

The U.S. Marines in World War I

PART I: THE U.S. MARINE CORPS RESERVE COMES TO THE FORE

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America's Citizen Marines—State Militias, a Tradition of National Service

To address more than a century of evolving national requirements, the United States Marine Corps added the crisis response capabilities of the Marine Corps Reserve (Reserve); its origins can be traced to the inadequacies of the states' naval militias for the defense of democracy and protecting the country's interests abroad. The 1916 legislation authorizing a Reserve provided a source of trained manpower and, not surprisingly, was the result of a coordinated Navy-Marine team approach.¹ This first part of a two-part story discusses how the Reserve in World War I depended greatly on the development of Marine branches inside state naval militias, the initiatives authorizing the Reserve and its mobilization, and finally the contributions of the Marine Reserve during the war.

The founding fathers recognized the need for a strong military reserve, but not as it has come to exist. The authors of the Articles of Confederation and later the U.S. Constitution were concerned about possible excesses of a large standing army and its expense on a fledgling nation. Retaining the citizen-soldier character of the military after the American Revolutionary War was fundamental to the survival of the new nation. A small standing army, backed by well-armed and -trained militias provided by the states, offered support for national emergencies.

The U.S. Constitution, which took effect in 1789, addressed the use of state militias with Article I, Section 8, Clause 15, defining the grounds for Congress to call up militias “to execute the laws of the Union, suppress insurrections, and repel invasions.”² Then on 2 May 1792, Congress passed the Uniform Militia Act (1 Stat. 264) requiring enrollment in the states militia, specifying exceptions to enrollment and providing guidance on organization and arming of the state militias.³

The War of 1812 was the first great test of the militia system. However, when many of the militiamen refused to leave their home states, the militia proved to be of little national value. Militia deployments were not authorized for the Mexican-American War because the conflict did not meet the criteria for employment of state militias as defined in the Constitution, that is to enforce laws, repel invasions, and suppress insurrection. Use of state militias in the American Civil War was more effective—the militias could be used to end insurrections but members were limited to no more than three months active duty.⁴

Secretary of the U.S. Navy Benjamin F. Tracy (1889–93) stressed the importance of a trained militia for the Navy and called for funding arms and equipment for naval militia in various seacoast states. As a result of his efforts with Congress, in his annual report for 1892, Tracy noted the naval appropriation act, approved 19 July 1892, provided \$25,000 for naval militias. In that annual report, he also confirmed qualifying instructions for states seeking a portion of the funds. Seven states formed and mustered in naval militias by the time Tracy

¹ Reserve officers of Public Affairs Unit 4-1, *The Marine Corps Reserve: A History* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office [GPO], 1966), 1.

² U.S. Const. art. I, § 8, cl. 15. U.S. Constitution Online, http://www.usconstitution.net/xconst_A1Sec8.html.

³ Uniform Militia Act of 1792, Pub. L. No. 2-1-28, 1 Stat. 264 (1792).

⁴ Rollin F. Van Cantfort, “Call Out the Reserves,” *Marine Corps Gazette* 37, no. 10 (October 1953): 16.

submitted his annual report on 10 December 1892. One additional state mustered in a naval militia unit before the end of the year.⁵

In spite of various congressional actions to improve the state militia system, the Constitutional restrictions on employment of militia remained unchanged, and by the end of the 1898 Spanish-American War, the militia system, which relied on militiamen provided by states, was shown to be inadequate in responding to national emergencies.⁶

Calls for a National Naval Reserve

The office of the state adjutant general monitored the state militias, including the naval militias. A review of annual adjutant general reports reveals a consensus that improvements were needed in the militia systems.

Of particular note are the difficulties encountered in New York state. In the *Annual Report of the Adjutant General of the State of New York for the Year 1898*, C. Whitney Tillinghast II emphasized a major lesson from the Spanish-American War: the states' abilities to provide forces to support the national call were hindered by the U.S. Constitution's restrictions on the use of militias. Since that war did not meet Constitutional requirements, Tillinghast noted the state of New York was forced to ask its militia for volunteers. While volunteers did come forward, the administrative nightmares associated with reporting the New York militia volunteers "mustering in," or swearing in for federal duty to the satisfaction of the U.S. War Department, were extremely challenging and frustrating, particularly federal payment to the volunteers.

In an exchange of telegrams from May through July 1898, the War Department and the New York adjutant general attempted to sort through the ad-

ministrative issues associated with the expenses of food and shelter, transportation, and pay for the volunteers for federal service.⁷

Additionally, included in the New York adjutant general's 1898 report was the report of the head of the New York Naval Militia, Captain J. W. Miller. Miller wrote on the war with Spain, "The personnel of the Naval Militia is well fitted to defend the immediate coast of the State. If it be desired to perfect the officers and men for deep-sea duty, the general government must provide suitable tools, in the way of modern ships. This has been recommended by me in many annual reports."⁸

Miller added "If the general government provided these ships, it would naturally expect a high standard of excellence both in officers and men. This standard can be obtained by the enactment of a National Naval Reserve Law." He also recommended the National Naval Reserve have its own ranks and ratings and be distinct from the U.S. Navy and that the federal government publish the "scope of examinations for entrance to the Naval Reserve . . . and a certain proportion of the Naval Militiamen of each State should have passed it before any aid was supplied by Congress."⁹

Under President William McKinley's direction, the secretary of the War Department was to procure soldiers from the states' National Guard (NG) units.¹⁰ New York's challenges in responding to federal requests for more manpower were typical of the other states of the Union. More improvements in growing a crisis response capability were needed.

On 1 November 1900, Lieutenant Commander William H. H. Southerland (USN), officer in charge of the Navy Department's Naval Militia Office and future commander of the Navy and Marine force in Nicaragua in August 1912,¹¹ wrote to the secretary of

⁵ U.S. Department of the Navy, *Report of the Secretary of the Navy: Being Part of the Message and Documents Communicated to the Two Houses of Congress at the Beginning of the Second Session of the Fifty-Second Congress* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1892), 44-46.

⁶ Van Cantfort, "Call Out the Reserves," 16.

⁷ New York's call for volunteers, the very positive response, frustration with the administrative issues, and the exchange of messages between the War Department and New York's state paymaster-general reflects ever increasing annoyance at the federal and state levels and suggests the absence of clearly defined procedures for bringing a militiaman into federal service. See the Adjutant General's Office, State of New York, *Annual Report of the Adjutant-General of the State of New York for the Year 1898* (Albany, NY: Wynkoop Hallenbeck Crawford Co., 1899), 36-43.

⁸ Adjutant General's Office, State of New York, *Annual Report of the Adjutant-General of the State of New York for the Year 1898* (Albany, NY: Wynkoop Hallenbeck Crawford Co., 1899), 245-46.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid., 13; and Maj Michael S. Warren, *The National Guard in the Spanish-American War and Philippine Insurrection, 1898-1899* (Ft. Leavenworth, KS: School of Advanced Military, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 2012), 12.

¹¹ George B. Clark, *The United States Military in Latin America: A History of Interventions through 1934* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co., 2014), 117.

the Navy about the inadequacies of the naval militia system:

I call your attention to these facts to show the absolute necessity for the creation, in addition to the naval militia organizations, of a Government or national reserve force, which should be organized entirely under . . . the control of the Navy Department.¹²

Little progress was made in authorizing a reserve for the Navy and Marine Corps until Secretary of the Navy George V. L. Meyer (6 March 1909–4 March 1913) recognized the inadequacies of the militia system as a source of trained officers and men for the Navy and Marine Corps. Meyer twice called for legislation to move toward a viable solution.¹³ In December 1911, under his leadership, the Department of the Navy proposed legislation to the 61st Congress (1909–11) to create a “reserve of personnel for the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps and for its enrollment.”¹⁴

Need for a Marine Corps Reserve

While the need for a national Navy and Marine Corps reserve force had been building over the years, the operational tempo of the sea services had increased. In particular, the Marine Corps’ operational tempo in Central America, Mexico, and the Caribbean had been expanding since the Spanish-American War. Protecting American interests in Haiti, Veracruz, Nicaragua, and Santo Domingo kept Marines deployed, while manpower had grown only marginally.¹⁵ These demands, plus ships’ detachments, legation guards, and other requirements, strained the Corps’ resources and affirmed the need for a Marine Corps Reserve ready to meet emergent force requirements.

Marine Militia and National Naval Volunteers

The U.S. Marine Corps Reserve obtained much of its initial core of trained manpower from Marine

units in the state naval militias. Finding records of Marines in state naval militias in the early days of America remains problematic, thus confirming the existence of the first Marine Corps unit in a state militia, after the Naval Appropriations Act of 1892, presents a challenge.

According to available records, the 1st Marine Corps Reserve Company, New York State Naval Militia, was activated in 1893.¹⁶ On 25 January 1994, New York Senator Alfonse M. D’Amato asked for and was granted permission to read into the congressional record part one of a two-part *Naval Reserve Association News* magazine article by two U.S. Navy Reserve/New York Naval Militia officers, Commanders Walter J. Johanson and William A. Murphy, on the history and importance of the naval reserve. It read, in part, as follows:

The Naval Militia, in addition to developing as a reserve for the Navy, was an incipient reserve for the Marine Corps as well. Starting in 1893, the New York Naval Militia included the 1st Marine Corps Reserve Company. Massachusetts and Louisiana also included units of Marines in their Naval Militia organizations.¹⁷

At the national level, the assistant secretary of war was charged with oversight of the state naval militias from 1891 to 1909. In December 1909, that responsibility was moved to the Personnel Division, Department of the Navy; and in 1911, the Office of Naval Militia was established and assumed oversight and support functions. Then in 1912, the U.S. Naval Militia functions were moved to the Navy’s Bureau of Navigation.¹⁸

Key references for identifying Marine units in state naval militias include the annual reports of the states adjutants general, which incorporate both national guard and naval militia information. In the annual adjutant general reports of the three states named in the above mentioned article—New York, Massachusetts, and Louisiana—the earliest mentioned Marine unit is in the *Annual Report of the Adjutant General*

¹² *Marine Corps Reserve*, 2.

¹³ *Ibid.*

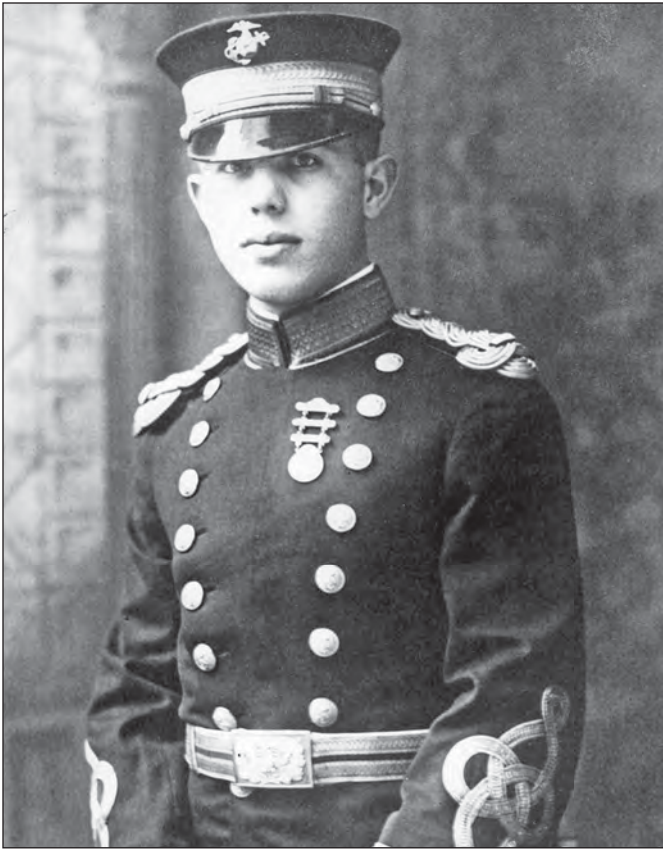
¹⁴ U.S. Department of the Navy, *Annual Reports of the Navy Department for the Fiscal Year 1911* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1912), 56, 63.

¹⁵ Col Jon T. Hoffman, *USMC: A Complete History* (Quantico, VA: Marine Corps Association, 2002), 162–63.

¹⁶ *Marine Corps Reserve*, 3.

¹⁷ 140 Cong. Rec. S (The Naval Militia) (25 January 1994).

¹⁸ “Records of the Bureau of Naval Personnel: Records of the Division of Naval Militia Affairs,” U.S. National Archives Guide to Federal Records, www.archives.gov/research/guide-fed-records/groups/024.html?vm=r#24.6.2.



Marine Corps History Division

1stLt William A. Worton, Marine Branch, Massachusetts Naval Militia, in 1916 at age 16.

of the State of Louisiana for the Year Ending 1902. The report lists a Marine guard of 31 men in the 1st Naval Battalion, Louisiana Naval Militia (LNM), serving onboard the USS *Stranger*.¹⁹ The next year, that Marine guard increased to 49 militiamen and reported as Division G, 1st Naval Battalion, Naval Brigade, LNM. The militia continued to increase in number and in 1906, LNM added a second division, Division H, 1st Naval Battalion, Naval Brigade.²⁰ In a reorganization of the Naval Brigade, Division H was disbanded on 5 September 1912, and the Marine militiamen consolidated into Division G.²¹

In a report ending 31 December 1912, the adjutant general of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts noted the authorization of a Marine guard as part of a new naval militia battalion.²² In his report the following year, the adjutant general wrote, “For the first time in the history of the Naval Brigade, a Marine guard consisting of 1 commissioned officer and 25 enlisted” was formed.²³

A charter member of Marine Company, Massachusetts Naval Militia, William A. Worton served more than 30 years on active duty after World War I and retired as a major general in June 1949. His detailed record keeping, personal papers collection, and oral history maintained in the Marine Corps Archives and Special Collections Section of the Marine Corps University provide insight into the organization, arms, equipment, uniforms, and strength of the Marine units in the naval militia prior to and during the war. He mentions the formation of a Marine unit in the Massachusetts Naval Militia in May 1913 with Walter A. Powers, Assistant Attorney General for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, appointed as a first lieutenant and named as the Marine Company’s first commander.²⁴ A 1909 Harvard graduate, Powers’s credentials mirror those of many who joined the naval militia: well-educated and upwardly mobile. His militia records indicate he was mustered into the Massachusetts Naval Militia on 11 March 1911 and commissioned first lieutenant 27 March 1913.²⁵

Beginning in 1892, the annual reports of the adjutant general of the state of New York included reports from the commander of the naval militia. However, the state’s report does not mention a Marine unit in the state naval militia until the annual report for 1916. That report cites an amendment to the federal law on naval militias approved 15 May 1916, addressing the composition, strength, and command

¹⁹ Louisiana Adjutant General’s Office, *Annual Report of the Adjutant General of the State of Louisiana for the Year Ending 1902* (Baton Rouge, LA: Ramires-Jones Printing Co., 1903), 77–78, filed in The National Guard Memorial Library, Washington, DC.

²⁰ Louisiana Adjutant General’s Office, *Annual Report of the Adjutant General of the State of Louisiana for the Year Ending 1906* (Baton Rouge, LA: Ramires-Jones Printing Co., 1907), 132–33.

²¹ Louisiana Adjutant General’s Office, *Annual Report of the Adjutant General of the State of Louisiana for the Year Ending 1912* (Baton Rouge, LA: Ramires-Jones Printing Co., 1913), 26, 72, 104, 134.

²² Massachusetts Adjutant General’s Office, *Annual Report of the Adjutant General of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts for the Year Ending December 31, 1912* (Boston, MA: Wright & Potter Printing Co., 1913), 11.

²³ *Ibid.*, 33–34.

²⁴ William A. Worton, Personal Papers, Marine Corps Archives and Special Collections, Marine Corps University, Quantico, VA.

²⁵ Massachusetts Adjutant General’s Office, *Annual Report of the Adjutant General of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts for the Year Ending December 31, 1913* (Boston, MA: Wright & Potter Printing Co., 1914), 24.

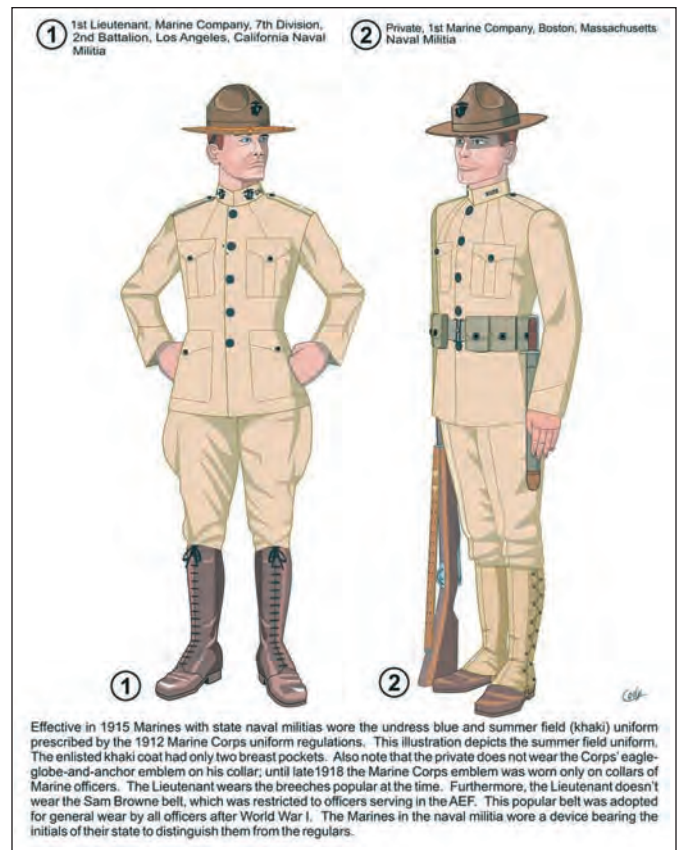
of the state naval militias. In New York, the 1st Battalion, Naval Brigade, now included nine divisions and an aeronautic section; the 2d Battalion included seven divisions, one Marine company, and one aeronautic section; and the 3d Battalion included eight divisions. According to the 1916 annual report, the naval militia mustered from the Marine Company into the 2d Battalion on 1 May 1916. The company's first commander was Lieutenant J. F. Rorke.²⁶

The annual *Register of the Commissioned and Warrant Officers of the Naval Militia of the United States* does not list a Marine unit in any state naval militia until the 1 January 1914 edition, which reported on units that were active in 1913.²⁷ The sole Marine unit listed in 1914 was Marine Company, Massachusetts Naval Militia, Boston, with 1 officer and 31 enlisted men. A note in the 1914 edition indicates the state of Louisiana did not submit a report for 1913.²⁸

Uniforms of the Marines in the Naval Militia

In a 25 January 1915 letter to U.S. Navy Captain Frederic B. Bassett Jr., chief of the Navy's Division of Naval Militia Affairs, Charles H. Power²⁹ of 1st Battalion, Naval Militia, New York, asked for clarification on the uniforms, equipment, and ordnance for the state's Marines. His question arose after learning in Washington that "Marines are to be allowed for the Naval Militia, and being about ready to muster in a detachment of one officer and twenty-four men."³⁰

Bassett forwarded the letter to Major General Commandant George Barnett on 30 January and stated in his endorsement that appropriations to support the Naval Militia Act would be used to purchase uniforms, equipment, and ordnance for enlist-



LtCol Richard L. Cody (Ret)
Uniforms of Marines in the Naval Militia.

ed men, but "no uniforms will be issued to officers, as this is contrary to precedent and there is not sufficient money available." Bassett requested that Barnett define the uniform items and insignia for the Marines in the naval militias.³¹

In a response dated 3 February 1915, Barnett confirmed the enlisted uniform items to be supplied: "khaki, undress blue, campaign hat, undress cap, leggings, flannel shirt, and noncommissioned officers' chevrons, and the regulation tan shoes."³² He recommended that Marine officers in the naval

²⁶ New York Adjutant General's Office, *Annual Report of the Adjutant General of the State of New York for the Year 1916* (Albany, NY: J. B. Lyon Co., 1917), 45, 50, 118, 124. The Department of the Navy issued General Order No. 153 implementing the new federal law, and as the states complied with the directive, the composition of their naval brigades adhered to a three-battalion organizational construct. Secretary of the U.S. Navy, U.S. Department of the Navy, *General Orders of the Navy Department: Series of 1913* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1918).

