

A Song with “Dash” and “Pep”

A HISTORY OF THE “MARINES’ HYMN” TO 1919

by Lauren Bowers

Abstract: From its unknown nineteenth-century origins, the “Marines’ Hymn” has grown from a collection of unregulated verses into a dignified anthem reflecting the proud history of the Corps. Focusing on the song’s early history until the end of World War I, this article tells the story of that evolution. During this period, the hymn played an increasingly important role in official recruiting and publicity efforts, resulting in a growing popularity among the general public, disagreements about the need to standardize the lyrics, and the introduction of new formats and technologies to allow for wider accessibility. Together, these trends culminated in the authorization and copyright of an official version of the song in the summer of 1919. The “Marines’ Hymn” is known worldwide as a reflection of Marine Corps experiences and values, and this article aims to bring some of its forgotten history and the contributions of its strongest advocates to the attention of a modern audience.

Keywords: “Marines’ Hymn,” Publicity Bureau, *Recruiters’ Bulletin*, Marines in World War I, Quantico, *Leath-erneck* magazine, Marine Corps Band, Quantico Post Band, Major General George Barnett, Brigadier General Charles A. Doyen, Lieutenant William H. Santelmann, First Class Musician Arthur Tregina, First Sergeant L. Z. Phillips, copyright

Approved on 15 May 2019, the updated *Marine Corps Order 5060.20, Marine Corps Drill and Ceremonies Manual*, includes the following statement:

It is a long standing tradition for Marines, past and present, who when they hear the Marines Hymn that they will face the direction of the music and stand at attention. It is now directed that Marines, present and who

have served honorably, who are not in a formation or part of an actual ceremony, or marching in a parade or review, who when they hear the playing of the Marines Hymn will stand at attention, face the music and sing the words to the Hymn.¹

This directive is the latest addition to the history of the “Marines’ Hymn,” which began in the nineteenth century as a collection of unregulated verses and slowly transformed into a dignified anthem reflecting the proud history of the U.S. Marine Corps. Untangling the details of that history is difficult, due to the large scale of the topic, the paucity of evidence from the song’s early years, and the prevalence of myths and

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¹ Enclosure 2, chapter 3 in *Marine Corps Order 5060.20, Marine Corps Drill and Ceremonies Manual* (Washington, DC: Headquarters Marine Corps, 15 May 2019), 3-2.

misconceptions that have been endlessly repeated without proper scrutiny.

Using documents stored at the Marine Band Library in Washington, DC, and the Marine Corps History Division's Historical Resources Branch at Quantico, Virginia, as a foundation, this article tells the story of the "Marines' Hymn" from its early years until the end of World War I. During this period, the hymn moved from training camps and battlefields into more public spaces, where it was increasingly recognized and enjoyed outside the Marine Corps. This transition was driven in part by the Marine Corps Recruiting Publicity Bureau, which deliberately included the hymn in its recruiting efforts and encouraged the addition of new lyrics to reflect the experiences of Marines fighting in a world war.

The increased visibility of the hymn helped raise the public profile of the Marine Corps and led to the use of new technologies, such as the phonograph, to bring the spirit of a military band into private homes. It also led to criticism of the lyrics and differing opinions regarding the need to standardize the verses, culminating in the official authorization and copyright of the hymn in the summer of 1919. The "Marines' Hymn" is known worldwide as a reflection of Marine Corps experiences and values, and this article aims to bring some of its forgotten history to the attention of a modern audience.

Nineteenth-Century Beginnings

The exact origin of the "Marines' Hymn" is unknown, primarily due to a lack of relevant nineteenth-century sources. Our knowledge of the hymn's early years relies almost exclusively on personal reminiscences that were recorded years, and even decades, afterward. It is worth giving an overview of these accounts, to provide citations for some of the more well-known among them; however, unless additional evidence comes to light, historians should proceed with caution when discussing this part of the time line.

Based on the iconic first line, "From the Halls of Montezuma to the Shores of Tripoli," it is generally assumed that the hymn was written after the events of 13 September 1847, when Marines under the command

of U.S. Army major general Winfield Scott helped capture Chapultepec Castle in Mexico City, Mexico. Indeed, the most pervasive claim about the origin of the hymn's first verse is that it was written in 1847 by an anonymous Marine, designated as either a private or an officer in various sources, who served as part of the invasion. Some accounts specify that the verse was scribbled at the Aztec Club, a social organization founded in October 1847 in Mexico City for officers serving in the Mexican-American War, but no other details about the alleged lyricist are given.² The lyric referencing "the Halls of Montezuma" likely dates to 1847 or later, but it is possible that other lyrics existed before this time. In any case, without additional information, this vague origin story cannot be viewed as definitive.

Another unconfirmed claim is that the hymn was played in Tokyo in 1853 by Marines who accompanied Commodore Matthew C. Perry on his first U.S. Navy mission to Japan.³ Ten years later, Army sergeant Gus Beurmann allegedly heard a party of men singing the hymn while he was on sentry duty in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. Beurmann recounted this incident in a 1918 interview, which may be the origin of the oft-repeated claim that "a Marine of Civil War days" said the Hymn was popular at the time.⁴

The origins of the song's melody are somewhat easier to trace. The first-known investigation into the

² Loren T. Casey, "Sea Soldiers' Song is Mystery Ballad," *Everett (PA) Press*, 20 July 1934, 4; "Famous Marine Corps Hymn Is Sung Around the World," *Republican and Herald* (Pottsville, PA), 1 April 1937, 9; and Joel D. Thacker, *The Aztec Club of 1847* (Washington, DC: Headquarters Marine Corps, 1945), 4.

³ Robert W. Broeg, "Sing It to the Marines," *Saturday Evening Post*, 22 January 1944, 84; and "Marine Corps Hymn Over 100 Years Old: Written by Private," *Plain Speaker* (Hazleton, PA), 5 June 1952, 11. The Marine Corps History Division investigated this claim in 1976 and no supporting evidence was discovered. "Fact Sheet Q & A," unpublished paper, 1976, Hymn subject file, Historical Resources Branch, Marine Corps History Division (MCHD), Quantico, VA.

⁴ "Keeping Our Corps in the Limelight," *Recruiters' Bulletin* 4, no. 8 (June 1918): 15; and Hash Mark, "Whence Came the Marine's Hymn?," *Leatherneck*, 10 April 1926, 1. Editions of the *Recruiters' Bulletin* cited herein were accessed through the Marine Corps University Research Library's Special Collections. Editions of the *Quantico Leatherneck* and *Leatherneck* (the same publication, and until 1920 a newspaper, when it switched to a magazine format) cited herein were accessed at the Historical Resources Branch, MCHD.

history of the hymn was conducted in January 1916 by Colonel Walter F. Smith, second leader of the Marine Corps Band, and Major Albert McLemore of Headquarters Marine Corps. McLemore relayed that “in 1878, when [Major Richard Wallach] was in Paris, the aria to which the Marines’ Hymn is now sung was a very popular one.” Wallach had identified the melody as an aria from the comic opera *Geneviève de Brabant*, by Jacques Offenbach. Smith listened to the aria and agreed, despite some differences in the melody. John Philip Sousa, leader of the Marine Corps Band from 1880 to 1892, corroborated this assessment in 1929.⁵

A two-act version of *Geneviève de Brabant* premiered at the Théâtre des Bouffes Parisiens in Paris, France, on 19 November 1859. However, the song resembling the “Marines’ Hymn,” “Couplets des Deux Hommes d’Armes” (Duet for Two Men-at-arms), a lighthearted number sung by two lazy, corrupt gendarmes, was not included until the expanded three-act version premiered in Paris on 26 December 1867. An English version of the libretto was published the following year and the operetta premiered in New York City on 22 October 1868.⁶

The similarities between Offenbach’s aria and the “Marines’ Hymn” are obvious even to the untrained ear, which raises questions about the veracity of claims that the hymn existed before 1867, and if it did, what melody accompanied the lyrics. Another possible musical influence was suggested by Major McLemore: “I am informed by one of the members of the band, who has a Spanish wife, that the aria was one familiar to her childhood and it may, therefore, be a Spanish folk song.”⁷ This letter gives no other specifics, and no such song has been subsequently identified, but the idea of an elusive Spanish folk song as the ori-

gin of the hymn’s melody persisted for many years.⁸ If such a song did exist, it is possible that Offenbach was familiar with it too, either from his travels around Europe or from his wife, Hérminie d’Alcain, daughter of a Spanish official, and that the melody became known to U.S. Marines after he incorporated it into the popular 1867 edition of *Geneviève de Brabant*. However, in 1950, Marine Corps archivist Joel Thacker investigated this theory and proposed an alternative provenance. Namely, he believed that the alleged folk song traveled directly from Spain to Mexico, where American Marines heard it in the 1840s and created their own lyrics soon after the Battle of Chapultepec, a full 20 years before Offenbach coincidentally used the same melody in his opera.⁹ Without further information, it is impossible to say which scenario is more credible or if there is truth behind either one.

