic*] much sitting down, I guess. We are unfortunate, as soon as we got rid of one cripple [Zeilin] we get another.”⁵⁶

But to his credit McCawley actually supported reform to a much greater degree than did his two predecessors. The new Commandant quickly directed all of his officers to drill Marines in the “School of the Company” and “School of the Battalion.” He also directed that Emory Upton’s “Tactics” be used as the primary reference for that training, further specifying that each commander report their progress to headquarters every month. McCawley also worked diligently to remove from the Marine Corps officers who failed to meet acceptable standards of conduct and proficiency. By the end of his first year in the post, some critics had to acknowledge the positive change his leadership had made.⁵⁷

Earlier, in 1873, Captain James Forney had traveled to Europe and visited Marines of several nations to gain insight into changes that might be made. On his return, Forney recommended that the USMC be restructured into tactical units such as companies and battalions, and that it adopt the strict training regimen he had observed within the British marines. In 1876, acting under orders from McCawley, Cochrane convened a conference consisting of Fagan, Captain Charles Heywood (a future Commandant), and several others to evaluate those and several other recommendations. The attendees seconded Forney’s recommendations and added others, but were disheartened when their ideas were not implemented by Congress, despite a favorable

report from the committee on Naval Affairs. Although the reformers would not give up, the changes they advocated were still two decades away.⁵⁸

Cochrane is an example of the far-sighted professional reformers who saw service in the Civil War. Similarly motivated officers echoed his calls from several quarters, including Captain McLane Tilton, who entered the Corps on 2 March 1861. A veteran of the reinforcement of Fort Pickens and the attack on Fort Fisher, Tilton found himself after the war in a number of assignments at sea. In 1870 he was in the Far East, and rightfully concerned about rising tensions between the United States and Korea. While discussing the relative advantages and disadvantages of the weaponry used by both the Marine Corps and the Korean defenders with the Corps' quartermaster, Tilton could not help but comment that the Koreans were better armed than the Marines. Tilton had earlier made evaluations of several weapons for the Marine Corps and was rightfully concerned that many of the detachments were still armed with inferior weaponry. He caustically added that "One man with a Breech loader is Equal to 12 or 15 armed as we are; and in the event of our landing, or even chasing any "Coreans" [sic], armed with an excellent repeater, what ever could Americans do, with a blasted old Muzzle Fuzzle [muzzle loader] !!!" He implored the Corps quartermaster (and senior ordnance officer) to try and gain better weaponry, entreating him to "Don't allow red tape to stand in our way!"⁵⁹

Likewise, many Marine Corps officers also understood the need to standardize and professionalize the training and day-to-day functioning of Marines under their charge. In the years following the Civil War, many of the officers took the initiative to

publish their own orders, regulations and procedures to establish and promulgate key information within their units. While serving as the commander of the Marine Barracks at Annapolis, Maryland, in the mid-1870s, Tilton wrote, published, and distributed a detailed set of “Internal Regulations of the Garrison” for his Marines. The following year a revised set was published that took into account several changes. In this manner, Tilton and his peers diverged from the practices of his predecessors and developed more fully rules and regulations for their commands, rather than rely simply on verbal orders passed down from watch to watch. By providing printed copies to all hands, Tilton increased the common understanding of orders, procedures and understandings within his unit, contributing to the overall good order and discipline of the Marines.⁶⁰

These efforts and the contributions of many other officers illustrate the desire among the more junior officers of the Corps to improve their lot and make the organization a more professional one. Their only problem was that they did not yet have the rank, seniority, or political standing to implement and achieve their goals, but time itself would make that happen. Indeed, it is the efforts of these same individuals that Shulimson points to as evidence of an increase in the professionalizing of the Corps, but he picks a time ten to fifteen years later. In the meantime, that same “new breed” of officers, assisted by the hard work of their non-commissioned officers, continued the fight to gain improvements in the way that the Corps was structured, manned and led. Having been forged in the crucible of fire that was the Civil War, these men were stubbornly determined not to let those experiences break them, but to instead channel

them to help shape the Corps into a more modern, efficient, and effective service for their successors.

Endnotes

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- ² Schaff, *Sunset of the Confederacy*, quote from 107.
- ³ Quote from Daniel B. Sanford, letter, *Confederate Veteran* 8, issue 4 (April 1900), 170.
- ⁴ *OR*, 46, pt. 1: 906, 947, 980; Schaff, *Sunset of the Confederacy*, 106-08; Scharf, *History of the Confederate States Navy*, 748-49, quote from 748; Krivdo, "Confederate States Marine Corps," 155-56; Ralph Donnelly, *The Confederate States Marine Corps: Rebel Leathernecks* (Shippensburg, Pa.: White Mane Publishing, 1989), 57-62.
- ⁵ Navy Dept., *Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of the Rebellion*, 30 volumes and index (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1894-1922), Series I, 16: 157, 186, 367 (hereafter referred to as *ORN*, and all citations are to Series I, unless otherwise indicated); 1st Lt. George Stoddard to Major Augustus S. Nicholson, Headquarters, Marine Battalion, Bay Point, South Carolina, 30 January 1865, Record Group (RG) 127 (Field Organization Records, Records of the United States Marine Corps), "Letters Received – Adjutant and Inspector's Office," National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C. (hereafter NA).
- ⁶ *ORN*, 16: 240, 261-62, 273, quotes from 273; Madeleine V. Dahlgren, ed., *Memoir of John A. Dahlgren, Rear-Admiral, United States Navy*, (New York: Charles A. Webster & Co., 1891), 502-503, also reference Dahlgren's own rhetorical question of 13 August 1863, 401.
- ⁷ Navy Dept., "Report of the Secretary of the Navy, 1862," 1 December 1862, *U.S. Congressional Serial Set* 1158, Sess. vol. 3, 37th Cong., 3rd Sess., House Exec. Doc. 1, Pt. 3 (hereafter "SecNav Annual Report, 1862"), quotes from 43; "The Navy Department," *New York Times*, 2 December 1862, 2-3; Entry for 20 August 1862, Gideon Welles, *Diary of Gideon Welles, Secretary of the Navy Under*

Lincoln and Johnson, 3 vols., edited by Howard K. Beale (New York: W. W. Norton Company, 1960), last quote from 1: 89 (hereafter Welles, *Diary* [Beale]). Note: this paragraph does not appear in the manuscript, but appears in published versions of the diary (predominantly based on the 1911 published version), based on Welles' written annotations on the original document. Therefore, when referring specifically to Beale's version, I have referenced it appropriately so the reader knows which version of the diary is being cited.