²⁷ U.S. Department of the Navy, *Register of the Commissioned and Warrant Officers of the Naval Militia of the United States* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1914).

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 28.

²⁹ Of note, when war was declared, Power left the naval militia and joined the New York National Guard (NG) in May 1917 and was assigned to the 102d Sanitation Train, 27th Division, NG. He deployed for World War I in June 1918 and returned to Brooklyn, New York, in March 1919 to be discharged. New York State Adjutant General's Office, *Abstracts of National Guard Service in World War I, 1917-1919, Series 13721*, New York State Archives, http://nysa32.nysed.gov/a/digital/images/about/about_military_wwi.shtml.

³⁰ Charles H. Power to Capt F. B. Bassett, USN, letter, 25 January 1915, Reserve subject file, Historical Inquiries and Research Branch (HIRB), Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA.

³¹ Capt Bassett forwarding Power's letter to MajGen Commandant George Barnett, Reserve subject file, HIRB, Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA.

³² Letter from MajGen George Barnett, 3 February 1915, Reserve subject file, HIRB, Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA.

militias “be required to equip themselves with khaki and blue, including cap, sword, belt, gloves, leather puttees, campaign hat, etc.” He continued with the following:

It is recommended that Marine officers and enlisted men of the Naval Militia wear the same rank devices and chevrons as in the regular service, and that they wear the Marine Corps insignia, with the same distinguishing mark that may be adopted for the Naval Militia.³³

Calls for a United States Marine Corps Reserve

Although more federal funding and equipment were provided to the militia after the Spanish-American War, the militia remained an ineffective solution to a presidential call for forces in time of war. While the inadequacies of the militia system were becoming more apparent at this point, incremental improvements continued.³⁴ The states’ naval militia organizational efforts progressed significantly with the 16 February passing of the Naval Militia Act of 1914.³⁵ The act placed the Naval Militia under the supervision of the Department of the Navy, authorizing annual inspections, assigning active-duty naval officers as inspector-instructors for the units, establishing a board to standardize qualifications for all naval militia officers and enlisted men, and elevating the Office of Naval Militia within the Department of the Navy to the larger Division of Naval Militia Affairs under the Bureau of Navigation.³⁶

Despite the 1914 Naval Militia Act, the state militia was not seen as the panacea for the ills associated with mobilizing a force in response to a presidential call. Major General Barnett took the oath of office as the 12th Commandant of the Marine Corps on 25 February 1914,³⁷ just days after passage of the Militia Naval Act. Barnett and Secretary of the Navy Josephus Daniels began a series of meetings from



Library of U.S. Congress, Harris & Ewing Collection
Secretary of the Navy Josephus Daniels, 1913-21.

which emerged a coordinated plan to increase the size of the Marine Corps and create a Marine Corps Reserve to meet the country’s ever-expanding expeditionary commitments and to provide a source for a manpower surge in the time of war.³⁸

A demanding and decisive man of action with a natural bent for seeking efficiencies,³⁹ Secretary Daniels issued a succinct implementation order for the 1914 Naval Militia Act two months after the legislation passed. In Department of the Navy General Order No. 93 of 12 April 1914, the secretary elevated the importance of the U.S. Naval Militia by enlarging the Office of Naval Militia and renaming it the Division of Naval Militia Affairs.⁴⁰ In that order, he also decreed that communications between the states, territories, District of Columbia, and Department of the Navy would be through the new division. That division would be responsible for all business pertaining to the Naval Militia including “armaments,

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ War College Division, General Staff Corps, *The Militia as Organized Under the Constitution and Its Value to the Nation as a Military Asset*, War Department Document No. 516 (Washington, DC: GPO, 1916), 19.

³⁵ Naval Militia Act of 1914, Pub. L. No. 63-57, 38 Stat. 283.

³⁶ Division of Naval Militia Affairs, Navy Department, *Naval Militia Annual Report for the Year 1914* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1915), 3, 4, 72.

³⁷ LtCol Merrill L. Bartlett, “George Barnett,” in *Commandants of the Marine Corps*, ed. Allan R. Millett and Jack Shulimson (Annapolis, MD: U.S. Naval Institute Press, 2004), 176.

³⁸ *Marine Corps Reserve*, 4.

³⁹ Bartlett, “George Barnett,” 181-82.

⁴⁰ *General Orders of Navy Department*.

equipment, discipline, training, education, and organization of the Naval Militia.”⁴¹

Secretary Daniels further interpreted the Naval Militia Act of 1914 in his expansive Navy Department General Order No. 153, wherein he more clearly defined the scope of Marine units in the Marine Corps Branch, Naval Militia, and specified that federal funding was contingent on naval militia units complying with the order’s provisions by 16 February 1917. In General Order 153, dated 10 July 1915, Daniels prescribed a “unit of organization” for the Marine element in the naval militias as a company with 3 officers and 48 enlisted, but noted the companies may be greater or lesser in strength, depending on availability of men. In the 103-page order, he also specified qualification requirements and prerequisites for the different ranks and billets, provided guidance on professional examinations for advancement, and authorized the formation of Marine battalions and brigades, if men were available. The order allowed for honorably discharged Marine veterans to join naval militias without a professional examination.⁴²

The secretary moved forward in organizing the naval militias and improving the professional skills of the militia members “in order that they will be eligible to be mustered into the service of the United States without further professional examination on the call of the president.”⁴³ Barnett continued to press Congress for a ready reserve, noting that manpower was a paramount need and a standing reserve force would be of significant assistance. In his annual report for fiscal year 1915, submitted 1 December, Barnett stated that “The Marine Corps has no reserve. During the last session of Congress a naval reserve, consisting of men who have seen service in the Navy, was created. The adoption of a similar proviso for the Marine Corps is recommended.”⁴⁴

In addition to formal testimonies promoting increased manpower and the creation of a Reserve, efforts moved forward on other fronts with Congress.

In his memoir *The Reminiscences of a Marine*, Major General John A. Lejeune, 13th Commandant of the Marine Corps, tells of becoming the Assistant to the Commandant in January 1915 while a colonel and working to ease the Marine Corps’ manpower deficiencies.⁴⁵ General Lejeune noted that “probably the most important” undertaking while he was Assistant to the Commandant was his participation, along with Colonel Charles H. Lauchheimer, on the Navy and Marine Corps Personnel Board. The board worked with the House of Representatives for three months in the summer of 1915 to hammer out the manpower sections of the critically important Naval Appropriations Bill, which later became law.⁴⁶

On 29 February 1916, Barnett, accompanied by Colonel Charles L. McCawley, quartermaster; Colonel George Richards, paymaster; and then-Colonel Lejeune, Assistant to the Commandant, testified before the House Committee on Naval Affairs. In his statement, Barnett once again strongly promoted the need for a Marine Corps Reserve.

Now, Mr. Chairman, I would like to refer to the matter of a Marine Corps reserve. The Marine Corps has no reserve. This is a very important matter, and it is urgently recommended that legislation similar to that enacted for the Navy be also enacted for the Marine Corps. During the last session of Congress the headquarters office of the Marine Corps urgently recommended the incorporation in the naval appropriation bill of a proviso for a Marine Corps reserve, and in the annual report of the Major General Commandant this recommendation was renewed.⁴⁷

Congress Creates a Marine Corps Reserve

The clarion call by Daniels and Barnett for a formal Reserve was finally heard. On 29 August 1916, the

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid., 3, 4, 9.

⁴³ Ibid., 2.

⁴⁴ Navy Department, *Annual Reports of the Navy Department for the Fiscal Year 1915* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1916) 761.

⁴⁵ The billet title “Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps” was first used in October 1946, but in reading Gen Lejeune’s memoir, Lejeune’s duties as Assistant to the Commandant were similar to those of the Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps. “Marine Corps Assistant Commandants,” HIRB, Marine Corps History Division, www.mcu.usmc.mil/historydivision/pages/frequently_requested/Assistant_Commandant.aspx.

⁴⁶ MajGen John A. Lejeune, *The Reminiscences of a Marine* (Philadelphia: Dorrance and Company, 1930), 219, 227.

⁴⁷ *Hearings Before the Committee on Naval Affairs*, House of Representatives, 64th Cong. (29 February 1916) (statement of USMC MajGen Commandant George Barnett), 2143.



Photo courtesy of Leatherneck magazine

As a senior colonel and then brigadier general, John A. Lejeune served in the billet of Assistant to the Commandant for MajGen Commandant George Barnett before taking command of Marine Barracks Quantico in September 1917.

Sixty-Fourth Congress, in its first session, authorized a Reserve in H.R. 15947. Specifically, on the creation of the Reserve, the legislation set forth the following:

A United States Marine Corps Reserve, to be a constituent part of the Marine Corps and in addition to the authorized strength thereof, is hereby established under the same provisions

in all respects (except as may be necessary to adapt the said provisions to the Marine Corps) as those providing for the Naval Reserve Force in this Act: *Provided*, That the Marine Corps Reserve may consist of not more than five classes, corresponding, as near as may be, to the Fleet Naval Reserve, the Naval Reserve, the Naval Coast Defense Reserve, the Volunteer Naval Reserve, and the Naval Reserve Flying Corps, respectively.⁴⁸

The legislation addressed the manpower needs of the Navy and Marine Corps and ultimately gave the president more authority to mobilize the U.S. Naval Militia. The congressional work to finally improve the president's access to the Naval Militia also created a new organization, the National Naval Volunteers, into which the president could order members of the Naval Militia and then federalize, or bring onto active service, those trained militiamen for war or other needs. Regarding the National Naval Volunteers, the legislation announced

that to provide a force for use in any emergency, including that of actual or imminent war, requiring the use of naval forces in addition to those of the regular Navy, of which emergency the president shall be, for the purposes of this Act, the sole judge, there is hereby created a force, to be known as the "National Naval Volunteers," into which the President alone is authorized, under such regulations as he may prescribe, to at any time enroll, by commission, warrant, and enlistment, respectively, and without examination, such number as he may decide to enroll from among those of the Naval Militia . . .⁴⁹

The secretary of the Navy moved quickly to publish the legislation through Navy Department channels. General Order No. 231, dated 31 August 1916, reprinted the legislation for the "information and guidance of all persons belonging to the Navy."⁵⁰

While the legislation creating the Marine Corps Reserve directed that it consist of not more than five classes, similar to the Naval Reserve Force, the Ma-

⁴⁸ U.S. Congress and Secretary of State, *The Statutes at Large of the United States of America from December, 1915, to March, 1917: Concurrent Resolutions of the Two Houses of Congress and Recent Treaties, Conventions, and Executive Proclamations*, vol. 39, part 1 (Washington, DC: GPO, 1917), 593.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 595.

⁵⁰ *General Orders of the Navy Department*.

Classes of Marine Corps Reserve

On 29 August 1916, congressional legislation created the Marine Corps Reserve. Subsequently, Marine Corps Order No. 13, dated 21 March 1917, laid out the implementation of that legislation, creating five classes of Marine reservists for males. Legislation and the Marine Corps order did not address women in the Marine Corps Reserve because Secretary of the Navy Josephus Daniels did not grant the Marine Corps permission to enroll women in the Reserve until 12 August 1918.

Class 1: Fleet Marine Corps Reserve (FMCR)

- 1a. Officers honorably discharged.
- 1b. Men entitled to an honorable discharge after at least one four-year enlistment.
- 1c. Enlisted men who completed 16 years of honorable service and were transferred to the FMCR at the expiration of enlistment.
- 1d. Enlisted men who completed 20 years of honorable service.

Class 2: Marine Corps Reserve A

All enrollments were restricted to U.S. citizens, and the commitment was for four years.

- 2a. Officers, provisional: must not be less than 20 or more than 40 years of age; not less than two years' experience as an officer in a military organization or military school or college; and pass a physical and professional examination.
- 2b. Officers, confirmation: after three months active service, must pass another professional examination by a board of officers and a physical examination to retain the provisional rank granted at enrollment.
- 2c. Enlisted men, provisional: must not be less than 18 or more than 35 years of age and of good character and show evidence of abilities.
- 2d. Enlisted men, confirmation: after three months active service, could be confirmed in provisional rank by an appointed Marine Corps officer.

Class 4: Marine Corps Reserve

This class was for citizens with useful skills and had no age limit. Those enrolled could subsequently transfer to Class 2, if eligible. Often underage or overage men took advantage of this category.

- 4a. Officers, provisional: must show proof of special skills needed in naval and reserve districts and pass a professional and physical examination.
- 4b. Officers, confirmation: same as Class 2, 2b.
- 4c. Enlisted men, provisional: must provide evidence of character and citizenship and proof of needed special skills and pass a medical examination. The provisional rank given was based on skills of the applicant and the requirements of the district.
- 4d. Enlisted men, confirmation: same as Class 2, 2d.

Class 5: Marine Corps Reserve Flying Corps

Former officers and men of the Marine Corps who were members of the Naval Flying Corps, surplus graduates of the aeronautic school, civilians skilled in flying, building or designing aircraft, and other current members of the Marine Corps Reserve with aviation skills could enter this Marine Corps Reserve class.

- 5a. Officers, provisional: must provide proof of character and citizenship, qualify through a professional examination, and pass a medical examination.
- 5b. Officers, confirmation: honorably discharged former officers of the Naval Flying Corps and surplus graduates of the aeronautical school could be designated in this class without a prior provisional appointment. Marines appointed with a provisional rank must serve three months' active duty service and be confirmed to that provisional rank through a professional examination and a medical examination.

5c. Enlisted men, provisional: must provide proof of character, ability and citizenship and qualify through a professional examination for a provisional rank and pass a medical examination. This class had no age limit.

5d. Enlisted men, confirmation: honorably discharged men of the Naval Flying Corps after at least one four-year enlistment in the Navy and those who were discharged after a term of enlistment. After three months' active duty service, a member could be confirmed in his provisional rank by qualifying before a designated Marine Corps officer.

5e. Any enlisted Marine with 16 years' service could transfer, with the authority of the Major General Commandant, at the end of his current enlistment contract to the Marine Corps Reserve Flying Corps if all other Class 5 requirements were met.

5f. Any enlisted Marine with 20 or more years enlisted service could transfer, with authority of the Major General Commandant, to the Marine Corps Reserve Flying Corps.

Class 6: Volunteer Marine Corps Reserve

This class was comprised of men who met the qualifications for the above classes and committed themselves but waived their retainer fee and uniform gratuity in time of peace. When called to active duty service in wartime, their pay was the same as the corresponding rank in the Marine Corps.

rine Corps took time to evaluate the next step and did not clarify or define those classes until months later. Marine Corps Order No. 13 (series 1917), dated 21 March 1917, laid out the Marine Corps' expected implementation of that legislation and defined the five classes in the Reserve for men.⁵¹

The earlier efforts of the members of the Navy and Marine Corps Personnel Board also paid off as an increase in manpower was authorized in the August 1916 legislation. The Marine Corps was granted an immediate increase in officers from 344 to 597, and in enlisted men from 9,921 to 14,981. The legislation also authorized the president to further increase the number of officers to 693 and enlisted men to 17,400 in an emergency.⁵²

Transfer of Personnel of the National Naval Volunteers, Marine Corps Branch, to Marine Corps Reserve

While the intent of the 1916 legislation was to create the Marine Corps Reserve and provide the president access to a trained militia in time of an emergency,

the creation of the National Naval Volunteers caused confusion since both it and the Naval Militia had Marine Corps branches. Congress addressed the issue with an amendment to an appropriations bill for naval services on 1 July 1918, authorizing the president to transfer all personnel of the National Naval Volunteers as a class to the Naval Reserve Force, or the Marine Corps Reserve.⁵³

On 10 July 1918, Barnett issued Marine Corps Order No. 34 (series 1918), stating that "from and including July 1, 1918, the personnel of the National Naval Volunteers, Marine Corps Branch, is transferred from that organization to Class 2, Marine Corps Reserve . . ." The order also confirmed that, in accordance with the congressional action, individuals transferred to the Reserve would retain their ranks on a provisional basis. Also, the Reserve would not conduct medical examinations or tests to gauge the professional competence of those brought in via transfer.⁵⁴

Barnett then sent letters to the adjutants general of those states with National Naval Volunteers or Marine branches in their naval militias, informing them of his actions. Those letters, dated 11 July 1918,

⁵¹ Headquarters U.S. Marine Corps, *Revision of U.S. Marine Corps Orders, May, 1918* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1918), hereafter *Revision of U.S. Marine Corps Orders*, 104-20. Among other Marine Corps orders, the reference contains Marine Corps Order No. 13 (series 1917).

⁵² Maj Edwin N. McClellan, *The United States Marine Corps in the World War* (Washington, DC: Historical Branch, G-3 Division, Headquarters Marine Corps, 1968), 71.

⁵³ S. Doc. No. 7983, at 452 (1918).

⁵⁴ Commandant of the Marine Corps, U.S. Marine Corps General Order No. 34, 10 July 1918, Reserve subject file, HIRB, Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA.



Marine Corps History Division

MajGen Commandant George Barnett (1914–20) oversaw the largest expansion in Marine Corps manpower up to that time in the history of the Corps.

went to the nine states with Marine units: California, Illinois, Louisiana, Massachusetts, New York, Ohio, Oregon, Rhode Island, and Texas. The letters noted that should the Marine reservists who entered from state organizations be discharged from the Reserve, the adjutants general would be informed. Barnett then signed a letter that same day to the chief of the Division of Naval Militia Affairs, Bureau of Navigation, Department of the Navy, informing him of the actions to bring the militiamen and National Naval Volunteers into the Reserve.⁵⁵

The Philadelphia Military Training Corps

Recruiting for the Reserve was slow to begin, hampered by the fact that guidance on the different classes of reserves was not published by the Marine Corps until March 1917. When war was declared on 6 April 1917, the Reserve had just 3 commissioned officers and 36 enlisted men to call for active duty. The Marine Corps Branch of the National Naval Volunteers had 24 officers and 928 enlisted men, also subject to the call for active duty.⁵⁶

However, efforts not associated with the naval militia programs became a valuable source of trained manpower. Civilian military training programs, particularly the Philadelphia Military Training Corps—established with the resources of wealthy, conservative Philadelphian Anthony J. Drexel Biddle—garnered positive Marine Corps exposure and enlistments in the Reserve.

Biddle was among a group of influential individuals who foresaw America's eventual involvement in World War I. In October 1915, with the consent of Barnett, Biddle created a training camp at Lansdowne, Pennsylvania, conducted by Marine noncommissioned officers from Marine Barracks Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. After the close of the camp, Marines from the Philadelphia barracks led periodic drills throughout the winter. Those trained in the camp became known as the “Drexel Biddle Citizens’ Army,” and by April 1916, more than 3,000 men had completed training. At that point, U.S. Representative Thomas S. Butler of Pennsylvania introduced a bill, which was approved, to provide \$31,000 for the Marine Corps to train citizen soldiers.⁵⁷

Also in April 1916, Biddle invited Barnett to speak at a Philadelphia Preparedness Campaign Committee dinner focused on raising money for a citizens’ army. The dinner afforded another opportunity for the Commandant to promote a citizens’ army, reinforcing his quest to pressure Congress into creating a Marine Corps Reserve. Pledging his support for the preparedness campaign, Barnett ordered Captain Logan Feland from Marine Barracks Philadelphia

⁵⁵ MajGen Barnett letter to chief of the Division of Naval Militia Affairs, Bureau of Navigation, Department of the Navy, 11 July 1918, Reserve subject file, HIRB, Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA. In spite of the legislation and Barnett’s order, some Marines continued to be listed as National Naval Volunteers on unit muster rolls through World War I and during demobilization.

