LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

A PECULIAR SERVICE: THE CHRONOLOGICAL EXPLOITS AND EVOLVING NATURE

OF THE CONFEDERATE STATES MARINE CORPS

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Contents

Introduction

Before the first shots of the American Civil War echoed across Charleston Harbor on April 12, 1861, the Confederate States Marine Corps had already been established and was being shaped into small yet integral part of the Confederate States of America's military. Throughout the entirety of the war, these marines served both on land and sea and earned the reputation of being some of the South's most formidable soldiers. However, few today know of the existence of the Confederate Marines and are surprised to learn that these men participated in several of the most famous and decisive engagements of the war. This forgotten nature of the Confederate States Marines is largely due to the fact that the marines were overshadowed by the Confederate Army and Navy, yet in almost every naval and coastal engagement, the marines provided valuable service to the Confederate war effort. Although technological advancements and circumstance changed the roles of the Confederate Marines throughout the war, they constantly adapted, and continued to be an important part of the Confederate military. Despite its small size and its overshadowed nature, the story of the Confederate States Marine Corps is an important part of Civil War history and deserves to be told.

When Confederate Secretary of the Navy Stephen Mallory advocated for the creation of a marine corps during the early days of the Confederate States of America, this idea was neither novel nor revolutionary. Since antiquity, man has sailed and fought on the water, and although naval warfare has changed and adapted with advancements in fighting techniques and technology through the ages, the idea of a marine has remained constant since Ancient Greece. However, like naval warfare itself, the roles of marines have changed over time. By the time the American Civil War began, the role of a marine was to protect naval bases, protect ships during naval engagements, and board enemy ships with the intention of fighting hand-to-hand until the ship

was theirs. Because of the many port cities along the East and Gulf Coasts of America as well as the many rivers throughout the country which were vital to trade and transportation, Confederate leaders quickly realized the importance of a strong naval force which could perform these roles, and the creation of the Confederate States Marine Corps was simply logical.

After the act creating the corps was passed, however, the task of organizing the corps still remained. Fortunately for the Confederacy, many other marine corps had been previously established and could be used as a template for the Confederate organization. The two primary models were the Royal Marines and, of course, the United States Marine Corps. From the United States Marines, the Confederate Marine Corps borrowed most of their regulations with few amendments. From the Royal Marines, however, the Confederate Marines borrowed their organizational structure, which largely defined the way they operated throughout the war.[1] For centuries prior to the American Civil War, the place of the marine, who was not fully sailor yet not fully infantryman, had been debated, but largely using the Royal Marine model, the Confederate States Marine Corps was organized into a battalion-sized unit which could be broken into small detachments commanded by their own officers. This organization allowed the corps to maintain its autonomy while serving in many different capacities.

The main early-war services of the marines were manning coastal guns on the Gulf Coast, acting as harbor police using small gunboats, and serving as guards aboard raiding ships and other vessels. All of these duties were rather typical marine roles of the time, but many of the marines preferred shipboard duty above the others. When serving aboard a sailing ship, marines often performed the exciting action of serving as a sharpshooter from atop the riggings, but while this stirring duty was a rather typical image associated with marines at the time, very few

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[1] Ron Field, *American Civil War Marines 1861-65* (Oxford, UK: Osprey Publishing, 2004), 30.

Confederate Marines actually experienced this role. The Federal Navy's quickly established blockade around the South was partially to blame for this because it greatly limited the number of large seafaring Confederate vessels which could support this form of service. However, the most prominent reason why only a few Confederate Marines performed this role throughout the war was because of the creation of the famed ironclad.

When the CSS *Virginia* proved that the age of wooden sailing vessels was over at the Battle of Hampton Roads, the roles of marines drastically changed. Following this battle, marines rarely acted as sharpshooters from ships, and even more rarely did they board enemy vessels during open naval warfare due to the limited exposed decking and maneuverability of ironclads. While it greatly changed the way marines served, the introduction of the ironclad did not cause marines to become obsolete. The Confederate Marines adapted by using their skill with naval artillery to become an integral part of an ironclad's crew and often manned the port and starboard guns on ironclads during the remainder of the war.

However, as the war continued and the Confederacy began to lose many of its ships, many of the marines were sent to shore to defend port cities and river routes. One of the most important land engagements the Confederate Marines fought in was the first battle of Drewry's Bluff in which they helped defend Richmond from an impending attack. The marines' role in this battle proved their effectiveness on land and caused Companies A, B, and C to be based at Drewry's Bluff for the remainder of the war. From the Bluff, detachments from these companies could be sent out to perform special missions such as raiding Union vessels. During the later years of the war, this land-based structure proved to be one of the corps greatest assets.

Recruitment for the Confederate Marine Corps continued to a limited extent throughout the entirety of the war, but after the first three companies were stationed at Drewry's Bluff,

recruitment efforts were temporarily reinvigorated. Due to these renewed efforts and the promise of serving aboard an ironclad, many new men joined the corps, and Companies D, E, and F were created. These companies primarily served in the deeper South and saw more shipboard action than the marines further north.

Whether in the Upper South or the Lower South, however, Confederate Marines who were not actively engaged against the enemy typically carried out various forms of military police service throughout the entirety of the war. Typically, marines serving in this role were assigned to naval yards or other naval property and stood guard against espionage and sabotage from the enemy and unruly behavior from other Confederates. In addition to this type of police service on land, Confederate Marines also acted as guards aboard Confederate vessels. When they were not manning the naval guns aboard these ships, the marines ensured that the enlisted sailors did not act in a disorderly manner and guarded any prisoners aboard the ship. However, many victories and exciting exploits were intermixed with this service.

Although the corps experienced much victory during its short life and helped keep many Southern ports open for the majority of the war, the Confederacy it fought to protect eventually began to crumble. During the final year of the war, many of the ships and coastal forts the marines helped protect were either captured or destroyed. Without these to protect, the marines again seemed to be obsolete. However, they again adapted to their circumstances and fought as infantrymen until finally surrendering at Appomattox Court House, Bennett Place, and a handful of other locations throughout the South.

Throughout the course of the war, the Confederate States Marine Corps helped prolong the life of the Confederacy by playing an integral role in protecting Richmond, keeping port cities open, and holding key positions in the battle lines of multiple battles. Additionally, the

marines received the thanks of the Confederate Congress at least four times during the war because of their actions in battle.[2] However, within a few decades after the war's end, the Confederate Marines were all but forgotten. During the 150 years since the end of the war, only a few books and articles concerning the Confederate Marines have been published, and today, the short-lived corps barely receives a mention in the seemingly infinite historiography of the Civil War.

The lack of scholarship concerning the Confederate States Marine Corps is largely due to three main reasons. The first of these reasons is the fact that the corps was quite small in comparison to other units during the war. Although an act was passed which allowed the corps to be composed of ten companies of one hundred men each, the corps never had more than six companies, several of which were not created until later in the war. Because of this, the Confederate Marines never numbered more than approximately six hundred men at any given time throughout the war, although approximately 1,200 served during the corps' existence.[3]

The second reason is because the Confederate Marines were constantly overshadowed by the Confederate Army and Navy. Much of the historiography of the war is focused on battles such as Bull Run and Gettysburg, where the armies fought large exciting battles where generals and brigades earned their fame. Because the marines did not fight in such engagements, they are often ignored in the greater context of the war. Yet, the Confederate Marines did serve in a number of famous battles. However, in these engagements, the marines often fought alongside the Confederate Navy. Because the marines were typically broken into small detachments, the

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[2] Ralph W. Donnelly, *The Confederate States Marine Corps: The Rebel Leathernecks* (Shippensburg, PA: White Mane Publishing Company, 1989), 270.

[3] Ibid., 4. Using the number of all Confederate Marines who served throughout the war and an estimate of how many men, both Confederate and Union, who fought during the war (3,000,000), it can be determined that the Confederate Marines made up 0.0004 percent of the men who took part in the war. Additionally, the Confederate Marines only accounted for 0.0012 percent of the men who fought for the Confederacy.

naval personnel greatly outnumbered the marines and often earned most of the credit during these battles. When the battles were over, the official reports concerning them often mentioned and gave credit to the marines, but those references were barely footnotes in comparison to the lengthy descriptions of the Navy's exploits. Due to this lack of attention in reports, scholarly works published since the war which rely on those reports for information largely pass over the Confederate Marines furthering, the trend of them being largely ignored in the historiography of the war.

The third reason for the lack of scholarship concerning the Confederate Marines is the lack of records produced by the Confederate States Marine Corps. Throughout the war, the corps maintained detailed records of the marines' exploits, but as Confederate forces prepared to evacuate Richmond towards the end of the war, all marine records were destroyed. The lack of surviving records greatly cripples the historian seeking information about the corps, and he is left to glean information from personal letters and the mentions of the marines in Army and Navy records. Fortunately, many of the officers of the corps were well-educated, and several often wrote lengthy letters to their families throughout the war. However, several of these officers did not join the corps until later in the war and their letters provide only a partial picture of the life in the corps. Additionally, the marines who left behind these letters often spared their families many details of their service. Also, while these letters give considerable detail about the experience of a marine officer, they provide little information about the experience of the enlisted marine. All of these factors and problems with primary sources further hinder the production of scholarship focused on the Confederate Marines.

