

Beyond McClellan and Metcalf

STAFF HISTORY IN THE U.S. MARINE CORPS

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American Marines have maintained some type of formal staff history effort since 1919 and continue to do so to date.² Its history and museums organization developed over time along with the Washington, DC, headquarters and the base at Quantico, Virginia. What sort of evolution has occurred during the last 100 years to create the modern historical program? How have placement, structure,

and wars impacted the ability of official historians to provide value to the Service and its members? What efforts have been temporal and which were of lasting value? These are timely questions, as often history to the Marines becomes all things to all people. This article will provide a history of history in the Corps. The current mission of the Marine Corps History Division is “to provide knowledge of the Marine Corps’ past to ensure an understanding of its present and future for the Marine Corps and the American people by making its hard-earned experience and official history available for practical study and use.”³

The value of a systematic study of past events has long been recognized in Western classical liberal education. Well-known nineteenth-century soldier and military strategist Antoine-Henri Jomini (1779–1869) wrote after the Napoleonic Wars: “Military history, accompanied by sound criticism, is indeed the true school of war.”⁴ His contemporary, Prussian general and military strategist Carl von Clausewitz (1780–1831), observed as well: “Only the study of military history is capable of giving those who have no experience of their own a clear picture of what I have just called the friction of the whole machine.” Clausewitz also provided the basis for the modern case study when

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² A broader approach can be found in John B. Hattendorf, “The Uses of Maritime History in the for the Navy,” *Naval War College Review* 56, no. 2 (Spring 2003): 13–39; and John B. Hattendorf, “The State of American Naval History in 2010,” *Historically Speaking* 11, no. 4 (September 2010): 16–18. For the evolution of the Marine Corps staff, see Allan R. Millett and Jack Shulimson, eds., *Commandants of the Marine Corps* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2004); Kenneth W. Condit, Maj John H. Johnstone, and Ella W. Nargele, *A Brief History of Headquarters Marine Corps Staff Organization* (Washington, DC: Historical Division, Headquarters Marine Corps, 1971); Kenneth J. Clifford, *Progress and Purpose: A Developmental History of the U.S. Marine Corps, 1900–1970* (Washington, DC: History and Museums Division, Headquarters Marine Corps, 1973); LtCol Charles A. Fleming, Capt Robin A. Austin, and Capt Charles A. Braley III, *Quantico: Crossroads of the Marine Corps* (Washington, DC: History and Museums Division, Headquarters Marine Corps, 1978); and C. A. Gregson, “CMC Moves to Pentagon: Most of HQMC to Follow,” *Marine Corps Gazette* 80, no. 8 (August 1996): 59.

³ “Mission,” *Marine Corps Order (MCO) 5750.1H, Manual for the Marine Corps Historical Program* (Washington, DC: Headquarters Marine Corps, 13 February 2009).

⁴ Robert D. Heinl, ed., *Dictionary of Military and Naval Quotations* (Annapolis: U.S. Naval Institute, 1966), 147.

he advocated the use of examples in his theory of war: “Examples from history make everything clear, and in addition they afford the most convincing kind of proof in the empirical fields.”⁵ This was well before the case study method of modern business schools.

As early as 1843, the Marine Corps showed interest in the systematic study of its profession by creating a library “for the use of the officers of the Marine Corps at Head Quarters [sic].”⁶ This followed an established U.S. Navy practice of having a collection of books provided for both yards and vessels of war. Of note were titles of history and biography along with administrative and technical works. Commandant Brevet Brigadier General Archibald Henderson’s own views were more to the point when he wrote in 1848 that commissioned and noncommissioned officers of the Corps should contribute in writing to the record of their active service in the U.S. Mexican War: “It is considered incumbent on the officers of the Marine Corps to have a faithful and impartial history written of the services of that portion of the Corps which has been on active duty with the Army and the Navy during the existing war with Mexico. Justice alone to the Corps, particularly to that part engaged in this arduous service, would require a record of this.”⁷

Seventy-one years later, after World War I, the Progressive secretary of the Navy, Josephus Daniels, directed both the Navy and Marine Corps to document the experience from that conflict. As a result, on 8 September 1919 the Historical Section, Adjutant and Inspector’s Department, was established at Headquarters by Commandant Major General George Barnett. Duties specified were establishing a historical

archive from records no longer needed in service, to prepare a narrative of the Marines in World War I, and to revise and update the history of the Marine Corps.⁸ In this endeavor, officers and enlisted were to assist in matters of “historical interest.”⁹