Two personal accounts provide the most detailed information about the state of the “Marines’ Hymn” at the end of the nineteenth century. The first was written by Assistant to the Commandant Brigadier General Ben H. Fuller in October 1928: “The year 1892 seems to be the farthest back [the “Marines’ Hymn”] can be traced. In that year, on board the U.S.S. *Wabash* (1855), Lieutenant William Winder of the Navy used to sing the song in these words:

From the Halls of Montezuma
To the shores of Tripoli,
We fight our country’s battles
On land and on the sea.
Admiration of the nursemaids,
We’re the finest ever seen,

⁵A. L. McLemore to Walter F. Smith, 7 January 1916; Smith to McLemore, 10 January 1916; and John Philip Sousa to Wendell C. Neville, 21 December 1929, all Marines’ Hymn file, U.S. Marine Band Library, Washington, DC.

⁶Jacques Offenbach, *Geneviève de Brabant*, French text with English translation, libretto by Jaime and Tréfeu (Boston, MA: Oliver Ditson, 1868); and James J. Fuld, *The Book of World-Famous Music* (New York: Dover Publications, 2000), 351.

⁷McLemore to Smith, 7 January 1916.

⁸One of the earliest mentions of this theory is found in “Find the Marines’ Hymn in an Old Opera Score,” *Recruiters’ Bulletin*, August 1919, 16. The suggestion reappears in many subsequent publications, including Casey, “Sea Soldiers’ Song is Mystery Ballad”; “Marine Corps Hymn Centennial Week to be Observed,” *Visalia (CA) Times-Delta*, 6 December 1947, 2; and William D. Parker, *A Concise History of the United States Marine Corps 1775-1969* (Washington, DC: Headquarters Marine Corps, 1970), 143.

⁹Untitled article, Armed Forces Press Service, 3 September 1950, Hymn subject file, Historical Resources Branch, MCHD. Based on the condition of the photocopy in the working file, the author was unable to determine the title of this article or the name of the publication in which it may have appeared.

Though our fate is sometimes very,
very hard,
Who would not be a Marine.¹⁰

In the same memorandum, Fuller stated: “Changing the words ‘nursemaids’ to ‘our messmates,’ I carried the song to the Philippines in 1899, where various verses were added, principally, I think, by Colonel H. C. Davis.”¹¹ The other account was written in 1930 by Lieutenant William H. Santelmann, leader of the Marine Corps Band from 1898 to 1927:

Shortly after the return of the Marines from their campaign at the Philippine Insurrection, Lt. Wendell C. Neville (now Commandant, MajGen Neville) told me of an inspiring little tune which the Marines used to sing on their hikes in the Philippines [ca. after 1901]. Humming it to me, I set down the music and arranged it for the Marine Band so it could be played at public and private affairs and as it soon became popular, it was regularly used at the “Carabou” Dinners. I also arranged it as a two-step for the famous “Bachelors Cotillion” dances in Washington, and, in remembrance of the strenuous days during the Philippine Insurrection, the Marines adopted it as the “Hymn of the Marines,” known as “From the Halls of Montezuma to the Shores of Tripoly [sic].”¹²

Based on these accounts, it is plausible that the hymn was somewhat widely known among Marines by the 1890s. Notably, Fuller’s account asserts that the “Marines’ Hymn” was developing organically, with different Marines composing new verses. Santelmann’s

account offers another important detail; it shows a deliberate attempt to move the hymn into a more public space, if only in the form of a two-step arrangement for the “Bachelors Cotillion.” This widening accessibility of the hymn continued, and throughout the first decades of the twentieth century, the Marine Corps made use of its popularity for recruiting and publicity purposes and to reflect the Corps’ changing identity.

A Corps d’elite, 1900–17

It is noteworthy that an early publication of the hymn’s first verse appeared during the unification crisis of 1908–9.¹³ Beginning in the 1880s, U.S. Navy commander William F. Fullam, along with other like-minded naval officers, began to push for the removal of Marines from Navy ships.¹⁴ They persisted in their fight until the issue came to a head at the end of Theodore Roosevelt’s presidency.

As Roosevelt contemplated the future of the Marine Corps, he was faced with an organization that was actively shaping its own public image and gaining political influence that many detractors considered to be disproportionate to its small size. Roosevelt issued Executive Order 969 on 12 November 1908, which removed the Marines from Navy ships.¹⁵ Opposition within the Marine Corps arose almost immediately, and the issue was further complicated when Army major general Leonard A. Wood suggested that the Marines be completely transferred to the Army.

During this crisis, a short article was published that raised questions about the legality of the restructuring proposals and quoted some reactions by current Marines. The article opened with a verse labeled “A Song of the Marines”:

From the halls of Montezuma

¹⁰ Assistant to the Cmdt Ben H. Fuller, memorandum to MajGen Cmdt John A. Lejeune, 11 October 1928, Marines’ Hymn file, U.S. Marine Band Library, hereafter Fuller memo to Lejeune.

¹¹ Fuller memo to Lejeune.

¹² William H. Santelmann to J. Taylor Branson, 20 January 1930, as quoted in William F. Santelmann to David S. Barry, 8 October 1942, Hymn subject file, Historical Resources Branch, MCHD.

¹³ Robert D. Heintz Jr. claimed that “the earliest appearance of the words so far found in print is on an 1898 recruitment poster,” but he provided no further details or citation, and no such poster was identified in the preparation for this article. Robert D. Heintz Jr., *Soldiers of the Sea: The United States Marine Corps, 1775–1962* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1962) 67.

¹⁴ Colin Colbourn, “Esprit de Marine Corps: The Making of the Modern Marine Corps through Public Relations, 1898–1945” (PhD diss., University of Southern Mississippi, 2018), 49–50.

¹⁵ Colbourn, “Esprit de Marine Corps,” 49–50.

To the shores of Tripoli,
 We fight our country's battles
 By land as well as sea.
 From the Temple of the Dragon
 To the sunny Philippine,
 Though our lot be sometimes hardish,
 Who wouldn't be a marine?¹⁶

The inclusion of this verse is significant because of its early date and because of how it related to the issue at hand. In an article that raised questions about the very existence and future of the Marine Corps, this "Song of the Marines" represented the identity of the Marines and showed what could be at stake should the proposed changes take root. The controversy over Executive Order 969 led to hearings in both the House and Senate Naval Affairs Committees in late 1908 and early 1909, and when Congress passed the Naval Appropriations Bill on 1 March 1909, it returned Marines to the Fleet through an amendment reversing Executive Order 969.¹⁷

This incident occurred during an important transition period for the Marines. In his doctoral thesis examining Marine Corps public relations from 1898 to 1945, Colin Colbourn asserts that after the Spanish-American War and the Boxer Rebellion, the Marine Corps sought to rebrand itself as a *corps delite*, a flexible and exclusive force of seagoing soldiers. According to Colbourn, this marked the start of a publicity strategy designed to appeal to the general public and circumvent the military hierarchy's efforts to restructure or disband the Marines.¹⁸ To this end, a local recruiting publicity bureau was established in Chicago, Illinois, in 1907, followed by the creation of the national headquarters of the Marine Corps Recruiting Publicity Bureau in New York City in 1911.¹⁹ Its keystone publication was the *Recruiters' Bulletin*, which ran monthly from 1914 to 1922 and provided re-

cruiters with a coordinated resource that focused on methods of promoting a positive image of the Corps within local communities as a way to appeal to potential recruits.²⁰

The Marine Corps Recruiting Publicity Bureau's efforts increased after the election of President Woodrow Wilson in 1912. Wilson's interventionist policies, particularly in the Caribbean, put the Marines at the forefront of his administration's goal of spreading democracy, order, and civility in the name of progressive diplomacy. Marine Corps recruiting efforts reflected this newfound role by highlighting the opportunities for travel and the chance to see immediate action.²¹ This also marked an upswing in the incorporation of the "Marines' Hymn" in publicity efforts. For instance, when Marines were deployed to Veracruz, Mexico, in April 1914, a press release noted:

The particular significance of the "marines' hymn" to the present activity of the Marine Corps in the operations at Vera Cruz [sic] was recalled by officers of the navy tonight. A reference in the hymn to the presence of the marines and of the Montezumas during the Mexican War made it very appropriate at this time.²²

Individual verses of the hymn were also printed in several Marine Corps recruiting pamphlets, including *U.S. Marines—Duties, Experiences, Opportunities, Pay* (1913 and 1915 editions) and *The American Marine, 'Soldier of the Sea'* (1913 edition).²³ In November 1914, the *Recruiters' Bulletin* announced the publication of a Publicity Bureau pamphlet entitled *The Marines in Rhyme, Prose, and Cartoon*. This compilation of cel-

¹⁶ "Problem of Marines: How They Regard Their Change in Service," *Aberdeen (SD) Daily News*, 11 November 1908, 7, Marines' Hymn file, U.S. Marine Band Library.