Despite these obstacles to researching the Confederate States Marine Corps, the information needed to produce scholarly works concerning the corps does exist. The wealth of

reports and other sources from the war must simply be sifted through until the information concerning the marines emerges. Often the briefest mention of the marines gives their precise location in a battle and allows the historian to discern the marines' role and actions in that battle. Although this type of research can lack specific details at times, it allows the fascinating story of the corps and its exploits to be told.

The story of the Confederate Marines has long been neglected, but certainly deserves a place in the historiography of the Civil War due the unique aspects of the corps. One of these unique aspects was the fact the Confederate States Marine Corps was one of the few regular units in the Confederate military, which caused it and the men who were a part of it to be held to a higher standard. This led to the Confederate Marines being extensively drilled which made them some of the best heavy artillerists in the Confederate military. Also due to their unique training, the Confederate Marines were trained in the style of infantrymen as well as artillerists which allowed them to adapt throughout the war. This ability to adapt allowed the corps to serve in a variety of roles and protect key strategic and logistical assets of the Confederacy throughout the war.

Ultimately, the Confederate States Marine Corps is a peculiar part of Civil War history and does not neatly fit into any particular aspect of the historiography of the conflict. However, perhaps the Confederate Marines should not fit into another aspect of Civil War history and deserve their own place in the scholarship of the war. The Confederate Marines did not only have a unique experience during the war, but also played an important role in the Confederate war effort and course of the war. Arguably, the corps prolonged the war on multiple occasions by playing integral roles in protecting Richmond and vital logistical interests. However, with the defeat of the Confederacy, the short-lived corps was over. Much like the smoke from one of the

great guns the marines operated, the corps lingered for a moment and then was gone. However,

the Confederate States Marines Corps' story deserves to be told and remembered.

Chapter 1: Marine Origins and Traditions

As the American Civil War raged on in August of 1862, Colonel Commandant Lloyd J. Beall of the Confederate States Marine Corps wrote to Confederate Secretary of the Navy Stephen Mallory concerning the state of his Corps. In his letter, Beall described the duties of his Corps as "the peculiar service."[4] Although the duties of a marine were still new and peculiar to Beall during the early years of the war, the idea of a hybrid soldier, one who fought like an infantryman but protected ships, was ancient. To fully understand the Confederate Marines, the history of the peculiar service of marines must be considered from its earliest days.

Thousands of years before Beall penned his letter to Mallory, man began experimenting with watercraft, and eventually, civilizations such as Egypt were able to build large boats capable of carrying goods and men over vast distances for the purpose of trade.[5] However, these trade ships quickly learned that they must contend with ships of war. The earliest warships bore little distinction from trade ships, and their crews acted as both sailors and soldiers.[6] Several problems occurred, however, when there was no true distinction between sailor and soldier. The first problem was that the sailors were not the best trained in the art of war, and the second problem was that sailors were often fatigued from rowing when an engagement began.[7] For this reason, Greek ships began carrying hoplites whose primary role was to board enemy vessels and destroy their crews. However, it was not until the Romans ventured to sea that the first true marines in history appeared.

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[4] II N.O.R. 2, 251: Letter from Colonel Lloyd J. Beall, C.S.M.C., to Secretary of the Navy Stephen Mallory concerning the officers of the marine corps, August 14, 1862.

[5] Lionel Casson, *The Ancient Mariners: Seafarers and Sea Fighters of the Mediterranean in Ancient Times* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), 3.

[6] Ibid., 30.

[7] Ibid., 39.

The Romans were an unlikely maritime power due to their history and tradition of fighting on land, yet it was the Romans who made many of the most notable advancements in early naval warfare. While the Romans were formidable soldiers on land, they were intimidated by the sea and the naval powers who sailed upon it.[8] To compensate for their inexperience in naval warfare, the Romans turned to innovation during the First Punic War and adopted the Syracusan *corvus*.[9] This innovation was a simple gangplank with a spike on the end of it which was dropped onto the deck of an enemy ship and allowed men to rush across to the other ship and fight using land-based tactics and formations. Because of this new capability, eighty legionaries were assigned to each Roman vessel, in addition to forty typical marines of the time.[10] Unlike the forty lesser-trained marines who served in a defensive role on the ship, however, the legionaries were trained to attack and capture enemy vessels after the *corvus* was dropped.[11] This tactic and use of marines gave the Romans a decisive victory over the Carthaginians at the Battle of Mylae and helped Rome become a formidable naval power. The true significance of this battle and use of marines, however, is that it was the first time in history that professionally trained marines were effectively used in an offensive role. Although marine tactics changed and adapted as centuries passed and empires crumbled, it was the marines of antiquity who paved the way for the early marine corps of the Middle Ages and modern period.

The first true marine corps was organized sometime during the first years of the thirteenth century by the Doge Enrico Dandolo of Venice for use in the Fourth Crusade.[12] Interestingly, this early marine corps was a regiment divided into ten companies much like the Confederate

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[8] Casson, *The Ancient Mariners*, 143.
[9] Ibid., 146.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Domenico Carro, *Vox Navalis*: (Lecce, Italy: Youcanprint, 2015), 107.

Marine Corps.[13] Although this early unnamed marine corps earned its place in history through its part in the amphibious assaults against Constantinople during the Fourth Crusade, little mention of it appears again in history until the "Fanti da Mar" was organized in 1550, which traced its origins back to Dandolo's marines.[14] With the beginning of the early modern period, the age of organized marine corps finally dawned.

Thirteen years before the "Fanti da Mar" was organized, the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V became increasingly interested in nautical instruments and the naval components of his army.[15] This interest in his navy led the emperor to organize the *Compañías Viejas del Mar de Nápoles*, to which the modern Spanish marine corps, the *Infantería de Marina*, traces its origins.[16] Originally, this marine force was specifically trained to protect ships operating in close proximity to the Holy Roman Empire. However, it later took on the role of carrying out amphibious landings throughout the vast Atlantic World.[17] Despite the Spanish marine corps' early beginnings and rich legacy, other similar forces soon emerged and surpassed it.

In 1622, one of the most formidable and influential marine corps of the colonial world began under the instruction of Cardinal Richelieu of France.[18] The French marine corps, known as the *Compagnies Ordinaires de la Mer*, or the Ordinary Sea Companies, was created to perform the typical roles of protecting naval vessels and boarding enemy ships.[19] However, the

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[13] Field, *Civil War Marines*, 30. Although the CSMC was never able to fill each company to full strength as the Venetians did, the same regimental structure was used by Dandolo's marine corps and the CSMC.

[14] Carro, *Vox Navalis*, 107.

[15] Gertrude Von Schwarzenfeld, *Charles V: Father of Europe* (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1957), 175.

[16] "Tercio de Armada (TEAR)," Ships/Units, Armada Española, accessed January 23, 2019, http://www.armada.mde.es/ArmadaPortal/page/Portal/ArmadaEspannola/buquesinfanteria/prefLang-es/01infanteria-marina-tercio-armada-tear. Because the modern Spanish Marine Corps traces the origins of its Tercio de Armada (a single part of the corps) to the *Compañías Viejas del Mar de Nápoles*, it boasts that it is the oldest continuously operating marine corps in the world.

[17] Ibid.

[18] *Les Troupes de Marine 1622-1984* (Paris, France: Charles-Lavauzelle, 1986), 27.

[19] Ibid.

French marines were also tasked with two new duties which became integral parts of the image and idea of a marine. The first of these new duties was the operation of naval artillery aboard vessels.[20] This role was not only important due to the fact that artillery was the primary means of attack and defense aboard ships, but also because it complemented and helped equip the French marines for their second new duty, which was protecting the seaports of the empire.[21] Because artillery aboard ships and artillery mounted in port fortresses was rather similar, the French marines were well equipped to perform both of these duties. As years passed and battle tactics changed, however, the French marines adapted their duties and took on new responsibilities.

These changes took place perhaps most prevalently during the Seven Years' War and in the years leading up to it. During this time, the third generation of French marines, *Les Compagnies Franches de la Marine*, were the only regular French troops in the New World and increasingly began to act as light infantry. Perhaps one of the best examples of the French marines acting in this manner was during the Battle of Monongahela. Prior to the battle, Fort Duquesne was defended by only a small number of French marines and natives.[22] However, after the fort was reinforced with approximately eight hundred natives, Captains of the Marines Daniel Liénard de Beaujeu and Jean-Daniel Dumas decided to attack the British and American force moving toward their position.[23] Although neither army was fully prepared for the battle, the French and natives were able to quickly regather after suffering initial casualties and use the terrain to their advantage.[24] After several hours of fighting, the French marines along with their native allies claimed an overwhelming victory. Throughout the next seven years after this battle,

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[20] Ibid.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Jonathan R. Dull, *The French Navy and the Seven Year's War* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), 31.

[23] "The French Account of the Battle on Monongahela," *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, Jan 8, 1756.

[24] Dull, *The French Navy*, 31.

the French marines and natives often fought alongside one another. Often, this combination of marines and natives was the result of necessity, but nevertheless, it helped add the role of light infantryman to the growing list of duties a marine was to carry out.

In addition to this new duty, the French marines also performed the standard duties of marines and helped defend port cities such as Louisbourg and, for a time, all of Canada.[25] The French marines also aided in amphibious assaults on strongholds such as Fort William Henry.[26] Overall, the Seven Years' War saw one the largest uses of marines and one of the greatest expansions of their duties in a war up until that point in history. However, France was not the only global power expanding their marine corps during this time. In the same year that the Battle of Monongahela occurred, France's greatest rival, England, officially formed its own marine corps.