How did the Marine Corps develop an organizational interest in history at the headquarters level? Beginning with General Barnett’s *Marine Corps Order (MCO) 53*, the location and command relations of the Historical or History Division have varied over time, as Headquarters itself has evolved. Of note is that the *Marine Corps Manual* of 1921 (the basis for Service orders and directives) did not mention history as such, nor was military history considered in the promotion examinations of that era. What was detailed was how to record events for the Commandant in accordance with naval regulations while on expeditionary, advanced base, or campaign duty and the disposition of records forwarded or destroyed with the approval of the Headquarters adjutant and inspector. In this author’s opinion, a start was established with Commandant Major General John A. Lejeune’s birthday message to Marines, published in the 1921 *Marine Corps Manual*, observing the founding of the Corps each 10 November. The first officer in charge of the Historical Section, Major Edwin N. McClellan, who wrote the message, justified this annual commemoration by stating: “It is the one day in which every Marine should have impressed upon him that he is an important integral part of an ancient and honorable organization.” With it, Marines were obliged to observe the founding of the Corps by “calling to mind the glories of its long and illustrious history.”¹⁰

⁵ Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, bk. 2 (New York: Everyman’s Library, 1993), chapter 6, 199–204.

⁶ Navy Department to BGen A. Henderson, 2 October 1843, History of History Division file, Historical Reference Branch, Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA. This unique and eclectic collection existed for approximately 162 years before absorption into the Education Command’s James Carson Breckinridge Professional Library in September 2005. See Evelyn A. Englander, personal communication, 19 November 2013, Charles Melson History of History Division (HD) files, History Division Staff Research Material, COLL/5786, Archives Branch, Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA. This collection will hereafter be referred to as Charles Melson History of HD files.

⁷ Headquarters, Adjutant and Inspector’s Office, order, 6 April 1848, Charles Melson History of HD files.

⁸ LtCol Shawn P. Callahan, “The Gilded Age Foundations of the U.S. Marine Corps’ Historical Narrative” (panel paper, 2011 McMullen Naval History Symposium, Annapolis, MD, 15 September 2011).

⁹ *Marine Corps Order (MCO) 53*, Washington, DC: Headquarters Marine Corps, 8 September 1919, History of History Division file, Historical Reference Branch, Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA.

¹⁰ Maj E. N. McClellan to MajGen J. A. Lejeune, 21 October 1921, Charles Melson History of HD files.

Historical Section, Adjutant and Inspector's Department, Headquarters

Located at Marine Barracks, Washington, DC, from 8 September 1919, until moving to the Navy Annex, Arlington, Virginia, on 30 April 1943.

Along with Major McClellan, initial participation in the development of a historical program was by Chief Clerk James F. Jenkins. His assistant, Joel D. Thacker, researched personnel data and obtained the transfer of the records of Marine units with the American Expeditionary Forces in France to Marine Corps control from the War Department (the National Archives and Records Administration was not established until 1934, and earlier collections were kept by the Library of Congress). The first staff or operational histories were also written and published. Beginning with McClellan's narrative of the Marines in World War I, some four volumes of official history were produced during this period. McClellan's history of the Marine Corps remained in mimeograph form, a project completed by Lieutenant Colonel Clyde H. Metcalf with the *History of the United States Marine Corps* (1939). Published in part by subscription, for economy the associated documentation was not included.¹¹

Commandant Major General Thomas Holcomb established a Marine Corps Museum with a circular letter on 2 October 1940. Lieutenant Colonel Metcalf was designated its curator and it was located at Marine Corps Barracks Quantico, Virginia, "where as many as possible of the officers and enlisted of the Corps can have access to it."¹² Its first location was in the old base headquarters at Potomac Avenue and Broadway Street in the town of Quantico. The exhibit and museum effort was separate from the Historical Section in the sense that its supervision was split between Marine Corps Base Quantico and later the Corps' chief of staff.

Henry I. Shaw Jr., the longtime chief historian,

summarized that the historical office of the 1920s and '30s was, as with the Corps, charged "with a multitude of tasks to be performed by a modicum of people." He went on to say, "In the 1940s, with enormous expansion of the Corps beyond most people's dreams, four years of combat actions across the whole range of the Pacific, and stunning and rapid demobilization, the historical office had done little more than cope with its own expansion and contraction to suit the times."¹³ The Historical Division's mission had remained the same for a quarter of a century, but the demands of World War II brought major changes.¹⁴

Historical Division, Personnel Department, Headquarters

Located at Navy Annex and Henderson Hall, Arlington, Virginia, 1 May 1943–31 October 1946.