¹⁷ Colbourn, "Esprit de Marine Corps," 57–58.

¹⁸ Colbourn, "Esprit de Marine Corps," 41–43.

¹⁹ Heinl, *Soldiers of the Sea*, 186–87.

²⁰ Colbourn, "Esprit de Marine Corps," 9–10.

²¹ Colbourn, "Esprit de Marine Corps," 60.

²² "Marine Hymn Appropriate," *Evening Sun* (Baltimore, MD), 23 April 1914, 5; and "'Marines' Hymn' Recalled: 'From the Halls of Montezuma to the Shores of Tripoli,'" *New York Times*, 24 April 1914, 3.

²³ L. P. Pinkston and H. C. Snyder, *U.S. Marines: Duties, Experiences, Opportunities, Pay*, 3d and 5th eds. (New York: Chasmar-Winchell Press, 1913, 1915); and *The American Marine, "Soldier of the Sea": Extract from the Sunday Star, Washington D.C. December 7, 1913* (London: Forgotten Books, 2017), Hymn subject file, Historical Resources Branch, MCHD.

ebulatory songs, poems, stories, and illustrations was lauded by the *Recruiters' Bulletin* as “a new departure in recruiting literature.” It proved to be so popular that a second edition was soon printed to keep up with demand.²⁴ The cover of the first and second editions was beautifully decorated with color pictures of “two strapping clean faced Marines in Winter uniform”: a sergeant standing at attention with rifle in hand and a member of the Bugle Corps. Notably, the “Marines’ Hymn” was given the highest place of honor as the first piece in the pamphlet, appearing after a full-page portrait of Major General Commandant George Barnett:

From the Halls of Montezuma
To the shores of Tripoli,
We fight our country’s battles
On the land as on the sea.
Admiration of the nation
We’re the finest ever seen.
And we glory in the title
Of the United States Marine.

From the pest-hole of Cavite
To the ditch at Panama,
You will find them very needy
Of marines—that’s what we are.
We’re the watchdogs of a pile of coal,
Or we dig a magazine.
Though our job-lots they are manifold,
Who would not be a Marine?

Our flag’s unfurled to every breeze,
From the dawn to setting sun.
We have fought in every clime and
place
Where we could take a gun.
In the snow of far off Northern Lands
And in sunny tropic scenes,
You will find us always on the job—
The United States Marines.

²⁴ “Recruit by Mail for Marine Corps,” *Recruiters' Bulletin* 1, no. 1 (November 1914): 11.

Here’s health to you and to our corps
Which we are proud to serve.
In many a strife we have fought for life,
But never lost our nerve.
If the Army and the Navy
Ever look on heaven’s scenes,
They will find the streets are guarded
By United States Marines.²⁵

In publicizing the pamphlet, the *Recruiters' Bulletin* made special mention of the hymn, calling it “the most famous of all American battle songs” and “the song with more dash than any other possessed by any branch of the united service.”²⁶ In a follow-up article a month later, the *Recruiters' Bulletin* noted that in a book that was excellently conceived overall, “the attention of the reader is quickly caught by the Marines’ Hymn. . . . The last two verses of this song have enough merit to warrant many repetitions.”²⁷

It is striking that this version of the hymn from 1914 is almost completely recognizable to modern eyes. The last two verses, in particular, are virtually unchanged in the current official version. Credit for some of these lyrics is often given to Major Henry C. Davis. In July 1915, the *Recruiters' Bulletin* identified him as the writer of the last two verses, and he was later credited in the above-mentioned memorandum from future Commandant Ben Fuller in 1928.²⁸ Davis, later promoted to colonel, was quoted as saying, “The Marines’ Hymn is, of course, a more or less famous song historically. . . . The following two verses I wrote at Camp Meyer [Guantánamo Bay, Cuba] in 1911 when on an expedition.”²⁹ Specifically, Davis claimed credit for penning the above verse regarding the “pest-hole

²⁵ *The Marines in Rhyme, Prose, and Cartoon*, 2d ed. (New York: U.S. Marine Corps Recruiting Publicity Bureau, 1914–15), 4, Hymn subject file, Historical Resources Branch, MCHD.

²⁶ “Recruit by Mail for Marine Corps,” *Recruiters' Bulletin* 1, no. 1 (November 1914): 11.

²⁷ “The Marines in Rhyme, Prose, and Cartoon,” *Recruiters' Bulletin* 1, no. 2 (December 1914): 7.

²⁸ Editorial, *Recruiters' Bulletin* 2, no. 9 (July 1915): 8; and Fuller memo to Lejeune, 11 October 1928, Marines’ Hymn file, U.S. Marine Band Library.

²⁹ *The Book of Navy Songs* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1930), 126–27.



Courtesy of Sgt Erik D. Maddox, private collection
Cover of the second edition of *The Marines in Rhyme, Prose, and Cartoon*, published by the Marine Corps Recruiting Publicity Bureau, 1915.

of Cavite” and another, equally irreverent, verse not included in *The Marines in Rhyme, Prose, and Cartoon*:

From the school of Application,
To the shores of Subig [sic] Bay,
We’ve avoided exertation [sic]
In the most ingenious way.
Admiration of our mattresses
Is the finest thing we’ve seen,
For it answers to the question,
Why the Hell is a marine?³⁰

Given the conflicting evidence, the precise extent of his contribution is unclear. At best, Davis has been

³⁰ *The Book of Navy Songs*, 126–27; and “The Marines’ Hymn,” *Marine Corp Gazette* (September 1942): 27, 53, photocopy of article reproduction, marked “Reproduced at Government Expense,” in files of the Marine Band Library, with the publication incorrectly identified as *Leatherneck* typed across the top of the page (further investigation discovered the article was actually published in the *Marine Corps Gazette*, as cited).

considered by the Marine Corps as just one of many contributors to the development of the hymn.

By 1915, the Marine Corps Band customarily ended its concerts with the “Marines’ Hymn,” sometimes followed by “The Star-Spangled Banner,” and the time was ripe to publish a single official arrangement.³¹ In February 1915, Assistant Commandant Colonel John A. Lejeune wrote a memorandum acknowledging that Lieutenant Santelmann was creating a new arrangement of “the old Marines’ Hymn” and stated that the Commandant wanted it to be sent to all the bands in the Marine Corps when published.³² The new instrumental arrangement was published that summer and credited to First Class Musician Edward M. Van Look of the Marine Corps Band.³³

Unsurprisingly, the increased visibility of the hymn’s lyrics and music sparked a deeper interest in its history and a closer consideration of the ramifications of tying it so closely to Marine Corps identity. As noted above, January 1916 marked the first known investigation into the musical origin of the hymn. That February, the *Recruiters’ Bulletin* published an opinion piece by Captain Frank E. Evans that offered a scathing rebuke of the current state of the hymn and its potentially damaging effect on the reputation of the Corps:

The Marine Corps is unique, in all of the services, in having a Corps song But it must be evident to the Corps that its song, The Halls of Montezuma, will fall into disrepute in the Corps unless measures are taken to standardize it. Each expedition has added either a new verse or a new rendition of some old verse. Verses have crept into the original song that either

³¹ Transcriptions of programs for Marine Corps Band concerts at Marine Barracks, Washington, DC, 3 January 1915, 26 April 1915, 1 May 1915, 5 June 1915, and 9 June 1915, Hymn subject file, Historical Resources Branch, MCHD.

³² Assistant Cmdt John A. Lejeune, memo to Col McCawley, 12 February 1915, Hymn subject file, Historical Resources Branch, MCHD.