Although the Royal Marines of the United Kingdom were officially formed into a permanent force in 1755, the corps traces its lineage back to 1664 and enjoys a rich history.[27] Prior to 1755, England called up men to act as marines during wartime but disbanded them shortly after the war was over.[28] Of course, several problems accompanied this form of marine organization. The first problem was that a new group of soldiers needed to be trained every time the marines were reformed. Some argued that soldiers from other line regiments could be transferred to act as marines while others vehemently opposed the idea stating that a soldier trained for duty on land was worthless on a ship.[29] Although the temporary marines served admirably and did well in combat such as during the Twelfth Siege of Gibraltar (September

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[25] Ibid., 25-26.
[26] Ibid., 81-82.
[27] Britt Zerbe, *The Birth of the Royal Marines 1664-1802* (Suffolk, UK: Boydell and Brewer, 2013), 24.
[28] Ibid., 22.
[29] Ibid., 19.

1704-May 1705), there was of course a period of learning that each temporary corps had to go through. The second problem was that the marines did not neatly fit into the army or the navy which caused problems with the structure of command. Initially, the regimental structure of land-based infantry forcers was imposed upon the marines.[30] While this system of regiments who marched and fought together worked well for the infantry, it proved inefficient for the marines who were often divided among several ships. If they were on a separate ship than their commanding officer, the marines were left to wonder whether they were to answer to their lower-ranking officers or the captain of the ship. Reciprocally, the officers on board a ship wondered who could give orders to the marines. These problems, along with others, persisted throughout the late-seventeenth and early-eighteenth centuries and were not fully resolved until the creation of a separate corps of marines.

By the mid-eighteenth century, the United Kingdom held claim to land on five continents and used its navy to enforce its power in those lands during peacetime.[31] During these times of peace, however, there was still a need for marines aboard the navy's ships, but because the marines were disbanded during peacetime, the navy was ordered to train seamen to take on the responsibilities of the marines.[32] Although this system worked well enough during times of peace, many recognized that the navy needed a larger trained force of marines to relieve the sailors should war break out. By 1755, the kindling of war between Great Britain and France was simply awaiting a spark. Knowing this, Great Britain officially created *His Majesty's Marine Forces* in April 1755.[33]

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[30] Ibid., 27.
[31] Ibid., 41.
[32] Ibid., 42.
[33] Ibid., 44.

During the months before the creation of the corps of marines when many in the public first began realizing war was on the horizon, an excitement concerning marines began to arise and rumors began to spread. By mid-February, newspapers began to report that men were enlisting and being impressed into the service of marines.[34] By mid-April, the excitement had spread from London to the American colonies, and newspapers in Philadelphia began reporting that forty marine companies of one hundred men each were to be raised and divided into ten regiments.[35] This type of excitement surrounding marines began to become a part of the idea and image of marines in the following years. Unfortunately, the excitement in 1755 led to several misconceptions.

The main misconception that arose concerned how the marines were to be organized. Instead of the old army regimental structure, which was not conducive to the duties of marines, the new corps of marines was divided into companies grouped into three distinct divisions.[36] Each of these divisions consisted of sixteen or seventeen companies stationed in one of Great Britain's main dockyards.[37] This divisional structure allowed large amounts of marines to be in the same area and quickly deploy on navy ships if the need arose. However, each company within the division could also act much more independently than if it were a part of a regiment, which allowed a company to break down into the necessary number needed for a ship without disrupting a larger unit.[38] The independence this system provided not only worked well when the marines were divided among several ships, but also when marines were ordered to carry out their

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[34] "London, February 15," *The Derby Mercury*, February 14, 1755.
[35] "London, February 11," *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, April 17, 1755.
[36] Zerbe, *Royal Marines 1664-1802*, 53.
[37] "Sunday's Poft," *The Ipswich Journal*, April 12, 1755. The three dockyards that the marines were stationed in were Chatham, Portsmouth, and Plymouth.
[38] Zerbe, *Royal Marines 1664-1802*, 53.

typical duties on land.[39] Another benefit to this structural system was that it gave great authority to the commanding officer of a company which largely answered the questions of to whom the marines were to answer. However, this system still did not answer the questions of to whom the corps of marines was to answer as a whole.

When the corps of marines was first created as a permanent force, it was placed under the control of the Admiralty, yet it was still unclear for a time whether the force fell under the Navy's control or if it was its own entity.[40] However, after a time and several discussions, the Admiralty decided that the marines would be a new and distinct unit within the military.[41] After these questions were answered and other logistical problems were solved, all that was needed was men to fill the companies.

Shortly after the decision to create the corps of marines was made, newspapers across Great Britain such as the *Ipswich Journal* began reporting that fifty companies were to be raised and encouraged men to join.[42] However, not all of the men who served as Great Britain's first official marines had a choice in doing so. One of the ways that men were "recruited" into the marines was through impressment. Shortly after the call for companies to be raised had been sent out, orders were given to the Justices of the Peace throughout Great Britain to send "all able-bodied idle and disorderly Persons, who cannot, upon Examination, prove themselves to exercise and industriously follow some lawful Trade or Employment" to serve in the corps of marines.[43] These "idle and disorderly persons" included those who had been convicted of petty theft or

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[39] Ibid., 54. Approximately two-thirds of the marines were stationed in the dockyards of the ships they served on, the other one-third was stationed a bit more inland from the dockyard to carry out various responsibilities.

[40] Ibid., 44.

[41] Ibid., 45.

[42] "Sunday's Post," *The Ipswich Journal*, April 12, 1755. This article provides an excellent list of the officers of the corps of marines as of April 1755 and gives an overview of the basic structure of the corps.

[43] Zerbe, *Royal Marines 1664-1802*, 74.

other lesser crimes and were not seen as a benefit to society.[44] However, this form of filling the

ranks of the marines was typically only resorted to during wartimes when men were needed

quickly.

Having men volunteer for service in the corps of marines was the preferred method for

raising companies, but of course, incentives were offered to make men more eager to volunteer.[45]

Some of these incentives offered were the promise of land in the American colonies or the

promise of a successful career at home.[46] Unfortunately for the men who volunteered because of

these incentives, many of these promises were never honored. Other men, however, saw through

these empty promises and had to be convinced to volunteer in a different way. To convince these

men, the government made threats of impressment so that men would volunteer before they were

forced to join the marines.[47] Through a combination of these successful tactics, men began

quickly volunteering for the marines and initially seemed to be in "high spirits" according to one

Edinburgh newspaper.[48] Eventually, the companies were filled, and *His Majesty's Marine Forces*

were almost ready for war. All that was left was training.

The life of a British marine largely revolved around three basic forms of training which

paralleled the duties of marines and equipped them for war.[49] Because marines were charged

with protecting ships, taking part in amphibious assaults, and fighting on land, the first and most

important drill involved using small arms in company formations.[50] The second form of training

involved separating companies into platoon sizes to simulate when marines from several

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[44] Ibid.
[45] Ibid., 77.
[46] Ibid.
[47] Ibid.
[48] "Extract of a Letter from Gofport," *The Caledonian Mercury*, August 12, 1755.
[49] Zerbe, *Royal Marines 1664-1802*, 182.
[50] Ibid., 183. While small arms training was perhaps the most important part of a marines training, the British often did not train with live rounds due their close proximity to civilians while on land. However, marines were able to train with live rounds while at sea.

companies were called to act as a single unit aboard a ship.[51] While marines could perform these

first two types of drills aboard ships, the last form of training, battalion drills, had to take place

on land.[52] Because of this, it was imperative that marines form into battalions as soon as they

landed so that they could gain experience in functioning as part of a larger unit.[53] Although

drilling never ended, after several months of training, the newly formed marines were finally

ready for war.

By nature of the island nation, the British way of war is to attack the enemy at various

points from the sea.[54] During the colonial era when Britain's holdings, as well as those of their

enemies, rimmed the Atlantic, this practice of amphibious warfare was perfectly conducive to

Britain's military, especially the marines. While the traditional role of a marine had long

included amphibious operations, this aspect of the marine image was furthered during the wars

of the late eighteenth century, and the newly formed corps was forced to quickly prove itself in

this role through a trial by fire during the Seven Years' War.

Arguably the first world war, the Seven Years' War included more colonial conquests

than any other war during the eighteenth century, and many of these conquests were carried out

through amphibious assaults.[55] One of the first amphibious operations that the marines were

involved in was along the coast of West Africa in 1758.[56] Prior to 1758, Great Britain had known

only defeat and needed even a small victory to raise morale in the military as well as on the

home front. In an attempt to gain such as success, a small naval squadron was sent to capture

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[51] Ibid., 184.
[52] Ibid., 185.
[53] John Mac Intyre, *A Military Treatise on the Discipline of the Marine Forces, When at Sea*: *Together with Short Instructions for Detachments Sent to Attack on Shore* (Charleston, SC: Nabu Press, 2011), 73.
[54] Zerbe, *Royal Marines 1664*-1802, 180.
[55] Ibid., 181.
[56] Ibid., 189.