⁵⁶ McClellan, *United States Marine Corps in the World War*, 11, 76.

⁵⁷ Philadelphia War History Committee, *Philadelphia in the World War, 1914–1919* (New York: Wynkoop, Hollenbeck, Crawford Co., 1922), 81.



Photo courtesy of Leatherneck magazine

Logan Feland, as a captain in 1916, was instrumental in successfully recruiting men into the Marine Corps Reserve from the Philadelphia Military Training Corps.

to command training during the summer of 1916 at Lansdowne.⁵⁸

On 23 July, thousands of civilians attended the camp's opening ceremony, and Barnett conducted a formal inspection. At the end of training on 28 August, the Commandant returned to review the graduation parade. During the closing ceremony, Captain Feland called on the graduates to join the Reserve, and 74 percent of the men volunteered.⁵⁹

At age 43, Biddle enrolled as a captain in the Reserve, Class 4, on 31 March 1917, not long before war was declared.⁶⁰ By that time, the millionaire sportsman and philanthropist had significantly refined his



Photo courtesy of Leatherneck magazine

Anthony J. Drexel Biddle, a millionaire philanthropist who helped form the Philadelphia Military Training Corps prior to WWI, enrolled as a captain in the Marine Corps Reserve in 1917 and taught personal combat techniques until released from active duty in 1919.

combat skills and influenced many of Philadelphia's finest to join the Reserve. One report stated that Biddle's Philadelphia Military Training Corps recruited 40,000 men for the military, including 8,900 for the Marine Corps.⁶¹ Biddle, initially assigned as a bayonet instructor at the new training site, Marine Barracks Paris Island, [sic] South Carolina,⁶² (name changed to Parris Island in 1919), became an instructor at the Marine officer training camp at Marine Barracks Quantico, Virginia, by the fall of 1917. While there, he was sent as an observer to study both the French and British close combat training.⁶³

Upon his return from Europe in the spring of

⁵⁸ David J. Bettez, *Kentucky Marine: Major General Logan Feland and the Making of the Modern USMC* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2014), 76–77.

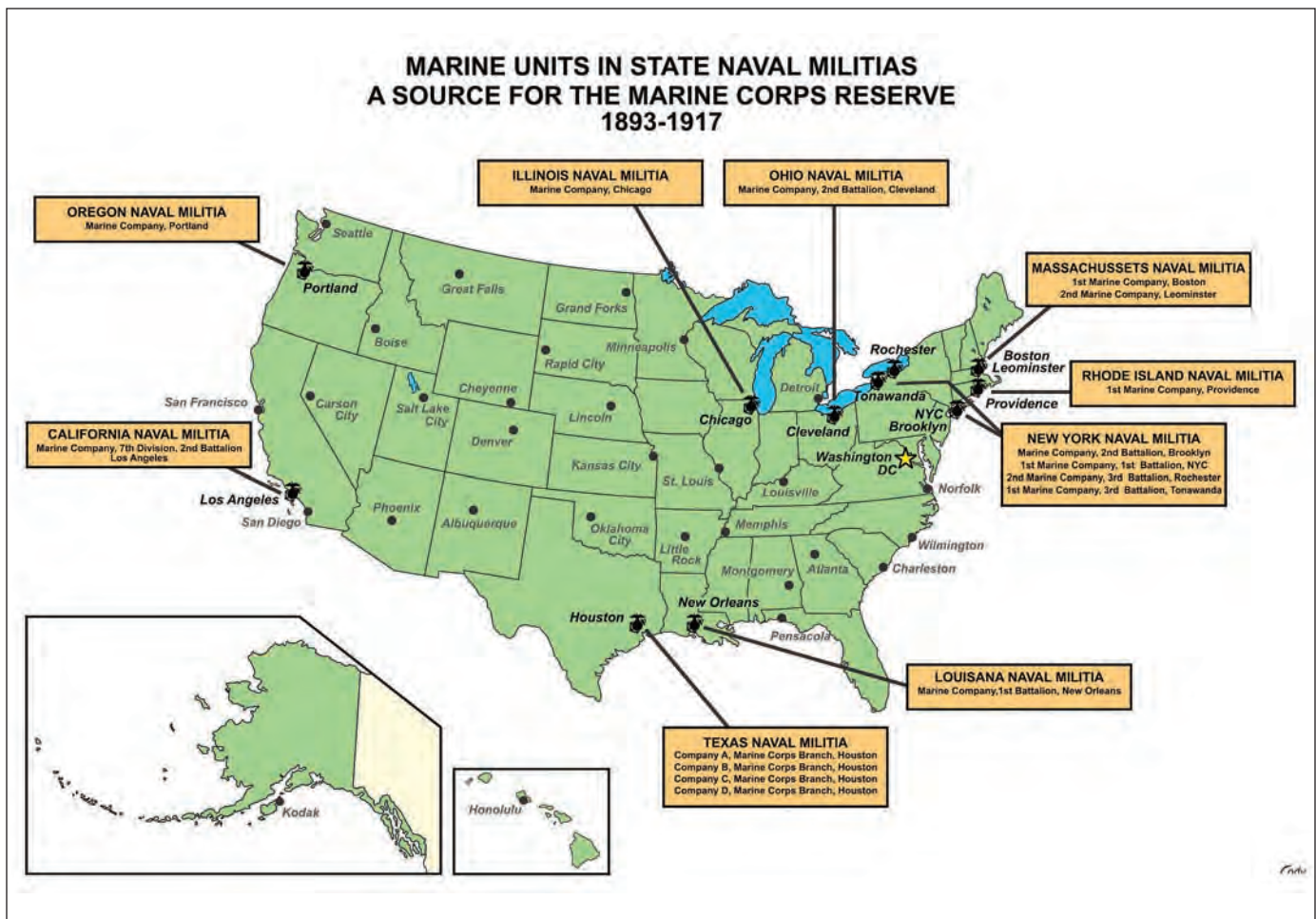
⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 78.

⁶⁰ U.S. Department of the Navy, *Register of the Commissioned and Warrant Officers of the United States Navy, U.S. Naval Reserve Force and the Marine Corps, January 1, 1919* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1919), 870.

⁶¹ Robert B. Asprey, "The King of Kill," *Marine Corps Gazette* 51, no. 5 (May 1967): 33.

⁶² The current Marine Corps Recruit Depot Parris Island was Marine Barracks, Paris Island, SC, in 1917. The spelling changed to Parris Island in May 1919. *Revision of U.S. Marine Corps Orders, MCO No. 27 (Series 1917)*, 129; and Elmore A. Champie, *Brief History of Marine Corps Recruit Depot, Parris Island, South Carolina* (Washington, DC: Historical Branch, G-3 Division, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, 1962), 4.

⁶³ Asprey, "The King of Kill," 33.



LtCol Richard L. Cody (Ret)

Nine U.S. states included Marine Corps units in their naval militias at the beginning of WWI. They were mobilized as National Naval Volunteers (Marines).

1918, Biddle was assigned as an instructor in the Infantry Officers' School at Marine Barracks Quantico, teaching bayonet, knife fighting, and hand-to-hand combat. He continued to prepare officers for war through the Armistice, transferring from Quantico to Marine Barracks Philadelphia on 1 January 1919, where he served as the athletics officer until being released from active duty in July 1919.⁶⁴

Biddle's initiatives promoting civilian readiness indirectly helped to push legislation that created the Reserve and greatly assisted in providing trained manpower for America's war effort. For the next three decades, Biddle continued to serve as a Marine Corps reservist. Biddle returned to active duty briefly in

World War II as a colonel, still spry and effective as an instructor in bayonet fighting, boxing, and jujitsu.⁶⁵

Mobilization in the Naval Militia, National Naval Volunteers, and Marine Corps Reserve

As America moved toward war, recruitment numbers for the Marine Corps Branch of the Naval Militia topped out at 1,046 men on 1 April 1917. Recruitment for the militia had stopped while recruiting efforts for the Reserve picked up.⁶⁶ Just as America declared war on 6 April 1917, the Reserve and Naval Militia mobilized that same day. Nearly all members

⁶⁴ "Anthony J. Drexel Biddle," in "Headquarters Detachment, Officers Training Camp, Marine Barracks Quantico, VA, muster roll (MROLL), April-December 1918," "Barracks Detachment, Marine Barracks Philadelphia Navy Yard, PA, MROLL, January 1919," and "Third Reserve District MROLL, July 1919," HIRB, Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA.

⁶⁵ David J. Bettez, "The Marine Corps Prepares for War: The Philadelphia Military Training Camp," *Leatherneck* 92, no.10 (October 2009), 51.

⁶⁶ McClellan, *United States Marine Corps in the World War*, 76.

of the Naval Militia volunteered for enrollment in the National Naval Volunteers.⁶⁷ The recruiting environment significantly changed as patriotic fervor spread; three Marine Reserve companies, designated 1st, 2d and 3d Reserve Companies,⁶⁸ were immediately recruited in Philadelphia, many most probably sourced from Drexel Biddle Citizens' Army, and began training at the Philadelphia Navy Yard.

Militia and National Naval Volunteers

After members of the state militias and National Naval Volunteers were mustered into federal service, members of the Marine units were ordered to rendezvous sites and then dispatched to various naval stations. Upon arriving at these naval stations, the Marine Corps disbanded the units and men were brought into the Marine Corps and sent to Marine installations to join units based on the needs of the Marine Corps. Some officers in the Marine Corps Reserve and National Naval Volunteers applied for temporary appointments in the regular Marine Corps with the goal of becoming regular active duty officers. Noncommissioned officers were tested and evaluated to confirm their ranks and determine their occupational ratings.⁶⁹

Uniforms

As the Marine Corps grew in numbers with the influx of Marines from the National Naval Volunteers and Reserve, Barnett extended the uniform guidance given to Marines in the state naval militias to Marines serving in the National Naval Volunteers and Reserve.

Marine Corps Order No. 17 (series 1917), signed 14 April 1917, directed that officers and enlisted men of the National Naval Volunteers and the Reserve wear the same uniforms as officers and enlisted men of the regular Marine Corps but with a distinguishing device. Officers in the National Naval Volunteers wore a metal "V" on their coat collars, overcoat shoulder straps, and field hats. Enlisted men of the National Naval Volunteers wore a metal "V" on the field hat. Reserve officers wore a metal "R" on the collars of



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After being called to federal service in 1917, 2dLt Newton Best, California Naval Militia (Marines), was assigned as the post athletics officer for Marine Barracks Mare Island.

“undress, white, and field coats and on the shoulder straps of the overcoat.” Reserve officers also wore the metal “R” on “the field hat with the bottom of the letter resting on the top of the hatband” and centered underneath the “eyelet for the corps device.”⁷⁰

Training

With a small Reserve at the beginning of World War I, the multitude of young men who volunteered at the onset of the war overwhelmed the Marine recruit depots. The two Marine Corps recruit training sites for enlisted men—Paris Island [sic] and Mare Island—were initially unprepared for the growth in the number of recruits. While the facilities were being expanded, a temporary recruit depot with capacity for 2,500 recruits was established at the Philadelphia Navy Yard. Another temporary recruit training facility with a capacity for 500 opened at the Norfolk Navy Yard. By the end of the war, the Marine Corps had significantly enlarged both primary recruit

⁶⁷ U.S. Department of the Navy, *Annual Reports of the Navy Department for the Fiscal Year 1917* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1918), 25.

⁶⁸ “United States Reserve, 1914–1940,” a summary paper, Reserve subject file, HIRB, Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA.

⁶⁹ “Marine Corps Militia,” *Marine Magazine*, July 1917, 4.

⁷⁰ *Revision of U.S. Marine Corps Orders*, 125.

Table 1. Marine Corps Reserve Units Activated for the First World War

Unit	Activated	Commander	Location
Marine Company, 7th Division, 2d Battalion, California Naval Militia became 36th Company	6 April 1917	Capt Newton Best	Exposition Park, Los Angeles moved to Marine Barracks Mare Island, California ⁷¹
Marine Company, 1st Battalion, Louisiana Naval Militia, New Orleans	6 April 1917	Capt Sidney S. Simpson	Marine Barracks Naval Station New Orleans ⁷²
1st Marine Company, Massachusetts Naval Militia, Boston	27 March 1917	Capt George H. Manks	Charlestown (Boston) Navy Yard ⁷³
2d Marine Company, Massachusetts Naval Militia, Leominster, Massachusetts	9 May 1917	1stLt James R. Walsh (discharged 18 June 1917)	Charlestown (Boston) Navy Yard ⁷⁴
Marine Company, 2d Battalion, New York Naval Militia, Brooklyn	6 April 1917	1stLt James F. Rorke	Northport, New York, power station ⁷⁵
1st Marine Company, 1st Battalion, New York Naval Militia, New York City	26 April 1917	1stLt Stanford W. Hoffman	Marine Barracks Brooklyn Navy Yard, New York ⁷⁶
1st Marine Company, 3d Battalion, New York Naval Militia, Tonawanda	7 April 1917	1stLt Alan V. Parker	Marine Barracks Brooklyn Navy Yard ⁷⁷
2d Marine Company, 3d Battalion, New York Naval Militia, Rochester	7 May 1917	2dLt Clarence Ball	Marine Barracks Brooklyn Navy Yard ⁷⁸
Marine Company, 2d Battalion, Ohio Naval Militia, Cleveland	7 April 1917	1stLt Jonas H. Platt	Marine Barracks Brooklyn Navy Yard ⁷⁹
Marine Company, Oregon Naval Militia, Portland	6 April 1917	2dLt Richard I. Heller	Marine Barracks Puget Sound Navy Yard, Washington ⁸⁰
Company A, Texas Naval Militia	6 April 1917	Capt Thomas R. Shearer	Marine Barracks Pensacola, Florida ⁸¹
Company B, Texas Naval Militia	6 April 1917	Capt Percy D. Cornell	Marine Barracks Pensacola, Florida ⁸²
Company C, Texas Naval Militia	6 April 1917	Capt William N. Pearson	Marine Barracks Charleston Navy Yard, South Carolina ⁸³
Company D, Texas Naval Militia	6 April 1917	Capt Angus A. Acree	Marine Barracks Norfolk Navy Yard, Virginia ⁸⁴
1st Marine Company, Rhode Island Naval Militia, Providence	6 April 1917	Capt John H. Sadler	Marine Barracks Boston Navy Yard ⁸⁵
Marine Company, Illinois Naval Militia, Chicago	6 April 1917	Capt Franklin T. Steele	Marine Barracks Philadelphia Navy Yard ⁸⁶

⁷¹ Department of the Navy, *Register of the Naval Militia of the States, Territories, and of the District of Columbia, January 1, 1917* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1917), 228, and "National Naval Volunteers (MC), 36th Company, Marine Barracks Mare Island, CA MRoll, 6 April-30 April 1917," and "98th Company, Marine Barracks Mare Island MRoll, 1 September-30 September 1917," HIRB, Marine Corps History Division.

⁷² "Louisiana Company, National Naval Volunteers (MOB) MRoll, 6 April-30 April 1917," HIRB, Marine Corps History Division.

⁷³ LtCol Eben Putnam, A. of U.S., ed., *Report of the Commission on Massachusetts' Part in the World War: History, vol. 1* (Boston, MA: The Commonwealth of Massachusetts, 1931), 28; and "1st Marine Company (Mass.), National Naval Volunteers MRoll, 7 April-30 April 1917," HIRB, Marine Corps History Division.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 155-56; and James R. Walsh, Officers' Data Card, Archives-Museum Branch, The Adjutant General's Office, Concord, MA.

⁷⁵ "New York Company, National Naval Volunteers MRoll, 6 April-11 April 1917," HIRB, Marine Corps History Division.

⁷⁶ "Eastern Recruiting Division MRoll, 1 November-30 November, 1917," HIRB, Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA; and New York Adjutant General, *Annual Report of the Adjutant General of The State of New York, 1917* (Albany, NY: J.B. Lyon Co., 1920), 20.

⁷⁷ "1st Marine Company, 3d Battalion, National Naval Volunteers, Tonawanda, NY MRoll, 7 April-7 May 1917," HIRB, Marine Corps History Division.

⁷⁸ "2d Marine Company, 3d Battalion, National Naval Volunteers, Rochester, NY MRoll, 6 April-6 May 1917," HIRB, Marine Corps History Division.

⁷⁹ "Ohio Company, National Naval Volunteers, Marine Barracks New York MRoll, 7 April-30 April 1917," HIRB, Marine Corps History Division.

⁸⁰ Oregon Secretary of State, *Oregon Blue Book, 1917-1918*, compiled by Ben W. Olcott, Secretary of State (Salem, OR: State Printing Department, 1918), 114; and "Marine Corps Militia," *Marine Magazine*, July, 1917, 4.

⁸¹ "Company A, Texas National Naval Volunteers MRoll, 12 April-30 April 1917," HIRB, Marine Corps History Division.

⁸² "Company B, Texas National Naval Volunteers MRolls 7 April-30 April 1917 and 1 May-4 May 1917," HIRB, Marine Corps History Division.

⁸³ "Company C, Texas National Naval Volunteers MRoll 6 April-30 April 1917," HIRB, Marine Corps History Division.

⁸⁴ "Company D, Texas Naval Militia (Marine Corps Branch) MRoll 6 April-30 April 1917," HIRB, Marine Corps History Division.

⁸⁵ "1st Marine Company, (R.I.), National Naval Volunteers MRoll 7 April-30 April 1917," HIRB, Marine Corps History Division.

⁸⁶ "Marine Company, National Naval Volunteers, 1st Regiment, Marine Barracks Navy Yard Philadelphia MRoll 9 April-30 April 1917," HIRB, Marine Corps History Division.

Clarence Ball

Clarence Ball, a member of the Sons of the American Revolution, Empire State Society¹, enlisted in the New York Naval Militia in Rochester in 1892 and served as a petty officer in the U. S. Navy during the Spanish-American War, was promoted to first lieutenant in the Marine Corps Branch, New York Naval Militia in August 1917 and ordered to the officers training camp in Quantico, Virginia. He joined the 5th Regiment in France in June 1918 in time for the beginning of the battle of Belleau Wood on 6 June. Ball fought at Soissons, the Saint-Mihiel salient, and the Champagne sector. During the battle of Blanc Mont Ridge, he assumed command of Company M, 5th Regiment, after the commanding officer was wounded and evacuated. Hospitalized for wounds received during his time in the Champagne sector, Ball yielded command in early November 1918 and was evacuated back to the United States.¹

Ball was cited for gallantry in action while serving with the 5th Regiment (Marines), 2d Division, American Expeditionary Forces, at Château-Thierry, France, 6–10 July 1918 and authorized to wear a silver star “on the ribbon of the Victory Medals awarded him.”² Ball was honorably discharged from the Marine Corps Reserve on 6 October 1919 as a captain.³

¹ Edward R. Foreman, ed., *World War Service Record of Rochester and Monroe County New York*, vol. 2, *Those Who Went Forth to Serve* (Rochester, NY: City of Rochester, 1928), 58.

² “Clarence Ball,” Hall of Valor, <http://valor.militarytimes.com/recipient.php?recipientid=75048,1910>.

³ “Barracks Detachment, Marine Barracks Quantico, VA, MRoll, 1 October–31 October 1919,” roll 0181, ancestry.com.

training facilities and set the duration of training at eight weeks.⁸⁷

The Marine Corps pursued officers differently. Before legislation authorized the formation of a Reserve in August 1916, Commandant Barnett brought 18 of the best Marine noncommissioned officers to Washington, DC, for officer testing. On 7 August, 12 enlisted Marines passed the exam. After legislation for the Reserve was approved, the Commandant sent a letter to colleges with military training curriculums offering graduates the opportunity to take an examination on 18 September 1916 to become a Reserve officer. Only 24 candidates passed the exam, so the Commandant offered a second examination (military training was not necessary) in November 1916 for any civilian.⁸⁸

Officers appointed directly from civilian life went to the Marine barracks at Mare Island and San Diego, California; the Marine Corps Rifle Range Winthrop, Maryland; and Paris Island⁸⁹ [sic] until the Officers Camp of Instruction could be opened at Marine Barracks Quantico. The first contingent of 345 untried, new lieutenants arrived at Quantico in July 1917.⁹⁰



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Capt Jonas H. Platt resigned from the National Naval Volunteers to accept a regular commission in the Marine Corps in September 1917. He earned a Navy Cross and a Purple Heart in the battle of Bois de Belleau on 6 June 1918.