By March 1944, some five million records were transferred to the division for retention. Commandant General Alexander A. Vandegrift confirmed the results of the Navy Manpower Survey Board that assigned the division responsibility for collecting war records and reports; using these same records to answer inquiries; compile data from these to prepare monographs, articles, and histories of Marine organizations; and to edit these and other assigned projects for historical accuracy.¹⁵ But Headquarters appeared at a loss as to what to do with the historical staff during relocation and restructuring, as seen by the shift from personnel to public affairs, along with combat photographers and artists. Approximately 10 unit or campaign histories were prepared and published under these conditions.

Historical Section, Division of Public Information, Headquarters

Located at Navy Annex and Henderson Hall, Arlington, Virginia, 1 November 1946–16 June 1949.

Throughout the war the *Marine Corps Manual* estab-

¹¹ The search for the missing notes became the Holy Grail of Marine historians ever since the history's publication.

¹² MajGen Commandant to All Officers, Circular Letter No. 390, 2 October 1940, History of History Division file, Historical Reference Branch, Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA.

¹³ Henry I. Shaw Jr., "The Marine Corps Historical Program: A Brief History," *Fortitudine* 19, no. 3 (Winter 1989–90): 5–7.

¹⁴ "Archives of World War II," *Marine Corps Gazette* 27, no. 3 (July 1943): 48–49.

¹⁵ Director of Naval History to CMC, Marine Corps Administrative History, 26 August 1947, Charles Melson History of HD files.

lished “record of events,” war diaries, and after action reports as the main means of transmitting narrative information as part of the five million records transferred to the historical office. But, according to naval historian Fletcher Pratt, “the purpose of a special action report is to create the impression that the operation proceeded according to plan.”¹⁶ Only the Iwo Jima and Okinawa campaigns had a Marine historian deployed to the field during the fighting. Later writers questioned the value of low-level field interviews as providing too much detail for use in creating a narrative.¹⁷ These campaigns also witnessed the use of field recording equipment by correspondents rather than historians. The officer in charge of the Historical Section in 1947, Major Robert D. Heinl Jr., felt that based on the example of the German Wehrmacht’s well-organized “historical spot-reporting,” there was the need for “a wartime historical program for the Marine Corps settled in advance, providing for a paper organization within the Fleet Marine Force and approximately 100 reservists including men who actually make their living by writing, studying, or teaching history.”¹⁸ The writers were seen as the ones who ensured uniform editing of historical works rather than delegating this as a clerical function to others.¹⁹ The first “standard usage in historical monographs,” or style guide, was established and these same standards remained in use through 2004.²⁰ Of note is that the World War II story of the six Marine divisions and Marine Air were written by either Marine correspondents or civilian journalists and published using unit recreational funds. In addition, some six unit or campaign histories were prepared and published as well.

¹⁶ As quoted in Maj Robert D. Heinl Jr., “Combat Historians?,” *Marine Corps Gazette* 31, no. 9 (September 1947): 10.

¹⁷ Verle E. Ludwig, A Brief History of the Marine Corps Historical Program, 27 June 1957, Charles Melson History of HD files.

¹⁸ Heinl, “Combat Historians?,” 10, 12.

¹⁹ Henry I. Shaw, “The Base Line in Writing and Editing Marine Corps History,” *Marine Corps Historical Center Writing Guide* (Washington, DC: History and Museums Division, 1981); and *Marine Corps Historical Center Writing Guide*, rev. ed. (Washington, DC: History and Museums Division, 2004).

²⁰ Historical Section Memorandum 3-47, 26 September 1947, Charles Melson History of HD files.

Historical Division, Headquarters

Located at Navy Annex and Henderson Hall, Arlington, Virginia, 17 June 1949–14 February 1952.

From the experience of World War II, Lieutenant Colonel Heinl articulated the primary functions of the historical program in a March 1950 *Marine Corps Gazette* article:

1. Maintenance of historical archives.
2. Preparation and publication of definite [sic] official narratives.
3. Operation of a working reference-collection.
4. Applied research to provide answers to historical questions which originate either within the service or the general public.
5. Encouragement of semi-official or private historical research of military value.
6. Arrangements for collection, preservation and display of historical objects.
7. Establishment of a specialist reserve historical component.²¹

By organizing to accomplish these functions, the division then consisted of an administration and production branch, records (archives) and research (library) branch, and a writer’s branch that expanded with an applied studies branch at the start of the Korean War.²² Heinl’s bid for a rational program was carried on by his successor, Lieutenant Colonel Gordon D. Gayle. They deserve credit for the modern historical program that has since been in effect. Shaw recalled, “Both possessed the drive and peer recognition necessary to win the Historical Division a respected place in the HQMC hierarchy. And both recognized that the jobs that needed to be done had to be done by professionals and that couldn’t be done on a shoe-string budget with a skeleton staff.”²³

²¹ LtCol Robert D. Heinl Jr., “Marine Corps History—Report to the Stockholders,” *Marine Corps Gazette* 34, no. 3 (March 1950): 47. The status of the functions was confirmed by Director of Marine Corps History to Director of Plans and Policies, Historical Division, Mission of, 1 March 1951, Charles Melson History of HD files.