French territory along the Senegal River.[57] The force sent on this expedition included two warships, their crews, and two hundred marines.[58] Upon reaching their destination, the marines deployed and helped the sailors bring ashore artillery in preparation to attack Fort Louis.[59] However, before significant fighting took place, the French forces surrendered the fort and the port of St. Louis, giving the British marines their first noteworthy victory.[60] After this victory, the marines were ordered to perform garrison duty at the fort until others could be sent to relieve them.[61] Much like their French counterparts, the British marines became quite familiar with this type of garrison duty throughout the war. However, the marines also saw much more fighting in operations largely based off their success at Fort Louis.[62]

Of course, for the British marines during the Seven Years' War, the typical fight began on a ship, where the men were prepared to advance into combat. When preparing for an amphibious siege of a fort, each marine was given two flints for his musket, sixty rounds of ammunition, a bayonet, a canteen, and rations for three days while they were still aboard the ship.[63] Next, they boarded large flat-bottom boats which could easily navigate across the shoals which protected many port cities and coastal forts.[64] Then, the boats moved to predetermined locations on shore where the men disembarked in an orderly fashion to commence the attack on the fort, which had been previously bombarded by warships.[65] In tandem with the navy, the marines were a formidable and effective force in this role. Although the British marines served in more capacities than amphibious landings during the Seven Years' War, their experience in this

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[57] Ibid.
[58] Zerbe, *Royal Marines 1664*-1802, 189.
[59] "Cleves, June 3," *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, August 24, 1758.
[60] Ibid.
[61] Zerbe, *Royal Marines 1664*-1802, 189.
[62] Ibid., 191.
[63] Ibid., 193.
[64] Ibid.
[65] Ibid., 194

role most greatly affected the idea of a marine for future generations and prepared them for their next war.

After the end of the Seven Years' War, many marines served in garrisons throughout Canada and other parts of the world. However, they did not have to wait long before they were again called on to fight. Within months of the "shot heard round the world," the British marines were involved in the American Revolution. The first major engagement involving the marines was during the Battle of Bunker Hill, when the First and Second Battalions of marines fought alongside regular infantry during the first and second charges against the Americans.[66] Despite several suffering casualties, including one of their majors, the marines performed rather well in this battle.[67] However, the success of the British marines during the Revolution was only beginning at Bunker Hill.

Initially, the British marines had several advantages during the American Revolution. The first was that the American colonies depended on port cities commercially, much like the French colonies in West Africa did during the Seven Years' War. Because of this and the marines' experiences in West Africa, the British had a rather good understanding of how to effectively use their marines against the Americans. The second advantage was the military intellect of Admiral Richard, Lord Howe, and his brother, General William Howe, who created a system of ships to rapidly transport troops along the American coast, giving Britain a significant advantage over the Americans. This system was particularly compatible with the marines who were used to quickly deploying from ships. The marines exemplified their usefulness in this type of rapid deployment during the siege of Fort Cumberland when two companies of marines along

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[66] "Copy of a Letter from the Hon. Lieutenant-General Gage to the Earl of Dartmouth. Dated Bofton, June 25, 1775," *The Derby Mercury*, July 28, 1775.
[67] Ibid.

with other troops were sent from Canada to aid in protecting the fort.[68] Upon arriving at the fort,

the marines and other troops rapidly deployed and repulsed the besieging Americans.[69] This

ability to move and deploy quickly proved to be one of the marines' greatest assets throughout

the American Revolution.

In addition to this rapid movement and striking, marines saw service in many other

various roles. One such role was creating diversions. The marines accomplished this by using the

same rapid movement employed in attacking, but instead, they would be quickly transported by

the navy to a point away from where the actual attack or landing was to take place. This caused

the Americans to believe that the operation was going to happen at a different point than it

actually was.[70] While quickly attacking and creating diversions was the greatest portion of the

marines' duties during the Revolution, they also acted as light infantry and were placed in

reserve as infantry during battles. Overall, the American Revolution helped the British marines

perfect their amphibious landings and attacks and furthered the concept of a marine. These

refinements and new roles, however, were soon put to the test.

In 1802, the British organization became the Royal Marines, and in less than a year, they

were involved in the Napoleonic Wars, which set a precedent for all other major wars of the

nineteenth century.[71] During these wars, the marines certainly participated in amphibious

assaults, but they also reverted back to their ancient tradition of protecting ships and fighting

while at sea. While many of the marines' duties during naval battles were similar to those of the

marines of old, advancements in technology and warfare caused them to take on new

responsibilities. One of the new roles which marines took on during the Napoleonic Wars was

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[68] Zerbe, *Royal Marines 1664*-1802, 199.
[69] Ibid.
[70] Ibid., 200.
[71] Otto Von Pivka, *Navies of the Napoleonic Era* (New York: Hippocrene Books, 1980), 177.

that of a seaman-sniper.[72] In this role, marines climbed onto the rigging of the ship with their

muskets and attempted hit the officers aboard enemy vessels.[73] Of course, success in this role

was rather limited due to the inaccuracy of the muskets they used and the movement of the ships.

In addition to this new role, the marines also boarded enemy ships and fought hand-to-hand with

the enemy as did their predecessors dating back to the Romans. The heavy involvement of

marines aboard ships during the Napoleonic Wars is clearly displayed by almost any newspaper

from the time that records the death tolls of naval battles. By 1815, many Royal Marines had

paid the ultimate price for Great Britain and the Corps had become the most seasoned marine-

type organization in the world. However, as the Royal Marines fought their way to this

distinction, other countries throughout the world watched and learned from them.

Perhaps no other country was more affected and influenced by the Royal Marines than

the United States of America. During the French and Indian War, several companies of

American marines had been raised to fight alongside the British, although they were used only in

a limited capacity.[74] However, by late 1775, the Americans saw that it was necessary to raise

their own force of marines to fight their former comrades. On November 10, 1775, Congress

passed a resolution to raise two battalions of marines to serve aboard the infant Continental

Navy, established a month previously.[75] These marines were to serve in the traditional roles of

protecting ships, keeping order aboard ships, attacking enemy vessels, and carrying out

amphibious operations. However, before the marines could carry out these duties, the battalions

first had to be raised.

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[72] Robert B. Bruce, Iain Dickie, Kevin Kiley, Michael F. Pavkovic, and Frederick C. Schneid, *Fighting Techniques of the Napoleonic Age 1792-1815: Equipment, Combat Skills, and Tactics* (New York: Thomas Dunne Books, 2008), 216.
[73] Ibid.
[74] Edwin Simmons, *The United States Marines: 1775-1975* (New York: Viking Press, 1974), 1.
[75] Ibid., 2.

Unlike the British who raised their companies by impressing petty thieves or making empty promises, the Continental Congress was quite particular about who they wanted in the ranks of the marines. Congress made this point rather clearly in its resolution to create the marine battalions when it stated, "no persons be appointed to office, or enlisted into said (marine) Battalions, but such as are good seamen, or so acquainted with maritime affairs as to be able to serve to advantage by sea when required."[76] Furthermore, the Continental Congress went about recruiting these experienced seamen much differently than the British had in 1755. Benjamin Franklin noted that fifers and drummers whose drums were painted to look like the Gadsden flag were sent out to kindle patriotism in the hearts of seamen and encourage them to join the marines.[77] Additionally, the Continental Congress published an "invitation" to join the marines in the *Virginia Gazette*, which listed the responsibilities of being a marine as well as the benefits, which included bounties and prizes in the case of permanent injury.[78] These tactics of recruitment worked rather well, and the two battalions were quickly raised and ready for duty within a few months.

Because the Continental Congress filled these battalions with seasoned seamen and because of America's desperate need to form a marine force quickly, the Continental Marines did not undergo the same amount of training the British marines had in 1755. Instead, they were deployed on ships and headed for sea by February 1776.[79] The objective of the small fleet was to secure the coasts of North and South Carolina and then attack any British ships found off the coast of Rhode Island.[80] However, Commodore Esek Hopkins decided to instead sail to the

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[76] *Journals of the Continental Congress* 3, 348: "Resolved, That two Battalions of marines be raised," November 10, 1775.

[77] Simmons, *Marines: 1775-1975*, 2.

[78] "The Invitations of the Continental Congress, to their brethren who are Sons of Liberty and Seamen, to engage in the defense of the Liberties of America," *The Virginia Gazette*, January 20, 1776.

[79] Simmons, *Marines: 1775-1975*, 3.

[80] Ibid.

Bahamas and capture gunpowder and other military supplies for the Continental Army from Nassau Town, which was protected by two stone forts.[81] Upon reaching the port city, two hundred marines were loaded into two captured enemy vessels in attempt to sail into port and surprise the enemy, but the plan was discovered and ultimately failed.[82] After this failure, the two hundred marines and fifty sailors landed at distance from the forts and marched towards them, whereupon both surrendered without putting up a fight.[83] Unfortunately, the acting governor of the Bahamas had sent most of the gunpowder away from the forts during the previous night, yet this victory was still significant and is considered the first victory of the American marines.[84]

During the return voyage to Rhode Island, the Continental Marines also took part in their first naval battle. On the morning of April 6, 1776, the small fleet encountered the British corvette *Glasgow* and commenced an attack after the ship attempted to come alongside one of the American ships.[85] The attack on the *Glasgow* began with a marine throwing a grenade from the riggings of one of the American ships onto the deck of the enemy vessel.[86] After this initial attack, several other American ships opened fire on the *Glasgow*, but the British ship slipped away before it could be captured or destroyed.[87] However, this small engagement gave the newly formed Continental Marines experience in the most traditional role of marines, and the expedition proved their worth.