⁸⁷ McClellan, *United States Marine Corps in the World War*, 25.

⁸⁸ Bernard C. Nalty and LtCol Ralph F. Moody, *A Brief History of U.S. Marine Corps Officer Procurement, 1775–1969* (Washington, DC: Historical Division, HQMC, 1958, rev. ed. 1970), 4.

⁸⁹ McClellan, *United States Marine Corps in the World War*, 22.

⁹⁰ LtCol Charles A. Fleming, Capt Robin L. Austin, and Capt Charles A. Braley III, *Quantico: Crossroads of the Marine Corps* (Washington, DC: History and Museums Division, HQMC, 1978), 26.



Marine Corps History Division

John W. Thomason Jr. enlisted as a private in the Texas Naval Militia, mobilized as a gunnery sergeant with Company A, Texas Naval Militia, then commissioned in Company C. He gained fame as an author and illustrator and passed away in 1944 as a Marine colonel.

In June 1917, after success in these early efforts, the Commandant issued Marine Corps Order No. 25 (series 1917), discontinuing the enrollment of civilians because he believed this source for officers was no longer required. Instead, the Marine Corps would appoint graduates of the U.S. Naval Academy and enlisted men who distinguished themselves in active service.⁹¹

In April 1917 at the beginning of U.S. involvement



Marine Corps History Division

Capt Franklin T. Steele, Naval Militia Illinois, accepted a regular commission in the Marine Corps and served in the Heavy Artillery Force, Marine Barracks Quantico during WWI.

in World War I, more than 50 percent of active duty U.S. Marines (13,725) were serving outside the continental United States, either onboard U.S. Navy ships (2,236) or ashore (4,733).⁹² With the adopted slogan of "First to Fight," the Marine Corps quickly carved out the 7th, 8th, and 9th Regiments for the continuing commitments of the Advanced Base Force, with all remaining regiments intended for the American Expeditionary Forces (AEF).⁹³

At that time, Marine Corps manpower was stretched. However, with the assistance of the emerging Reserve and National Naval Volunteers, the Marine Corps filled a request from Secretary of War

⁹¹ Revision of U.S. Marine Corps Orders, 128; and Nalty and Moody, *A Brief History of U.S. Marine Corps Officer Procurement*, 76.

⁹² McClellan, *United States Marine Corps in the World War*, 9, 11.

⁹³ Col Robert Debs Heinl Jr., *Soldiers of the Sea: The United States Marine Corps, 1775-1962* (Annapolis: U.S. Naval Institute, 1962), 193.



Library of Congress, Harris & Ewing Collection

MajGen Commandant George Barnett inspects the sights and action of a Lewis machine gun at the Marine Corps Rifle Range Winthrop, MD, in 1917.

Newton D. Baker Jr. for a regiment of Marines to be part of the AEF in France. Within weeks, the Marine Corps' 5th Regiment sailed from Philadelphia.⁹⁴

The regiment officially organized at the Philadelphia Navy Yard on 7 June 1917, just one week prior to departing for France on 14 June.⁹⁵ Commanded by Colonel Charles A. Doyen, the regiment consisted of 70 officers and 2,689 enlisted men⁹⁶ drawn from ship detachments, naval stations, and barracks plus newly enlisted men from the Reserve and National Naval Volunteers.⁹⁷ The Reserve was of critical importance when the Marine Corps was called to war quickly; for example, 75 of the 123 Marines of the regiment's Supply Company were reservists. Most of these men came from 1st and 2d Marine Reserve Companies

in training in Philadelphia.⁹⁸ The June muster rolls for 5th Regiment units included 16 Reserve officers, 1 officer in the National Naval Volunteers, Marine Branch, 88 Reserve enlisted men, 74 enlisted men in the National Naval Volunteers, and 2 enlisted men in the U.S. Naval Militia, Marine Branch, who had not yet been brought into the National Naval Volunteers.⁹⁹

Many reservists and National Naval Volunteers in the AEF ground forces in France were in units of the 4th Brigade, 2d Division.¹⁰⁰ The brigade earned honors from actions taken in the Aisne defensive and the battles at Hill 142, Bouresches, and Belleau Wood—which garnered international recognition for U.S. Marines—and at Soissons, Saint-Mihiel,

⁹⁴ George B. Clark, *Devil Dogs: Fighting Marines of World War I* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, Inc., 1999), 2-3.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁹⁶ McClellan, *United States Marine Corps in the World War*, 9.

⁹⁷ Clark, *Devil Dogs*, 2.

⁹⁸ "Supply Company, 5th Regiment, onboard USS *Hancock*, MRoll, 12 June-30 June 1917," HIRB, Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA.

⁹⁹ "5th Regiment Field and Staff MRoll, 8 June-30 June 1917" and the muster rolls of "Headquarters Company, 5th Regiment; Supply Company, 5th Regiment" and the companies of "1st Battalion, 5th Regiment, 2d Battalion, 5th Regiment and 3d Battalion, 5th Regiment, June 1917," HIRB, Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA.

¹⁰⁰ "2d Division General Recapitulation MRoll, 1 November-30 November 1918," HIRB, Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA.



Library of Congress, Charles Buckles Falls,
World War I Posters Collection

Premiers au feu means "First to Fight" in English, and the Marines meant to live up to that reputation by getting to France with the American Expeditionary Forces in June 1917.

Blanc Mont, the crossing of the Meuse River, and during the occupation of Germany, all of which motivated U.S. Marines and instilled the Marine Corps in the hearts of Americans.

The Marine Corps Reserve during the War but Not "Over There"

While most of the mobilized Marine Corps Reserve, U.S. Naval Militia, and National Naval Volunteers were deployed with units in France, many remained in the United States at bases and stations, some were

in U.S. Navy ships' detachments and others were with Marine units scattered around the globe.

As America's involvement in World War I became unavoidable, bands of rebels created unrest and disturbed sugar production in Cuba. As early as March 1917, Marines deployed from Haiti to Cuba to ensure the continued safety of the Allied sugar supply. With continued disruption of sugar-producing efforts and an outcry from American sugar producers, the Marine Corps activated the 7th Regiment, one of the Advanced Base Force regiments, in Philadelphia on 14 August 1917 under Lieutenant Colonel Melville J. Shaw.¹⁰¹ The regiment arrived in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, on 27 August 1917.¹⁰²

With significant efforts to assemble a fighting force for Europe, filling out the 7th Regiment for Cuba required Reserve participation, specifically for the headquarters company. Marine regiments, at this time, were not organized in battalions but were formed for expeditionary service with a headquarters and a varying number of companies based on the need.¹⁰³ The 7th Regiment included a headquarters company and eight infantry companies. Of the 120 men in Headquarters Company, 7th Regiment, 42 were reservists and all transferred in from the 1st Marine Reserve Company, Marine Barracks Philadelphia.¹⁰⁴ The eight companies in the regiment—37th, 59th, 71st, 72d, 86th, 90th, 93d, and 94th—were less dependent on the Reserve for men. However, two of the three officers in each company were reservists except in 59th Company, which had one Marine Corps Regular, one Reserve, and one officer from the National Naval Volunteers.¹⁰⁵

Oil was another resource critical to the Allied war effort. The U.S. Navy and Allies were dependent on the Mexican oil fields, but deteriorating relations and continued turmoil in Mexico in 1917 caused concern about undisrupted oil supply. The infamous "Zimmermann Telegram" prompted action.¹⁰⁶ To ensure the flow of oil from Mexico and to promote stability

¹⁰¹ James S. Santelli, *A Brief History of the 7th Marines* (Washington, DC: History and Museums Division, HQMC, 1980), 1.

¹⁰² J. Robert Moskin, *The U.S. Marine Corps Story*, 3d rev. ed. (Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Company, 1992), 156; and "Headquarters, 7th Marine Regiment MRoll, 14 August–31 August 1917," HIRB, Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA.

¹⁰³ James S. Santelli, *A Brief History of the 8th Marines* (Washington, DC: History and Museums Division, HQMC, 1976), 1–2.

¹⁰⁴ "Headquarters, 7th Marine Regiment MRoll, 14 August–31 August 1917," HIRB, Marine Corps History Division.

¹⁰⁵ "37th, 59th, 71st, 72d, 86th, 90th, 93d, and 94th Companies, 7th Marine Regiment, USMC, MRoll, 1–31 August 1917," HIRB, Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA.

¹⁰⁶ Communiqué from the German foreign secretary, Arthur Zimmermann, to the German ambassador to Mexico that promised significant financial support to Mexico if it allied with Germany against the United States. BGen Edwin Howard Simmons and Col Joseph H. Alexander, *Through the Wheat: The U.S. Marines in World War I* (Annapolis: U.S. Naval Institute Press, 2008), 2.



Library of Congress, United States Army Signal Corps
Marines in France dig trenches during training for battle.

in relations with Mexico, once again the president turned to the Marine Corps for a ready reserve force, and the Corps responded with the 8th Regiment.

The 8th Regiment of the Advanced Base Force was activated at Marine Barracks Quantico on 9 October 1917 under the command of Major Ellis B. Miller. The 8th Regiment became an infantry regiment with a headquarters and three companies—105th, 106th, and 107th. Within the month, it added 103d, 104th, 108th, 109th, and 110th Companies from Marine Barracks Mare Island, and two additional companies were organized from men at Marine Barracks Quantico—111th and 112th Companies.¹⁰⁷ Once again, the Reserve helped the Corps quickly field the new regiment. The regiment's Headquarters Company stood up on 9 October with 39 men on its muster roll, 20 of whom were reservists.¹⁰⁸ Each of the companies, except the 109th and 111th, included Marine

Corps reservists and National Naval Volunteers.¹⁰⁹

On 2 November 1917, Colonel Laurence H. Moses arrived at Quantico from Marine Barracks New York and assumed command of the regiment the next day. Then, exactly one month after being activated, the 8th Regiment boarded USS *Hancock* (AP 3) and, on 10 November 1917, sailed for Fort Crockett, Texas, on Galveston Island and arrived on 18 November.¹¹⁰ The regiment's mission was to prepare to move swiftly to land on the Mexican coast and seize the major oil fields near Tampico, Mexico. The 8th Regiment, joined by 9th Regiment in August 1918, remained at Fort Crockett under the command of 3d Provisional Brigade until early 1919.¹¹¹

The third regiment intended for the Advanced Base Force—the 9th Regiment—was formed at Marine Barracks Quantico on 20 November 1917 with a headquarters, one machine gun company, the 14th

¹⁰⁷ Santelli, *A Brief History of the 8th Marines*, 1.

¹⁰⁸ "Headquarters Company, 8th Marine Regiment MRoll, 9-31 October 1917," HIRB, Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA.

¹⁰⁹ "103d, 104th, 105th, 106th, 107th, 108th, 109th, 110th, 111th, and 112th Companies, 8th Marine Regiment, USMC MRoll, 1-31 October 1917," HIRB, Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA.

¹¹⁰ "Headquarters Company, 8th Marine Regiment MRoll, 1-30 November 1917," HIRB, Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA.

¹¹¹ Santelli, *A Brief History of the 8th Marines*, 2.



Library of Congress, Harris & Ewing Collection

Secretary of the Navy Josephus Daniels visits Marines during training at the newly activated Marine Barracks Quantico in 1918.

Company, and eight rifle companies—36th, 100th, 121st, 122d, 123d, 124th, 125th, and 126th.¹¹² Again, the Reserve and the National Naval Volunteers played a key role. The headquarters of the newly formed 9th Regiment had 22 men on its muster roll on the day the regiment was activated, and 19 were Marine Corps reservists.¹¹³ On 20 November, the 36th Company, 9th Regiment, had 4 Marine Corps reservists and 41 National Naval Volunteers to a total strength of 117 men.¹¹⁴ While the 100th Company reported only 1 Marine Corps reservist and 7 National Naval Volunteers to a strength of 111 men,¹¹⁵ the remaining five companies, 121st through 126th, reported no Marine Corps reservists or National Naval Volunteers on their muster rolls.¹¹⁶

Numbers Reflect Wartime Significance of the Reserve

An examination of the “General Recapitulation” of the Marine Corps’ November 1918 muster rolls for the 4th Brigade, 2d Division, AEF, reveals that 28.9 percent (86 of 212) of the officers and 11 percent (1,040 of 8,372) of the enlisted men in the brigade were Marine Corps reservists.¹¹⁷ In that month, November 1918, the Reserve attained its highest strength: 6,773.¹¹⁸

Certainly the Reserve suffered its share of casualties in a war where the Marine Corps endured more casualties in eight months than during its entire 142 years of existence.¹¹⁹ In February 1919, Barnett re-

¹¹² Truman R. Strobridge, *A Brief History of the 9th Marines* (Washington, DC: Historical Branch, G-3 Division, HQMC, 1967), 1.

¹¹³ “Headquarters, 9th Marine Regiment MRoll, 20 November–30 November 1917,” HIRB, Marine Corps History Division.

¹¹⁴ “36th Company, 9th Marine Regiment MRoll, 20 November–30 November 1917,” HIRB, Marine Corps History Division.

¹¹⁵ “100th Company, 9th Marine Regiment MRoll, 1 November–30 November 1917,” HIRB, Marine Corps History Division.

¹¹⁶ “121st, 122d, 123d, 124th, 125th, and 126th Companies, 9th Marine Regiment MRoll, 1 November–30 November 1917,” HIRB, Marine Corps History Division.

¹¹⁷ “2d Division General Recapitulation MRoll, 1 November–30 November 1918,” HIRB, Marine Corps History Division.

¹¹⁸ McClellan, *United States Marine Corps in the World War*, 76.

¹¹⁹ Heinl, *Soldiers of the Sea*, 219.

ported that 7 Marine Reserve officers and 156 enlisted men were killed in action, and 8 Reserve officers and 61 enlisted men died of other causes. The 6,435 Marines reported wounded were not separated by component, Regular or Reserve, so a definite look at this measure of sacrifice for the Reserve is not possible.¹²⁰

The deaths reflect the sacrifice and commitment of Marine Corps reservists. The decorations awarded to reservists punctuate the significance of the contributions the Reserve made to the war effort. One Marine reservist, Second Lieutenant Ralph Talbot, earned the Medal of Honor. Forty Marine reservists or Marines enrolled via the Naval Militia or National Naval Volunteers were awarded the Navy Cross with many also earning a Distinguished Service Cross for the same actions.¹²¹ Captain Percy D. Cornell, who entered the Marine Corps via the Texas Naval Militia, Marine Branch, was awarded the Navy Cross twice for separate actions.¹²²

Private Roy H. Simpson, who joined the Reserve in Philadelphia assigned to 1st Reserve Company, Marine Barracks Philadelphia,¹²³ was awarded a Navy Cross for heroic actions while serving with the 47th Company, 5th Regiment, during the attack on Belleau Wood. On 12 June 1918, Simpson was carrying a message from battalion headquarters to his company when he was apparently shot. Initially reported as killed in action and posthumously awarded the Navy Cross,¹²⁴ Simpson was actually a prisoner of war being held at Rastatt, Baden, Germany. He was released on 6 December 1918 and returned to his unit in France on 19 January 1919.¹²⁵

Several Marine reservists were awarded Navy Distinguished Service medals in addition to the Navy Cross, but only one Marine reservist was recognized

solely with the Navy Distinguished Service medal. Second Lieutenant Frank Nelms Jr. earned the medal “for extraordinary heroism as a pilot in the First Marine Aviation Force” during several air raids and for his participation in the airdrop of supplies to an isolated French army unit in October 1918. Nelms flew in at an altitude of 100 feet and dropped food under intense rifle and machine-gun fire, not once, but three times.¹²⁶ Nelms was commissioned in the Reserve, Class 5, and was among those former U.S. Naval Reserve Force pilots discharged to enter the Reserve to meet the need for pilots in the Day Wing, Northern Bombing Group.¹²⁷

Two reservists earned the Distinguished Service Cross (DSC): Private Sydney G. Gest¹²⁸ and Second Lieutenant Fred Thomas. For two separate actions, Thomas earned two DSCs and a Navy Distinguished Service medal. Always in the thick of the action, Thomas also earned four Silver Star citations.¹²⁹

When war was declared in April 1917, the U.S. Marine Corps had less than 14,000 men in active-duty ranks, with another 1,091 Reserve and National Naval Volunteers available for active duty. By mid November 1918, the Marine Corps had more than 75,000 men and women on active duty, and 7,256 were members of the Reserve. While the Reserve represented not quite 10 percent of the Marine Corps at the end of the war, its growth in approximately 17 months was phenomenal.¹³⁰

Demobilization

Immediately after the Armistice of 11 November 1918 went into effect, demobilization began. The 1st Marine Aviation Force, which returned to the United States in December 1918,¹³¹ disbanded in February 1919, and Marine Flying Field Miami, Florida,

¹²⁰ *The Marine Corps Reserve*, 10.

¹²¹ Crosschecked search results of Reserve awards using C. Douglas Sterner, ed., *Marine Corps Heroes, Medal of Honor*, vol. 1 and *Marine Corps Heroes, Navy Cross 1915-WWII*, vol. 2, (Scotts Valley, CA: CreateSpace, 2015); “Preserving the History of Recipients of the Medal of Honor,” *homeofheroes.com*; and Jane Blakeney, *Heroes: U.S. Marine Corps, 1861-1955, Armed Forces Awards Flags* (Washington, DC: Guthrie Lithograph Co. 1957).

¹²² Sterner, *Marine Corps Heroes*, vol. 2, 27.

¹²³ “1st Marine Company, Marine Barracks Philadelphia Navy Yard MRoll, 3 April-30 April 1917,” HIRB, Marine Corps History Division.

¹²⁴ Sterner, *Marine Corps Heroes*, vol. 2, 84.

¹²⁵ “47th Company, 5th Marine Regiment MRoll, 1 June-30 June 1917” and “rewritten 10 November 1931,” HIRB, Marine Corps History Division

¹²⁶ To read the award citation, see “Frank Nelms, Jr.,” Hall of Valor, <http://valor.militarytimes.com/recipient.php?recipientid=16730>.

¹²⁷ Reginald Wright Arthur, *Contact! Naval Aviators Careers* (Washington, DC: Naval Aviator Register, 1967), 229.

¹²⁸ Blakeney, *Heroes: U.S. Marine Corps, 1861-1955*, 86.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 153.

¹³⁰ McClellan, *United States Marine Corps in the World War*, 9, 11, 76.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 75.



U.S. Army Signal Corps photograph courtesy of Leatherneck magazine
Marines go into the attack in the Meuse-Argonne area, 1918.

closed in September 1919.¹³² With the end of the war, the number of Reserve aviators quickly dropped. On 9 September 1918, the Reserve Flying Corps had 11 first lieutenants and 118 second lieutenants. A Marine aviator list published 13 March 1919 reflected just 13 first lieutenants and 60 second lieutenants.¹³³ The number continued to drop as men transitioned to inactive status or became members of the regular component.

Marines in the brigades were released on a different basis, with individual requests for release

processed as they were received until the new fiscal year began on 1 July 1919. The Naval Appropriations Act approved on 11 July 1919 provided the Marine Corps with funds for an average strength of 27,400 enlisted men plus officers. The pace of demobilization for the brigades then significantly increased. The Marine Corps completed demobilization of the brigades on 13 August. The transfer of reservists on active duty to inactive status was completed on 25 August 1919.¹³⁴

While the World War I Marine reservists returned

¹³² LtCol Edward C. Johnson, *Marine Corps Aviation: The Early Years, 1912-1940*, ed., Graham A. Cosmas (Washington, DC: History and Museums Division, Headquarters Marine Corps, 1991), 17.