²² Headquarters Marine Corps, History of the Archives and Library of the Records and Research Section, Historical Branch, G-3, July 1952, Charles Melson History of HD files.

²³ Shaw, “The Marine Corps Historical Program,” 5-7.

Concurrent with the effort to document World War II was the outbreak of fighting in Korea that saw a simultaneous endeavor to publicize the Marine participation using both military and civilian historians. Journalist Lynn Montross was hired to assume these duties. The 1st Provisional Historical Platoon (now the 1st Provisional History Platoon) was fielded in August 1950 with teams to Korea in an effort to document events, but it disbanded by July 1952. Platoon members commented, "It of course would help all hands if all officers and men in the Marine Corps would become more history-conscious, so that those who are interviewed after an operation could be more helpful."²⁴ Seven unit or campaign histories were prepared and published.

Historical Branch, G-3 Division, Headquarters

Located at Navy Annex and Henderson Hall, Arlington, Virginia, 15 February 1952–31 October 1969.

The branch was now organized under a colonel with three sections: writing under a lieutenant colonel, records and research under Thacker, and administration and production under a captain.²⁵ In 1957, it consisted of a mix of regular, Reserve, and civilian staff for a total of five officers and 13 civilians. At the time, the custodian of the Marine Corps, Lieutenant Colonel John H. Magruder III, and the Quantico museum fell under the branch for supervision with its one officer, three enlisted, and three civilians. It was located in Building 1019, the new base headquarters, in 1960.²⁶ An updated history of the Marine Corps was published in 1962 by the U.S. Naval Institute, Heinl's *Soldiers of the Sea*.

In November 1963, chief of staff of the Marine Corps Lieutenant General Wallace M. Greene Jr.,

fended off a bid for control of the Historical Branch by Marine Corps Schools at Quantico due to conflicting findings (the move was apparently motivated more by manpower ceilings and space problems than functions), but he directed the matter be studied further.²⁷ The resulting study was a model of staff work addressing both the Historical Branch and Marine Corps Museum, including comparisons with the other Services. As a result, it was decided "that for reasons of more efficient operation of the historical program and greater personnel stability," the Historical Branch would remain where it was in the nation's capital.²⁸

In July 1964, now as Commandant, General Greene established an advisory committee on Marine Corps history. Its first members were Brigadier Generals Keith B. McCutcheon, Gordon G. Gayle, and Donn J. Robertson. This was the culmination of General Greene's long-held concern for history seen previously with his efforts in operations and plans, and then as the chief of staff. The committee's precepts or charter included: 1) advising the Commandant on the "scope, content, and direction" of the historical program; 2) recommending priorities for major projects; 3) encouraging the study and exploitation of historical assets; and 4) fostering the acquisition of private papers and material of significance to the Marine Corps. It became a standing committee that met once a year until disbanded in 1979.²⁹

In 1965, a proposal was again made to move the functions of the Historical Branch and the Marine Corps Museums from the G-3 Division to the Marine Corps Schools. It was said by Colonel Frank C.

²⁴ *Fleet Marine Force, Pacific, General Order No. 114*, 25 July 1952, Charles Melson History of HD files.

²⁵ TSgt Allen G. Mainard, "They Chronicle the Corps," *Leatherneck* 39, no. 11, November 1956, 51–53, 93.

²⁶ Notes on the Work of the Historical Branch, G-3, 17 August 1956, Charles Melson History of HD files; and Verle E. Ludwig, A Brief History of the Marine Corps Historical Program, 27 June 1957, Charles Melson History of HD files. The museum had an on-again/off-again relationship with the Historical Branch, reporting directly to the chief of staff of the Marine Corps for a time, brought on by its location at Quantico, VA, rather than Headquarters Marine Corps.

²⁷ CMC to MCS, Location of Functions of the Historical Branch, AC/S, G-3, Headquarters Marine Corps, 7 November 1963, Charles Melson History of HD files; and Col R. E. Cushman to Chief of Staff, memorandum, 26 December 1963, Charles Melson History of HD files.