³³ William H. Santelmann to R. P. Pierce, 8 March 1915; and William H. Santelmann to unnamed music publisher, 30 March 1915, Hymn subject file, Historical Resources Branch, MCHD.

lack merit as verses or whose merit is tainted by undignified or bombastic wording. Such a line as “admiration of the nation” may appeal to a recruit or a newly caught second lieutenant, but their effect on the service at large is one of risibility. The spectacle of Marines guarding the streets of heaven might appeal to an original member of the Ford Peace excursion as a highly admirable employment of an armed force, but the irreverent are apt to guffaw at such a vision.³⁴

He proposed that all known versions of the song be submitted to a committee, such as the Board of Control of the Marine Corps Association, so that musical experts could recommend an appropriate official version. The result would be “a song purged of bombast, vulgarities and improbabilities, and one that the Corps can sing with its oldtime [sic] pride in the song. Their action would also act as an effective curb on further maltreatment of the Marine Corps song.”³⁵

Although his language is extreme, Captain Evans was not alone in his concerns. As the “Marines’ Hymn” was brought further into the public eye during the 1910s through recruiting materials and musical performances, and then through a world war, a dichotomy of attitudes emerged that would last for decades. On one side of the debate were those who sought to continue the tradition of regularly updating the hymn’s lyrics to reflect the experiences of new Marines. On the other side were those like Evans, who called for a top-down standardization of the hymn that would reflect the Marine Corps’ new phase of institutionalized professionalism.

“First to Fight” and Bois de Belleau, 1917–18

On 6 April 1917, Congress issued a joint resolution declaring war against the German Empire. Within days, Major General Commandant Barnett secured the Marine Corps’ place in the newly formed American Expeditionary Forces (AEF) and began a national recruiting drive. Hoping to appeal to “red-blooded men of action,” Barnett emphasized that “Marines are always called first when war is imminent, and they have shown the way to fighting men since 1798.”³⁶ This assertion was not new, but the mobilization of 1917 marked the start of the widespread use of the pithy slogan “First to Fight,” which encapsulated its message. The slogan proved to be incredibly enticing to new recruits looking for immediate action. When the *Recruiters’ Bulletin* conducted a survey in December 1917 among major newspaper publishers about the Marine Corps’ wartime publicity efforts, many respondents specifically cited the “First to Fight” slogan as a primary reason for its success, with one editor from the *New York Post* stating that the slogan “is the very best recruiting appeal of the war.”³⁷

The “Marines’ Hymn” was quickly incorporated into wartime publicity and explicitly connected to the “First to Fight” slogan. On 20 May 1917, the *New York Times* published an article subtitled “Europe to See Corps that Has Fought ‘From the Halls of Montezuma to the Shores of Tripoli,’” which introduced the public to the first wave of Marines sailing to France under the command of Colonel Charles A. Doyen, as a part of the fighting Army division under Major General John J. Pershing.³⁸ The article closed with four printed verses of “the world-famous fighting song of the American Marines.” They were the same four verses previously printed in *The Marines in Rhyme, Prose, and Cartoon*, with one important exception. The fifth and sixth lines of the first verse were changed from “Admiration of the nation, we’re the finest ever seen” to the now-familiar “First to fight for right and free-

³⁴ Frank E. Evans, “‘The Halls of Montezuma’: Call For All Versions of Song,” *Recruiters’ Bulletin* 2, no. 4 (February 1916): 7.

³⁵ Evans, “‘The Halls of Montezuma,’” 7.

³⁶ “Major Gen. Barnett’s Plea for Marine Corps Recruits,” *New York Times*, 4 April 1917; and “Begging for Marines,” *Chicago (IL) Tribune*, 5 April 1917.

³⁷ Colbourn, “Esprit de Marine Corps,” 90–91.

³⁸ “Fighting Not New to Doyen’s Marines,” *New York Times*, 20 May 1917, 2.

dom, and to keep our honor clean.”³⁹ This new lyric is not credited to any specific person, but given the context in which it appears, possibly for the first time in print, it is conceivable that the change originated from within the Marine Corps Recruiting Publicity Bureau, as a strategic way of promoting the new slogan and ingraining it further into the overall identity of the Marine Corps.

Versions of the hymn containing the lyrics “Admiration of the nation, we’re the finest ever seen” continued to be printed and recorded periodically until at least 1951, but the change to “First to fight for right and freedom” caught on quickly as the preferred version throughout World War I and beyond.⁴⁰ For instance, the change was incorporated into the third edition of *The Marines in Rhyme, Prose, and Cartoon*, printed about 1917, and in early printed sheet music editions of the hymn in December 1917 and August 1918, as discussed below.⁴¹

Another significant contribution from World War I was a verse commemorating the battles of the Château-Thierry campaign, including Belleau Wood, in the summer of 1918. The details of these brutal battles were widely reported and the August edition of the *Recruiters’ Bulletin* included the following notice:

When the French government re-named Belleau Wood in honor of the U.S. Marines, a private of Marines celebrated the event by scribbling a new verse for the “Marines’ Hymn.” Although the writer was killed a few days later, his comrades adopted his verse as a part of their battle song.

As we raised our flag at Tripoli
And again at Mexico,
So we took the Chateau-Thierry and

The forest of Belleau.
When we hurled the Hun back
from the Marne
He said we fought like fiends;
And the French rechristened
Belleau Wood
For United States Marines.⁴²

This verse was subsequently reprinted elsewhere, such as the November 1918 edition of the *Ladies Home Journal*, where it appeared as the third of four verses featured in a sheet music version of the hymn. In the accompanying article, Marines were referred to as “the singingest of all soldiers,” whose “voice[s] in song [are] as familiar in the neighborhood of Chateau-Thierry as [their] rifle[s] became.” The author also noted that the new verse about Belleau Wood gave the reader an idea of how up-to-date the song was kept.⁴³

Aside from the Belleau Wood verse and the change to “First to fight,” most of the lyric suggestions from this time were probably not presented as serious or long-lasting revisions, but rather as light-hearted, ephemeral reflections of the experiences of the Marines who wrote them. For instance, journalist E. U. Stephens reported that a popular version of the hymn sung by Marines in the Fifth Regiment opened with “From the shores of dear old U.S.A. to the clime of sunny France, we have come to lick the Kaiser if we ever get the chance.”⁴⁴ Another suggestion relocated the famous final lines of the hymn: “If the French or British Soldiers, Ever look on Berlin’s scenes, They will find the streets patrolled by United States Marines.”⁴⁵ More earnest lyrics were also suggested, including the following verse that was published in a St. Louis newspaper on 13 September 1918, and then reprinted a week later at the request of the Marine Corps Recruiting Publicity Bureau:

³⁹“Fighting Not New to Doyen’s Marines,” 2.

⁴⁰Two notable examples of “Admiration of the nation”: *The Marines’ Hymn*, Kate Smith and the Kate Smith Singers, orchestra under the direction of Jack Miller, recorded 12 February 1942, Columbia Records, 36540, 78 rpm; and *Halls of Montezuma*, directed by Lewis Milestone (Los Angeles, CA: Twentieth Century Fox, 1951).

⁴¹*The Marines in Rhyme, Prose, and Cartoon*, 3d ed. (New York: U.S. Marine Corps Recruiting Publicity Bureau, 1917–18), Poems file, Historical Resources Branch, MCHD.

⁴²“Keeping Our Corps in the Limelight,” *Recruiters’ Bulletin* 4, no. 10 (August 1918): 14.

⁴³“The Song of the Marines, Arranged by A. Tregina, United States Marine Band,” *Ladies Home Journal*, November 1918, 87.

⁴⁴“Keeping Our Corps in the Limelight,” *Recruiters’ Bulletin* 4, no. 6 (April 1918): 12.

⁴⁵“Change Suggested for the Marine Hymn,” *Quantico Leatherneck*, 6 March 1918, 6.

From the year of 1779
 To 1917,
 We've fought our country's battles
 In every war between.
 And if we're called to cross the seas
 In this her latest strife,
 Each man will proudly face the foe
 And gladly give his life.⁴⁶

These amateur lyricists continued the tradition of updating the hymn with the times, and their efforts were bolstered by two additional factors. The first was the Publicity Bureau's support of such compositions, as seen through the printing of several new verses in various newspapers. Publicizing these individual contributions no doubt encouraged readers to pen even more verses, to memorialize their wartime experiences, and perhaps in hopes of seeing their own names in print.

The second factor in encouraging new additions was the repeated references to the hymn in articles describing the lives of wartime Marines. On 1 July 1917, the Washington, DC, *Evening Star* published an article about music that was popular among servicemembers. It made special note of the "Marines' Hymn," including printing the lyrics of the first verse and calling it "eminently a soldier's song" that was produced by war and customarily sung on formal occasions.⁴⁷ In a letter to the editor of a Vermont newspaper the following year, Second Lieutenant Merritt A. Edson described his training experiences at Quantico, Virginia, in September 1917, noting that "the Marine corps hymn gets just as much reverence as the National anthem, and I believe if a man refused to stand up at attention, or remove his hat while singing that song he would be tarred and feathered."⁴⁸

Reports from Europe also mentioned the hymn. The romanticized image of Marines—"bronzed and

weatherbeaten, heavy packs strapped over their shoulders, swing[ing] jauntily along"—singing and whistling the hymn as they marched through quaint French villages on their way to the front, was featured in more than one account.⁴⁹ The most frequently repeated anecdote of this type was first printed in *Stars and Stripes* in August 1918. The article recounts the story of "a wounded officer from among the gallant French lancers" who was recovering at an American field hospital when he inquired "about the dashing contingent that had fought at his regiment's left." The soldier reportedly said, "I believe they are your soldiers from Montezuma. At least when they advanced this morning they were all singing 'From the Halls of Montezuma to the Shores of Tripoli!'"⁵⁰ Whether or not these accounts are factually accurate is not the point. Rather, they are important in showing that the hymn was a regular feature of wartime publicity and likely inspired many people to embrace the song and make their own personal contributions to it.