¹³³ Headquarters Marine Corps, "A list of Officers of the U.S. Marine Corps and U.S. Reserve on Active Duty Arranged According to Rank," booklet, 9 September 1918; and "A list of Officers of the U.S. Marine Corps and U.S. Reserve on Active Duty Arranged According to Rank," booklet, 13 March 1919, Francis T. Evans, Personal Papers Collection, U.S. Marine Corps Archives and Special Collections, Marine Corps University, Gray Research Center, Quantico, VA.

¹³⁴ LtCol Frank E. Evans, "Demobilizing the Brigades," *Marine Corps Gazette* 4, no. 4 (December 1919): 303-4.

to their homes, just as militiamen had done for more than a century, a new and vital source of military capability emerged through the Reserve. Evolutionary changes in American interests, a more international bent, proved the need for a military that could be called upon to do more than “execute the laws of the Union, suppress insurrections, and repel invasions.” The citizen-soldier construct, so important to the

founders of the Republic, was maintained. Although an embryonic force in World War I, the Reserve contributions were significant. It was born at just the right time.

The second, and concluding part, of the special feature on the Reserve in World War I focuses on the birth, growth, and contributions of the Reserve Flying Corps and the Reserve (Female). ♦1775♦

The U.S. Marines in World War I

PART II: THE U.S. MARINE CORPS RESERVE COMES TO THE FORE—THE MARINE CORPS RESERVE FLYING CORPS

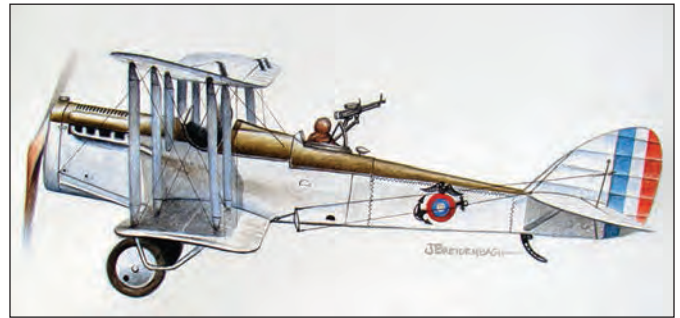
Colonel Walter G. Ford, USMC (Ret)

Over the course of several parts, we are discovering the story of the Marine Corps Reserve from its evolution out of the state and naval militias into a national defense force, particularly its contribution to Marine Corps efforts in the First World War. A discussion of the Reserve's part in this history would be incomplete without an analysis of aviation and its role in the Great War.*

The Early Days

The Marine Corps Reserve Flying Corps (MCRFC) did not get off the ground rapidly after Congress authorized the Naval Appropriations Act of August 1916. At that time, aviation in the Marine Corps was still in its infancy, and the early leaders in Marine Corps aviation were fighting hard to gain men, equipment, and flying fields, working closely with the U.S. Navy. Oversight of Marine aviation came through a section at Headquarters Marine Corps, and little is known of the organization and administration of the budding MCRFC.¹

In its youth at the beginning of World War I (WWI), Marine aviation can be traced back to the first Marine naval aviator, First Lieutenant Alfred A. Cunningham. He appeared on the rolls of the Naval Aviation School, U.S. Naval Academy, Annapolis, Maryland, as the “Only Marine Officer Present” in May 1912.² By August 1912, he was the first quali-



Courtesy of Leatherneck magazine
The DH-4 and the Marines in World War I, a watercolor by aviation artist Jason Breidenbach, shows the aircraft that Marines successfully flew in WWI.

fied Marine naval aviator.³ Cunningham became known as the “Father of Marine Corps Aviation,” but not simply because he was the first aviator.⁴ He was a driving force in all early Marine aviation activities and particularly in readying the MCRFC for duty in the war.

Bringing on the Marine Corps Reserve Flying Corps for War

When the United States entered WWI, the Marine Corps had six Marine officers classified as naval aviators; although none were identified as reservists.⁵ But the surge was on, and a large segment of the buildup in aviation manpower came via Marine Corps recruiting efforts, selecting highly qualified Marine enlisted men for aviation training and the Navy Reserve flying programs.

Quick to get into the action, the first Marine

* This article, one in a series devoted to U.S. Marines in the First World War, is published for the education and training of Marines by the History Division, Marine Corps University, Quantico, VA, as part of the Marine Corps' observance of the centennial anniversary of that war. Editorial costs have been defrayed in part by contributions from members of the Marine Corps Heritage Foundation.

¹ Reserve Officers of Public Affairs Unit 4-1, *The Marine Corps Reserve: A History* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1966), 11.

² U.S. Naval Academy, Muster Roll (MRoll), May 1912, Roll 0086, Ancestry.com.

³ Edwin Howard Simmons, *The United States Marines: A History*, Third Edition (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1998), 87.

⁴ Alan R. Millett, *Semper Fidelis: The History of the United States Marine Corps* (New York: Free Press, 1982), 321.

⁵ Robert Sherrod, “Marine Corps Aviation—The Early Days: Part I,” *Marine Corps Gazette* 36, no. 5 (May 1952): 55.



Courtesy of Leatherneck magazine

Lt Edmund G. Chamberlain as a Marine first lieutenant aviator during WWI.

Corps Reserve officer reported for aviation duty less than a month after war was declared. Reserve Marine Second Lieutenant Edmund G. Chamberlain was listed as “on aviation duty” on the muster roll of the Aeronautic Company, Advanced Base Force, Philadelphia Navy Yard, Pennsylvania, from Houston, Texas, on 2 May 1917. Chamberlain earned his wings as Naval Aviator No. 96 ½ and remained in Marine Corps aviation during the war, but not as a reservist.⁶ He integrated into the Marine Corps on 6 September 1917, prior to earning his naval aviator designation. Chamberlain was followed by Second Lieutenant Marcus A. Jordan from Washington, DC, who was listed as “on aviation duty” on 18 May 1917.⁷ By early July 1917, Jordan was posted on the

muster roll of the 7th Company, 5th Regiment, at the Philadelphia Navy Yard and dropped from aviation duty, but remained in the Marine Corps Reserve.⁸

Jordan never lost his love of aviation, and it eventually cost him his life. He deployed to France with his regiment and, on 16 October 1917, worked his way back into aviation through attachment to the Aviation Section, Signal Corps, U.S. Army, where he was ordered to the Aviation Training School in Foggia, Italy, for “instructions in flying.” Jordan took his first training flight on 28 October 1917.⁹ Advancing rapidly, he took his last training flight on 6 November and became an “Instructor of Cadets in Machine Gunnery.”¹⁰ While attached to the 8th Aviation Instruction Center in Foggia and still a second lieutenant in the Marine Corps Reserve, but not a designated naval aviator, he was killed on 27 March 1918 in a crash during a training flight near Foggia.¹¹

To more effectively build and prepare a Marine Corps aviation organization for war, just three weeks after the U.S. declaration of war in April 1917, the relatively small Marine Aviation Section, U.S. Navy Air Station, Pensacola, Florida, was divided with some of the Marines forming the Marine Aeronautic Company, Advanced Base Force, Philadelphia Navy Yard, under the command of Cunningham. At Pensacola, the training had been focused on seaplanes. The new aviation unit at Philadelphia was to be a combination land and water unit with training in seaplanes, land aircraft, and observation balloons.¹²

On 12 October 1917, to refine aviation organization and focus flight skills, aircraft types, and missions, the Marine Aeronautic Company was split into two units: 1st Marine Aeronautic Company and 1st Aviation Squadron.¹³

The 1st Marine Aeronautic Company, with 10 officers, only one who—Captain Francis T. Evans—was designated a naval aviator, and 96 enlisted men, emphasized seaplane operations and relocated to Naval Coastal Air Station Cape May, New Jersey. Among those officers arriving at Cape May on 14 October

⁶ Roy A. Grossnick, *United States Naval Aviation, 1910-1995* (Washington, DC: Naval Historical Center, 1997), 404.

⁷ Aeronautic Company, Advanced Base Force, Navy Yard, Philadelphia, MRoll, May 1917, Roll 0122, Ancestry.com.

⁸ The 7th Company, 5th Regiment, MRoll, July 1917, Roll 0122, Ancestry.com.

⁹ The 7th Company, 5th Regiment, MRoll, October 1917, Roll 0130, Ancestry.com.

¹⁰ The 7th Company, 5th Regiment, MRoll, November 1917, Roll 0128, Ancestry.com.

¹¹ The 7th Company, 5th Regiment, MRoll, March 1918, Roll 0136, Ancestry.com.

¹² Maj Edwin N. McClellan, *The United States Marine Corps in the World War*, facsimile reprint (Washington, DC: Historical Branch, G-3 Division, HQMC, 1968), 71.

¹³ *Ibid.*



Official U.S. Marine Corps photo 532357

Marines in the newly formed 1st Aviation Squadron at the Philadelphia Navy Yard, prior to departing for Mineola, Long Island, NY, in October 1917. From the left: Sgt Ralph D. Henry, USMCR, clerk to the commanding officer; Capt Walter E. McCaughtry; 2dLt Walter H. Batts, USMCR; Capt Alfred A. Cunningham; 1stLt Edmund G. Chamberlain; and an unidentified Marine.

1917 were two MCRFC officers who were not yet designated naval aviators: Second Lieutenants Alan H. Boynton and Amor L. Smith. Also on the initial muster roll of the 1st Marine Aeronautic Company was one Fleet Marine Corps Reserve sergeant and two privates in the National Naval Volunteers (NNV).¹⁴

Although deeply involved in training its potential Reserve pilots, the company immediately became operational, flying sea patrols from Cape May with its two Curtiss R-6 seaplanes.¹⁵ It became the first Marine Corps aviation unit to deploy in an operational mode for the war when, in January 1918, it arrived at Naval Base 13, Ponta Delgada, Azores, equipped and ready for sea patrols.¹⁶

The other unit formed from the Marine Aeronautic Company was 1st Aviation Squadron, commanded by Cunningham. The new unit, with 24 officers, including one Marine gunner, and 197 enlisted men,

was moved a little later in October 1917 to an Army flying field, Hazelhurst Field, Mineola, Long Island, New York. Cunningham and the second senior officer, Captain Roy S. Geiger, spent a great deal of that month away from the unit, leaving Captain William M. McIlvain as the senior officer present in the new command. While none of the officers were noted as members of the Marine Corps Reserve on the muster roll, three sergeants and five privates were, along with three NNV.¹⁷ Of the initial 24 officers, only 3 were designated naval aviators: Cunningham, McIlvain, and Geiger.¹⁸

The Army's Hazelhurst Field focused on training pilots for landplane flying.¹⁹ The Marines of 1st Aviation Squadron remembered Hazelhurst Field because of the intense cold and poor flying conditions.²⁰ But the icy weather was not long endured as the Marine Corps' search for an aviation training site in a more favorable climate paid off. On New Year's Day 1918, the 1st Aviation Squadron, including 14 Reserve second lieutenants not yet designated Marine aviators,²¹ left Mineola for the more aviation-friendly weather of the Army's Gerstner Field in Lake Charles, Louisiana.²²

Training and Qualifying Marine Corps Reserve Aviators

With Marine aviation training for landplanes now at Gerstner Field and seaplane operations at Cape May, another Marine aviation training site was being pursued by Geiger, who, with a small detachment including three MCRFC second lieutenants not yet designated naval aviators, moved south to Naval Air Station (NAS) Coconut Grove, Florida, in February 1918.²³ Marine aviators, trained at this naval air station, earned their naval aviator designation flying seaplanes, but Geiger saw the need to get all the

¹⁴ Marine Aeronautic Company, Naval Coastal Air Station, Cape May, MRoll, October 1917, Roll 0130, Ancestry.com; and, names on the above muster roll were compared with the designated naval aviators in Roxanne M. Kaufmann, *1912-2012: 100 Years of Marine Corps Aviation: An Illustrated History* (Quantico, VA: Headquarters Marine Corps, 2011), 314.

¹⁵ George B. Clark, "First Marine Aviation Force, 1917-18," *Marine Corps Gazette* 97, no. 5 (May 2013): 60.

¹⁶ McClellan, *United States Marine Corps in the World War*, 36.

¹⁷ First Aviation Squadron, MRoll, October 1917, Roll 0130, Ancestry.com.

¹⁸ Comparing the names on the October MRoll with the designated naval aviators listed by Kaufmann, *100 Years of Marine Corps Aviation*, 314.

¹⁹ McClellan, *United States Marine Corps in the World War*, 71.

²⁰ Robert Sherrod, "Marine Corps Aviation—The Early Days: Part I," *Marine Corps Gazette* 97, no. 4 (April 2013): 56.

²¹ First Aviation Squadron, MRoll, January 1918, Roll 0131, Ancestry.com; and Kaufmann, *100 Years of Marine Corps Aviation*, 314.

²² Sherrod, "Marine Corps Aviation," 55.

²³ Aeronautic Detachment, MRoll, February 1917, Roll 0133, Ancestry.com; LtCol Edward C. Johnson, USMC, *Marine Corps Aviation: The Early Years, 1912-1940*, ed. Graham A. Cosmas (Washington, DC: History and Museums Division, 1977, reprinted 1991), 17.

Corps' early pilots, including the Marine reservists, to add the land dimension to their qualifications. He arranged for the Marines to use the old Curtiss Flying School strip near the Everglades. On 1 April 1918, the nomadic 1st Aviation Squadron arrived at its new home, the newly renamed Marine Flying Field Miami, Florida. With this move, Geiger and McIlvain's units were combined and the 1st Marine Aviation Force (FMAF) was established.²⁴ The training of pilots greatly expanded as the Navy permitted large-scale movement from its aviation units to the new Marine unit.²⁵

Three of the Marine Reserve officers, who had been with the 1st Aviation Squadron from Philadelphia to Mineola and at the Marine Flying Field Miami with the recently activated FMAF, serve as good examples of the differing routes taken to become naval aviators in the MCRFC: William H. Derbyshire, Jesse A. Nelson, and Fred S. Robillard.

Second Lieutenant Derbyshire, Naval Aviator No. 533, was the first MCRFC officer to be designated a naval aviator.²⁶ He did not enter via the U.S. Naval Reserve Flying Corps (USNRFC), as did most of the early Marine Reserve aviators, and was not former enlisted. He enrolled as a second lieutenant in the MCRFC at Marine Barracks Philadelphia on 26 September 1917 after graduating from Harvard and was assigned to 1st Aviation Squadron in Philadelphia.²⁷

Second Lieutenants Boynton and Smith preceded Derbyshire's enrollment in the MCRFC in September 1917 but were not designated naval aviators by the time Derbyshire qualified.²⁸ Boynton, Naval Aviator No. 856, may well have been delayed in being designated a naval aviator because of the operational tempo of his unit, the 1st Marine Aeronautic Company, which began sea patrols off the East Coast followed quickly by deployment to the Azores. The reason for Smith's precedence as Naval Aviator No.

2761 is less evident because he transferred from 1st Marine Aeronautic Company, Naval Coastal Air Station Cape May, on 5 November 1917 to join Marine Aviation Section, NAS Pensacola, where he remained until 12 January 1918 when he was transferred to Marine Barracks New York, and discharged in January 1918.²⁹ He then joined the U.S. Army, commissioned a second lieutenant, and honorably discharged after the Armistice.³⁰

Derbyshire trained at the Army flying field, Mineola, for landplane duty and qualified as a Reserve military aviator on 24 November 1917 and then moved with Geiger's Aeronautic Detachment from Philadelphia to NAS Coconut Grove, where he was designated a naval aviator on 28 February 1918. He was injured in an aircraft accident in Miami on 12 March 1918 and remained on sick leave until September of that year. As a result of the accident, his designation as a naval aviator was revoked on 17 September 1918, and he was detached from aviation.³¹

Nelson's Marine Corps service and ultimate qualification as a Marine Corps Reserve aviator began when he originally enlisted as a private on 27 June 1913. He reenlisted and, because of special skills, was appointed sergeant and assigned to the Aeronautic Company, Advanced Base Force, Philadelphia, in August 1917.³² Continuing to excel, Nelson was appointed Marine gunner in October 1917 while at Mineola and then commissioned a second lieutenant in the MCRFC on 21 December 1917. He relocated with the squadron to Gerstner Field in January 1918 and attained designation as Naval Aviator No. 589 while with the FMAF at Marine Flying Field Miami on 17 April 1918. He sailed for France with the FMAF in July 1918 and flew with the FMAF as part of the Day Wing, Northern Bombing Group, at La Fresne, France, until the end of the war. Nelson was

²⁴ Ibid., 15.

²⁵ Sherrod, "Marine Corps Aviation," 56-57.

²⁶ Kaufmann, *100 Years of Marine Corps Aviation*, 314, provides the naval aviator precedence number and Arthur, *Contact!* includes short biographical notes with sources of entry and service on each of the first 2,000 naval aviators.

²⁷ Frederick S. Mead, ed., *Harvard's Military Record in the World War* (Boston, MA: Harvard Alumni Association, 1921), 262.

²⁸ Aeronautic Company, Advanced Base Force, MRoll, September 1917, Ancestry.com; and Kaufmann, *100 Years of Marine Corps Aviation*, 314.

²⁹ Arthur, *Contact!*, 515; 1st Marine Aeronautic Company, MRoll, November 1917, Roll 0128, Ancestry.com; and Marine Aviation Section, NAS Pensacola, MRoll, January 1918, Roll 0131, Ancestry.com.

³⁰ New York, Abstracts of World War I Military Service, 1917-1919, Boxes 717 and 741, Ancestry.com.

³¹ Arthur, *Contact!*, 167.

³² Aeronautic Company, MRoll, October 1917, Roll 0125, Ancestry.com.

The First 20 Marine Corps Reserve Naval Aviators

Naval aviator precedence numbers were used to identify the first Marine Corps Reserve Flying Corps (MCRFC) aviators. The first 20 Marine Corps Reserve naval aviators are listed below by name, naval aviator precedence number, and date of designation. All Marine Corps aviators listed here came via the U.S. Naval Reserve Flying Corps (USNRFC). Only 1 of these 20, Herman A. Peterson, entered the USNRFC via the National Naval Volunteers. Peterson enrolled in the New York Naval Militia on 2 March 1917 and was mustered into federal service at Bay Shore, New York, on 7 April 1917 and ordered to Key West, Florida. He was assigned to 1st Marine Aviation Force (FMAF) at Marine Flying Field Miami, Florida, while still a lieutenant junior grade in the USNRFC. Peterson accepted an appointment as a first lieutenant in the MCRFC on 16 August 1918 while deployed with the FMAF in France.

Fractions in a naval aviator precedence number are the result of more than one aviator designated with that number. If the aviator originally enrolled as a Marine Corps Reserve officer but disenrolled from the Reserve and enrolled in the Marine Corps prior to being designated a naval aviator (e.g., Edmund G. Chamberlain), that Marine aviator is not listed.*

Name	Naval aviator number	Date designated
Bradford, Doyle**	111 ½	5 November 1917
Webster, Clifford L.	112 ½	5 November 1917
Wright, Arthur H.	148	6 December 1917
Peterson, Herman A.	163 ½	2 November 1917
Laughlin, George McC. III	165	12 December 1917
Ames, Charles B.	193	21 December 1917
Weaver, John H.	251	21 January 1918
Prichard, Alvin L.	279	21 January 1918
Willman, George C.	299	22 January 1918
Elvidge, Herbert D.	424	12 May 1918
Pratt, Hazen C.	426	8 March 1918
Clark, Sidney E.	442	8 March 1918
Schley, Fredrick C.***	443	8 March 1918
Needham, Charles A.	444	14 March 1918
Bates, John B.	449	25 March 1918
Talbot, Ralph	456	10 April 1918
Comstock, Thomas C.	473	26 March 1918
Clarkson, Francis O.	474	28 March 1918
Williamson, Guy M.	477	25 March 1918
Alder, Grover C.	479	25 March 1918

* The naval aviator precedence numbers and dates are from Kaufmann, *100 Years of Marine Corps Aviation*, 314. Confirmation of the source of enrollment and status as a member of the Marine Corps Reserve, Class 5, is from "U.S. Marine Corps Muster Rolls, 1893-1958," microfilm T977, 460 rolls, ARC ID: 922159, record group 127, Ancestry.com; and Reginald Wright Arthur, *Contact! Careers of U.S. Naval Aviators Assigned Numbers 1 to 2000*, Vol. 1 (Washington, DC: Naval Aviator Register, 1967).