²⁸ HQMC, G-3 Division, Decentralization of Historical Branch, G-3 Division, Headquarters Marine Corps, study, 31 January 1964, History of History Division file, Historical Reference Branch, Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA.

²⁹ HQO 5750.5, *Establishment of the Commandant's Advisory Committee on Marine Corps History*, 29 September 1966, HD: Historical Center file, Historical Reference Branch, Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA; and HQO 5420.22B, *Commandant's Advisory Committee on Marine Corps History*, 17 March 1972, HD: Historical Center file, Historical Reference Branch, Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA.

Caldwell, director of the Historical Branch, that the writers and reference staff would do everything but history in the demands for education, doctrine, and development that existed at Quantico.³⁰ The director of Marine Corps Museums stated this proposal had been raised every two or three years since 1947. Behind this was Colonel Magruder's desire to retain the museum under the chief of staff of the Marine Corps because of the previous lack of support by Marine Corps Schools between 1942 and 1954. In 1967, proposal for a Corps museum on the grounds of the Marine Corps Memorial in Arlington, Virginia, was made to General Greene, who responded "you are aware of the type of effort required to study, design, *fund* and build a project of this magnitude."³¹

The modern historical program was well in place and under the leadership of Colonel Caldwell when the war in Vietnam began. This was expanded by Fleet Marine Force, Pacific and III Marine Amphibious Force historical and documentation efforts. Current command chronology and oral history programs started with the publication of *MCO 5750.1, Duties of the Marine Field Historian*, in May 1965, which mandated a historical program for the first time beyond the *Marine Corps Manual* containing both headquarters functions and a writing guide. Routine (semiannual in garrison, monthly while in combat for battalion- and squadron-size units or larger) command chronologies were called for in July 1965 and oral histories solicited in October of the same year.³² The leading advocate of oral history at headquarters was Benis M. Frank,

beginning with a career interview of General Greene.³³ Headquarters instituted an interview program for Vietnam returnees through major base commands. The purpose was to obtain narratives of noteworthy professional value and to preserve transcripts of interviews for future use in writing the official history of participation in the war in Vietnam (roughly 6,500 interviews were collected).³⁴ In 1969, the head of the Vietnam unit of the historical branch, Dr. Jack Shulimson, posited that professional Marines as well as professional historians must use the historical record of the ongoing Southeast Asia conflict: "The Vietnam historical data base already exists; it only remains to be exploited."³⁵

In regards to writing, there was a reversal of roles from military (albeit reservists with history backgrounds) to civilian writers who had previously been research assistants. The head of the writing section and chief historian from 1965 was Henry I. Shaw Jr. rather than a Marine officer. Some shifting of priorities occurred from long-term historical projects to address short-term current events.³⁶ Accounts of the battle of Khe Sanh and the Combined Action Program were produced as exceptions to the general publication trends. Approximately 71 unit or campaign histories were prepared and published on World War II and Korea. These ranged from reference pamphlets to bound multivolumes of definitive history.

Historical Division, Headquarters

Located at Navy Annex and Henderson Hall, Arlington, Virginia, 1 November 1969–14 October 1973.

In November of 1971, Chief of Staff Lieutenant General John R. Chaisson recommended to Commandant General Leonard E. Chapman Jr. that the museum program should be formally placed under the Historical Division along with the combat art program. The

³⁰ Director, Marine Corps Museums, Proposal to Assign Historical Branch to CMCS, memorandum, 29 December 1965, History of History Division file, Historical Reference Branch, Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA.

³¹ CMC Green Letter No. 18-67, 3 November 1967, HD: Historical Center file, Historical Reference Branch, Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA. Emphasis original.

³² Col Frank C. Caldwell, "Every Marine an [*sic*] Historian," *Marine Corps Gazette* 50, no. 3 (March 1966): 33–38; and Jack Shulimson, "Vietnam Historical Data," *Marine Corps Gazette* 53, no. 2 (February 1969): 43–45. The experience of classified history chronologies and writing was somewhat less successful due to the problems of writing about current events. Gen Simmons overcame this by using FMFPac's more readable narrative accounts, the "Krulak Fables."

³³ R. B. Morrissey, "To Make That Report," *Marine Corps Gazette* (June 1960): 53; as early as this time a bid was made for oral history reporting of events.

³⁴ *MCO 5750.3, Historical Interview Program for Vietnam Returnees* (Washington, DC: Headquarters Marine Corps, 16 October 1965).

³⁵ Shulimson, "Vietnam Historical Data," 45.