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[81] Ibid.

[82] Ibid., 3-4.

[83] "Extract of a letter from Eseck Hopkins, Esq; Commander in Chief of the American fleet, to the President of the Congress, dated on board the ship *Alfred*, New London Harbor, April 9, 1776," *The Virginia Gazette*, May 4, 1776.

[84] Ibid.

[85] Ibid.

[86] Simmons, *Marines: 1775-1975*, 5. This is an interesting point which shows that marines at this time not only acted as snipers from the riggings of ships but also acted as grenadiers who could preemptively create significant chaos and damage aboard an enemy ship before it was boarded.

[87] Ibid.

Following the success of the raid on Nassau, the Continental Congress approved the raising of four additional companies of marines, and five months later, influenced American marines forever when it issued uniform regulations for the marines.[88] These uniforms consisted of green coats with white facings, a white waist coat, white breeches, a white belt, and a hat.[89] However, the most iconic piece of the Continental Marines' uniform was a leather stock or collar which was intended to protect the marine's neck from the enemy's cutlass and to promote good posture.[90] This obscure piece of the marines' uniform which was used until after the Civil War gave the marines their lasting nickname of "leathernecks."[91]

Within three months after the Continental leathernecks received their new uniforms, they saw action again. As the battle of Trenton drew near, a battalion of marines joined General Washington's Continental Army and acted as infantry.[92] Although the marines did not play a particularly significant role during this battle, their involvement shows that the Americans used their marines to provide extra support when needed much like the French and British. After this battle, the Continental Marines did not see any noteworthy action for almost a year, but in 1778, a small group of marines carried out one of the most daring landing operations of the American Revolution.

By 1778, the young naval officer John Paul Jones had proved his talent and was given the command of the twenty-gun *Ranger*.[93] As he prepared to set sail for France, Jones sent out fife and drum under Captain Matthew Parke to recruit marines to serve aboard the *Ranger*.[94] After approximately twenty to twenty-five marines joined the ship, the *Ranger* set sail and captured or

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[88] Ibid. This uniform regulation was issued on September 5, 1776.

[89] Von Pivka, *Navies of the Napoleonic Era*, 216.

[90] Simmons, *Marines: 1775-1975*, 5.

[91] Ibid.

[92] Ibid., 7.

[93] "From the Cumberland Packet Extraordinary," *The Derby Mercury*, April 24, 1778.

[94] Simmons, *Marines: 1775-1975*, 7.

destroyed several British ships while at sea.[95] Then, Jones decided to make a daring assault on

the British port of Whitehaven where marines and sailors used small boats to get to shore and

disable the batteries defending the city.[96] Following the success at Whitehaven, Jones and his

crew sailed to Kirkcudbright, Scotland where a small force of marines went ashore and stole

many fine possessions from the house of Lord Selkirk.[97] During both of these attacks,

Continental Marines invaded and attacked British soil, and while these two attacks did little

logistically to impact the war, they struck a psychological blow to the British and increased

morale in the colonies.

Throughout the American Revolution, the Continental Marines took on a responsibility

which was not one of the traditional roles of a marine. This duty was accompanying important

dispatches and items to their intended destination and insuring their safe arrival. In fact, this is

the type of mission Jones and his crew had recently accomplished when they attacked England

and Scotland.[98] As the war drew to a close and General Cornwallis's army was trapped at

Yorktown, the few marines who were still in active service carried out one such mission in

which they accompanied one million silver crowns from France through land occupied by

loyalists.[99] Shortly after the Continental Marines accomplished this last mission, Cornwallis

surrendered, and with the official end of the war in 1783, the Continental Marines were

disbanded.[100]

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[95] Ibid.
[96] "From the Cumberland Packet Extraordinary," *The Derby Mercury*, April 24, 1778.
[97] "Whitehaven, April 23," *The Leeds Intelligencer and Yorkshire General Advertiser*, April 28, 1778.
[98] Simmons, *Marines: 1775-1975*, 7. Jones and his crew were given orders to carry dispatches reporting the surrender of General Burgoyne's army at Saratoga to Benjamin Franklin who was at the time in France.
[99] Ibid., 12. The silver crowns which were escorted by the Continental Marines were used to open the Bank of North America.
[100] Ibid.

Within three years of the American Revolution's end, the young nation had sold all of the ships in its navy and possessed only a remnant of a military. During that same time, America was quickly learning the threats and responsibilities which accompanied being a sovereign nation. These threats and responsibilities had caused America to consider and even begin rebuilding the navy during the early 1790s, but by 1796, problems with France were reaching a climax and the need for a navy and marines became apparent.[101] During the discussions about reforming the military, Samuel Sewall who was chair of the House Naval Committee advocated for the creation of a formal corps of marines and went as far as to introduce a bill which would create the corps.[102] Sewall's bill passed both houses of the government and was signed into law by President John Adams on July 11, 1798.[103]

The newly formed United States Marine Corps did not have long before they were sent into battle in an undeclared war. During this Quasi War with France, the United States Navy and Marines primarily served along the United States' southern Atlantic coast and in the Caribbean, where they captured several French vessels.[104] These naval engagements went on for two years before a peace between the United States and France was finally reached. However, in less than a year, America found itself in a true war.

In May 1801, Yusef Karamanli, the Bey of Tripoli, declared war on the United States and began the First Barbary War.[105] President Thomas Jefferson responded by sending some of the United States' best war ships to the Mediterranean. In October 1803, one of these ships, the USS

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[101] Ibid., 13. France had asked the United States become their ally and go to war against Great Britain during the 1790s. The French believed that they were owed this due to their part in the American Revolution, and when the United States did not agree to fight against Britain, the French allowed their raiders to take American merchant vessels.

[102] Ibid., 13-14.

[103] Ibid.

[104] "Raleigh, Tuesday, June 24, 1800," *Weekly Raleigh Register*, June 24, 1800.

[105] Simmons, *Marines: 1775-1975*, 16.

Philadelphia, ran aground while patrolling Tripoli Harbor and was quickly captured thereafter.[106] However, in February 1804, a small force of marines under the command of Navy Lieutenant Stephen Decatur used a small captured Tripolitan ship to sneak aboard the *Philadelphia* and set fire to it to prevent its use by the enemy.[107] The true shining moment for the marines in the First Barbary War, however, came in the spring of 1805 during the Battle of Derna. During this battle, Marine First Lieutenant Presley O'Bannon led seven other marines along with mercenary forces to capture the harbor fort at Derna and turned its guns on the Tripolitans.[108] At the end of the battle, two marines lay dead, but their legacy and what the marines had accomplished was forever enshrined as a part of United States Marine history and lore.[109] Although the First Barbary War ended shortly after the victory at Derna, more trouble for America and work for the marines soon arose.

While unrest had been stirring for years, the War of 1812 officially began on June 18, 1812, when Congress declared war on Great Britain due to the impressment of American sailors.[110] The first engagements of this war were fought at sea, and both Royal and Untied States marines played an integral role in defending and attacking enemy vessels. The first true naval engagement was fought between the USS *Constitution* and the HMS *Guerriere*.[111] As the two ships neared one another, the American marines prepared to board the *Guerriere*, but as one of the marine lieutenants climbed atop the railings, he was killed by a Royal Marine.[112] The

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[106] Glenn Tucker, *Dawn like Thunder: The Barbary Wars and the Birth of the U.S. Navy* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1963), 300.

[107] Ibid.

[108] Leo J. Daugherty, *The Marine Corps and the State Department: Enduring Partners in United States Foreign Policy, 1798–2007* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland Press, 2009), 11-12.

[109] Simmons, *Marines: 1775-1975*, 16-17.

[110] "Extracts of Letters: Washington, June 18th, 1812," *Hartford Courant*, June 30, 1812. By 1812, more than 6,000 American sailors had been impressed into the British navy.

[111] Simmons, *Marines: 1775-1975*, 18-19.

[112] Ibid., 19.

American marines quickly returned fire and killed many of the British sailors and marines on the

Guerriere's top deck before the British surrendered their sinking vessel.[113] Two months later, the

marines fought a similar engagement when the USS *Wasp* and the HMS *Frolic* faced one

another. During this battle, rough weather caused the sea to toss the two ships around

violently.[114] However, the small group of marines aboard the *Wasp* fought gallantly and

continued to fire their muskets across the enemy's deck. When the two ships came alongside one

another and the American marines prepared to board the *Frolic*, they were surprised to find that

their musket fire along with cannon shot had killed nearly all of the men on deck and that "the

deck was slippery with blood."[115] With little resistance, the *Frolic* was taken. These actions were

rather typical for marines during the War of 1812, but they also fought in many places besides

the sea.