** Civilian flight instructor with the U.S. Army prior to enrolling in USNRFC.

*** The spelling of his first name on muster rolls varies: Frederick, Frederic, and Fredrick. The muster roll of 4th Squadron, 1st Marine Aviation Force, Marine Flying Field Miami lists him as "disenrolled" on 17 August 1917.

among the few Reserve aviators who commissioned in the Marine Corps. He retired from the Corps because of disability in December 1935.³³

Robillard took a different route and served as another example of the MCRFC and its contributions to success in the Great War. He enrolled as a sergeant in the Marine Corps Reserve, Class 4c, on 30 June 1917 in Chicago. Initially sent to the Aeronautic Company, Advanced Base Force, Philadelphia, Robillard was on the roster when the company split, and he became an enlisted mechanic in 1st Aviation Squadron.³⁴ He trailed along with the squadron to Mineola where he was appointed a second lieutenant, MCRFC, Class 5, then on to Gerstner Field with the 1st Aviation Squadron in early January 1918.³⁵

Robillard then accompanied the squadron to join the FMAF at Marine Flying Field Miami, designated Naval Aviator No. 602 on 17 April 1918, and became a pilot in Squadron B, FMAF. He sailed with the FMAF to be initially assigned to Field "D" near Calais, France, for duty with the Day Wing, Northern Bombing Group, where he earned the Navy Cross for his actions alongside other Allied armies during operations along the Belgian front from September 1918 to the end of the war. He was released from active duty in 1919, but reentered the Marine Corps in 1921, and went on to a very distinguished career, retiring as a major general on 1 October 1952.³⁶

The Marine Corps Reserve officer with the lowest precedence as a naval aviator, Herman A. Peterson, Naval Aviator No. 163 ½, entered the MCRFC through the U.S. Naval Reserve Force. Peterson had been a member of the New York Naval Militia, mustered into federal service with his Navy unit as a National Naval Volunteer on 7 April 1917 and designated a naval aviator on 2 November 1917.³⁷ He is on the June 1918 FMAF muster roll; however, Peterson was still a lieutenant (junior grade).³⁸ He was



Official U.S. Marine Corps photo

Fred S. Robillard was enrolled as a sergeant in the Marine Corps Reserve in June 1917 due to his special skills as a mechanic. Commissioned in the USMCR on 17 December 1917, he later earned a Navy Cross in France.

not discharged from the Navy Reserve to accept his appointment as a first lieutenant in the MCRFC until 16 August 1918 while in France.³⁹ Peterson earned the Navy Cross "for distinguished and heroic service . . . while serving with the First Marine Aviation Force, attached to the Northern Bomb Group (USN), in active operation co-operating with the Allied Armies on the Belgian Front during September, October and November, 1918, bombing enemy

³³ Arthur, *Contact!*, 183.

³⁴ First Aviation Squadron, MRoll, October 1917, Roll 0130, Ancestry.com.

³⁵ First Aviation Squadron, MRoll, December 1917, Roll 0129, Ancestry.com; and 1st Aviation Squadron, MRoll, January 1918, Roll 0131, Ancestry.com.

³⁶ Arthur, *Contact!*, 187-88.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 77. Peterson and George McC. Laughlin, Naval Aviator No. 165, are noted on page 16 of Reserve Officers Public Affairs Unit 4-1, *The Marine Corps Reserve*, as former members of the National Naval Volunteers. *Contact!*, notes Laughlin left Yale University after two years and enrolled as a sailor on 17 April 1917, was designated Naval Aviator No. 165, and was appointed an ensign in the Naval Reserve Flying Corps on the same day, 12 December 1917. He transferred to the MCRFC, already a qualified pilot, on 26 May 1918. According to *U.S. Naval Aviation*, vol. 2, Laughlin's service listed at the time of designation as a naval aviator was National Naval Volunteer. Laughlin also earned a Navy Cross in France.

³⁸ FMAF, MRoll, June 1917, Roll 0141, Ancestry.com.

³⁹ Arthur, *Contact!*, 77.

Captain Thomas R. Shearer: Texas Naval Militia Member, National Naval Volunteer, and Marine Corps Reserve Aviator

Captain Thomas R. “Bull” Shearer was among the Marine Corps Reserve’s aviators who did not deploy to Europe during WWI but gained command stateside. Shearer began his journey to become a Reserve aviator via Company A, Texas National Naval Militia, Marine Corps Branch, in April 1917.¹ Shearer is possibly the sole Marine aviator to gain wartime command with a career beginning in the Marine element of a state naval militia.

According to *The Recruiters’ Bulletin* of March 1917, Shearer “of Houston, Texas . . . organized and mustered into the state Service the first Marine Company in the Texas Naval Militia.” The 51-man company asked to be called “The McLemore Marines” in honor of Colonel Albert S. McLemore, the assistant adjutant and inspector of the Marine Corps, who headed Marine Corps recruiting.²

The Marine company was organized on 10 February 1917 with Shearer as its captain. On 6 April 1917, less than two months after the unit was created, the company was ordered to federal service, the day the United States declared war against Germany.³ The same day, motivated Texans and their enthusiastic commander reported to the local rendezvous site in Houston. From there, the company members traveled to the federal rendezvous site in New Orleans, Louisiana, arriving on 12 April. There they were enrolled into the National Naval Volunteers (NNV).⁴

By late May, Shearer and his unit were stationed at Marine Barracks NAS Pensacola, Florida. In January 1918, while still a member of the NNV, Shearer was transferred to command the Marine Aviation Section at NAS Pensacola and began flight training to become a qualified seaplane pilot.⁵ On 4 April 1918, he was designated Naval Aviator No. 559. Just one month later, as the commander, Shearer suspended himself from duty for five days for “flying in the fog.”⁶

On 1 July 1918, he transferred from the NNV, Marine Corps Branch, to the Marine Corps Reserve at the rank of captain. At that point, he became commander of the Marine Aviation Section, NAS Miami, and on 15 July 1918, he was placed in charge of all aerial patrols flying from the NAS. His unit flew the difficult air patrols in the Florida Straits until just after the Armistice.⁷



Official U.S. Marine Corps photo

¹ Company A, Texas National Naval Militia, Marine Corps Branch, MRoll, 12–30 April 1917, Roll 0121, Ancestry.com.

² “Texas Marine Militia Company,” *The Recruiters’ Bulletin*, 3, no. 5 (March 1917): 29.

³ Arthur, *Contact!*, 175.

⁴ Company A, Texas National Naval Militia, Marine Corps Branch, MRoll.

⁵ Company A, NNV, Marine Barracks, Aeronautical Station, Pensacola, MRoll, 1–31 May 1917 and Marine Aviation Section, U.S. Naval Air Station, Pensacola, MRoll, 1–31 January 1918, Roll 0122, Ancestry.com.

⁶ Arthur, *Contact!*, 175; and, Marine Aviation Section, U.S. Naval Air Station, Pensacola, MRoll, 1–31 May 1918, Roll 0139, Ancestry.com.

⁷ Marine Aviation Section, U.S. Naval Air Station, Miami, MRoll, 1–31 July 1918, Roll 0143 and Marine Aviation Section, U.S. Naval Air Station, Miami, MRoll, 1–30 November 1918, Roll 0154, Ancestry.com.

Correspondence in June 1918 between Captain Alfred Cunningham, who headed the Marine aviation office at Headquarters Marine Corps, and his replacement, First Lieutenant Harvey B. Mims, narrates the tale of how Shearer came to command a key Marine seaplane operational unit. Mims, Naval Aviator No. 576, did not know Shearer and was concerned about his qualifications. Shearer requested a transfer to Miami for a training course, followed by assignment to foreign duty. All the Marine aviators in Pensacola and Miami, including Shearer, were aware the FMAF was preparing for deployment to France and wanted to get into the fight.

Both Captain Roy Geiger, at FMAF, and Colonel Charles G. Long, in Major General Commandant George Barnett's office, informed Mims to make the transfer because the Navy was transitioning Pensacola into an advanced training site, and NAS Miami was becoming the primary seaplane training station. Long thought it "absolutely essential that we continue training in water machines in order that we may be able at any time, to coordinate and cooperate with the advanced base force, in case of their needing a water company at any time."⁸ Positioning the highly regarded Shearer—who was known for getting things done—at NAS Miami would earn current and future benefits for the Marine Corps.

Shearer remained in the Marine Corps after the war, integrating into the regular Marine Corps in September 1919. He died on 21 April 1937 while on active duty serving as the operations and training officer at Headquarters Squadron, 1M, Aircraft One, Fleet Marine Force, Marine Barracks Quantico, Virginia.⁹

⁸ Letters of 26 and 29 June 1918 from 1stLt Harvey B. Mims to Capt Alfred A. Cunningham, Alfred A. Cunningham Personal Papers, Marine Corps Archives and Special Collections, MCU, Quantico, VA.

⁹ Squadron A, Marine Aviation Force, MRoll, 1–30 September 1919, Roll 0179; and Headquarters Squadron 1M, Aircraft One, Fleet Marine Force, MB, Quantico, VA, MRoll, 1–30 April 1937, Roll 0401, Ancestry.com.

bases, aerodromes, submarine bases, ammunition dumps, railroad junctions, etc."⁴⁰

The Marine Corps flew into a bit of friction with the Navy based on its rejection of a significant number, 17, of the USNRFC pilots who came to the FMAF from the Navy in late May and early June 1918.⁴¹ Cunningham was caught in the middle. Although listed on the FMAF muster roll in June 1918, Cunningham, now a captain, remained on temporary duty at Headquarters Marine Corps, leaving Geiger at Marine Flying Field Miami to evaluate the mix of officer and enlisted pilots arriving from the Navy in June.⁴² The course of instruction at Marine Flying Field Miami was very challenging. It included basic or preliminary flying; then advanced acrobatic and formation flying; and bombing, gunnery, and reconnaissance flights. The reconnaissance training included aerial photography.⁴³

Despite being in Washington, DC, Cunningham,

working for the Major General Commandant, continued his pursuit of additional aviation resources—people, aircraft, more airfields, etc.—while Geiger screened and trained would-be Marine aviators in Florida. On 11 June 1918, Cunningham wrote Geiger at Marine Flying Field Miami, "Note that the Board [run by Geiger] has turned down seventeen of the Navy pilots, and believe that they do not realize the conditions. As you know one-half of the pilots are nothing but machine gunners. The Navy have [sic] fallen down on us in the matter of giving more pilots."⁴⁴ At that time, early June 1918, the Reserves listed on the FMAF muster roll included 12 first lieutenants, 51 second lieutenants, 2 sergeants, 37 privates, 7 NNV and the muster roll listed as Navy, 2 assistant surgeons, 1 lieutenant (junior grade), 33 ensigns, and 1 seaman second class and 10 pharmacist mates.⁴⁵

Training for aviators also was coordinated by

⁴⁰ C. Douglas Sterner, "Navy Recipients of the Navy Cross," Home of Heroes, http://www.homeofheroes.com/valor/02_awards/index_nx/index-NXp.html.

⁴¹ Sherrod, "Marine Corps Aviation," 57.

⁴² FMAF, MRoll, June 1918, Roll 0141, Ancestry.com.

⁴³ McClellan, *United States Marine Corps in the World War*, 76.

⁴⁴ Alfred A. Cunningham Personal Papers, Marine Corps Archives and Special Collections, MCU, Quantico, VA.

⁴⁵ FMAF, MRoll, June 1917.

the Navy at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), Boston, Massachusetts. Enlisted Marines selected as promising flyers were appointed temporary gunnery sergeants and ordered to a 10-week ground training course at MIT. After ground school graduation, they did their actual flying at Marine Flying Field Miami and, upon qualifying, commissioned second lieutenants in the MCRFC. The first class for enlisted Marines did not enter this program until 10 July 1918, so it did not have a significant impact on the number of qualified MCRFC pilots fighting in France.⁴⁶

However, the MIT program did provide pilots for the FMAF in France. One of the USNRFC officers who entered through the MIT program and later transferred to the MCRFC to serve with distinction in Europe was Ralph Talbot. In June 1917, Talbot left Yale University to join the DuPont Aviation School in Wilmington, Delaware. The war was on and he wanted to contribute. He enrolled as a seaman second class on 25 October 1917, completed the MIT ground training course, and was ordered to NAS Key West, Florida. There he was commissioned an ensign in the USNRFC on 8 April 1918 and then later designated Naval Aviator No. 456. Talbot took advantage of the Navy's willingness to let its pilots transfer to the MCRFC at Marine Flying Field Miami and was commissioned a second lieutenant on 26 May 1918. In mid-July, Talbot deployed overseas with the FMAF and earned a unique place in Marine Corps history.⁴⁷

Marine Corps Reserve Aviators Deploy to the Azores

The Germans had operated submarines in the Atlantic Ocean during the early years of the war, wreaking havoc on shipping, and there was concern that they might try to establish an advance base in Portugal's Azores archipelago. The British had been watching



Official U.S. Marine Corps photo 529928

A 1st Marine Aeronautic Company, 1st Marine Aviation Force Curtiss R-6 seaplane undergoes repairs at Naval Base 13, Ponta Delgada, Azores, in the fall of 1918. Extra wing crates and repair tents are in the background.

the area and the U.S. Navy had used Ponta Delgada, São Miguel Island, Azores, for ship repairs. The U.S. Navy collier, *USS Orion* (AC 11) was in Ponta Delgada undergoing repairs when, early on the morning of 4 July 1917, German submarine *U-155* began shelling the town. *Orion* returned fire, although her stern was out of the water, driving off the submarine.⁴⁸ This helped make the decision to get Portuguese consent to establish a shore installation at Ponta Delgada.⁴⁹

On 7 December 1917, the 1st Marine Aeronautic Company—with its experience flying sea patrols from Cape May—was selected to deploy to the Azores and establish shore installation (Naval Base 13) at Ponta Delgada, and the company began flying antisubmarine patrols. The company arrived with 10 Curtiss R-6, 2 Curtiss N-9 seaplanes, and 6 Curtiss HS-L flying boats on 22 January 1918.⁵⁰ Among the Marines arriving at Naval Base 13 in January were one MCRFC officer, Second Lieutenant Boynton, two Marine Corps Reserve privates, and four NNV privates.⁵¹

In the Azores, the Aeronautic Company Marines

⁴⁶ Johnson, *Marine Corps Aviation*, 20.

⁴⁷ Arthur, *Contact!*, 148–49.

⁴⁸ Josephus Daniels, *Our Navy at War* (New York: George H. Doran Co., 1922), 276–77.

⁴⁹ LtCol C. H. Metcalf, USMC, "Flying Marines," *Leatherneck*, May 1939, 14.

⁵⁰ McClellan, *United States Marine Corps in the World War*, 71, provides details on the number and type of aircraft and indicates the unit arrived on 21 January; however, 1st Marine Aeronautic Company, MRoll, January 1918, Roll 0132, Ancestry.com, indicates arrival on 22 January 1918.

⁵¹ First Marine Aeronautic Company, MRoll, January 1918.



Bombing Mission in DeHavilland 9'S by John T. McCoy. Watercolor on paper.
Art Collection, National Museum of the Marine Corps

flew daily patrols out to a radius of 70 miles off the island, most often monotonous with little, if any, contact.⁵² The Marines were ordered back to the United States on 24 January 1919, arriving at Marine Flying Field Miami on 15 March 1919.⁵³ The company strength for March (7 officers and 60 enlisted men) included 2 Marine Corps Reserve officers (Class 5 and Class 1) and 3 Marine Corps Reserve enlisted.⁵⁴

Also deployed to Naval Base 13 in January 1918 was a Marine 7-inch naval gun unit, commanded by Captain Maurice G. Holmes.⁵⁵ The unit, Foreign Expeditionary Detachment, Naval Base 13, and its 51-Marine detachment included six members of the Marine Corps Reserve, Class 4.⁵⁶ Holmes command-

ed the detachment through the Armistice, departing on 22 November 1918.⁵⁷ The guns were later turned over to the Portuguese rather than transported back to the United States.⁵⁸

Marine Reserve Aviators in the War in Europe

Involvement of Marine Corps aviation in WWI came about through the initiatives of Cunningham, although it was supported by the Major General Commandant, other officers at Headquarters Marine Corps, and U.S. Navy leadership. The German submarine menace had to be curtailed; and bombing of

⁵² Johnson, *Marine Corps Aviation*, 13.

⁵³ McClellan, *United States Marine Corps in the World War*, 71.

⁵⁴ First Marine Aeronautic Company, MRoll, March 1919, Roll 0165, Ancestry.com.

⁵⁵ Clark, "First Marine Aviation Force, 1917-18," 60-61.

⁵⁶ Foreign Expeditionary Detachment, Naval Base 13, MRoll, January 1918, Roll 0132, Ancestry.com.

⁵⁷ Foreign Expeditionary Detachment, Naval Base 13, MRoll, November 1918, Roll 0154, Ancestry.com.

⁵⁸ Clark, "First Marine Aviation Force, 1917-18," 61.

the Belgian submarine shelters (or pens) in Zeebrugge, Ostend, and Bruges was a mission taken on by the U.S. Navy. The Navy dispatched a limited force to France in June 1917 to initiate the bombing but did not have enough air assets. Cunningham, during a visit to the front in late 1917, saw an opportunity for Marine aviation to get into the action by assisting the Navy. Cunningham asked for and received a Marine force of a headquarters and four squadrons in early 1918 and now, with the United States about a year into the war, Marine aviation had a combat assignment.⁵⁹ The Marine Corps needed pilots to support the Navy's mission, so the Navy permitted its pilots to transfer to the MCRFC in May and June 1918.

The FMAF—with its headquarters and Squadrons A, B, and C that arrived in Brest, France, on board the USS *De Kalb* (ID 3010) on 30 July 1918 to join the Day Wing, Northern Bombing Group—demonstrated the significance of the almost two-year-old Marine Corps Reserve.⁶⁰ The FMAF included 272 members of the Marine Corps Reserve and six NNV out of a total of 787 men—35.3 percent were Marine Corps Reserve and NNV. The representation of the Marine Corps Reserve was dramatic among the officers: 12 of the 17 first lieutenants, or 71 percent; 71 of 77 second lieutenants, or 92 percent; and 11 of 11 Marine gunners, 100 percent.⁶¹

With Cunningham commanding FMAF, the flying squadrons were commanded by Captain Geiger, Squadron A; Captain McIlvain, Squadron B; and Captain Douglas B. Roben, Squadron C.⁶² These squadron commanders, plus the future commander of Squadron D, First Lieutenant Russell A. Presley, arrived in France as an advance party, coordinating with the Navy's Northern Bombing Group, around mid-June 1918.⁶³ Squadron D did not join the Day Wing until after landing in France on 5 October 1918. This squadron added 222 Marines and Navy men to the Day Wing, of which 102 were Marine Corps Reserves—34 of 39 officers were reservists.⁶⁴ When the FMAF became the Marine Day Wing of the U.S. Navy Northern Bombing Group, the four



Official U.S. Marine Corps photo 530634

The first Marine aircraft destroyed in air battle in WWI also resulted in the pilot, 2dLt Harvey C. Norman, MCRFC, and observer, 2dLt Caleb B. Taylor, MCRFC, above, Squadron C, FMAF, being killed in action. Their aircraft was attacked by seven enemy aircraft on 22 October 1918 over the Bruges-Ghent Canal, Belgium.