³⁶ Background on the Writing of Marine Corps Official Histories, memorandum, 5 May 1966, Charles Melson History of HD files.

resulting organization would be under an active duty general officer. The Commandant agreed and assigned Brigadier General Edwin H. Simmons to head the new organization in December 1971, with colonels heading the both the history and museum branches.

The field historian and combat artist effort also continued in 1971, evolving into a number of Marine Reserve volunteer training units, and finally a mobilization-training unit was established as the basis for the current field history program. Marine Corps museum and combat art programs were integrated in 1973 and *Fortitudine*, the bulletin of the Marine Corps historical program, was first produced. General Simmons's *The United States Marines: A History* was published by the U.S. Naval Institute in 1974 (continuing in a third edition through 1998). Twenty-six unit or campaign histories were prepared and published.

History and Museums Division, Headquarters

Located at Navy Annex and Henderson Hall, Arlington, Virginia, until moving in 1977 to the Washington Navy Yard, Washington, DC, 15 October 1973–30 September 2002.

The Marine Corps Museum under Colonel F. Brooke Nihart was established at Building 58 at the Washington Navy Yard in 1978, as well the Marine Corps Air-Ground Museum at Brown Field at Quantico (local base museums existed at Parris Island, South Carolina; Camp Pendleton, California; and San Diego, California). In 1979, the Marine Corps Historical Foundation was founded to preserve and promote Marine Corps history and tradition as a nongovernmental nonprofit organization (renamed the Marine Corps Heritage Foundation). Dr. Allan R. Millett's *Semper Fidelis: The History of the United States Marine Corps* (1980) was published, combining both the Service and academic approaches.³⁷ During this period, editing and design staff were added to the division and tasked with responsibility for preparing the division's written products

for publication. About 148 unit or campaign histories were prepared and published, including those documenting the Vietnam War and the Gulf War.

This was the most stable, and one could say most fruitful, period for the historical program, while others felt the institution had become resistant to new challenges. In these two and a half decades, a number of orders and regulations institutionalized the management of the program. These included:

Marine Corps Manual: "Objectives of the Marine Corps Historical Program are:

- a. *To make the historical experience of the Marine Corps available for practical study and exploitation.*
- b. *To preserve a record of Marine Corps activities and tradition by collecting and maintaining papers and articles of lasting historical interest to the Marine Corps.*
- c. *To achieve a generally accepted realization within the Marine Corps that military history is a basic source of knowledge for solving problems and attaining advances in the theory and practice of military science.*"³⁸

*MCO P5400.45, Headquarters Marine Corps Organizational Manual: "The Director, Marine Corps History and Museums are the Commandant's principal staff officer for historical matters. As such, the Director conducts the operations of the Division; supervises the operations of assigned field historical activities; and has staff cognizance over the general execution of the historical program throughout the Marine Corps."*³⁹

Table of Organization 5164, History/Museum Division (HD):

The Director of Marine Corps History and Museums is responsible for coordinating the planning of the Marine Corps Historical Program; making the historical experiences of the Marine Corps available

³⁷ A variety of other tabletop or commercial publications have appeared, with journalist J. Robert Moskin claiming his 1977 *The U.S. Marine Corps Story* as the first not written by a Marine. BGen Edwin H. Simmons, "A History of the Marine Corps History," *Naval History* 17, no. 1 (February 2003): 34–37.

³⁸ *Marine Corps Manual* (Washington, DC: Department of the Navy, Headquarters Marine Corps, 1980), section E, paragraph 1402, 1–35.

³⁹ *MCO P5400.45, Headquarters Marine Corps Organizational Manual* (Washington, DC: Headquarters Marine Corps, 15 May 1989), 12-1–12-22.

*for practical study and exploitation to preserve a record of Marine Corps accomplishments by collecting and maintaining printed and written documents and oral history tapes of lasting historical and sentimental value to the Marine Corps in order to ensure effective planning for the future through evaluation of the past; ensuring that historical facts are presented in clear, reliable and academically reputable form; determining the eligibility of Marine Corps units for unit awards, campaign, and service streamers; and coordinating the efforts of the Marine Corps Museum in preserving, collecting, exhibiting, and exploitation of objects, memorabilia, Marine Corps art, and personal papers of lasting historical and traditional value to the Marine Corps.*⁴⁰

And finally, the MCO P5750.1G, *Manual for the Marine Corps Historical Program*, was in its eighth edition as the program authority.⁴¹ From this and the other references it can be stated that by then the program's mission was accomplished through four interrelated branch functional areas: historical, museums, support, and field operations. But none of these documents ensured adequate funding levels for personnel, operations, and management. A comparison with other Service history and museums agencies indicated the history and museum program had always done more with fewer resources.