Merry Christmas from Quantico and a Song with Plenty of "Pep," 1917–18

As the "Marines' Hymn" became more popular, the Corps found new ways to keep it in the public eye. In December 1917, the staff of the *Quantico Leatherneck* newspaper published a sheet music edition of the hymn, including four written verses and musical notation for piano and voice.⁵¹ The *Quantico Leatherneck*, predecessor of *Leatherneck* magazine, debuted in November 1917, shortly after Marine Barracks Quantico opened as an East Coast base for the much-needed training and organization of tactical units.⁵²

In its second edition, dated 24 November 1917, the newspaper printed the following announcement:

⁴⁶ "Marine Corps Hymn," *St. Louis (MO) Star and Times*, 13 September 1918, 8; and "Song of the Marines," *St. Louis (MO) Star and Times*, 19 September 1918, 20.

⁴⁷ S. H. Walker, "Favorite Music of Our Fighters on Land and Water," *Evening Star* (Washington, DC), 1 July 1917, 36. This article was also published in the *Recruiters' Bulletin* 3, no. 10 (August 1917): 6–8.

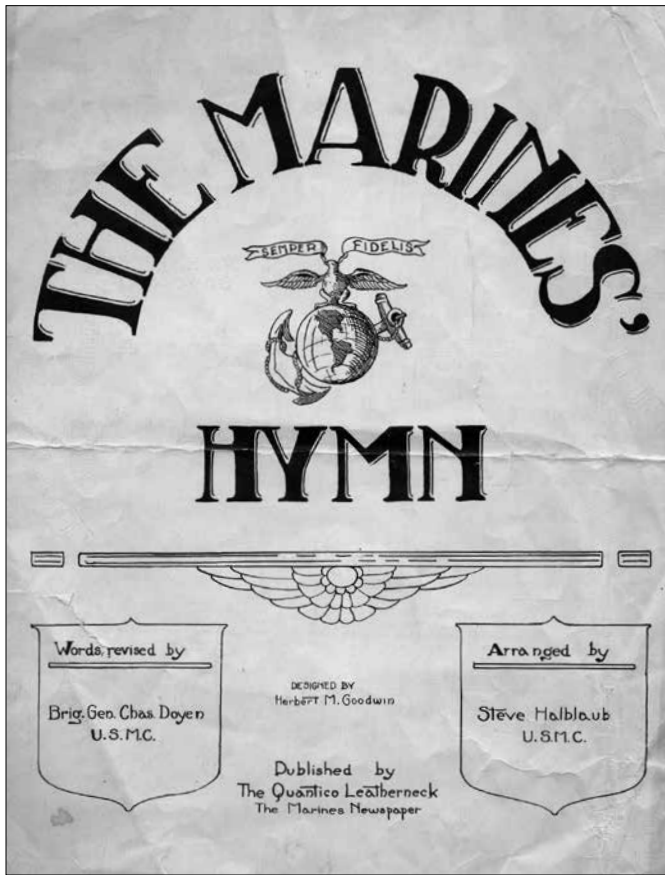
⁴⁸ Letter from Lt Merritt Edson, *Springfield (VT) Reporter*, 1 August 1918, 6.

⁴⁹ "The Marines Make a Raid into No Man's Land—Story of the First Man Killed in Active Combat," *Burlington (VT) Free Press*, 15 August 1918, 13; and "How Marines Entered the Trenches," *Recruiters' Bulletin* 4, no. 7 (May 1918): 4.

⁵⁰ "Along the Fighting Front," *Stars and Stripes* (Paris, France), 16 August 1918, 8.

⁵¹ *The Marines' Hymn*, rev. by Charles Doyen, arranged by Steve Halblaub (Quantico, VA: *Quantico Leatherneck*, 1917), Marines' Hymn file, U.S. Marine Band Library.

⁵² Heinl, *Soldiers of the Sea*, 192.



U.S. Marine Band Library

Cover of the "Marines' Hymn" sheet music for piano and voice, published by the *Quantico Leatherneck*, December 1917.

"The Marine Hymn is to be published with music, oh yes, with all its thrills, thru the aid of the Y.M.C.A. . . . Postoffice [sic] clerks have been warned not to even try to remember the names of the girls back home when the rush comes thru the sale of these copies."⁵³ A follow-up article from 15 December made it clear that this edition was a special Christmas treat and specifically noted that the sheet music was at last being published due to high public demand: "It came about like this. The *Leatherneck* [sic] staff has been besieged with requests for the publication of the Marine Hymn. But space limits in this paper prohibited and still do. Still there was a necessity for it getting into print some way, and it appeared that the paper must do it."⁵⁴

⁵³"Marine Hymn with Music Will Be Published Soon," *Quantico Leatherneck*, 24 November 1917, 1.

⁵⁴"Get the Tune Boy and Also Get the Step to the Hymn," *Quantico Leatherneck*, 15 December 1917, 1.

The article also stated that this edition was approved by "military authorities."⁵⁵ Indeed, Brigadier General Doyen is credited on the cover for revising the words. It is unclear whether this attribution was a courtesy to indicate his approval of the publication, or whether he personally revised the lyrics. The lyrics in this edition are identical to those printed in the aforementioned *New York Times* article from May 1917, so if the *Quantico Leatherneck* did mean to credit Doyen for a specific revision, it is possible that they were referring to the recent "First to fight" lyric change in the first verse. However, without additional evidence, it is not possible at this time to make a conclusive link between Doyen and this revision.

A third article, printed 22 December, announced that the sheet music had arrived at Quantico on 19 December, "and its appearance was a signal for an unprecedented welcome. Everyone fell on its neck, figuratively speaking, so glad were they to see it."⁵⁶ This article also gave special acknowledgment to "Privates Goodwin, Alexander, and Halblaub," who "worked like Trojans" outside their normal routines to finish the edition. It ended by saying, "theirs will be the rewards hereafter," a note of high praise that would soon become a tragic reality for two of the edition's contributors.⁵⁷ Private Steve Halblaub, credited as the arranger of the sheet music, enlisted in the Marine Corps on 21 May 1917 at age 21 and joined the 80th Company, Sixth Regiment, at Quantico that August. The following year, he fought in the Battle of Belleau Wood, where he sustained a gunshot wound to his left shoulder on 8 June and died five days later.⁵⁸ Only four months after, on 6 October, Brigadier General Doyen died at Quantico, a victim of the influenza pandemic.⁵⁹

It is unclear how widely known the *Quantico Leatherneck* edition was at the time of its printing. An article in the *Recruiters' Bulletin* from June 1918

⁵⁵"Get the Tune Boy and Also Get the Step to the Hymn," 1.

⁵⁶"Marine Hymn Given a Regular Welcome," *Quantico Leatherneck*, 22 December 1917, 1.

⁵⁷"Marine Hymn Given a Regular Welcome," 1.

⁵⁸World War I casualty lists, Historical Resources Branch, MCHD.

⁵⁹"Brig. Gen. C. A. Doyen Dies of Influenza," *New York Times*, 8 October 1918, 11.

stated, “The complete hymn (words and music) was published by a Chicago firm for a number of years. The plates were afterwards destroyed, and at present no copies of the song are for sale. Arrangements are now being made to again have the song published and distributed in folio form.”⁶⁰ Aside from the reference to a mysterious Chicago edition (which has not been uncovered), this shows the Marine Corps Recruiting Publicity Bureau’s lack of awareness of the December 1917 Quantico edition.