Marine squadrons were redesignated the 7th, 8th, 9th, and 10th Squadrons, respectively.⁶⁵

With a shortage of aircraft, Cunningham turned to the British Royal Air Force (RAF), with its numerous available aircraft and lack of fully trained pilots, for his FMAF pilots to gain flight time. Marine pilots and observers were assigned to RAF Squadrons 217 and 218 to fly combat missions over the German lines.⁶⁶ One of these pilots, MCRFC Second Lieutenant Chapin C. Barr, flying with Squadron 218, died

⁵⁹ Sherrod, "Marine Corps Aviation," 58-59.

⁶⁰ McClellan, *United States Marine Corps in the World War*, 34.

⁶¹ FMAF MRoll, July 1918, Roll 0145, Ancestry.com.

⁶² Sherrod, "Marine Corps Aviation," 59.

⁶³ Johnson, *Marine Corps Aviation*, 19.

⁶⁴ Squadron D, MRoll, October 1918, Roll 0153, Ancestry.com.

⁶⁵ MSgt Roger M. Emmons, USMC (Ret), "Marine Combat Squadrons in World War I," *Marine Corps Gazette* 62, no. 11 (November 1978): 79.

⁶⁶ Johnson, *Marine Corps Aviation*, 21.



Art Collection, National Museum of the Marine Corps

Raid on Thielt by James Butcher. The first all-Marine aviation raid was on Thielt, Belgium, on 14 October 1918 by 9th Squadron, 1st Marine Aviation Force. 2dLt Ralph Talbot, MCRFC, and Cpl Robert G. Robinson were awarded the Medal of Honor for their heroic actions in the raid.

on 29 September 1918 of wounds received in a combat raid over enemy territory.⁶⁷ Barr was awarded the Navy Cross for his actions in combat and was the first Marine aviator to die as a result of enemy action.⁶⁸ Also, while flying with Squadron 218, Marine pilots participated in the first aerial resupply on 2 and 3 October when food was dropped to a surrounded French unit.⁶⁹ One of the three Marine pilots participating in that food drop was MCRFC Second Lieutenant Frank Nelms Jr., who earned a Navy Distinguished Service Medal for his actions.⁷⁰

The first all-Marine air combat operation was a

raid carried out on the morning of 14 October by Squadron C (9th) from La Fresne flying field. The Marines attacked the German-held railway junction and yards at Thielt, Belgium, with a composite flight of five DH-4s and three DH-9As, led by Captain Robert S. Lytle.⁷¹ In those eight squadron aircrews, five pilots were Marine Corps reservists and one, Ensign Elmer B. Taylor, was a member of the USNRFC assigned to the squadron. Three of the eight observers/gunners in the aircraft rear seats were Marine Corps reservists.⁷²

On the return flight, the Marine aircraft were in-

⁶⁷ Squadron B, MRoll, September 1918, Roll 0150, Ancestry.com.

⁶⁸ Arthur, *Contact!*, 236; and James R. Nilo, "Marines Aloft in World War I," *Leatherneck*, July 1998, 34.

⁶⁹ Johnson, *Marine Corps Aviation*, 21.

⁷⁰ Arthur, *Contact!*, 229; and, *Marine Corps Heroes, vol. I, 1861-1942*, compiled by C. Douglas Sterner. Copies held by HIRB, MCHD, Quantico, VA, and the author courtesy of Mr. Sterner.

⁷¹ Clark, "First Marine Aviation Force, 1917-18," 58.

⁷² George B. Clark, in *ibid.*, named the pilots and observers; and Squadron C, MRoll, October 1918, and Squadron A MRoll, October 1918, Roll 0153, Ancestry.com, confirmed the mission assignment and Reserve status.



Ralph Talbot Personal Papers, Marine Corps Archives and Special Collections, Marine Corps University

2dLt Ralph Talbot entered the USMCR via the Naval Reserve Force, with ground training at MIT.

tercepted by enemy aircraft; and a group of German Fokker fighter planes attacked Second Lieutenant Talbot and his observer, Corporal Robert G. Robinson, whose aircraft had separated from the flight due to engine trouble. Robinson, firing the rear-mounted machine gun, shot down one of the attacking aircraft, but in another onslaught, his left elbow was shattered. He continued firing until again wounded, this time in the abdomen and thigh, when he collapsed. Talbot attacked the Fokker with his front guns, shooting down one additional aircraft then with continuing engine problems, he dropped low,

crossed the German lines, and landed at a Belgian airfield to obtain aid for Robinson.⁷³ After dropping off Robinson, Talbot again lifted into the air, despite engine issues, returning to La Fresne flying field.⁷⁴

Both Talbot and Robinson were awarded the Medal of Honor for “extraordinary heroism” for earlier operations and this raid, thus, earning the first two Medals of Honor awarded to members of Marine Corps aviation units, although Talbot’s was presented posthumously.⁷⁵ Talbot was killed on 25 October 1918 when he crashed into a bomb dump at La Fresne during a maintenance test flight. He did not make it into the air, ripping off his landing gear as he tried to pass over the bomb dump embankment. He died in his burning aircraft.⁷⁶ First Sergeant John K. McGraw, Fleet Marine Corps Reserve, Class B, earned the Navy Cross that day for “extraordinary heroism,” when he prevented a massive explosion of the bomb dump.⁷⁷ When Talbot crashed, McGraw led the nearest men in moving burning bomb crates, rolling the bombs in mud, and extinguishing the fire.⁷⁸ Talbot’s observer/gunner, Reserve Second Lieutenant Colgate W. Darden Jr., Class 5, flying in the rear seat was thrown clear of the aircraft and survived the accident. Darden later became a member of the General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Virginia, member of the U.S. House of Representatives from Virginia, governor of Virginia, and president of the University of Virginia.⁷⁹

In addition to the Marine aviators of FMAF in France, six Marine officers were detached and assigned to the Army Air Service, American Expeditionary Forces.⁸⁰ At least one of the six, Second Lieutenant Marcus A. Jordan, was a member of the Marine Corps Reserve.⁸¹ Another enrollee in the MCRFC in 1917 already had combat experience in France. Russell F. Stearns had been a pilot, with the rank of corporal, in the Lafayette Flying Corps prior to America entering the war. Stearns had gone to

⁷³ Clark, “First Marine Aviation Force, 1917-18,” 59.

⁷⁴ Emmons, “Marine Combat Squadrons in World War I,” 81.

⁷⁵ R. J. (Bob) Proft, ed., *United States of America’s Congressional Medal of Honor Recipients and the Official Citations*, 2d ed. (Columbia Heights, MN: Highland House II, 1998), 584, 589.

⁷⁶ Roger M. Emmons, “Giants of the Corps: Ralph Talbot,” *Marine Corps Gazette* 61, no. 5 (May 1978): 31.

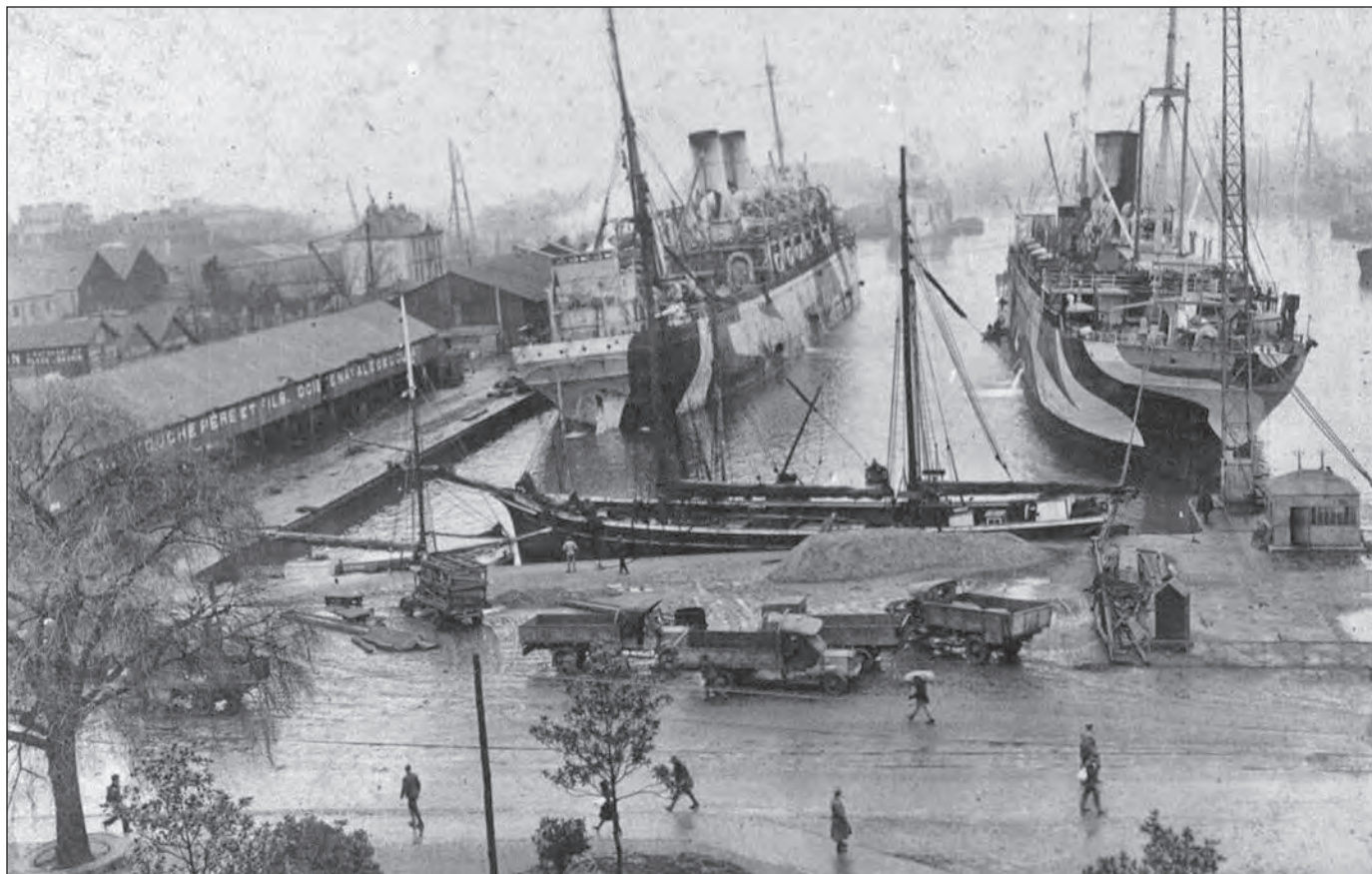
⁷⁷ Squadron C, FMAF, MRoll, October 1918.

⁷⁸ Douglas Sterner, ed., *Marine Corps Heroes: vol. 2, Navy Cross 1915-WWII* (Scotts Valley, CA: CreateSpace, 2015), 62.

⁷⁹ 1st Squadron, FMAF, MRoll, October 1918, Roll 0153, Ancestry.com; “Former Marines Now in Congress,” *Marine Corps Gazette* 19, no. 1 (February 1935): 14; and Sherrod, “Marine Corps Aviation,” 61.

⁸⁰ McClellan, *United States Marine Corps in the World War*, 75.

⁸¹ The 7th Company, 5th Regiment, MRoll, March 1918.



Ralph Talbot, *Personal Papers*, Marine Corps Archives and Special Collections, Marine Corps University
The port of Saint-Nazaire, France, December 1918.

France to serve in the American Ambulance Field Service in 1916, then enlisted in the Lafayette Flying Corps on 12 April 1917. He qualified as a pilot and was assigned to Escadrille Spad 150, piloting the French Spad biplane in combat during 27 December 1917–24 February 1918. He returned to the states on leave in February and, while home, applied for a discharge from the Lafayette Flying Corps and joined the Marine Corps Reserve. Unfortunately, general health issues followed him from France, and he did not qualify as a naval aviator and was disenrolled from the MCRFC on 30 July 1918.⁸²

Examining the Marine Corps muster rolls of the FMAF, Naval Air Forces, France, American Expeditionary Forces, at the time of the Armistice in No-

vember 1918, reveals that 111 of 132 officers, or 84.1 percent were Marine Corps reservists; 15 of 15, or 100 percent of the warrant officers were reservists; and 228 of 783, or 29.2 percent of the enlisted men were Marine Corps reservists.⁸³

The Day Wing, Northern Bombing Group, received orders to return to the United States and embarked at Saint-Nazaire, France, on 16 December 1918, arriving at Newport News, Virginia, five days later.⁸⁴ Delivering supplies and the bombing raids by these early Marine aviators became routine missions in later wars and insurgencies. In its short time in existence, the MCRFC made its mark and helped ensure Marine Corps aviation continued to flourish.

◆ 1775 ◆

⁸² James Norman Hall and Charles Bernard Nordhoff, ed., *The Lafayette Flying Corps*, vol. 1 (Boston, MA: Riverside Press Cambridge, 1920), 442; and 4th Squadron, FMAF, MRoll, July 1918, Roll 0143, Ancestry.com.

⁸³ General Recapitulation, Marine Corps, MRoll, November 1918, Roll 0156, Ancestry.com.

⁸⁴ McClellan, *United States Marine Corps in the World War*, 75.

The U.S. Marines in World War I

PART III: THE U.S. MARINE CORPS RESERVE COMES TO THE FORE

by Colonel Walter G. Ford, USMC (Ret)*

The Marine Corps Reserve (Female)

As with the advent of the Marine Corps Reserve, the U.S. Navy led the way for women in the Marine Corps Reserve. The Navy's significant expansion, resulting from the Naval Appropriations Act of 1916, demanded more manpower quickly. While volunteers and the draft brought about growth in personnel, the Navy needed more men in the fleet, and while the act did not specifically mention women in the Reserve, it did not preclude their service. So, with a secretary of the Navy interpretation and decision, that same act opened the doors for women to volunteer and serve. The Navy began recruiting female yeomen in March 1917.¹

Seeing the Navy's success, the Marine Corps quickly realized the benefit of opening its rolls to women in clerical positions at its stateside headquarters, recruiting stations and supply depots, freeing men for the frontlines in Europe and other expeditionary efforts in support of national defense commitments. The demand for trained clerical staff was particularly great, and civilian women with those skills were seen as a capable source. Just four months after the Navy acted to bring in women on 2 August 1918, Major General Commandant George Barnett wrote the secretary of the Navy seeking authority to enlist women in the Marine Corps Reserve, specifically for clerical duty. The secretary, in concurring wrote:



National Archives, Record Group 127G, photo 515829
Pvt Opha May Johnson, the Marine Corps' first enlisted woman and first female noncommissioned officer, enrolled on 13 August 1918, the day after Secretary of the Navy Josephus Daniels authorized the enlistment of women in the Marine Corps Reserve.

* This article, one in a series devoted to U.S. Marines in the First World War, is published for the education and training of Marines by the History Division, Marine Corps University, Quantico, VA, as part of the Marine Corps' observance of the centennial anniversary of that war. Editorial costs have been defrayed in part by contributions from members of the Marine Corps Heritage Foundation.

¹ Nathaniel Patch, "The Story of Female Yeomen during the First World War," *Prologue Magazine* 38, no. 3 (Fall 2006).

NAVY DEPARTMENT

Washington

August 12, 1918

To: The Major General Commandant
 Subject: Enrollment of women in the Marine Corps Reserve for clerical duty.
 Reference: Letter of Major General Commandant, August 2, 1918.

1. Referring to letter of the Major General Commandant as per above reference and in particular to the statement contained in the second paragraph thereof, that it is thought that about 40 per cent of the work at the Headquarters, U. S. Marine Corps, can be performed as well by women as men: authority is granted to enroll women in the Marine Corps Reserve for clerical duty at Headquarters, U. S. Marine Corps, Washington, D. C., and at other Marine Corps offices in the United States where their services may be utilized to replace men who may be qualified for active field service with the understanding that such enrollment shall be gradual.

JOSEPHUS DANIELS,
 Secretary of the Navy²

Anticipating the secretary's approval, the Marines enlisted the first female, Opha May Johnson, who was working as a civil service employee at Headquarters Marine Corps, into the Marine Corps Reserve on 13 August 1918. Johnson was assigned as a clerk in the office of the Quartermaster.³ Later in August 1918, Marine recruiting offices received the following guidance on enrolling females in the Reserve:

1. Women to be enrolled as privates in the Marine Corps Reserve, Class 4, for a period of four (4) years, and the requirements to be the same as for men, except as modified by the "Circular Relating to the Physical Examination of Women" prepared by the Bureau of Medicine and Surgery, Navy Department.

2. To be between the ages of 18 and 40, but an applicant slightly under 18 years of age, who

is in every respect very desirable, to be enrolled with the consent of her parents, after authority from the Major General Commandant.

3. Women to be enrolled to be competent stenographers, expert bookkeepers, accountants, or typists.

4. No enrollments to be made without specific authority of the Major General Commandant.

5. All applicants to be informed that they will be subject to the rules and regulations that apply to enlisted men and that if their services or behavior are unsatisfactory they will be summarily disenrolled.

6. Pay and allowances while detailed as clerks to be the same as privates in the Marine Corps Reserve (\$110.00), in addition to which articles of uniform clothing are issued gratuitously.

7. Women enrolled to be entitled to the same privileges as enlisted men in the regular service regarding family allotments and insurance.

8. Opportunity for promotion to noncommissioned rank, with corresponding increase in pay, open to those who prove capable and industrious.⁴

The uniforms for Reserve female Marines were designed by the Marine Corps Quartermaster's Office and tailored for each woman from material similar to the men's uniforms. The issued items, described in the May 1936 article by former Corporal Lillian C. O'Malley, included "a specially designed skirt and coat, overcoat, chambray shirt, regulation tie, overseas cap, and campaign hat. The overseas cap, both in winter field and khaki, was the preferred head gear and the one usually worn by all women in uniform."⁵

Initially, each female reservist was issued one green wool jacket and skirt for the coming winter. The standard issue later became two winter and three summer khaki uniforms. The uniform issue consisted of jackets and skirts, six shirts, one overcoat, two neckties, and a pair of brown high-topped shoes for winter wear and low-cut oxfords for the summer khaki uniform. There was no dress uniform, and raincoats, gloves, and purses were not issued. The Marine Corps

² Lillian C. O'Malley, "Marine Corps Reserve (F)," *Marine Corps Gazette* 20, no. 2 (May 1936): 30.

³ Capt Linda L. Hewitt, USMCR, *Women Marines in World War I* (Washington, DC: History and Museums Division, 1974), 4.

⁴ O'Malley, "Marine Corps Reserve (F)," 30, 31.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 31.



National Archives, Record Group 127G, photo 528855
Marine Corps artist Morgan Dennis depicts a female Marine replacing a Marine clerk for duty in the operating forces.

emblem and appropriate chevrons were also issued. The female Marines were noted to be “very impressive with their ‘trim and snappy appearance.’”⁶

There was no boot camp or recruit training for these new female Marines, who were called “Marianettes” in both civilian and War Department news releases and in photograph captions. However, officials at Headquarters Marine Corps disapproved of the nickname, as did many of the female reservists who preferred to be called simply “Marine.”⁷ Training for the female reservists consisted of clerical work and close order drill. The drill, conducted by experienced male Marine noncommissioned officers (NCOs), took place in Potomac Park on the White

House Ellipse. The new Marines, under the tutelage of the demanding male NCOs, became sufficiently proficient to be included in numerous parades and ceremonies in Washington, DC.⁸ The Major General Commandant reviewed them on parade at the Ellipse on 3 February 1919, and the “entire unit was included in the guard of honor, facing the Presidential Reviewing Stand at the White House, for a parade of troops just returned from the front,” in early summer 1919.⁹

Women Reservists by the Numbers

Thousands of women stepped forward to be screened for enlistment in the Marine Corps Reserve in those first weeks after its authorization. In New York City, 2,000 women lined up at the recruiting office to be screened. After dictation and typing tests winnowed the line somewhat, interviews were conducted and only five were chosen.¹⁰

Faced with the challenge of all the enlisted women entering at the rank of private, some more mature women received early appointment to a higher rank. The September muster roll for Headquarters Marine Corps indicates that, on 11 September 1918, with just less than one month on active duty, Opha M. Johnson was appointed to sergeant, making her not only the first female reservist but the Corps’ first female NCO.¹¹

Florence Gertler, one of the five applicants from New York City, was enrolled as a private on 3 September 1918 and assigned to Headquarters Marine Corps. She rose in rank quickly: promoted to private first class in November, corporal in February 1919, and sergeant in April 1919.¹² Also promoted to sergeant in April 1919 were Violet Van Wagner and Florence M. Weidinger (enlisted 17 August 1918), Helen M. Mull (enlisted 29 August 1918), and Margaret L. Powers (enlisted 19 September 1918).¹³

Another female enrollee, Sophia J. Lammers, en-

⁶ Hewitt, *Women Marines in World War I*, 29.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 16.