- ⁸ U.S. Congress, *Journal of the Senate of the United States of America* (hereafter *Senate Journal*), 37th Cong., 3rd Sess., 22 December 1862, 67; Cong., *Congressional Globe*, 37th Cong., 3rd Sess., 22 December 1862, 155; Entries for 20 and 23 December 1862, Welles, *Diary* [Beale], 1: 196-206.
- ⁹ Entries for 25 September and 4 December 1862, 24 January and 27 July 1863, Welles, *Diary* [Beale], 1: 149-50, 186-87, 227, 384-85, quotes from 1: 187, 384, and 227 respectively; "Congress," *New York Times*, 23 December 1862, 4. For a revealing characterization of John P. Hale and his relationship with Welles, see John Niven, "Gideon Welles," in *American Secretaries of the Navy*, Paolo E. Coletta, ed., 2 vols. (Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1980), 1: 330. Welles' *Diary* is replete with entries concerning his poor relationship with Hale.
- ¹⁰ Acting Rear-Admiral David Dixon Porter to Major William B. Slack, 11 January 1863, reprinted in *ORN*, 24: 150, quotes from 150 (hereafter referred to as *ORN*, and all citations are to Series I, unless otherwise indicated); Chester Hearn, *Admiral David Dixon Porter* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1996), 168-73.
- ¹¹ *Senate Journal*, 37th Cong., 3rd Sess., 28 February 1863, 361; *Congressional Globe*, 37th Cong., 3rd Sess., 28 February 1863, 1359.
- ¹² Navy Dept., "Report of the Secretary of the Navy, 1863," 7 December 1863, *Serial Set* 1183, Sess. vol. 4, 38th Cong., 1st Sess., H. Exec. Doc. 1, Pt. 4 (hereafter "SecNav Annual Report, 1863"), quotes from 32, with emphasis added.
- ¹³ "SecNav Annual Report, 1863," 1070-71, quotes from 1071.
- ¹⁴ Harris to "Sir" [Multiple addressees], Headquarters, Marine Corps, Washington, [D.C.], 7 December 1863, and responses, all reprinted in John Harris, compiler, *Letters from Naval Officers in Reference to the United States Marine Corps* (Washington, D.C.: Franck Taylor, 1864), 3-39, quotes from 3; U.S. Congress, "On the Expediency of Dispensing with the Marine Corps as part of the Armed Equipment of a Vessel-of-War," 24 March 1830, *American State Papers* 025, Naval Affairs vol. 3, 21st Cong., 1st Sess., Publication no. 416, 560-69; Harris to

Welles, HQMC, Washington, D.C., 15 January 1864, RG 127, Entry 4: “Letters Sent, 1798 – 1884,” NA.

- ¹⁵ Harris to Welles, HQMC, Washington, D.C., 15 January 1864, RG 127, Entry 4: “Letters Sent, 1798 – 1884,” NA; *New York Times*, 14 May 1864, 8;
- ¹⁶ Niven, “Gideon Welles,” 1: 342-43;
- ¹⁷ Gideon Welles, “Diary of Gideon Welles,” Entry for 14 May 1864, reprinted in *Diary of Gideon Welles, Secretary of the Navy Under Lincoln and Johnson*, 3 vols., Welles, Edgar Thaddeus, ed. (Boston, Ma.: Houghton, Mifflin & Co., 1911), (hereafter Welles, *Diary* [1911]), quote from 2: 31; Harris to Welles, 25 March 1864, RG 80 (General Records of the Department of the Navy, Records of the Office of the Secretary of the Navy), Entry 14 (Letters From the Commandant and Other Officers of the Marine Corps, January 1828 - December 1886) (hereafter “Letters Received”), NA; Colonel William Dulany to Welles, Marine Barracks, [Norfolk, Va.], 14 May 1864, RG 80, Entry 1 (Letters to the Commandant and Other Officers of the Marine Corps) (hereafter “Letters Sent”), NA; Joseph Alexander, “Jacob Zeilin,” in *Commandants of the Marine Corps*, edited by Allan R. Millett and Jack Shulimson (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2004), 85-87.
- ¹⁸ Entries for 14 May and 9 June 1864, Welles, *Diary*, 2: 31, 51; first and second quotes from 2: 51; John G. Reynolds, *Proceedings of a Marine General Court Martial, Convened at Washington City, May 7, 1862, for the Trial of Lieut. Col. John Geo. Reynolds, U.S. Marine Corps* (Washington, D.C.: Henry Polkinhorn, Printer, 1862); Major Nicholson, Adjutant and Inspector, to [Multiple addressees], 11 June 1864, RG 80, Entry 1: “Letters Sent,” NA, third quote from text; Alexander, “Jacob Zeilin,” 87.
- ¹⁹ Charles O. Paullin, *Paullin’s History of Naval Administration, 1775-1911* (Annapolis: Naval Institute, 1968), 297-303; “SecNav Annual Report for 1861,” 5, 17-18, quote from 18; “SecNav Annual Report for 1862,” 4-5, 20-22; “SecNav Annual Report for 1863,” 5; Niven, “Gideon Welles,” 344.
- ²⁰ David M. Sullivan, *The United States Marine Corps in the Civil War – The Final Year* (Shippensburg, Pa.: White Mane Books, 2000), quote from 18; Jacob Zeilin to Ward Marston, HQMC, Washington, D.C., 23 and 27 January 1865, RG 127, Entry 4: “Letters Sent, 1798 – 1884,” NA; Court Martial of Lieutenant Ward Marston, RG 45 (Naval Records Collection of the Office of Naval Records and Library), Court Martial Records, Case 4070, 1 November 1865, NA. Marston pleaded guilty of misappropriating over \$8,000 of bounty money that his men

had entrusted to him for safekeeping. He was sentenced to dismissal from the service.

- ²¹ Privy Council (P.C.) 4/104, *Privy Council Register, January, 1754 – December 1755*, 9 January and 25 March 1755, National Archives, United Kingdom (hereafter NAUK); Admiralty 2/1152, *Out Letters Relating to Marines, 1755 – 1756*, 29 March 1755, NAUK; Alfred James Marini, “The British Corps of Marines, 1746-1771, and the United States Marine Corps, 1798-1818: A Comparative Study of Two Modern Marine Forces” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Maine, 1979), 186-208; Richard Brooks, *The Royal Marines, 1664 to the Present* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2002), 46-49; Millett, *Semper Fidelis*, 3-5.
- ²² Marini, “British Corps of Marines,” 186-208; Brooks, *Royal Marines*, 97-99, 291.
- ²³ Congress, *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789*, 34 vols. (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1904-1937), 3: 348, quote from 348 with emphasis added; James C. Bradford, “Samuel Nicholas,” in *Commandants of the Marine Corps*, 17-26; Charles R. Smith, *Marines in the Revolution: A History of the Continental Marines in the American Revolution, 1775-1783* (Washington, D.C.: History and Museums Division, 1975), 105, 155-61.
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- ²⁵ See the discussion in Chapter III.
- ²⁶ “SecNav Annual Report for 1861,” 515-16; “SecNav Annual Report for 1862,” 902; “SecNav Annual Report for 1863,” 1070-71, quote from 1071; *Serial Set* 1221, Sess. vol. 6, 38th Cong., 2nd Sess., H. Exec. Doc. 1, pt. 6, 5 December 1864 (hereafter “SecNav Annual Report for 1864”), 1193-94; *Serial Set* 1253, Sess. vol. 5, 39th Cong., 1st Sess., H. Exec. Doc. 1, pt. 5, 4 December 1865 (hereafter “SecNav Annual Report for 1865”), 426-28.
- ²⁷ The Provisional Congress of the Confederate States of America unanimously adopted a Provisional Constitution on 8 February 1861, and the next day selected Jefferson Davis to serve as President for one year. Confederate States of America, *Journal of the Congress of the Confederate States of America*, 7 vols. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1904-1905), 1: 103, 151 (hereafter referred to as *JCC*); Confederate States of America, *Acts and*

Resolutions of the First Session of the Provisional Congress of the Confederate States, Held at Montgomery, Ala. (Richmond: Enquirer Book and Job Press by Tyler, Wise, Allegre & Smith, 1861), 48-49, 98-105, quote from 103 (hereafter referred to as *Acts, First Session*); Confederate States of America, *Acts and Resolutions of the Second Session of the Provisional Congress of the Confederate States, Held at Montgomery, Ala.* (Richmond: Enquirer Book and Job Press by Tyler, Wise, Allegre & Smith, 1861), 39, 86-87 (hereafter referred to as *Acts, Second Session*).