The bureau produced at least two sheet music editions in 1918. The cover of one, often incorrectly credited as being the first sheet music version of the hymn, reads: “Printed but not published by the U.S.M.C. Publicity Bureau, New York, NY, August 1, 1918.”⁶¹ This was available as a stand-alone edition, but full images of this version were also reprinted in the 4 August 1918 “War Songs” edition of the *Boston Sunday Advertiser* to ensure wider accessibility.⁶²

Notably, this version only includes the three now-familiar verses and omits the “pest-hole of Cavite” verse. Credit for this vocal and piano arrangement was given to First Class Musician Arthur Tregina of the Marine Corps Band. Tregina later commented on the work in an interview with *Leatherneck* in 1933:

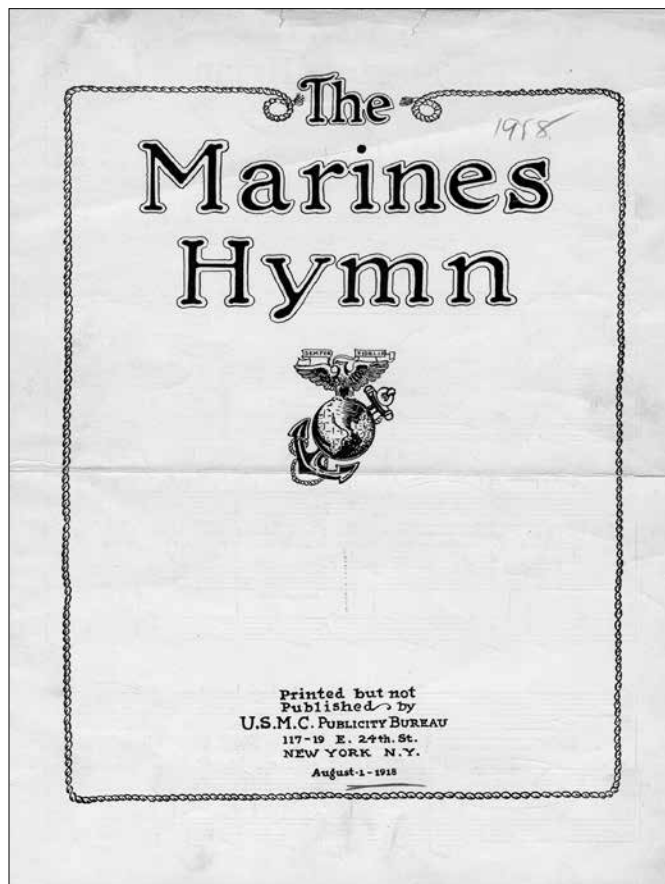
Then they ordered me to arrange a proper and appropriate setting of the “Marines’ Hymn.” The music was taken from the opera “Genevieve de Brabant,” by Offenbach. I merely harmonized it in an easy and playable manner for voice and piano. They have made it the official version at any rate, and it will keep the old Corps from entirely forgetting me when I retire.⁶³

⁶⁰ “Marines’ Hymn on Victor Records,” *Recruiters’ Bulletin* 4, no. 8 (June 1918): 24.

⁶¹ Arthur Tregina, *The Marines’ Hymn* (New York: U.S. Marine Corps Publicity Bureau, 1918), Marines’ Hymn file, U.S. Marine Band Library.

⁶² “War Songs,” *Boston (MA) Sunday Advertiser*, 4 August 1918, Marines’ Hymn file, U.S. Marine Band Library.

⁶³ “Arthur Tregini [sic],” *Leatherneck*, October 1933, 33, Hymn subject file, Historical Resources Branch, MCHD.



U.S. Marine Band Library

Cover of the “Marines’ Hymn” sheet music for piano and voice, printed by the Marine Corps Recruiting Publicity Bureau, 1 August 1918.

In September 1918, the *Recruiters’ Bulletin* announced another upcoming sheet music publication by the Publicity Bureau, this time a “de luxe” edition, complete with a cover printed in four colors that featured two Marines flanking a monument listing important campaigns from the American Revolution to Château-Thierry.⁶⁴

This era also saw the advent of sound recordings of the hymn on phonograph. The significance of this new technology in publicizing the “Marines’ Hymn” was eloquently described in a letter dated 17 May 1918 from Second Lieutenant Robert B. Stuart of the Tenth Regiment, Marine Barracks Quantico, to the Victor Talking Machine Company:

⁶⁴ Sheet music cover illustration, “With the Globe, Eagle and Anchor,” *Recruiters’ Bulletin* 4, no. 11 (September 1918): 13.

of accessibility. Whereas Van Loock's 1915 arrangement was designed for impressive public performances by military bands, the piano and vocal arrangements by the *Quantico Leatherneck* and Arthur Tregina and the phonograph recordings of the Victor Talking Machine Company were meant for more intimate settings, such as private homes or small gatherings, and could be played at any time. They allowed for a more personal connection with the hymn, as a teaching tool for future recruits and a comfort to those anxiously awaiting news of their Marines overseas. The explicit labeling of some of these products as Christmas gifts or "de luxe" editions likely made them even more cherished.

Now that the "Marines' Hymn" could be played in every home, proponents of standardization were even more motivated to seek official approval of a single, dignified version. Authorizing such a version, and utilizing the popular sheet music and phonograph formats to promote it, would ensure that, in the aftermath of the Great War, only a limited number of deliberately selected verses, sung with their appropriate "pep" and "martial airs," would come to dominate the public's image of what the "Marines' Hymn" should be.

Transition to Peace and the Copyright of First Sergeant L. Z. Phillips, 1919

The first-known indication of a plan to standardize and copyright the "Marines' Hymn" in the postwar era is seen in a letter dated 18 June 1919 from the Quantico Post commander, Brigadier General John T. Myers, to Major General Commandant Barnett: "It is requested that the MajGen Commandant render a decision as to what is the official version of the Marine Hymn." Myers went on to credit a Dr. Darby of the YMCA and Sergeant L. Z. Phillips, the Quantico Post bandmaster,

for spearheading the effort to publish a newly authorized version.⁶⁷

L. Z. Phillips was one of the key players in the history of the hymn during the interwar years, but the extent and impact of his contribution has been all but forgotten. When Phillips enlisted in the Marine Corps Reserve in Cleveland, Ohio, on 29 September 1917, he was not a typical recruit. Rather, he was a 50-year-old, gray-haired restaurateur who wore glasses and was missing the little finger on his left hand.⁶⁸ He was new to the Marine Corps, but he had previously served in the 16th Infantry Band of the U.S. Army from 1886 to 1890, and perhaps also in the Third Artillery Regiment from 1883 to 1885.⁶⁹

Phillips joined the Marine Corps during a targeted recruiting drive in Cleveland in September 1917 to enlist musicians for a Ninth Regiment Band at Quantico. First Class Musician Arthur Tregina of the Marine Corps Band led the drive and succeeded in enlisting talented musicians from Ohio, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia, "each one a native born American, clean of heart and strong of soul."⁷⁰ As someone who had led bands all his life, Phillips was chosen as bandmaster and enlisted in the Marine Corps as a first sergeant. He continued in this role until he was honorably discharged in May 1922.

As noted above, it is clear that by June 1919, Phillips was a driving force behind the publication of an official version of the hymn and the subsequent copyright. His exact motivations are not known, but he seems to have been well suited to the task. Not only did he have the professional credential as the Quan-

⁶⁷ Post Cmdr, Quantico, John T. Myers to the MajGen Cmdt, 18 June 1919, as quoted in a memo to Gen Lane, 2 April 1929, Hymn Subject File, Historical Resources Branch, MCHD. There is some confusion regarding Phillips's first and middle names, but the initials "L. Z." are used consistently throughout official documentation: L. Z. Phillips, USMC service record, Marines' Hymn file, U.S. Marine Band Library; certificate of marriage, LZ Phillips to Kate Keller, 6 February 1895, Lucas County, OH, Ancestry.com; and L Z Phillips, Grave 23151, Section 17, Arlington National Cemetery, Arlington, VA.

⁶⁸ L. Z. Phillips, USMC service record.

⁶⁹ MajGen Cmdt, memo to the AdjGen of the Army, 12 December 1921, found in L. Z. Phillips's USMC service record.

⁷⁰ Arthur Tregina, "How the Popular Post Band Was Recruited and Formed," *Quantico Leatherneck*, 9 February 1918, 3.



Library of Congress

Cover of the “Marines’ Hymn” sheet music for piano and voice, approved by MajGen Cmdt George Barnett (misspelled as “Bennett”) and published by the *Leatherneck* soon after the official copyright registration of 19 August 1919.

tico Post bandmaster, he was also a songwriter and composer in his own right.⁷¹ As a restaurant owner in Cleveland, he was also an established businessman, which may have given him insight into the publicity potential of such an endeavor. His dedication to the project can be seen in the fact that he stated his intention to pursue the new publication “through patriotic motives” and initially proposed to finance it himself.⁷² However, Brigadier General Myers directed *Leatherneck* to provide the finances instead, with the idea that the newspaper would then “be entitled to the profits arising therefrom, and the money so accruing, would eventually be expended for the benefit of the enlisted

⁷¹ Phillips is credited as the author of the popular songs “Dear Old Flag” and “Only One Face in Dreamland” and of several religious songs. “Our Post Band,” *Leatherneck*, 21 August 1920, 1.