In August 1990, Major Charles D. Melson reported as a joint historian to the U.S. Central Command for the Gulf War. He was followed by approximately eight regular, Reserve, and recalled officers as field historians.⁴² Combat artists came from the regular

and Reserve establishments as well. A Reserve field historian and combat artist Field History Branch of individual mobilization augmentees was organized in 1994. Subsequent deployments took place to Somalia, Liberia, Bosnia, and Kosovo. The coming Global War on Terrorism would be well served by this prior experience.⁴³ Along with these events, the planning for the National Museum of the Marine Corps began in 1995. At least three separate design phases were conducted before a final construction contract went out for bid.

History Division, Training and Education Command/ Marine Corps University

Located at the Washington Navy Yard, Washington, DC, until moving to Marine Corps Base Quantico, Virginia, 1 October 2002 to present.

With the director, Colonel John W. Ripley (Ret), and deputy director, Colonel Jon T. Hoffman, focused on a museum to be located at Quantico, their initial effort for the History Division and Museums Division was to move it into the General Alfred M. Gray Marine Corps Research Center of Marine Corps University. The commanding generals of Training and Education Command pushed back on this and felt the move from the Navy Yard would not occur until a purpose-built facility was constructed. A shift from Washington, DC, to Quantico, Virginia, was precipitated as much as anything else by the reduction of headquarters staff prior to its shift to the Pentagon, the elimination for a time of the Marine Corps Staff director as a general officer billet, and the base closing and realignment process. The Marine Corps Heritage Foundation and its museum planning cell were already located at Quantico.

This changed dramatically when the president of Marine Corps University, Major General Donald R. Gardner (Ret), gave notice in the fall of 2004 that the museums branch would be a separate division as of

⁴⁰ Table of Organization 5164, History/Museum Division, 14 November 1989, Charles Melson History of HD files.

⁴¹ MCO P5750.1G, *Manual for the Marine Corps Historical Program* (Washington, DC: Headquarters Marine Corps, 28 February 1992).

⁴² In Kuwait, this included Col Charles J. Quilter II, LtCols Charles H. Cureton, Dennis P. Mroczkowski, and Ronald J. Brown. Maj Charles D. Melson remained at headquarters as the coordinator of the collection effort.

⁴³ In Afghanistan and Iraq, this was with Cols Nicholas R. Reynolds, Reed Bonadonna, Gary W. Montgomery, and Michael D. Visconage; Lt-Cols Nathan Lowery, David A. Benhoff, and Kurtis P. Wheeler; Majs Melissa D. Mihocko, Theodore R. McKeldin, John P. Piedmont, Christopher Warnke, and Joseph Winslow; and CWO4 Timothy S. McWilliams.

July 2005 and the entire History and Museums Division would be in Quantico no later than 1 September 2005. These structural and personnel changes were challenged by both a Headquarters-mandated implementation planning team and a subsequent March 2006 review board chaired by General Carl E. Mundy Jr. (Ret).⁴⁴ That this move allowed a run on History Division personnel resources and was unfunded and poorly executed was an effect but not the cause of the shift.⁴⁵ Departing at the same time were the director and deputy director, as well as the majority of the editing and design, support, library, and archives staff. After this disruption, further unbalancing occurred with the arrival of a new acting director, Colonel Richard Camp (Ret), along with a sudden infusion of a half-dozen Marine Reserve officers with no previous History Division affiliations or loyalties. All of this created a wave of attention on short-term goals at the expense of long-term vision. As new employees arrived, no regard was taken of previously established procedures or experience that had evolved into the historical program from the 1971 founding of the History and Museums Division. There was one particular achievement of note during all of this: the National Museum of the Marine Corps was successfully opened at Quantico on 10 November 2006 by President George W. Bush. At the event, Corporal Jason L. Dunham posthumously received a Medal of Honor, who was killed in action in Iraq, emphasizing the continued relevance of history to today's Marines.⁴⁶

Marine Corps Order 5750 and Table of Organization 5164 were all modified with needed revisions that resulted from the move to Marine Corps Base Quantico.⁴⁷ Authored and staffed by longtime senior historian Charles R. Smith, the 2009 update to the order, *MCO 5750.1H*, did much to ensure the historical pro-

gram survived.⁴⁸ But significantly, History Division's director, Dr. Charles P. Neimeyer, and deputy director, Paul Weber, also had to take on the responsibility for the Gray Research Center in 2012 and then the 2015-16 move to the Brigadier General Edwin H. Simmons Marine Corps History Center.⁴⁹ The purpose-built facility promised for more than a decade previously finally came to pass, but as this article shows, significant changes to the program have already occurred.⁵⁰