- ²⁸ Krivdo, “Confederate States Marine Corps,” 17. Information supporting the creation of this figure is drawn from *Acts, First Session*, 103.
- ²⁹ Ralph Donnelly, *Rebel Leathernecks*, 3-5, quote from 3; James Charles Gasser, “Confederate Marines in the Civil War” (M.A. thesis, Alabama Polytechnic Institute, 1956), 7, citing from *ORN*, II, 2: 53; *JCC*, 1: 259, 263, 297, 328; *Acts, First Session*, 104; *Acts, Second Session*, 86-87; Krivdo, “Confederate States Marine Corps,” 50-51.
- ³⁰ Krivdo, “Confederate States Marine Corps,” 52. Information drawn from *Acts, First Session*, 104; *Acts, Second Session*, 86-87; and *JCC*, 1: 259, 263, 297, 328.
- ³¹ *JCC*, 1: 259, 263, 297, 328; *Acts, First Session*, 104; *Acts, Second Session*, 86-87.
- ³² Krivdo, “Confederate States Marine Corps, 51-52; *JCC*, 1: 259, 263, 297, 328; *Acts, First Session*, 104; *Acts, Second Session*, 86-87; Col. Lloyd J. Beall to Secretary of the [Confederate States] Navy Stephen R. Mallory, Richmond, Va., 14 August 1862, reprinted in *ORN*, II, 2: 251.
- ³³ As described in U.S. Marine Corps, *Marine Corps Doctrinal Publication 6 (MCDP 6), Command and Control* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1996), 87-89, 109-12.
- ³⁴ Krivdo, “Confederate States Marine Corps,” 53-55; *Acts, First Session*, 48-49, 98-105, 2: 39, 86-87; Durkin, *Confederate Navy Chief*, 144-45; U.S. Marine Corps, *Command and Control*, 87-89, 109-12.
- ³⁵ Krivdo, “Confederate States Marine Corps,” 52-54, 179-80; 251-54.
- ³⁶ *Ibid.*, 180. Graphic created by Dianne G. Krivdo, 22 November 2006.
- ³⁷ Krivdo, “Confederate States Marine Corps,” 156-57, 254.
- ³⁸ *Ibid.*, 157; Graphic created by Dianne G. Krivdo, 22 November 2006.

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- ³⁹ *ORN*, II, 1: 464; *ORN*, 22: 682; *OR*, III, 2: 1-4, 11-16, 123; *ORN*, 23: 37-41, 44, 48, 80; Chester G. Hearn, *Ellet's Brigade: The Strangest Outfit of All* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2000), 11-25, quote from 11.
- ⁴⁰ *ORN*, 23: 362, 388, 395-96, 418, 427-29; Hearn, *Ellet's Brigade*, 72-77.
- ⁴¹ 4 November 1862, Welles, *Diary*, 180, quotes from text; Hearn, *Ellet's Brigade*, 76-77.
- ⁴² Hearn, *Ellet's Brigade*, 77-78, 146-47, 264-66; President Abraham Lincoln, Executive Order, 7 November 1862, in Roy P. Basler, ed., *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, 9 vols. (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1953), 5: 490; *ORN*, 23: 468-69; "Ellet's Marine Brigade," *New Albany Ledger*, undated news clipping from Amos W. Bellows Diary, Crandall Warren Daniel Collection, Illinois State Historical Library, Springfield, Illinois, as cited in Hearn, *Ellet's Brigade*, 265-66.
- ⁴³ *Army and Navy Journal* (hereafter *ANJ*), 4 September 1875, 55; *ANJ*, 11 September 1875, 73.
- ⁴⁴ Jack Shulimson, *The Marine Corps' Search for a Mission, 1880-1898* (Lawrence, Kans.: University of Kansas Press, 1993), *passim*; Jack Shulimson, "Military Professionalism: The Case of the U.S. Marine Officer Corps, 1880-1898," *Journal of Military History* 60 (April 1996), 231-42, quotes from 238; Samuel B. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of the Harvard University Press, 1957), 7-10, 19-53.
- ⁴⁵ Shulimson, "The Case of the U.S. Marine Officer Corps," 231.
- ⁴⁶ Much of the discussion over whether to abolish the Corps or transfer it to the army originated out of an effort by some congressional leaders to make the Commandant a brigadier general. In the course of those discussions, Representative John D. Baldwin of Massachusetts presented a resolution to again ask the Committee on Naval Affairs to consider the point, because he felt that despite their past great service, "in modern navies [the Corps] is unnecessary and useless." See *Congressional Globe*, 39th Cong., 1st Sess., 1333, 1744-45, 3238, quote from 1745; the real debate played out in the pages of the *Army and Navy Journal*, issues of 30 June 1866, 5, 12, and 26 January 1867, and 9 February 1867, 314, 329, 362, 365, 394. However, in the end it was Commandant Zeilin's resorting to the time-tested tactic first practiced by Archibald Henderson of presenting testimonials of Navy officers that again quashed Baldwin's effort.

See also *Serial Set* 1253, Sess. vol. 5, 39th Cong., 1st Sess., 4 December 1865, 427.

- ⁴⁷ Brigadier General Commandant Zeilin to Welles, 17 and 22 November 1868 (with enclosures), copies in Jacob Zeilin Biographical File, Marine Corps Historical Division, Quantico, Va; Alexander, "Jacob Zeilin," 95.
- ⁴⁸ Henry C. Cochrane to "Dear Father," Marine Barracks, Washington, D.C., 3 June 1863, Henry Clay Cochrane Papers, Marine Corps Archives and Special Collections, Gray Research Center, Quantico, Virginia (hereafter GRC); Cochrane to "Dear Mother and Sister," U.S. Marine Barracks, Washington, D.C., 14 June 1863, Cochrane Papers, Archives and Special Collections, GRC; Charles F. W. Coker, "Biographical Sketch of Henry Clay Cochrane" in *Register of the Henry Clay Cochrane Papers, 1809-1957*, Manuscript Register Series, Number 1 (Washington, D.C.: Marine Corps Museum, 1968), 7-11 (hereafter "Cochrane Biography"), Cochrane Papers, Archives and Special Collections, GRC; Edward W. Callahan, ed., *List of Officers of the Navy of the United States and of the Marine Corps from 1775 to 1900* ([1901], New York: Haskell House Publishers, Ltd., 1969), 683.
- ⁴⁹ Cochrane to "Dear Parents," Marine Barracks, Mound City, [Illinois,] 15 June 1864, Cochrane Papers, Archives and Special Collections, GRC; "Cochrane Biography," 7-8, GRC.
- ⁵⁰ *ORN*, 27: 154; "Cochrane Biography," 8-11, GRC, Anne Cipriano Venzon, *Leaders of Men: Ten Marines Who Changed the Corps* (Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press, 2008), 19-38.
- ⁵¹ "Cochrane Biography," 8-11, GRC; see Cochrane Papers, Archives and Special Collections, GRC, for voluminous examples of his lecture and speaking notes. Last quote from Louis E. Fagan to Cochrane, USS *Vandalia*, Smyrna, Turkey, 11 September 1877, copy in Cochrane Papers, Archives and Special Collections, GRC.
- ⁵² Henry Clay Cochrane, Pamphlet, *The Status of the Marine Corps* (Annapolis, Md.: privately printed, 1875), copy in Cochrane Papers, Archives and Special Collections, GRC, quotes from 3-5 with emphasis added.
- ⁵³ *Ibid.*, 3-9, quote from 8.
- ⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 3-9.