⁷² Post Cmdr, Quantico to the MajGen Cmdt, 18 June 1919.

men; the profits from the *Leatherneck* being periodically transferred to the camp welfare fund.”⁷³

Major General Commandant Barnett approved an official version of the hymn on 30 June 1919.⁷⁴ Less than two months later, on 19 August 1919, a copyright for the “Marines’ Hymn” was registered with the Library of Congress.⁷⁵ According to the copyright certificate, the song was registered in the name of the United States Marine Corps, Quantico, Virginia, for a term of 28 years. Credit for the “words and music” was given to L. Z. Phillips of the United States, but notably, in a different copy of the certificate, the word “compiled” is handwritten above this line, so it reads “words and music ‘compiled’ by L. Z. Phillips, Quantico, VA, ‘The Leatherneck’.”⁷⁶

A copy of sheet music housed at the Library of Congress, showing a brightly colored image of four Marines marching across a tropical setting, is almost certainly an example of the earliest edition of the newly authorized and copyrighted hymn from the summer of 1919.⁷⁷ It can be so precisely dated because in the bottom left corner is the inscription “Authorized and Approved by Major General Geo. Bennett,” a clear misspelling of “Barnett.” Barnett directed this misspelling to be corrected by *Leatherneck* in a memorandum to Myers dated 29 September 1919, making it unlikely that any editions printed after this date

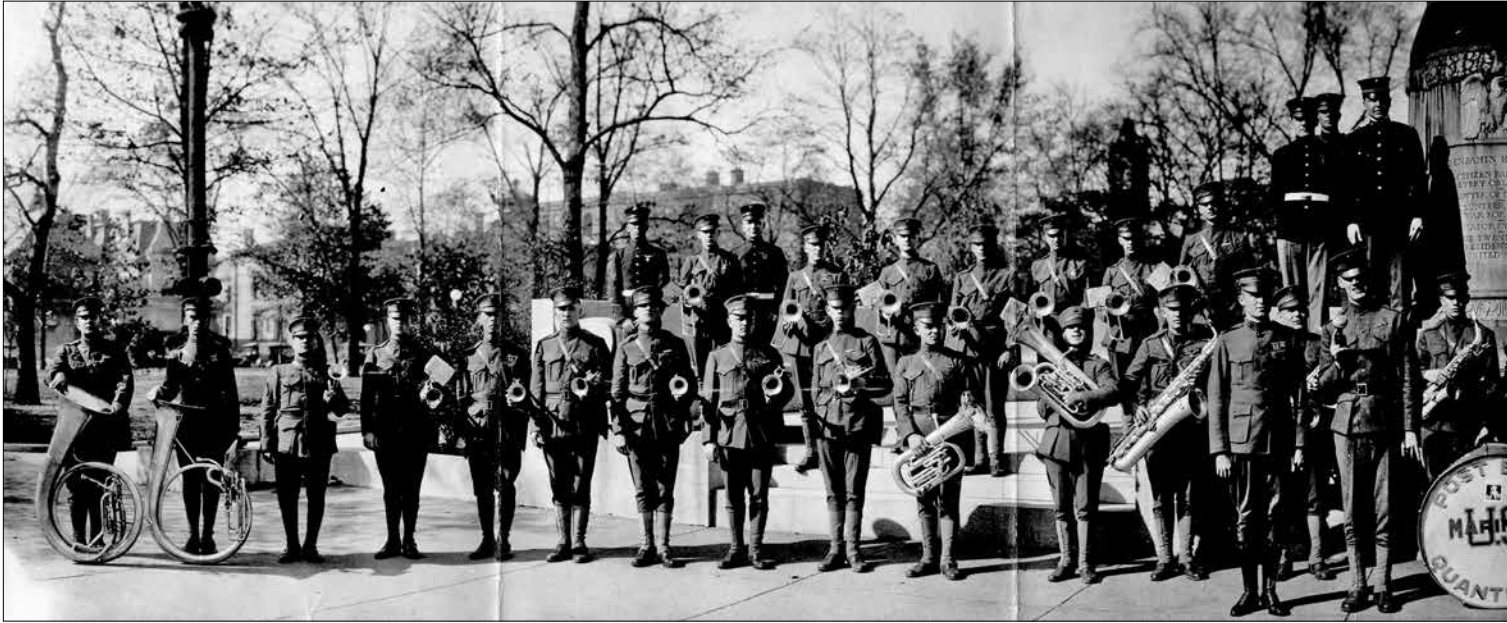
⁷³ Post Cmdr, Quantico to the MajGen Cmdt, 18 June 1919.

⁷⁴ Memo to Gen Lane, 2 April 1929; and Joel Thacker, memo to Administrative Officer, Historical Division, 8 December 1950, Hymn subject file, Historical Resources Branch, MCHD.

⁷⁵ L. Z. Phillips, “The Marine’s Hymn,” Certificate of Copyright Registration, Copyright Office of the U.S. Library of Congress, E 457132, 19 August 1919, Marines’ Hymn file, U.S. Marine Band Library. The application was received by the Copyright Office on 18 August and registered the following day. The registration has been cited incorrectly in some sources as E 457152. The date of 1891 is frequently given as the year of the first copyright, but no supporting evidence for this claim has been found. It is possible that this date originated as a typo of “1919,” since a full date is sometimes given as “19 August 1891.”

⁷⁶ L. Z. Phillips, “The Marine’s Hymn,” Certificate of Copyright Registration. Given the discrepancy, it is likely that the handwritten notation of “compiled” was added later by a cataloger at the Library of Congress.

⁷⁷ *The Marines’ Hymn* (Quantico, VA: *Leatherneck*, 1919), box 54, M1646, LCCN 2014561867, Library of Congress.



would contain the same error.⁷⁸ A look inside reveals that this official version of the hymn was composed of the three now-familiar verses, including the “First to fight for right and freedom” lyric in the first verse, and the following verse honoring Belleau Wood included as the third verse:

When we were called across the sea
 To stand for home and right,
 With the spirit of the brave and free
 We fought with all our might.
 When we helped to stop the German’s
 drive
 They said we fought like fiends,
 And the French rechristened Belleau
 Wood,
 For United States Marines.⁷⁹

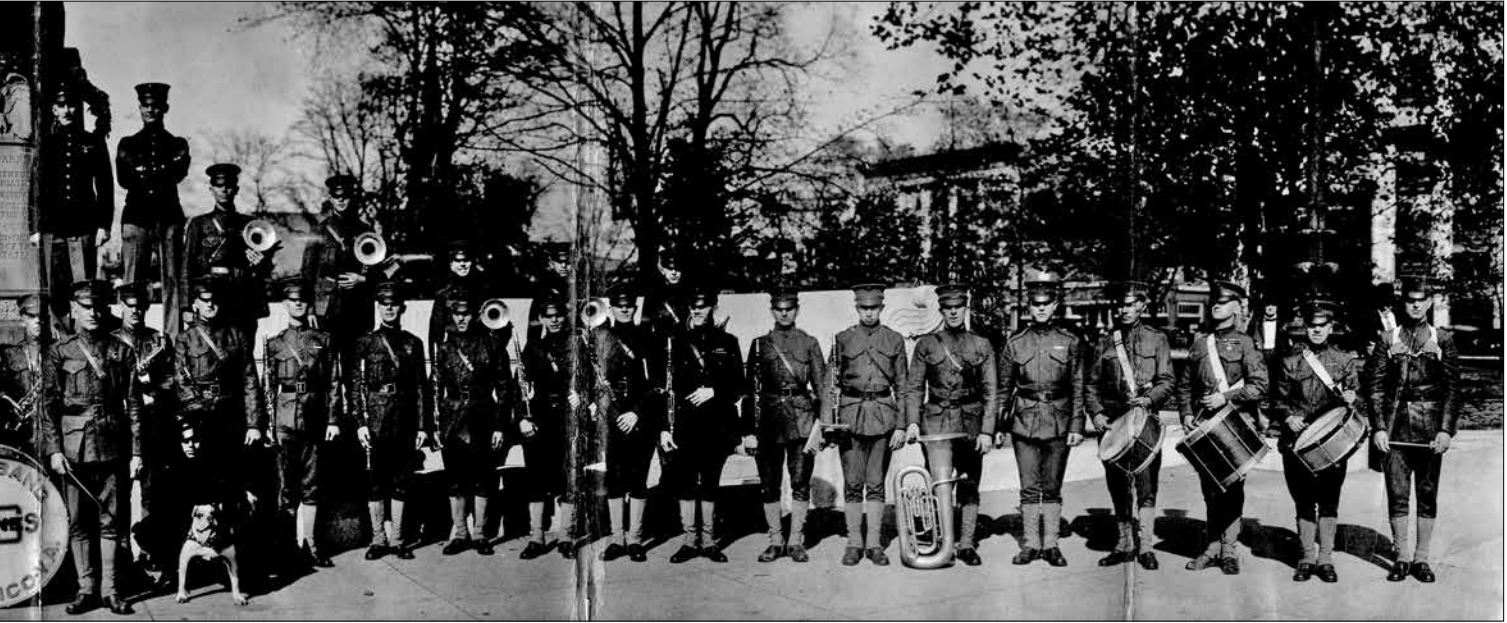
The author of this verse is not known for certain, but Phillips was likely the one who included it in the official authorization request to Barnett. According to the 18 June memorandum, Phillips proposed a new verse to take the place of “the third verse,” likely referring to the increasingly impolitic “pest-hole of Cavite”

