



# MARINE CORPS HISTORY DIVISION

## *Leathernecks*

Marines have had many nicknames, but one that has endured and is a point of pride is “Leathernecks.” The origins of Leatherneck date back to 1776, when the Naval Committee of the Second Continental Congress mandated uniform regulations. Marines were to wear green coats with buff white (a light brownish yellow) facings, buff breeches, black gaiters, and a leather stock collar fastened around the neck. British soldiers first wore a leather or horsehair collar in 1755, meant to maintain the wearer’s military bearing, not to protect the neck against slashing or sword cuts, as a persistent myth claims. The origins of U.S. Marines being called Leathernecks is disputed. Some claim it came from U.S. Navy sailors, while others argue it was a Royal Navy sailors’ epithet for Royal Marines. Whether the origins were American or British, U.S. Marines wore the leather collar until it was dropped from uniform regulations in 1872. Even today, the distinctive Marine dress blue uniform harkens back to the stock collar.



*Leathernecks in the Air!* by Laurence Brinkman.  
National Museum of the Marine Corps Art Collection

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