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- ⁵⁵ Shulimson, "The Case of the U.S. Marine Officer Corps," 231-32; *ANJ*, 3 July 1880, 978; William F. Runny to Cochrane, Headquarters, Artillery School, Fort Monroe, Va., 14 March 1876, copy in Cochrane Papers, Archives and Special Collections, GRC; Fagan to Cochrane, USS *Vandalia*, Constantinople, Turkey, 23 January 1877, copy in Cochrane Papers, Archives and Special Collections, GRC, quotes from text. In the absence of formal professional journals, many reform-minded military thinkers turned to private periodicals such as the *Army and Navy Journal* and *United Service* to employ as public forums for discussing and critiquing the popular military ideas of the day.
- ⁵⁶ *Washington Chronicle*, 25 August 1875, copy in Louis E. Fagan Papers, Archives and Special Collections, GRC, first and second quotes from text; *ANJ*, 11 September 1875, third and fourth quotes from text; Fagan to Cochrane, USS *Vandalia*, Constantinople, Turkey, 23 January 1877, copy in Cochrane Papers, Archives and Special Collections, GRC, fifth quote from text.
- ⁵⁷ Marine Corps Circular, 2 May 1877, Navy and Marine Corps Orders, 1877-1903, Rare Book Collection, GRC; Major August S. Nicholson, Adjutant and Inspector, Headquarters, Marine Corps, RG 80, Entry 14, 1 February 1877; Jack Shulimson, "Charles G. McCawley," in *Commandants of the Marine Corps*, 100-101; 1st Lt. Richard S. Collum to 1st Lt. Cochrane 14 August 1877, Folder 22, Cochrane Papers, Archives and Special Collections, GRC.
- ⁵⁸ Report, Captain James Forney to Secretary of the Navy George M. Robeson, 15 September 1873, RG 45, Subject File VR (United States Marine Corps), NA; Minutes, Meeting of Marine Officers, North Atlantic Squadron and Norfolk Station, 12 February 1876, copy in Cochrane Papers, Archives and Special Collections, GRC; H. Report 762, U.S. Senate Committee on Naval Affairs, 18 January 1881, 46th Cong., 3rd Sess., copy in Cochrane Papers, Archives and Special Collections, GRC; *ANJ*, 24 December 1881.
- ⁵⁹ McLane Tilton to "My Dear Major" [William B. Slack, Quartermaster], Frigate *Colorado*, New York, 13 March 1870, McLane Tilton Papers, Folder "Letters – Asiatic Station," Archives and Special Collections, GRC;
- ⁶⁰ Captain McLane Tilton, Pamphlet, *Internal Regulations of the Garrison*, (Annapolis, Md.: privately printed, 1874), copy in the Henry Clay Cochrane Papers, "Memorandum Book, 1865-1881," Archives and Special Collections, GRC; Captain McLane Tilton, Pamphlet, *Internal Regulations of the U.S. Marine Barracks at Annapolis, Maryland*, (Annapolis, Md.: privately printed, 1875), original copy in the Raymond Graff Collection, Archives and Special Collections, GRC.

CHAPTER IX

AFTERMATH AND CONCLUSIONS

At the onset of the Civil War era the U.S. Army consisted only of a small collection of companies and battalions dispersed widely throughout the expanding nation, each unit linked with some often distant regimental headquarters for its administration and command. As late as the opening months of 1861, the entire strength of the regular Army totaled only about 16,000 officers and men, commanded by a mere handful of general officers. Of that number the Secretary of War commented that “there are not more than about 11,000 men available for active service in the field.”

Nonetheless, once the conflict began, the rush of volunteers rapidly expanded the Army, transforming it for a few years into a massive, highly cohesive organization comprised of field armies, corps, divisions, and brigades on a scale that could scarcely have been imagined in the antebellum years. More than one million soldiers were under arms. In the process, the Army reinvented itself and produced “the first of the great modern [generals].”¹

The U.S. Navy crafted in some ways an even more remarkable transformation. It began the war with fewer than 40 serviceable vessels, most of them using the old technologies of wood construction and sail propulsion. Yet before the war was over it created and successfully employed a modern naval force that historian Kurt Hackemer characterized as “perhaps the best navy in the world for coastal defense and riverine operations.” This new navy grew in strength sevenfold, from about 9,000 sailors and

officers in early 1861 to almost 60,000 by war's end. Moreover, this new navy embraced innovative technologies and quickly grew from a pitifully small, scattered collection of ships led by largely autonomous captains to become instead a capable, well-integrated, and squadron-directed fighting force of modern weaponry commanded by admirals. By war's end the Navy had expanded in size to over 600 vessels, many of them new iron-hulled or armor-clad designs, and most incorporating steam propulsion and armed with some of the most modern of naval weaponry. To more effectively service and support the organization, the Navy modified its Bureau system and more closely regulated the training and administration of its officers and sailors. Through experimentation, the service nimbly adapted itself to a new national military strategy, seizing ports and gradually tightening its grip on the Confederacy's coast while concurrently cooperating with Army units in riverine and littoral operations.²

Compared to the successful expansion and experiences of its sister services, the Marine Corps regressed as an institution. Seagoing Marines in 1865 performed essentially the same missions their predecessors undertook during the War of 1812 a half century before: they served in small detachments to assist the vessel commander in maintaining good order and discipline. Other Marines guarded shore installations. In stark contrast to their performance in the Mexican War, the Corps' senior officers stubbornly resisted the forming of larger battalion units and some discouraged any attempt to employ Marines under army command. Although the Corps earlier had sought out opportunities to prove its expeditionary capabilities in the field, from the Secession Crisis on it avoided or diluted efforts to continue along that path. Frustrated,

senior military authorities eventually stopped calling on the Marines to perform challenging tasks, thereby allowing the Corps to revert to its comfortable, yet less relevant or important roles.

Discerning the factors that account for the Marines' regression is significant to understanding the circumstances of the effects of modernization, the Corps, its status during and after the war, and its difficulties from 1865 to the 1890s. Several historians have honed in on the sudden death in office of the Corps' longstanding commandant, Archibald Henderson, as a central factor to explain the organization's disappointing performance in the Civil War, an observation bolstered by the fact that it occurred 1859, on the cusp of the war. While this is a valid assertion, a deeper analysis demonstrates other factors not addressed in previous studies.

First, the clear changes in leadership styles and operational priorities between Henderson and his replacement John Harris are distinct and readily apparent. The former Commandant had wholeheartedly supported innovative efforts to expand the Corps' participation within the nation's military establishment beyond that of their limited roles as ships' guards and shore sentries. Henderson had also pushed to increase the professionalism of his officers and men. On the other hand, Harris, although a quietly competent administrator, proved unimaginative and generally uninterested in any efforts to expand of the role of his Marines, even when repeatedly requested to do so by superiors and operational commanders alike. In stark contrast to his predecessor, Harris exhibited little interest in assuming new roles and missions beyond the traditional, even

when confronted with increased evidence of the value of those tasks to the nation, the war effort, and the Corps itself.