Throughout the war, a small portion of the marines fought around the Great Lakes while

others protected coastal towns in the South. However, perhaps the strangest involvement of

marines during the war was at its very end. During the latter months of 1814, Marine Captain

Daniel Carmick and approximately three hundred marines fought the creole pirate Jean Lafitte

near New Orleans before finally burning his base of operations.[116] Shortly after this, General

Andrew Jackson began preparing for a British attack on the city, and the marines joined Jackson

to bolster his ranks.[117] On January 8, 1815 the British attacked Jackson's force, of which slightly

less than ten percent were marines.[118] Within an hour, Jackson's forces suffered fewer than

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[113] Ibid.
[114] "Captain Jacob Jones of the United States Navy," *The North-Carolina Star*, July 30, 1813.
[115] Ibid.
[116] Simmons, *Marines: 1775-1975*, 25-26.
[117] Ibid., 26. Upon joining Jackson's army, the marines found themselves fighting alongside Lafitte's crew who Jackson agreed to pardon if they fought in defense of New Orleans. Much of the American artillery used in the battle was manned by these pirates.
[118] Ibid.

twenty casualties while they inflicted over two thousand and soundly defeated the British.[119]

Following this victory, Congress formally recognized Carmick and the marines for their valor in

defending the city.[120] However, after the marines were praised, they were left with the question

of what to do now that the war was over.

Some of the marines deserted and had bounties placed on their heads while other

remained in the service and continued to serve in limited capacities.[121] Some of these marines

fought against slave ships which were still attempting to operate after the ban on the international

slave trade, while other fought in the Seminole Wars and patrolled the Florida coast.[122] Later, the

marines served in the west and during the Mexican-American War, taking part in several

amphibious landings which many of them had little previous experience in.[123] However, one of

the most significant engagements for Marines during this period occurred during 1859 in a quiet

Virginia town.

On October 16, 1859, John Brown, whose name was already widely known for his

actions in Bleeding Kansas, entered the small town of Harper's Ferry, Virginia where one of the

United States' armories was located. Brown, operating under the name Isaac Smith, brought with

him eighteen men and many weapons. Their intent was to take the armory's weapons, incite a

slave insurrection, and flee into the surrounding mountains where they would fight a guerilla

style rebellion. The insurgents easily took control of the unguarded armory, gathered several

hostages from the town, and made the engine house their stronghold.[124] Shortly after Brown and

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[119] "The Battle at New Orleans," *Carlisle Weekly Herald*, February 16, 1815.
[120] "United States Congress in Senate, Wednesday, Feb. 15," *Sentinel and Democrat*, March 10, 1815.
[121] "Ninety Dollars Reward. Deserted from the Marine Corps, the Following Marines: on the 15th July, 1815," *Louisiana State Gazette*, August 15, 1815.
[122] Simmons, *Marines: 1775-1975*, 29-32. The international slave trade was made illegal in the United States in 1808.
[123] Ibid., 34.
[124] Ibid.

his men accomplished all this, the local Virginia militia arrived but did not engage the

insurgents.[125] Because the militia would not attack, a detachment of marines was sent to put

down the rebellion and were placed under the highest ranking Army officer in the area, Lt. Col.

Robert E. Lee.[126] On October 18, Lee first sent Lieutenant J.E.B Stuart to offer Brown a peaceful

surrender and protection for his men.[127] However, after Brown declined this offer, Stuart

motioned to a group of marines under the command of Major William Russell and Lieutenant

Israel Green giving them the signal to attack.[128]

First, two marines used sledgehammers in an attempt to break through the door of the

engine house where Brown, his men, and the hostages were.[129] After this tactic failed, the

marines used a ladder as a battering ram and broke through the door.[130] The marines quickly

stormed the building similarly to how they would attack in the amphibious assaults they were

trained for. Russell and Green entered the building first and the insurgents fired, killing one of

the marines standing behind the officers.[131] Following this, the marines fired at the insurgents,

and Lieut. Green drew his sword and slashed Brown's neck which caused him to become

incapacitated.[132] Within minutes, two of Brown's sons lay dead, along with several others, and

the insurgents who were still living were quickly captured.[133] As the marines brought the

prisoners and bodies out of the engine house and the hostages were brought to safety, the

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[125] Ibid.

[126] "The Late Rebellion from Our Own Reporter," *The Daily Exchange*, October 19, 1859.

[127] Ibid.

[128] Ibid. Discrepancy exists concerning who actually led the marines into the engine house due to the fact that Major Russell was a staff officer who could not command a force in the field. For this reason, Lieut. Green is typically credited with leading the attack despite his holding a lower rank. However, both men were among the first to enter the engine house.

[129] Ibid.

[130] Ibid.

[131] Ibid.

[132] Ibid.

[133] Ibid.

townspeople who had gathered nearby began to cheer for the marines and hailed them as heroes.[134] However, the marines' work was not over. Several men armed with rifles demanded the death of the prisoners, but the marines defended the prisoners and escorted them to safety where they could await trial.[135] As they led off the prisoners, all was well again in the quiet Virginia town and it seemed that the marines had prevented the bloodshed Brown and his men intended to create.

What the marines and the country did not know at the time was that the marines had captured who Herman Melville later called "the Meteor of the War." Just over a year after John Brown was hanged, South Carolina seceded from the Union, and four months later, Fort Sumter was fired upon which brought about what some have called "the war fought in ten thousand places." In some of these places, there were marines clad in grey.

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[134] Ibid.
[135] Ibid.

Chapter 2: Beginnings and Change

Shortly after South Carolina seceded on December 20, 1860, small forces of U.S.

Marines, which were not even of company strength, were sent to protect coastal forts and naval

yards from Southern rebels.[136] As these detachments attempted to hold federal property, many

who held loyalty to the South began to falter, and after the Confederate States of America was

formed on February 4, 1861, many United States Marines resigned to become officers in the

Confederate military.[137] However, as the United States Marine Corps dwindled, Confederate

Secretary of the Navy, Stephen Mallory, planned and budgeted for the creation of the

Confederate Navy and Marine Corps.[138] After Mallory's initial planning, the Confederate

Congress introduced an act to be approved by President Jefferson Davis which provided for the

organization of a Navy. Although this act primarily concerned the creation of the Navy, Section

Five of the act officially created the Confederate Marine Corps and outlined how the corps

would be organized.[139] This section of the act also specified the pay of marines as well as what

rations they would receive.[140] On March 16, 1861, President Davis approved the act, and

Mallory's Navy and Marine Corps became a reality.[141]

Under the act passed on March 16, the Confederate Marine Corps was to be organized as

a battalion consisting of a major, a quartermaster, a paymaster, an adjunct, a sergeant major, a

quartermaster sergeant, and six companies. Each of these companies was to be composed of a

captain, a first lieutenant, a second lieutenant, four sergeants, four corporals, one hundred men,

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[136] Simmons, *Marines: 1775-1975*, 44. One of these forces which was stationed at the Pensacola Naval Yard was marched upon by Alabama militia, but capitulated without a fight.

[137] Ibid.

[138] Donnelly, *Confederate States Marine Corps*, 2. On March 12, 1861, Stephen Mallory and the Confederate Congress created a budget for the Confederate Marine Corps which allowed for a marine battalion to be composed of six companies and led by a major.

[139] "An Act to Provide for the Organization of the Navy," *The Daily Delta* March 30, 1861.

[140] Ibid.

[141] Ibid.

and two musicians.[142] Mallory borrowed this battalion and company organizational structure

from the Royal Marines, as this form of organization allowed for companies to be more easily

deployed as individual units.[143] Initially, this structure of six companies seemed to be sufficient.

However, after the firing on Fort Sumter and the secession of three more states, the Confederate

Congress passed an act which called for an expansion of the Confederate Marine Corps. [144] On

May 20, President Jefferson Davis approved the act and the corps was enlarged to forty-six

officers and 944 enlisted men, divided into ten companies and commanded by a colonel instead

of a major.[145] After the structure of the corps was determined, two pressing tasks were left to be

accomplished.

The first of these tasks was to enact laws by which the officers of the corps would be

governed. This task was accomplished rather easily and was addressed in section nine of the

March 16 act, which stated, "All laws of the United States heretofore enacted for the government

of the officers, seamen and marines of the Navy of the United States, that are not inconsistent

with the provisions of this act, are hereby adopted and applied to the officers, seamen and

marines of the Navy of the Confederate States."[146] Essentially, the Confederate Marine Corps

largely copied the laws of the United States Marine Corps with few amendments.

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[142] Ibid.

[143] Raimando Luraghi, *A History of the Confederate Navy* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1996), 27. In many ways, the Confederate Marine Corps looked more to the British Royal Marines than the United States Marine Corps.

[144] "An Act Amendatory of an Act to Provide for the Organization of the Navy," *The Weekly Advertiser*, May 29, 1861. This enlargement of the Confederate Marine Corps provided for colonel, a lieutenant colonel, a major, a quartermaster (major), an adjunct (major), a paymaster (major), a sergeant major, a quartermaster sergeant, and two musicians.

[145] Donnelly, *Confederate States Marine Corps*, 3. This structure resembled an infantry regiment more than a marine battalion. However, this structure had been used before by Dandolo's marines in the thirteenth century. Although the corps was expanded, the actual number of men serving at any given time throughout the war only barely exceeded the number of men specified in the original March 16th act.

[146] "An Act to Provide for the Organization of the Navy," *The Daily Delta*, March 30, 1861.