⁸ O’Malley, “Marine Corps Reserve (F),” 31.

⁹ Hewitt, *Women Marines in World War I*, 33; and O’Malley, “Marine Corps Reserve (F),” 31.

¹⁰ Hewitt, *Women Marines in World War I*, 7.

¹¹ Headquarters Marine Corps, Muster Roll (MRoll), September 1918, Roll 0149, Ancestry.com.

¹² Headquarters Marine Corps, MRolls, September and November 1918, and February and April 1919, Rolls 0149, 0154, 0161, and 0167, Ancestry.com.

¹³ Headquarters Marine Corps, MRolls, August 1918, September 1918, and April 1919, Rolls 0147, 0149, and 0167, Ancestry.com.



National Archives, War Department photo 165-WW-598A-12

Women applicants surged into the New York recruiting office when the announcement was made that the Marine Corps was enrolling qualified women for clerical work as members of the Marine Corps Reserve.

listed on 4 November 1918 and reported for active duty at Headquarters on 9 November 1918.¹⁴ She had the distinction of being immediately appointed to sergeant due to her qualifications: a 1911 University of Nebraska graduate, former reference librarian for the university, and a reference librarian at the Library of Congress when in the Marine Corps Reserve (F), listing source materials for a history of the Marine Corps. As such, this previous education, training, and work experience made her highly qualified to research and assist in writing Marine Corps history.¹⁵

Another female accepted for enlistment was Martha L. Wilchinski. In August 1918, the Marine Corps Recruiting Publicity Bureau in New York City

enrolled Wilchinski as a private.¹⁶ With a degree in journalism from New York University, she was well prepared for service in the Publicity Bureau. During her active duty, several of her articles about service in the Corps were published in various newspapers and magazines, and she frequently appeared in publicity photographs. Wilchinski went on to become the editor of *Variety* magazine.¹⁷

Wilchinski rose to the rank of sergeant by July 1919 and was transferred to the Assistant Adjutant and Inspector Office, San Francisco, California, that month.¹⁸ There, Wilchinski was discharged from active duty, but remained as an Inactive Reserve until her enlistment obligation was completed in August 1922.¹⁹

¹⁴ Headquarters Marine Corps, MRoll, December 1918, Roll 0156, Ancestry.com.

¹⁵ Marine Recruiting Station Washington, DC, MRoll, October–December 1918, Roll 0157, Ancestry.com; and Nebraska Alumni Association, "Alumni Directory: Classes 1873–1914," *University Journal*, January 1919, 8.

¹⁶ Marine Corps Recruiting Publicity Bureau, MRoll, August 1918, Roll 0147, Ancestry.com.

¹⁷ Hewitt, *Women Marines in World War I*, 27.

¹⁸ Office of the Assistant Adjutant and Inspector, San Francisco, MRoll, July 1919, Roll 0174, Ancestry.com.

¹⁹ Marine Corps Reserve Division, Headquarters Marine Corps, MRoll, July 1922–September 1922, Roll 0216, Ancestry.com.



Defense Department (Marine Corps) 518891

Cpl Martha L. Wilchinski, assigned to the Recruiting Publicity Bureau in New York City, marches alongside USS *Arizona* (BB 39) seagoing Marines when the ship was anchored in the North River (south end of the Hudson River) in late 1918.

Another impressive female enlistee who attained the rank of sergeant outside of Headquarters was Lela E. Leibrand. She enlisted on 31 October 1918 at the recruiting station in New York City and began her service as a clerk in the Adjutant and Inspector Office on 8 November.²⁰ Muster rolls show her on “Special Temporary Duty” with the Publicity Bureau in New York City, during 11–17 March 1919 and again in 17–21 May 1919.²¹ She then transferred to the Central Recruiting District, Kansas City, Missouri, on 25 May 1919.²² Leibrand continued on the inactive Reserve list until discharged at the rank of sergeant in December 1922.²³

While assigned to the Marine Corps Publicity Bureau, Leibrand did routine office work but also produced articles published in the *Recruiters' Bulletin*, *Leatherneck* newspaper (it later became *Leatherneck* magazine) and *The Marines Magazine*. She had been a Hollywood scriptwriter in 1916 prior to entering the Marine Corps. Her talents, honed in the burgeoning

movie business prior to active duty, proved very useful for the Marines. Among her credits as a Marine is one of the first training films, “All in a Day’s Work.”²⁴

While with the Publicity Bureau, Leibrand’s articles provided insight into life as a female reservist at Headquarters. Her article, “The Girl Marines,” tells of the Navy Department taking over the Vendome Hotel in downtown Washington to house the women away from the men. She describes drill, beginning early in the morning on the Ellipse behind the White House, with each female company having a Marine NCO in charge. She recorded the names of these early drill instructors for the female leathernecks: Sergeant Arthur G. Hamilton, Corporal Edward E. Lockout, Corporal Guy C. Williams, and Private Herbert S. Fitzgerald.²⁵

Leibrand returned to the film industry after the war, first working at Fox Studios in New York City, but eventually making a name for herself and promoting her daughter’s career. Although married more than once, she was well known by the last name: Rogers. Her daughter, Ginger Rogers, gained fame in the movie and entertainment industry.²⁶

With assignments restricted to clerical-type duties, even with the expanding need for manpower, the numbers of Marine female reservists were small. By 1 September 1918, there were 31 women enlisted; as of 1 October there were 145; and by 1 November, there were 240 female reservists. In July 1919, when disenrollment from active duty began, there were 226 reservists.²⁷ At its greatest strength, the Marine Corps Reserve (F) numbered only 305.²⁸

While the numbers were few, the impact was significant. As early as mid-September 1918, the Major General Commandant was able to authorize the transfer of men “at Marine Corps Headquarters in staff offices, and in recruiting offices, employed on clerical or other routine duty and who were classified under selective service regulations, provided, of course, their service could be spared without det-

²⁰ Headquarters Marine Corps, MRoll, November 1918.

²¹ Headquarters Marine Corps, MRolls, March and May 1919, Rolls 0165 and 0171, Ancestry.com.

²² Central Recruiting District, MRolls, May and July 1919, Rolls 0170 and 0174, Ancestry.com.

²³ Marine Corps Reserve Division, Headquarters Marine Corps, MRoll, December 1922, Ancestry.com.

²⁴ Hewitt, *Women Marines in World War I*, 27.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 76.

²⁶ Sabrina Messenger, “Lela Leibrand Rogers,” Women Marines Association, 26 July 2013.

²⁷ Maj Edwin N. McClellan, *The United States Marine Corps in the World War* (Washington, DC: Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, 1920), 77.

²⁸ O’Malley, “Marine Corps Reserve (F),” 18.



Courtesy of former Capt Linda L. Hewitt Seagraves, USMCR

Marines participate in a 1919 parade in Philadelphia commemorating Marine Corps expeditionary service.

ment to the government service and the women clerks available were competent to fill their places.”²⁹

With the majority of the female Reserve billets at Headquarters by January 1919, there were 88 female reservists assigned to the Adjutant and Inspector’s Office, 53 in the Quartermaster’s Office, and another 28 in the Paymaster’s Office.³⁰

Release From Active Duty

On 11 November 1918, when the Armistice began, there were 277 women in the Marine Corps Reserve (F).³¹ With the war over, Sergeant Opha M. Johnson, the first female to enlist in the Marine Corps Reserve (F) and the Corps’ first female NCO, was discharged on 28 February 1919.³² She had etched her name sol-

idly into Marine Corps history. However, the need for additional administrative support was not over. The clerical demands of bringing the Marines home, ensuring the accuracy of pay records, and accounting for the supplies while drawing down the force required the skills of the women reservists for several additional months. The Naval Appropriations Act for the fiscal year beginning 1 July 1919 called for “placing on inactive duty within 30 days of all female members of the Marine Corps Reserve, but also provided for the retention of such that were necessary and whose service was satisfactory, in the capacity of temporary civil service appointments, and about 75 percent were retained under this arrangement.”³³

By July 1919, the urgent need for experienced

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Hewitt, *Women Marines in World War I*, 27.

³¹ McClellan, *United States Marine Corps in the World War*, 76.

³² Headquarters Marine Corps, MRoll, February 1919, Roll 0160, Ancestry.com.

³³ *Annual Reports of the Navy Department for the Fiscal Year 1919* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1920), 126.

clerical staff had diminished, in spite of the fact that most of the Marine ground forces would not return until August 1919.³⁴ So, in July, to comply with the congressional direction, the Major General Commandant ordered "all reservists on clerical duty at Headquarters . . . to inactive status prior to 11 August 1919."³⁵

As is traditional in the Marine Corps, a farewell ceremony, including speeches from the Major General Commandant and secretary of the Navy, was conducted in honor of the female reservists departing active duty. The grand event, recognizing the service of the women Marine Reserves in time of great need, was held on the White House lawn. Both the Major General Commandant and the secretary applauded their commitment and performance.³⁶

Based on their service, the female reservists earned several lifelong benefits. In addition to the option of burial in a national cemetery, these included:

1. Eligibility for government insurance.
2. \$60 bonus on discharge and World War Adjusted Compensation at the rate of \$1.00 a day for home service performed during the period from April 5, 1917, to July 1, 1919. Some states also provided a bonus for legal residents.
3. Medical treatment and hospitalization under the regulations of the Veterans Administration for service connected disability.
4. Five per cent added to earned rating in examinations for entrance to classified service under Civil Service Regulations.³⁷

The women who remained in the Reserves in an inactive status, serving out their enlistment, received a \$1 monthly retainer pay until discharged at the end of their four-year enlistment. In addition, they were awarded a Good Conduct Medal and World War I Victory Medal when they were discharged from the Inactive Reserves.³⁸

Once a Marine

The saying "Once a Marine, Always a Marine" was certainly ascribed to by female reservists. Although no longer a part of the uniformed Marine Corps, some women remained in government service working for the Marine Corps. One was Jennie F. Van Edsinga. Van Edsinga joined in September 1918 and was released from active duty to complete her enlistment as a corporal in the Inactive Reserve on 31 July 1919.³⁹ Corporal Van Edsinga changed her name to Jane F. Blakeney in 1921 after marrying Arthur Blakeney, a fellow Marine, while she was still in the Inactive Reserve.⁴⁰ Before retiring from civil service, Jane Blakeney rose to head the Marine Corps' Decorations and Medals Branch at Headquarters Marine Corps.⁴¹

Blakeney's reference book, *Heroes*, first published in 1957 and dedicated to her late husband Major Arthur Blakeney, remains a significant source of information on Marines earning medals for valor from the Civil War era to 1955 and includes histories and facts about the highest military medals awarded by our country.⁴² With this book, her contributions to Marines, their families, and historians, which began in 1918, continue through today.

Another of the original female reservists who remained with the Marine Corps was Private Alma Swope. She worked in the Supply Department for more than 44 years. She was the last female reservist from World War I who worked in the civil service to retire. When she retired in 1963, General David M. Shoup, Commandant of the Marine Corps, personally congratulated Swope on her service to Corps and country.⁴³

Two of the World War I female reservists, Lillian O'Malley Daly and Martrese Thek Ferguson, came back into the Corps for World War II.⁴⁴ One of these two, Martrese Thek Ferguson, ordered to the Divi-

³⁴ McClellan, *United States Marine Corps in the World War*, 78.

³⁵ Hewitt, *Women Marines in World War I*, 40.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 40, 41.

³⁷ O'Malley, "Marine Corps Reserve (F)," 45, 46.

³⁸ Hewitt, *Women Marines in World War I*, 43.

³⁹ Reserve District No. 2, New York, MRoll, July-September 1918, Roll 0149, Ancestry.com; and Headquarters Marine Corps, MRoll, July 1919, Roll 0174, Ancestry.com.

⁴⁰ Headquarters, Eastern Reserve District, Philadelphia, MRoll, July-September 1921, Roll 0204, Ancestry.com.

⁴¹ Hewitt, *Women Marines in World War I*, 43.

⁴² Jane Blakeney, *Heroes: U.S. Marine Corps, 1861-1955; Armed Forces Awards, Flags* (Washington, DC: Guthrie Lithograph, 1957).

⁴³ Hewitt, *Women Marines in World War I*, 43.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 43, 44.



Defense Department (Marine Corps) 521222

Marine Corps Reserve (Female) and U.S. Navy Reserve (Yeomen) march in one of the numerous wartime parades in Washington, DC, in 1918-19.

sion of Reserve, Headquarters Marine Corps, in April 1952 for training, extended her active service into the Korean War era.⁴⁵

Lillian O'Malley Daly, then Lillian C. O'Malley, enlisted in the Marine Corps Reserve (F) in November 1918, moved to an Inactive Reserve status as a corporal on 31 July 1919, and remained in the Inactive Reserve until her four-year enlistment period was complete. She was discharged on 8 November 1922.⁴⁶ Later married, she came back into the Marine Corps as a reservist with a direct commission to captain, one of only eight women who entered the recently authorized Marine Corps Women's Reserve (MCWR) as an officer in early 1943, straight from life as a civilian. Daly was assigned as the West Coast liaison officer for the MCWR.⁴⁷

As the West Coast liaison officer, Daly represented the Marines at various civilian functions.⁴⁸ By January 1944, she was the adjutant for the Women Reserve Battalion, Headquarters, Fleet Marine Force, San Diego area.⁴⁹ She transferred to the East Coast



Official U.S. Marine Corps photo A412893

LtCol Martrese Thek Ferguson served on active duty in the Marine Corps Reserve during three wars: WWI, WWII, and on active duty for training at Headquarters Marine Corps during the Korean War.

as a major in January 1945, assigned to the Women's Reserve Battalion at Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, North Carolina.⁵⁰ The end of World War II found her assigned to 3d Reserve District, Marine Barracks, Navy Yard, New York.⁵¹ Daly was listed in the Officers Volunteer Reserve, 4th Marine Corps Reserve District, as a major in 1952, promoted to lieutenant colonel on the Inactive Status Personnel list in October 1952, and last noted on the October 1957 roll "Inactive Status List, Officer Volunteer Reserve, 4th Marine Corps Reserve and Recruiting District, Philadelphia," while a lieutenant colonel.⁵²

⁴⁵ Company C, Headquarters Battalion, Headquarters Marine Corps, Division of Reserve, Unit Diary (UD), 7 April 1952, Roll 0251, Ancestry.com.

⁴⁶ Headquarters Marine Corps, MRoll, November 1918 and July 1919; and Marine Corps Reserve Division, HQMC, MRoll, October-December 1919, Rolls 0154, 0174, and 0219, Ancestry.com.

⁴⁷ Hewitt, *Women Marines in World War I*, 45.

⁴⁸ "Detachments: San Diego," *Leatherneck*, September 1943, 68.

⁴⁹ Headquarters Company, Marine Corps Women's Reserve Battalion, MRoll, January 1944, Roll 0717, Ancestry.com.

⁵⁰ 4th Marine Corps Reserve District (MCRD), Philadelphia, Roll 2040, Ancestry.com; 4th MCRD, Philadelphia, Inactive Status Personnel UD, 26 October 1952, Roll 2041, Ancestry.com; and 4th Marine Corps Reserve and Recruiting District, Philadelphia, Inactive Status Personnel UD, 31 October 1957, Roll 3725, Ancestry.com.

⁵¹ General Service Unit, 3d Reserve District, Marine Barracks New York, MRoll, July 1945, Roll 1003, Ancestry.com.

⁵² 4th MCRD, Philadelphia, Roll 2040; 4th MCRD, Philadelphia, Inactive Status Personnel UD, 26 October 1952; and 4th MCRD, Philadelphia, Inactive Status Personnel UD, 31 October 1957.



National Archives, Record Group 127G, photo 530164A

Assistant Secretary of the Navy Franklin D. Roosevelt, fourth from the left, with the Secretary of the Navy Josephus Daniels standing to his left, join USMCR(F) Marines and Navy Yeomen (F) at their final review in Washington, DC on 30 July 1919.

There was no indication she served in an active-duty status during the Korean War-era, although she was carried on the Reserve rolls in an inactive status.

Martrese Thek enlisted in the Marine Corps Reserve (F) on 7 September 1918 in New York City and was assigned to Headquarters Marine Corps.⁵³ When released from active duty, she returned to civilian life, married, and as Martrese Thek Ferguson, reentered the Corps as a cadet in the newly formed MCWR in April 1943.⁵⁴ That same month, she graduated first in the initial women officers' course conducted at Mount Holyoke College, Massachusetts.⁵⁵

By the end of the war, she was a major and commanding 2d Headquarters Battalion, Headquarters Marine Corps, Henderson Hall, Virginia.⁵⁶ In March 1952, Lieutenant Colonel Ferguson was again on the Marine Corps' muster rolls, now called the Unit Dia-

ry (UD), as a reservist in Company C, Headquarters Battalion, Headquarters Marine Corps, Henderson Hall, Virginia, in the Office of the Division of Reserve.⁵⁷ She was transferred to the "Inactive Status List" in 1956.⁵⁸

Making Their Mark

While the active duty for those women who labored so intently to serve the Marine Corps and the nation in time of war was limited to not quite one year, it was impactful. In his annual report to the secretary of the Navy, prepared for Congress in 1919, the Major General Commandant noted, "The termination of hostilities on Nov. 11, 1918, precluded the practical working out of the principal idea in enrolling women in the Marine Corps Reserve for clerical duty, namely, that of releasing for active service in

⁵³ Headquarters Marine Corps, MRoll, September 1918.

⁵⁴ Marine Detachment Naval Reserve Midshipmen's School, MRoll, April 1943, Roll 0600, Ancestry.com.

⁵⁵ Hewitt, *Women Marines in World War I*, 44.

⁵⁶ Headquarters Company, 2d Headquarters Battalion, Headquarters Marine Corps, MRoll, April 1945, Roll 0955, Ancestry.com.

⁵⁷ Company C, Headquarters Battalion, Headquarters Marine Corps, UD, 7 April 1952.

⁵⁸ 1st Marine Corps Reserve and Recruiting District (MCRRD), Boston, Inactive Status List of Officers Volunteer Reserve, UD No. 11-56, 30 April 1956, Roll 3394, Ancestry.com.

the field practically all the enlisted men who had been and were being utilized in the performance of such duties. However, the majority of the women so enrolled rendered capable and efficient service, and about 75 per cent of them have elected to remain on in a temporary civil status as provided by the Act of July 11, 1919, so that the working efficiency of those

headquarters and the staff and recruiting offices outside of headquarters at which women were stationed has not been interfered with by the sudden demobilization of the female reserve.”⁵⁹

It would be 24 years and another great world war before the Marine Corps once again turned to women to meet wartime manpower needs. ♦ 1775 ♦

⁵⁹ “Annual Report of the Major General Commandant to the Secretary of the Navy for the Fiscal Year Ended 30 June 1919,” in *Annual Reports of the Navy Department for the Fiscal Year 1919*, 2637, 2638.