Yet there is more to the situation than the obvious changes in operational priorities that resulted from Henderson's death and Harris' assumption of the commandancy. A second notable factor was that the Marine Corps had long suffered from a crisis of identity: critics had raised difficult and entirely germane points about the Marine Corps as a service, even questioning the issue of whether the military establishment really needed a Marine Corps. Were the tasks performed by Marines on board ships and ashore relevant and valuable to the Navy? Were Marines worth the investment of men and materiel? Were there better tasks for Marines, ones that would benefit both naval services and improve their combined combat capabilities? Or were Marines simply continuing to perform functions that were traditional but fast becoming obsolete in the face of changes in both modern naval warfare and service practice?

To his credit, Commandant Henderson had long wrestled with those very questions, and his answers led him to doggedly pursue a course that he believed would transform the Marine Corps into "the military arm of the Navy."³ To Henderson, this meant that the Corps needed to train to perform infantry, artillery, even engineer tasks to enhance its ability to fight enemies as a valuable component of landing parties.⁴ By extension, Henderson also pushed hard to take opportunities for Marines to participate as larger combat formations alongside Army forces in extended land combat. He successfully proved his concept by employing Marine battalions during the Second Seminole War and in the Mexican War. Marines also bolstered their fighting reputation

through participating in a number of naval expeditions in the antebellum years and earned further respect by quelling John Brown's Raid in 1859 in a politically sensitive operation. In each of those evolutions the Marine Corps filled a valuable niche and became for a time a national force in readiness.

Several factors aided Henderson in his transformative campaign. First, the Navy was experimenting with new technologies such as steam propulsion, armor, and advances in weaponry.⁵ To begin with, the Navy was unsure how those same new propulsion, armament, and weapons systems might affect its own tactics, techniques, and procedures. By extension, naval leaders remained oblivious to how those same factors might have consequences for the naval services' requirements for Marines. Second, the Navy's concurrent adopting of certain naval reforms improved sailor morale and reduced the frequency and severity of disciplinary infractions. Those same initiatives decreased the need to station Marines to help enforce discipline aboard ship, directly negating one of the traditional roles of the Corps. Some naval leaders even considered deploying warships without Marine detachments and experiments along that line soon hinted that the absence of Marines from ships did not necessarily equate to greater incidences of disciplinary problems or mutiny. Third, with the Navy focusing on its own modernization effort, it largely ignored the Marine Corps as a service and generally left it to its own devices where internal improvements were concerned. During Henderson's tenure, the forceful commandant exploited that indifference to some extent to achieve progress toward his goals that made the Corps more capable of flexible military operations in support of the Navy.

Since he was essentially left on his own where future plans for the Corps were concerned, Henderson deftly leveraged his political skills, connections, and the seniority of his unusually long tenure to successfully lobby for support of his initiatives. He also educated political and military leaders on the achievements and potential of his Marines, thereby creating new proponents for the Corps. To the end, the long-serving Commandant effectively guided his command toward his objective of creating a more nimble and capable military force.

Yet despite his many successes, Henderson also failed in several important respects. His first failure involved not institutionalizing his concept for the Corps and in not establishing mechanisms within it to continue those initiatives beyond his own tenure. The publishing of a long-range plan for the Corps, coupled with the orders and directives to implement it would have not only ensured widest dissemination of them, but also better inculcated his ideas and thereby made them more lasting. Although he attempted to do this to some extent, the weak link proved to be within the Corps' own senior officers. Some of those men remained generally unconvinced of the need for the Corps to adapt to modern times. Instead, many of them wished only to continue their tenure as barracks commanders, viewing their post as a sinecure that they rated by virtue of seniority. Although Henderson had made some progress in controlling the Corps' senior officers, a significant percentage resisted any attempt by headquarters to impose greater authority over their actions.

The second failure was in Henderson's not identifying, preparing, and training a successor (or successors) to take over the reins of the Corps when he departed.

Henderson had served as the Corps' Commandant for almost forty years, longer than most of his Marines had been alive. Throughout his term, Henderson controlled virtually every aspect of the Corps' functioning, and he served as the critical central link between his organization and the Navy Department. The closest equivalent of a second in command to the Commandant was the field grade officer who held the position as the Corps' Adjutant and Inspector, the individual responsible for the training, qualifying, and preparing of all Marines, both officer and enlisted, for duty. Although empowered to act on the Commandant's behalf on many issues, the Adjutant and Inspector was not an heir-apparent: the selecting of Commandants had traditionally been accomplished solely on the basis of seniority. But by establishing a system whereby his successor could have been identified and prepared beforehand, Henderson could have better prepared that individual and ensured that his priorities and initiatives were continued after his exit. Such prior preparation might have also minimized the impact of drastic or general changes to the unit when a new leader suddenly assumed command.

Third, although Henderson had always kept his superiors advised of his reforms and ideas, the initiative to pursue those goals remained on his shoulders and consequently died with him. Through sheer force of personality coupled with longevity, Henderson remained the single most influential person for modernizing the Corps during this period. Although he continuously pushed from below, seldom did his superiors in the Navy Department get behind his initiatives and make them truly their own. With a little effort beforehand, Henderson might have used his influence to win greater support for his ideas within Congress and the Navy Department. By gaining support of his

initiatives in the Navy Department and among its senior political and military leaders, Henderson could have better ensured that his ideas would survive his absence.

Establishing such support would have aligned his efforts to improve the military value of the Corps with the actual requirements of the Navy.

Following Henderson's death, the appointing of John Harris as the new commandant had great consequences for the Marine Corps during the Civil War. The positive momentum established by Henderson slowed to a halt and in some ways reversed itself. Although Harris made no significant changes in the administering of the Corps from the policies set by Henderson, it nonetheless soon became apparent that the new Commandant had different priorities. Harris proved less interested in the roles and missions Henderson experimented with and more concerned with returning to the traditional methods of employing Marines. Disagreements over the training and preparing of new Marines occurred almost immediately between Harris and his Adjutant and Inspector, Major Henry Ball Tyler, Sr. Major Tyler believed Harris was diluting Henderson's initiatives, and he attempted to get Secretary of the Navy Isaac Toucey to side with him. A civilian official with extensive political experience in several offices (congressman, state governor, and U.S. Attorney General), Toucey had little understanding of the Navy, and even less of the Marines and land warfare. Therefore, Toucey simply distanced himself from the argument, essentially allowing Harris to follow his own priorities.⁶ As the differences between Harris' lack of vision and Henderson's accomplishments grew, it created friction between advocates of Henderson's initiatives and the new commandant who ignored them.