The second task was to appoint officers and fill the ranks. Because the Confederate

Marine Corps was a regular unit, officers were not elected as in volunteer regiments but rather

appointed to their commands.[147] One of the first officers to be appointed after the expansion of

the corps was Lloyd James Beall.[148] Beall was the son of Captain Lloyd Beall, who was a

veteran of the American Revolution.[149] Beall himself, who had fought in the Black Hawk War,

the Seminole Wars, and the Mexican-American War, had a long and distinguished military

career before he was appointed colonel of the marine corps.[150] However, like many other

Confederate officers who formerly served in the United States Army like their fathers and

grandfathers before them, Beall saw the South as the true heir to the spirit of 1776 and resigned

from the army shortly after the firing on Fort Sumter.[151] Shortly thereafter, Beall offered his

services to the Confederacy and was appointed Colonel and Commandant of the Confederate

Marine Corps on May 23, 1861.[152]

Around the same time that Colonel Beall was appointed, the corps gained several officers

who possessed experience as marines. On May 31, 1861, the *Richmond Dispatch* reported that

Major Henry Tyler, Captain George Terrett, Captain Algernon Taylor, Lieutenant J. E. Muire,

and Lieutenant Israel Green all had resigned their commissions in the United States Marine

Corps.[153] Within the next seven months, four of these five men were appointed to staff officer

positions in the Confederate Marine Corps.[154] Perhaps the most notable of these men was Israel

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[147] Donnelly, *Confederate States Marine Corps*, 3.
[148] Ibid.
[149] David M. Sullivan, ed., *Biographical Sketches of the Commissioned Officers of the Confederate States Marine Corps* (Shippensburg, PA: White Mane Publishing Company, 2001), 17.
[150] Ibid.
[151] "Military Movements and Army Intelligence," *The Times-Picayune*, May 10, 1861. Colonel Beall was married to a South Carolinian, which may have also influenced his decision to join the Southern cause.
[152] Sullivan, *Biographical Sketches*, 17. Although Beall had no previous experience as a marine, he did much to direct and shape the corps and served as Colonel Commandant for the duration of the war.
[153] "Dismissals and Resignations in the Navy and Marine Corps," *The Richmond Dispatch*, May 31, 1861.
[154] Donnelly, *Confederate States Marine Corps*, 8.

Green, who was born and raised in the North, led the attack against the engine house at Harper's

Ferry, slashed and captured John Brown, and had become a rather famous and recognized U.S.

Marine before the war. However, like Colonel Beall, these career marines' beliefs led them to

fight for the South and serve the Confederacy until the war's end.

In addition to appointing officers, the ranks needed to be filled with enlisted personnel.

The efforts to recruit these men began shortly after the March 16 act when Captain Reuben

Thom set out to recruit men in the capital of the Confederacy, at that time in Montgomery,

Alabama.[155] Shortly after Captain Thom's appointment, several other captains and lieutenants

were appointed and sent shortly thereafter to New Orleans in hopes of recruiting experienced

seamen and sailors to serve as marines.[156] While none of the larger newspapers seem to have run

advertisements for recruiting marines and there is little documentation as to how they were

recruited, there is reason to believe that a significant number of the men in what later became

Captain Alfred Van Benthuysen's Company B were former U.S. Regular soldiers who were

stationed in Texas and deserted to join the Confederacy.[157] Whether they were deserters,

experienced boatmen, or simply Southern sympathizers, by June 29, 1861, at least 194 marines

had been recruited.[158] Even before this date, however, some of them had already received

assignments and were stationed throughout the South.

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[155] Field, *Civil War Marines*, 30. Captain Thom was the first officer appointed in the corps. Shortly after his appointment, Captain Thom set up a recruiting office in Montgomery, Alabama where he recruited the first three enlisted marines. One of these enlisted marines was Jacob Scholls who had served as a U.S. marine for eight years and fought in the Mexican-American War.

[156] Donnelly, *Confederate States Marine Corps*, 14.

[157] "Pensacola Affairs," *Evening Star*, May 7, 1861. During the first two months of the CSMC's recruiting, the U.S. Regular 2nd Cavalry, 1st Infantry, 3rd Infantry, 8th Infantry, and several batteries of artillery were stationed in Texas. Records indicate that at least three hundred men from these units deserted, and some may have very well joined the CSMC.

[158] Donnelly, *Confederate States Marine Corps*, 14.

Their first deployment was to Pensacola, Florida, where federal troops had been strengthening their defenses since the day Florida seceded. Reports show that by April 27, a company of 109 Confederate Marines under the command of Captain Van Bethuysen, was stationed on the extreme left flank of General Braxton Bragg's army in Pensacola, Florida.[159] Upon arriving, the marines were issued weapons from the Department of West Florida and attached to the Warrington Naval Yard.[160] During the marines' first weeks in Pensacola, Colonel Beall had not yet been appointed, so Secretary Mallory acted as the Colonel-Commandant of the corps. During his time serving in this capacity, Mallory showed particular interest in the marines and personally instructed Captain Van Benthuysen in how the marines' camp should be set up and how they should go about procuring their equipment.[161]

After completion of these tasks, the business of training began. While in Pensacola, the recruits learned and performed many of the traditional duties of marines through extensive drilling, which primarily focused on operation and use of the marines' two primary weapons.[162] The first of these weapons was heavy artillery used on ships as well as coastal batteries.[163] The marines' skillset in operating heavy artillery proved to be an advantage for them later in the war, as they were among the few units with the knowledge of how to man these monstrous guns. Their training with large guns also caused them to receive their first traditional marine assignment, which was manning a battery positioned against Fort Pickens.[164] The second type of weapon the marines learned how to use was the small arm, or rifle, typically used while on

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[159] "From Our Army," *The Daily Delta*, May 4, 1861.

[160] O.R. 6, 772: Letter from Maj. Gen. Braxton Bragg to Adjunct-General C.S. Army, November 29, 1861.

[161] Donnelly, *Confederate States Marine Corps*, 17.

[162] Ibid., 156.

[163] Field, *Civil War Marines*, 32.

[164] Donnelly, *Confederate States Marine Corps*, 16. Fort Pickens was one of three forts guarding Pensacola harbor, and it remained under Federal control for the entirety of the war.

shipboard duty.[165] After they were sufficiently trained in the use of their small arms, the marines

were tasked with shore patrol, another traditional yet mundane marine duty.[166] In this role, they

guarded trains, railroad depots, naval stores, and the Naval Yard. However, the assignment

which most marines looked forward to was serving aboard a ship.

By mid-June, some of the marines were deemed sufficiently trained and began serving

aboard and protecting ships, the most traditional and exciting of all marine duties. The first of the

shipboard assignments came from General Braxton Bragg on June 19 when he gave the order

that a small detachment consisting of one commissioned officer and twelve enlisted men were to

act as guard on the steamer *Time*.[167] However, around the same time this order was given, the

first two official ships of the Confederate Navy neared completion and were in need of a marine

guard. The first of these ships was the CSS *Sumter*, which Commander Raphael Semmes had

requested for refitting and commission even before the firing on Fort Sumter.[168] On June 3, the

Sumter was commissioned in New Orleans, with a compliment of twenty marines under the

command of Lieutenant Becket Howell.[169] Within the following month-and-a-half, the marines

aboard the *Sumter* took part in capturing eight ships in the West Indies.[170] After these ships were

captured, Commander Semmes removed their officers and crews and placed them as prisoners

under the marines' guard until they could be taken ashore.[171] The second ship of the Confederate

Navy was the CSS *McRae*, which was assigned twenty-three marines under the command of

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[165] Field, *Civil War Marines*, 32.
[166] Donnelly, *Confederate States Marine Corps*, 17.
[167] Ibid.
[168] Francis Trevelyan Miller, *The Photographic History of the Civil War in Ten Volumes*, vol. 6, *The Navies* (Norwalk, CT: Easton Press, 1995), 80.
[169] Donnelly, *Confederate States Marine Corps*, 18.
[170] "The Confederates on the Sea," *Advocate and American*, August 8, 1861. The newspapers also recorded that the *Sumter* burned one other vessel.
[171] Sullivan, *Biographical Sketches*, 105-106.

Lieutenant Richard Henderson.[172] Although the *McRae* did not go out to sea as the *Sumter* did, the marines stationed aboard the *McRae* soon saw action of a different sort.

While these fortunate few marines served aboard these ships and experienced the excitement of shipboard duty, other marines were assigned to another form of shipboard service. At approximately the same time that the act establishing the Confederate Marine Corps was passed, General Bragg ordered the organization of a "harbor police" to ensure no Federal ships could supply Fort Pickens or other enemy vessels in Pensacola harbor.[173] This harbor police consisted simply of a few small gunboats armed with rather light artillery.[174] While these boats were largely meant to be a deterrent to supply ships, they still needed to be equipped with crews who could man the guns and board enemy vessels if the need arose. The commanding officers in Pensacola recognized that the marines were perfectly suited for this assignment and called upon them to supply crews for the patrol boats.[175]

However, some marines saw this assignment as perfectly suited for a means of desertion. On September 16, General Bragg stated in a report that a rowboat crewed by nine enlisted marines on the night of September 8 failed to return from harbor police duty and deserted to the enemy.[176] Colonel Harvey Brown, commander of the Union forces in Pensacola, also wrote a report concerning this event and stated that he learned valuable information from the marines.[177] Although these marines were disgruntled or disloyal to the Confederacy and used their first

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[172] Donnelly, *Confederate States Marine Corps*, 18.

[173] "General Orders – No. 4," *Southern Champion*, March 22, 1861.

[174] "Letter from Florida," *The Daily Delta*, March 23, 1861.