Conclusion

In summation, much has changed in the period discussed from 1919 through 2019, but much has not. In the broadest sense, the program continues to document the Marine Corps in times of conflict for the American people.⁵¹ The historical program has accomplished this with narrative histories and writing, museums and exhibits, and other heritage efforts (e.g., lineage and honors, commemorative naming) as part of the military staff process. These are with historical products (i.e., general support) rather than services (i.e., direct support) for the use of Headquarters, commands, and other knowledge-based functions. The subtleties between academic and applied history seems to defy program managers, most of whom are not interested in the liberal arts. The historical program does not accomplish this for public affairs and community relations, lessons and operational analysis, doctrine and developmental support, or professional military education and instructional supports, because each of these functions has its own programs,

⁴⁴ *MCO 5750.1H, Manual for the Marine Corps Historical Program* (Washington, DC: Headquarters Marine Corps, 13 February 2009).

⁴⁵ Dir, HD to CG, EdCom, Decision Paper, 20 September 2012, Charles Melson History of HD files.

⁴⁶ In the prophetic words of the late Col Heinl, "Few projects within the Marine Corps have been subjected to the winds of chance, the vagaries of personality, and just plain misunderstanding and general ignorance, as has the Marine Corps historical program, together with its long-suffering executor, the Historical Division." See Heinl, "Marine Corps History—Report to the Stockholders," 46.

⁴⁷ "At the conclusion of the operations analysis phase it is equally important that this documentation be made available to the Director of Naval History and the Director of Marine Corps history so that official histories and historical analyses can be prepared and made available to the public." *Secretary of the Navy Instruction 5212.5D, Navy and Marine Corps Records Disposition Manual* (Washington, DC: Department of the Navy, 22 April 1998), part 5, Records of Armed Conflict.

⁴⁴ The author participated in the various planning teams and Mundy board.

⁴⁵ This included the destruction of the unique library collection.

⁴⁶ Col Patricia Saint, "Museum Dedication: From Design to Dedication, A Project Management View," *Fortitudine* 32, no. 2, 2007, 4-6.

⁴⁷ Col Jon T. Hoffman, USMCR (Ret), "It Was the Best of Times, It Was the Worst of Times" (panel paper, 2011 McMullen Naval History Symposium, Annapolis, MD, 15 September 2011).

personnel, and budgets that far exceed that dedicated to the history effort. These disciplines also benefit more from a social sciences rather than a historical approach.

Derived from public law and a variety of Department of Defense and Service regulations, the current authority and responsibilities of the History Division to provide continued value to the institution in the critical efforts for: 1) the maintenance of permanently valuable records in compliance with U.S. Codes, primarily 5 and 10; 2) to provide a resource for command decision making; and 3) to serve as a resource for educating and training Marines.⁵² This had been accomplished as a separate special staff section with the ability to engage in operational reporting and deployments, and the ability to run its own facilities and programs. From 1919, this was with Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps in Arlington, Virginia; but

from 2002 on, the division became part of the Marine Corps Education Command and Marine Corps University at Quantico, an organization whose mission is professional military education for resident and non-resident students having a continual turnover on an annual basis.

More than a decade ago, the author stood before the U.S. Naval Academy's McMullen Naval History Symposium and predicted the need for staff or operational history for the twenty-first century, based on the efforts to document the Gulf War.⁵³ Since the transition to the current History Division at Marine Corps University, roughly 50 or more monographs and campaign histories have been prepared and published, including those documenting the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. As a result, some of what this author proposed during that symposium has come to pass.⁵⁴

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⁵² Annette Amerman, "Every Marine an Historian: A Sequel," *Marine Corps Gazette* 96, no. 3 (March 2012): 77-79. This article dealt with a basic and perennial source of concern.

⁵³ Randy Carol Balano and Craig L. Symonds, eds., *New Interpretations in Naval History: selected papers from the Fourteenth Naval History Symposium, held at Annapolis, Maryland, 23-25 September 1999* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2001), 424-31.

⁵⁴ 2011 McMullen Naval History Symposium (Panel: History in the Marine Corps), 14-16 September 2011, chaired by Dr. Charles P. Neimeyer, with papers by Col Jon T. Hoffman, LtCol Shawn P. Callahan, and Charles D. Melson.