These differences in operational concept became more apparent during the Secession Crisis. Facing pressures produced by significant resignations and desertions, the already understrength U.S. Army found itself without sufficient manpower to provide garrisons for some of the critical forts that protected the nation's capital region. Rightly concerned, the Secretary of War requested assistance from the Marine Corps and Secretary Toucey agreed. Toucey directed Harris to provide Marines for two vital fortifications, but the Commandant only grudgingly assigned troops to that duty. Instead of building upon these deployments, and seeking to expand the Marine Corps to fulfill them, Harris took the opposite tack and argued for the Marines' relief from the assignments. Although the crisis provided the Corps with a golden opportunity to curry political favor and quite possibly gain additional structure, Harris contended it was not a Marine Corps mission and convinced Toucey to allow him to withdraw the forces. The opportunity soon passed, but Harris had made it known that he did not favor employing his men with the Army, as his predecessor had done.⁷

Meanwhile, the Secession Crisis further tested the leadership of Commandant Harris, and found him lacking. Officers began leaving the Corps in great numbers, and Harris may have exacerbated the situation. Some officers might have been prompted to leave in part due to personal conflicts with Harris, or as a result of lack of confidence in his leadership. A few highly valued and experienced officers with few ties to the South resigned their commissions. Some of them joined the Confederate military and became valued leaders in their own right. Their loss both hurt the USMC at a time of need and benefitted their new units. During the crisis, the U.S. Marine Corps suffered from the

sudden loss of over 50 percent of its seasoned company-grade officers, the largest percentage loss of all the American military services. Harris may have contributed to the scope of that loss, and he certainly did little to stem it.

In addition, only when directed to do so by the incoming Secretary of the Navy, Gideon Welles, did Harris form a battalion for land service with the Army. However, where in the past Henderson had assigned experienced Marines to the unit as a way of best ensuring its combat capabilities and increasing its likelihood of success, Harris filled it instead with new recruits who had little or no experience. Many were issued their weapons for the first time only days before departing for the battlefield. As a result, the battalion performed just as poorly in combat as the equally raw and inadequately prepared volunteer and militia units it served beside at the first Battle of Bull Run. For their part, many senior military commanders expected more from a regular military unit, and the Marine battalion's substandard performance disappointed them.⁸

Although clearly responsible in part for the unit's substandard performance, Harris instead implied that the battalion's failure was due to the Marines being employed contrary to their traditional roles and missions. He asked Secretary Welles to not allow Marines to serve with the Army in the future and curtly requested to reassign the remaining battalion personnel "to their more legitimate duties in the Corps."⁹ It is worth mentioning that, despite sometimes dire shortages of soldiers, the Army did not again call on the Marines to provide a battalion or regiment for land service during the remainder of the war.

If Harris thought that the issue of forming Marine battalions would simply go away, he was soon dispelled of that notion. From the time that the first naval blockading squadrons were formed early in the war, the commanders of those organizations consistently and repeatedly requested larger Marine combat formations to assist them in the prosecution of their operations. Almost every squadron commander asked that he be provided with such a unit at one point or another, several even specifying that the Marines be specially trained to conduct amphibious landings.¹⁰ Many of these senior Navy leaders had been guided by their experiences with Marine battalions in operations during the Mexican War, where such units had proven their utility in many situations. It was another opportunity missed not only by Commandant Harris, but also by Secretary Welles. Senior Marine leaders continued to comply only grudgingly with requests for battalion units, arguing that they had insufficient manpower to provide them, essentially prioritizing naval requests for larger units below even the need to provide Marines for garrison barracks commands located far from the field of battle. After being dissatisfied by Harris' inadequacies, Welles would have been fully justified in relieving him as Commandant. Yet he did not, and the Corps limped along at a reduced level of efficiency.

When their appeals for Marine battalions were turned down, frustrated squadron commanders usually turned to their own assets and created their own Marine battalions out of their several organic ships' detachments. Although the forming of such *ad hoc* units was less effective than if purpose-built Marine battalions had been trained and provided, squadron commanders' efforts in building their own *ad hoc* Marine units

confirmed an important point: it validated the operational requirement for Marine battalions within the squadron structure. To the various squadron commanders, the requirement for tactical Marine units, even less-efficient, temporary ones, outweighed the requirement to maintain small Marine detachments aboard each ship. As the operational commanders offshore demonstrated, the combat needs of the squadrons should have been taken into account and filled as a matter of the highest priority. Instead, senior Marine leaders were allowed to essentially ignore the demands of the squadrons as they continued to fill instead the less efficient detachments. Again, fault lay with Harris - - but also with Secretary Welles for not replacing Harris with someone who would have at least tried to meet the needs of the Navy.

On this key point, the Marine Corps failed to live up to the Navy's expectations as defined by the various squadron commanders. Harris and his successor, Jacob Zeilin, equally uninterested in forming larger, tactical Marine units, routinely cited chronic manpower shortages as a rationale for not providing landing battalions. But manpower was not the problem as much as where the Marines were serving and the duties they performed. Several battalions might have been formed if the Marines had moved men from the various barracks commands or from ships unlikely to be engaged in combat, but Harris and his senior officers never entertained that option. Eventually, through constant repetition, even the Navy Secretary became convinced of Harris' rationale for why the Commandant could not provide battalions.

It is important to understand that from its inception the Confederate States Marine Corps (CSMC) purposefully adopted a radically different structure than that of

the American Marines. When the South created its own Marine Corps, it deviated significantly from the existing Federal unit and instead crafted a tactical structure that proved more adaptable, flexible, and efficient than that of the USMC. The CSMC adopted the company as its basic tactical unit, and located them with its naval squadrons. Depending on analysis of the military situation, separate companies could be rapidly combined to form battalions when needed, and were just as easily redeployed to higher priority assignments. This innovative employment concept and structure allowed the CSMC to achieve significant results with the few men it had available. Detachments served on board warships when needed, leaving it up to the company commander, in consultation with the supported squadron commander, to best determine the distribution and hand-select the men to fill posts. Importantly, the company (or battalion) commander could better supervise both unit training and the combat employment of his forces, and the organization benefitted from having an established chain of command, standardized procedures, and a more keen awareness by the leaders of the individual and collective strengths and weaknesses of the Marines they led. Therefore, the CSMC's employment scheme proved more modern, efficient, and effective than the antiquated system of fielding individual detachments that Harris and his successors stubbornly clung to throughout the Civil War.¹¹

Comparison of the USMC's structure with that of other marine units reinforces the point. The British Royal Marines had long before adopted a company-based structure. Furthermore, the British added artillery companies to the mix, providing increased combat support for its field units. Similarly, Harris' and Welles' errors meant

that the U.S. military lacked authorized units organized, trained and employed for amphibious operations, leading the U.S. Army in the Mississippi River Valley to create its own force, the Mississippi Marine Brigade. However, the failure of the Army to coordinate its effort with the Navy, and its over-reliance on a civilian contractor for the experiment's execution led to problems that prompted the Army to dissolve the unit.¹² In any event, the experiment once again validated the concept of a combined arms combat force trained in amphibious warfare within the U.S. military structure, a need that would go unfilled for some time.

Some scholars have discounted historical criticism of the Marine Corps during the Civil War by focusing on the remarkable performance of the individuals themselves in undertaking the missions assigned to them. Specifically addressing the performance of the Marine battalion at the First Battle of Bull Run, historian David Sullivan asserts that it “performed as well as, if not better than, any other military organization thrown into the battle.” He makes a similar argument that the courageous individual action of Marines throughout the war “was equal to any who have borne the title ‘United States Marine.’”¹³ With regard to individual performance in combat, the issue was never in doubt: Federal records contain ample testimony of the heroic actions of Marines and sailors in the hundreds of engagements they participated in during the Civil War. The real issue is whether the Marines were well-organized, trained, and equipped for the missions expected of them by both Army and Navy commanders: the simple answer is that they were not.