verse from about 1911, which is not included in this version. Although the text of Phillips’s proposed verse is not given in the memorandum, its position as the new third verse matches the placement of the Belleau Wood verse. Furthermore, when Phillips sent a letter to the Office of the Commandant years later outlining his role in the 1919 publication and copyright of the hymn, he claimed that “while bandmaster and song leader at Quantico he collected from various Marines fragments of verses and music of what they called the ‘Halls of Montezuma,’ and from this material composed a selection which he christened ‘The Marines’ Hymn,’ a piano copy of which he later published and had copyrighted.”⁸⁰ Since the other three verses featured in the official 1919 version had already been in print several years before Phillips joined the Marines, this statement is clearly an exaggeration, but it may correctly allude to his contribution of the Belleau Wood verse. It is reasonable that Marines at Quantico were familiar with different verses about Belleau Wood, especially since one had been published in the *Recruiters’ Bulletin* in August 1918, and that Phillips compiled his own variation based on the ones he had

⁷⁸ MajGen Cndt George Barnett to Post Cndr, Quantico, 29 September 1919, quoted in a memo to Gen Lane, 2 April 1929, Hymn subject file, Historical Resources Branch, MCHD.

⁷⁹ *The Marines’ Hymn*.

⁸⁰ L. Z. Phillips to the Office of the Cndt, July or August 1931, quoted in MajGen Cndt (acting) A. A. Vandegrift to Herman Fuchs, Pathé News, 18 June 1941, Hymn subject file, Historical Resources Branch, MCHD.



Historical Resources Branch, Marine Corps History Division

The Quantico Post Band, without bandleader 1stSgt L. Z. Phillips, on 2 October 1919 in Indianapolis, IN, during the band's first major recruiting tour since the end of World War I. The photograph was, unfortunately, folded for storage.

heard and included it in the request for authorization to Barnett in June 1919.

The official inclusion of a verse about Belleau Wood in 1919 shows an important intersection between the conflicting attitudes toward the hymn at the time. Namely, including a verse that referenced events from only a year earlier validated the efforts of those who had continued to update the lyrics over the years to ensure the hymn would resonate with each new generation of Marines. However, it also meant that this verse had now become part of the ongoing push toward standardization, and the associated implication that the hymn was now “complete” and not open to further unauthorized contributions.

Coincidentally, on the same day the official “Marines’ Hymn” was copyrighted, the Ninth and Tenth Regiment Bands of Quantico played in the Washington, DC, parade welcoming home the war heroes of the Marine Corps. The event was recorded by a band member in *Leatherneck*:

We are camouflaged with the tin kellys [helmets], and for at least one day we made believe we had really been overseas. . . . It was a stirring sight to see those men who have done so much to-

ward getting the Kaiser’s goat get just the welcome that real men and brave deserve. Nothing is too good for them, and they know that us fellows who did not go were right behind them just as eager to go as they were.⁸¹

Under the leadership of Phillips, the Quantico Post Band went on to serve an important role in postwar recruitment. Starting with an extensive Midwest tour during 1–26 October 1919, the band used the popular music of the Marine Corps to “enlist Marines in foreign service.”⁸² To commemorate this tour, a large photograph of the band was taken in Indianapolis, Indiana, on 2 October, in front of a bronze statue of President Benjamin Harrison in University Park, which is now part of the Indiana World War Memorial Plaza.⁸³ Unfortunately, Phillips did not participate in the tour and is not included in the photograph.

⁸¹ “Blues Notes of the 10th Reg. Band,” *Leatherneck*, 22 August 1919, 5.

⁸² “Devil-Dogs Serenade Pittsburgh,” *Leatherneck*, 10 October 1919, 1.

⁸³ “Marine Band Here Today,” *Indianapolis (IN) Star*, 2 October 1919, 8. Special thanks to Kara Newcomer, formerly with the Historical Resources Branch, MCHD, for helping identify the location depicted in the image.

Muster rolls for the Quantico Barracks attachment show that Phillips remained at the base for the entire month of October, and a short item in *Leatherneck* from 7 November stated, “The boys are all glad to hear that Mrs. Phillips had a very successful operation and is on the road to a speedy recovery,” suggesting that he stayed at Quantico to tend to his ailing wife.⁸⁴

Leatherneck recounted the eventful tour, during which the band was feted in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, by the actress Lillian Russell, who was an honorary colonel in the Marine Corps; performed at a ball game in St. Louis, Missouri, attended by Major General Lejeune; and performed to a crowd of 30,000 at Churchill Downs in Louisville, Kentucky. In Evansville, Indiana, their longest stop on the tour, “the Marine Band led the parade and showed the Army and Navy that when it came to music and marching there was nothing to it but the Marines.”⁸⁵ Interestingly, the guest of honor for the 22 October parade in Evansville was Major General Leonard Wood. The man who had made the unpopular suggestion of transferring the Marine Corps to the Army during the unification crisis a decade earlier was now witnessing a celebration of Marine Corps accomplishments performed by the Quantico Post Band, which undoubtedly included a rousing rendition of the newly official “Marines’ Hymn.”

Conclusion

The development of the “Marines’ Hymn” during its early years, particularly the 1910s, set the stage for many issues that would continue for decades. The conflict between updating and standardizing the lyrics led to additional official revisions in 1929 and 1942, and many more unofficial suggestions. The increasing popularity of the hymn and its inextricable link to Marine Corps identity, due in part to the strategies of the Publicity Bureau during World War I, made the song a lightning rod at times: recognized and respect-

ed all over the world, but a target of ridicule during times of scandal.

The copyright of August 1919, in particular, had far-reaching legal implications for both the Marine Corps and L. Z. Phillips, resulting in ownership disputes in the 1930s and 1940s, and changes to official Marine Corps policy regarding the proper use of the hymn. However, in 1919 it seems to have gone virtually unnoticed. On 1 July 1919 (the day after Barnett officially approved the new version), a letter from Marine Corps Headquarters to the officer in charge of the Publicity Bureau suggested that the *Recruiters’ Bulletin* publish an article about the hymn, after the revision and new publication of the song was complete.⁸⁶ Nevertheless, no such article appeared for the rest of the year. Likewise, *Leatherneck* advertised the sale of “Marines’ Hymn” sheet music in late December 1919–January 1920, but these advertisements were very brief and did not mention that this edition featured the newly authorized version of the lyrics.⁸⁷

This lack of fanfare by two prominent Marine Corps publications indicates two things. First, the copyright was likely seen as a behind-the-scenes bureaucratic action that would affect very few people and not be newsworthy to the general public. Second, and most notably, the authorization of the official version did not introduce brand-new lyrics or musical interpretations to the hymn. Instead, it served as a stamp of approval of the verses already in circulation, some of them for many years, among Marines and the general public, which therefore needed no special media announcement. In other words, the authorized 1919 version of the “Marines’ Hymn” may have finally achieved official standardization, but it did not originate from the top down; rather, it was an affirmation of the existing ideas and words that had become most popular, most resonant, and most representative of Marine Corps values during an era of tremendous change.

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⁸⁴L. Z. Phillips, October 1919 Muster Roll, Barracks Detachment, Marine Barracks, Quantico, Historical Resources Branch, MCHD; and “Post Band Notes,” *Leatherneck*, 7 November 1919, 2.

⁸⁵“Quantico Band Has Successful Tour,” *Leatherneck*, 31 October 1919, 3.

⁸⁶David D. Porter, Headquarters USMC to Officer in Charge, Recruiting Publicity Bureau, 1 July 1919, Marines’ Hymn file, U.S. Marine Band Library.

⁸⁷Advertisements, *Leatherneck*, multiple editions, 5 December 1919–30 January 1920.