Sullivan misses that point completely in his analysis. Yet he rationalizes the consequent cracking of the Bull Run battalion in battle as being caused by the unit being manned by “incompletely trained, callow youths.”¹⁴ Clearly, the failure of the unit to perform to expectations belonged with the commander who purposely formed the battalion with the rawest of recruits, rather than filling it with experienced Marines. In creating that battalion, Harris deviated from previous similar experiences by not filling the ranks with veterans, making it appear that the manning of individual ships’ detachments occupied a higher priority status in his mind. In any event, Harris’ action likely doomed the unit to failure, and for that decision the Commandant should be held accountable.

Furthermore, inasmuch as Sullivan is correct in asserting that “the stigma” of the Marine’s performance at Bull Run “was a disgrace to the honor and traditions” of the Corps and “completely unwarranted,” he cannot discount the damage that was done to the Corps’ reputation at the time or how the incident came to shape Army-Marine relations throughout the remainder of the war. He mentions the sting of Harris’ own assessment of the Marines’ performance, but does not point out that Harris did little to set the record straight, and that the Commandant used the event to his own ends.¹⁵ Harris clearly hoped to avoid future commitments to support the Army, believing it not a valid mission for Marines.

Surprisingly, none of the previous studies of the U.S. Marine Corps in the Civil War have analyzed in what ways senior leaders *outside* the Marine Corps also bear responsibility for the Corps’ failings in the war. The Marine Corps was an element of

the Navy Department, and the Secretary of the Navy was ultimately responsible for that service to the same degree as he was responsible for the Navy itself. Yet although it is clear that Gideon Welles felt frustrated in the performance of Harris and several other senior Marine officers, the secretary failed to take corrective action to the same degree that he did within the Navy. In the latter service Welles justifiably relieved several officers from their commands when he became concerned over their performance and how it might affect the war. Yet despite the many indicators that he disapproved of actions of Harris and other senior Marines, the Secretary still refused to relieve them. Only when Harris died in office did Welles take the time to deliberate on the situation, mulling in his diary that the choices of successors were not good.¹⁶ And when he did decide on a replacement for Harris, he did not dig deep enough into the ranks to affect any major change in the administering of the Corps, selecting a man who proved almost as conservative as Harris.

By not correcting recognized deficiencies and fostering change within the Corps, Welles essentially abrogated his responsibilities over the service. As head of the Navy Department, Welles held responsibility not only for everything the Corps did or failed to do, but also to synchronize that service's efforts with that of the Navy to ensure that the Corps was best meeting its obligations. But during the war, his subordinate operational commanders repeatedly provided specific notice of what their expectations were of Marines under their command, and the Corps failed to meet them. Welles also failed: he did little to fix the Corps' problems, thereby perpetuating them. For that

reason alone Welles deserves a share in the blame for the Corps' failures to adapt and meet the challenges of better supporting the war effort.

Sullivan also misses a major point by asserting that “only the limitations of the law prevented the Corps from taking a more active part in the conflict.” He correctly identifies that the Navy was levying more manpower demands on the Corps than the Marines could ever fill with their current structure. Once again, Archibald Henderson had previously demonstrated that in wartime Congress could agree to expand the Corps. And since the Civil War provided greater national stresses than the Mexican War had, it further increased the chances that the Marine Corps would expand. Sullivan astutely posits that had the Corps been authorized more Marines, the Navy would have found ways to employ new units.¹⁷ However, this assumption collides with the reality that previous expansions had been predicated on the assumption of new roles and missions for the Marines, the exact situation that Harris and others were avoiding. Although the Corps did expand modestly during the war, the added structure was used to fill vacancies in detachments on board ships, and not employed in forming larger units as advocated by naval squadron commanders.

Furthermore, other leadership failings were not taken into account. During the Civil War, due to limitations on enlistment bonuses and time of service, the Marine Corps never recruited to its authorized level, nor could it hold onto its men when they were recruited. The Corps consistently had one of the highest rates of desertion among the services. These recruiting and retention problems are yet another indicator of leadership failings and a lack of institutional imagination and innovation. Little effort

was made to solve the old problems of recruiting in new ways, such as expanding its recruiting base or recruiting African Americans, as both other services did. Instead, the Corps continued to recruit as it always had, with predictably poor results. Besides, from the start when presented with ideal opportunities to increase the Corps' structure, when Marines were requested to garrison forts and form new units for service with the Army, the Marine leadership fought against those assignments and argued it was not their job. With that response, who could blame Congress for quite reasonably looking elsewhere to gain the needed forces? Besides, if the Marine Corps would have been given extra personnel, Harris might have simply used them to fill out more detachments for ships and to top off barracks commands, his top two manpower priorities.

The magnitude of the opportunity that the Marines missed was great and likely set back the Corps' development for several decades. As for the increased demands by the Navy for Marines, the very nature of their blockading mission placed the naval vessels and personnel in close proximity with the enemy for extended periods of time. Furthermore, blockading drew the U.S. Navy into the rivers and ports of the Southern coastline, forcing it to fight in the littorals. Squadron commanders needed military forces familiar with naval combat that could move ashore and fight enemy soldiers on and near their own coasts. As the war developed, so did the necessity of seizing ports, towns, and transportation facilities to deny their use to the Confederacy. These operations required forces greater in size to those of the enemy they faced, and the Marines were initially ideally positioned to fill that niche. However, with the Corps' senior leaders committed to fighting primarily as a collection of detachments from

several vessels, their self-imposed limits led the Navy to instead seek Army troops. As a result, the Marines' failure to recognize the opportunity and adapt to changing combat requirements doomed their effort to mostly peripheral, small-unit actions conducted within larger operations.

One positive benefit of the Corps' assignments and performance during the war is that it fostered within a new generation of leaders the sense of purpose to correct the several deficiencies that they observed and experienced within their organization. The nature of the employment of Marines left the combat actions predominantly in the hands of the younger and more junior officers. The senior officers of the Corps largely avoided active field service throughout the war, with several notable exceptions. As the combat experiences of the "new breed" of leaders soon vastly exceeded that of the old, many of these company-grade officers met and shared their ideas about improvements they felt should be made, and were mostly rebuffed by their seniors. Those same officers also discussed their situations and opinions with officers from other services whom they fought alongside, and some began to actively correspond with others of like mind, sharing their thoughts within a larger forum and presenting suggestions for improvements to the Corps.¹⁸

After the war, these same officers continued to correspond, meet, and sometimes heatedly debate the several problems that they observed within the Marine Corps, both operationally and professionally. They intended to improve the warfighting capabilities of the Corps and to increase the level of professionalism, particularly within the officer ranks. Some made frequent use of the early military journals and public newspapers as a

forum for exchanging and refining their ideas for changes within a larger and broader audience of men from all services. Their collective sense of frustration over the lack of influence that they had in the decision-making process became increasingly evident in their writings and particularly in some of the bold recommendations they proposed. One even went so far as to propose that if the Marine Corps did not fix its evident weaknesses, then the organization should be disbanded.¹⁹

Eventually, that same generation of officers who cut their teeth in combat as detachment and company commanders during the Civil War gained seniority and the consequent power to make the changes that many believed were long needed. It is these officers who become the force for reform that historian Jack Shulimson refers to in his studies of military professionalism at the end of the nineteenth century. According to Shulimson, the Corps' own push toward increased officer professionalism rested on two separate strains. The first consisted of a refining of the "outward traits that characterized most professionals." That refinement began even before the Civil War, but it was a slow process, indeed. But many Marine officers had long clamored for increased professionalism. The second strain involved the creating within the Navy's structure and mission a "professional jurisdiction that the Marine Corps had to carve out for itself," essentially refining its mission within the Navy Department's overall role.²⁰ One of the main purposes of this dissertation has been to show that both elements of that process were in place and active during the Civil War period.²¹ Essentially, that search for a mission and the impetus for increasing the overall level of professionalism within the Corps may be one of that unit's greatest legacies that arose from the conflict.

What are Marines for? That question has been asked in various ways for most of the Marine Corps' existence, and is indeed raised on occasion even into the twenty-first century. But the greatest era of uncertainty over the question may have been during America's most deadly and demanding war of all – the Civil War. During that conflict, that same question was raised many times by a wide variety of military and political leaders, often in frustration, and cut to the quick of some of the Corps' most fundamental problems. And most tellingly, there were probably as many distinct answers to the query as there were people posing it. John Harris and Jacob Zeilin would have answered it quite differently than the Navy's most illustrious squadron commanders, John Dahlgren, Samuel DuPont, David Dixon Porter, or David G. Farragut. Archibald Henderson could have answered that question quite forcefully. Unfortunately for the Corps itself, some of its junior leaders like Robert Huntington, Henry Clay Cochrane, Louis Fagan, and future Commandant Charles McCawley would most likely have answered the question more along the lines of DuPont and Dahlgren than like Harris or Zeilin. But despite the fact that the real issue of what the Marine Corps' roles and missions should be -- expeditionary units and power projection ashore -- would not be realized for decades to come, thanks to their wartime experiences, a new generation of leaders resolved themselves to answering it.

Endnotes

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- ¹ This analysis is based on the data contained in War Department, “Army Register, 1860,” *U.S. Congressional Serial Set* 1100, Session vol. 9, 36th Congress, 2nd Session, House Executive Document 54, 4 February, 1861, 2-55; War Dept., “Report of the Secretary of War, July 1861,” *Serial Set* 1079, Sess. vol. 2, 36th Cong., 2nd Sess., Senate Exec. Doc. 1, pt. 2, 4 December 1860, 3; and War Dept., “Report of the Secretary of War, 1859,” *Serial Set* 1024-2, Sess. vol. 2, 36th Cong., 1st Sess., S. Exec. Doc. 2, pt. 2, 5 January 1860, first quote from 3. Analysis of Union Army generalship derived from T. Harry Williams, *Lincoln and His Generals* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1952), second quote from 314.
- ² Navy Dept., “Report of the Secretary of the Navy, July 1861,” *Serial Set* 1079, Sess. vol. 2, 36th Cong., 2nd Sess., S. Exec. Doc. 1, pt. 2, 4 December 1860, 85-86; Kurt H. Hackemer, “The U.S. Navy, 1860-1920,” in *A Companion to American Military History*, 2 vols., James C. Bradford, ed. (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishing, Ltd., 2010), 1: 388-90, quote from 388.
- ³ Henderson to Secretary of the Navy Mahlon Dickerson, Headquarters Marine Corps, Washington, D.C., 7 October 1834, Record Group (hereafter abbreviated as RG) 127 (Field Organization Records, Records of the United States Marine Corps), Entry 4 (“Letters Sent, August 1798- June 1810 and March 1804- February 1884”) (hereafter “Letters Sent 1798-1884”), National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C. (hereafter abbreviated as NA).
- ⁴ Joseph G. Dawson III, “With Fidelity and Effectiveness: Archibald Henderson’s Lasting Legacy to the U.S. Marine Corps,” *Journal of Military History* 62 (October 1998), 727-753.
- ⁵ Details of the Navy’s experimentation with new and emerging technologies can be found in Chapter II.
- ⁶ For examples, see Henry B. Tyler, Sr., to Secretary of the Navy Isaac Toucey, HQMC, 26 April 1859 and 1 December 1860, with Toucey’s notes and endorsements, RG 80 (General Records of the Department of the Navy, Records of the Secretary of the Navy), Entry 14 (Letters from the Commandant and Other Officers of the Marine Corps), NA. Several other examples of the exchange of correspondence over the same basic issue occur within the same source.
- ⁷ See the coverage of these deployments in Chapter IV.
- ⁸ Secretary of War Simon Cameron to Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles, War Dept., Washington, D.C., 12 July 1861, RG 107 (Records of the Office of the Secretary

of War), “Military Books,” Book no. 45, 1 July – 31 August 1861, NA; Major John G. Reynolds to Harris, Marine Barracks, Washington, D.C., 24 July 1861, reprinted in “Report of the Secretary of the Navy, 1861,” *Serial Set* 1119, Sess. vol. 3, 37th Cong., 2nd Sess., S. Exec. Doc. 1, Pt. 3 (hereafter “SecNav Annual Report, 1861”), 37-39.

- ⁹ Quote from Harris to Welles, HQMC, Washington, D.C., 24 July 1861, RG 80 (General Records of the Department of the Navy, Records of the Office of the Secretary of the Navy), Entry 14 (Letters From the Commandant and Other Officers of the Marine Corps), NA.
- ¹⁰ For example, both Admiral Samuel F. DuPont and his successor, Admiral John Dahlgren requested such units, as did Admiral Stephen P. Lee. See Chapter VII for details.
- ¹¹ For a detailed analysis of the CSMC’s employment scheme and its benefits, see Chapter VIII; Michael E. Krivdo, “The Birth, Life, and Death of the Confederate States Marine Corps” (M.A. Thesis, Texas A&M University, 2006), 17, 50-55, 156-57, 179-80; 251-54; and Michael E. Krivdo, “The Confederate Navy and Marine Corps,” in Bradford, ed., *A Companion to American Military History*, 1: 466-68.
- ¹² For greater details on the Mississippi Marine Brigade, see Chapter VIII and Chester G. Hearn, *Ellet’s Brigade: The Strangest Outfit of All* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2000).
- ¹³ David M. Sullivan, *The United States Marine Corps in the Civil War – The Final Year* (Shippensburg, Pa.: White Mane Books, 2000), 275-78, quotes from 275 and 278, respectively.
- ¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 275.
- ¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 278.
- ¹⁶ See, for example, the entries for 14 May and 9 June 1864, Gideon Welles, *Diary of Gideon Welles, Secretary of the Navy Under Lincoln and Johnson*, 3 vols., edited by Howard K. Beale (New York: W. W. Norton Company, 1960), 2: 31, 51 (hereafter Welles, *Diary*, [Beale]).
- ¹⁷ Sullivan, *The Final Year*, 278.
- ¹⁸ See the discussion in Chapter VIII.

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- ¹⁹ See Henry Clay Cochrane's 9-page pamphlet, *The Status of the Marine Corps* (Annapolis, Md.: privately printed, 1875), copy in Cochrane Papers, Archives and Special Collections, Gray Research Center, Quantico, Virginia (hereafter GRC), wherein Cochrane proposes, among other reforms, "a resuscitation or a funeral" for the Marine Corps in light of its many institutional and professional failings made evident during 1861-1865.
- ²⁰ Jack Shulimson, *The Marine Corps' Search for a Mission, 1880-1898* (Lawrence, Kans.: University of Kansas Press, 1993), passim; Jack Shulimson, "Military Professionalism: The Case of the U.S. Marine Officer Corps, 1880-1898," *Journal of Military History* 60 (April 1996), 231-42, quotes from 241.
- ²¹ See the discussion of the push for reforms among junior Marine officers in Chapter VIII.

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