[175] Donnelly, *Confederate States Marine Corps*, 18. There is little documentation about the marines' service as Harbor Police, but the men given this assignment were from Company B and appear to have been relieved by army personnel by the end of 1861.

[176] O.R. 6, 438: Report of Brig. Gen. Braxton Bragg, C.S. Army, September 16, 1861.

[177] O.R. 6, 666: Report of Col. Harvey Brown to Lieut. Col. E. D. Townsend, Assistant Adjunct General, September 10, 1861.

shipboard assignment to desert, many marines enjoyed this traditional type of assignment. However, the corps' first landing operation and victory laid on the horizon.

On July 4, Captain Edward Higgins, a staff-officer of Major General David Twiggs, approached Lieutenant Alexander Warley of the *McRae*, asking for men to take part in an expedition to "drive the enemy out of the Mississippi Sound."[178] Lt. Warley agreed and ordered the entire crew of the *McRae*, including the marines, was to take part in the expedition.[179] Another small detachment of marines then joined the marines from the *McRae*, and all fifty-five marines on the expedition were placed under the command of Captain Thom.[180] Then, the marines, as well as the sailors and other personnel, were divided among the steamers *Swain* and *Oregon*.[181] The next day, the expedition departed in search of federal forces operating in the sound but finding none, went ashore near Bay St. Louis where the marines helped fill sandbags which were used to protect the ships' boilers.[182] The next morning, the expedition departed from Bay St. Louis and set a course for Ship Island.

This island, approximately twelve miles of the coast of Mississippi, was the site of a partially completed federal fort which Union troops tried to destroy a few weeks prior to the Confederate expedition.[183] When the two steamers drew up near Ship Island, they sighted two ships operating in the vicinity, and the *Oregon* gave chase, only to find that these two ships were friendly fishing vessels.[184] After the *Oregon* returned to the island, Captain Higgins determined that the island was unoccupied and should be taken.[185] In the afternoon, all of the men in the

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[178] "A Naval Brush at Ship Island," *The Times-Picayune*, July 11, 1861. Lieutenant Warley initially hesitated to provide men for the expedition as the captain of the *McRae*, Captain Huger, was away.
[179] Donnelly, *Confederate States Marine Corps*, 19.
[180] "Official Report of the Ship Island Expedition," *The Weekly Advertiser*, August 7, 1861.
[181] "A Naval Brush at Ship Island," *The Times-Picayune*, July 11, 1861.
[182] "The Fight at Ship Island," *The American Citizen*, July 13, 1861.
[183] Donnelly, *Confederate States Marine Corps*, 18.
[184] "The Fight at Ship Island," *The American Citizen*, July 13, 1861.
[185] "A Naval Brush at Ship Island," *The Times-Picayune*, July 11, 1861.

expedition were sent ashore with several pieces of artillery which they fortified with the sandbags gathered at Bay St. Louis.[186] Lt. Warley noted in his official report that the marines worked harder in this endeavor than he had ever seen recruits work before.[187] After this work was completed, Captain Higgins left the *Swain* under the charge of the marines and returned to the mainland with many of the men and the *Oregon*.[188]

The expedition for the marines, however, was not yet over. During the next two days, they kept watch on Ship Island and manned the guns on the beach. On July 12, however, the *Grey Cloud* and *Oregon* were nearing the island to deliver munitions and other supplies when the Union steamer USS *Massachusetts* approached.[189] As the ship approached, the marines rushed to the guns positioned on the beach and opened fire.[190] The Union steamer returned fire but missed their mark, and their cannonballs lodged in the sand.[191] Several men manning the guns, likely marines, rushed to where the cannonballs were lodged, dug them out of the sand, loaded them in their own guns, and fired them back at the enemy.[192] Eventually, a Confederate shell damaged the deck of the *Massachusetts* and it drew off to the protection of another island.[193] With the departure of the *Massachusetts*, the Confederate Marine Corps won their first victory and waited to be relieved by the army.

For several months after the engagement at Ship Island, the Confederate Marines saw little action other than manning a battery at the Warrington Naval Yard. However, during this

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[186] Ibid.

[187] O.R. 53, 709: Report of Lieutenant Alexander F. Warley, C.S. Navy, to Captain E. Higgins, C.S. Army, July 10, 1861.On July 12, 1861, Captain Higgins issued a general order officially acknowledging and thanking the marines and other members of the expedition on behalf of Maj. Gen. Twigg.

[188] "The Fight at Ship Island," *The American Citizen*, July 13, 1861.

[189] "A Naval Brush at Ship Island," *The Times-Picayune*, July 11, 1861.

[190] "The Fight at Ship Island," *The American Citizen*, July 13, 1861.

[191] Ibid.

[192] Ibid. The main guns used by both forces in this engagement were 32-pounders.

[193] "A Naval Brush at Ship Island," *The Times-Picayune*, July 11, 1861.

time, some reports show that a small detachment of marines accompanied Confederate naval

officers to Fort Macon near Beaufort, NC, in order to train the coastal fort garrison in the use of

naval artillery.[194] The Confederate Navy's use of the marines in this role proves that the

corpsmen were among the best and most well trained in the use of naval artillery which soon

proved to be a valuable asset. During this same time, recruitment efforts began again and several

new officers and recruits joined the corps.[195] Although the corps was gaining men, it also lost

several who deserted to the enemy near Pensacola during this same time.[196]

Two Model 1841 Navy 32-pounders and a Model 1861 Confederate Rodman eight-inch Columbiad currently on display at Fort Macon State Park. A detachment of Confederate Marines was sent to Fort Macon to help train the fort's garrison in the operation of naval guns such as these. (Photo by author)

However, during the last few months of 1861, the corps saw its first land-based action

and the heaviest fighting it had yet experienced. The marines' first large land-based action and

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[194] "Fort Macon," *Newbern Weekly Progress*, September 10, 1861. Although the marines were sent to help train the men at Fort Macon, the naval officers found that the garrisoned soldiers were already well trained in the use of heavy artillery and did not need the marines' instruction.

[195] Donnelly, *Confederate States Marine Corps*, 22-23. Much of this new recruitment effort took place in Tennessee.

[196] "The Federals Repulsed," *The Times-Picayune*, September 16, 1861. The newspaper reported that some of these deserters led a raid against the Confederate Naval Yard. However, other sources show that the deserters were being held as prisoners during the time of the raid. Whether or not the deserters took part in this raid, it is likely that some Confederate Marines were northern boatmen who were trapped in the South when the war broke out and joined the CSMC until they could desert to federal forces.

amphibious assault occurred early in the morning on October 9, when Brigadier General Richard

Anderson led a force of approximately one thousand men across the bay from Pensacola

intending to secure Santa Rosa Island.[197] During this expedition, CSMC lieutenants Calvin Sayre

and Wilbur Johnson volunteered to act as aids for General Anderson.[198] Upon landing on the

island, the Confederate force including a detachment of marines attacked Wilson's Zouaves (6th

NY Infantry) and destroyed every building in their camp with the exception of the hospital.[199]

After the force spiked several cannons and captured supplies, it turned toward Fort Pickens.[200]

However, the federal troops in the fort repulsed the Confederates, who left with only captured

supplies and a few men to show for their actions.[201] Additionally, CSMC Lieutenant Calvin

Sayre was shot through the leg and taken prisoner during the fighting.[202] Despite this defeat, the

newspapers in the South focused on the destruction of the zouaves' camp and celebrated it as

"brilliant attack." While the Confederate Marines and others celebrated their action in this false

victory, Union forces began planning a retaliatory attack.

 During the first weeks of November, while the majority of Confederate Marines

continued to guard Pensacola, others took part in the Battle of Port Royal in South Carolina. On

November 4, Union ships were sighted off the coast of South Carolina, and a Confederate

"mosquito fleet" under the command of Commodore Josiah Tattnall left the safety of the

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[197] "Brilliant Night Attack on Santa Rosa Island," *The Times-Picayune*, October 10, 1861.

[198] O.R. 6, 463: Report of Brig. Gen. Richard H. Anderson, C.S. Army, commanding expedition, October 23, 1861.

[199] Ibid.

[200] Ibid.

[201] Ibid.

[202] "Letter from Pensacola," *Mobile Advertiser and Register*, October 22, 1861. Lt. Sayre was claimed as a prisoner by the Wilson Zouaves who treated him very well and sent him to a hospital where his leg could be properly cared for. After his leg had healed enough, he was paroled until he was properly exchanged or until his leg fully healed.

Savannah River in an attempt to slow down the enemy.[203] The ships in the tiny fleet carried

members of the CSMC's Company A under the command of Captain George Holmes.[204] On the

morning of November 7, the Union ships neared Port Royal and Fort Walker which protected the

city. The fort opened fire on the Union vessels but did little damage. Then, the CSS *Savannah*

entered the fight and exchanged fire with the USS *Minnesota* and the USS *Susquehanna* before

being damaged and drawing off to the protection of Skull Creek.[205] Upon nearing Hilton Head

Island, Tattnall ordered the marines aboard the *Savannah* to disembark with the ship's

ammunition and help man the guns at Fort Walker.[206] Eventually, the marines and other forces

abandoned the fort and retreated to safety. However, the amphibious Battle of Port Royal marked

Company A's first large engagement and traditional marine action.

      Meanwhile in Florida, Union forces under Colonel Harvey Brown prepared for their

retaliatory attack against Fort McRee, which protected Pensacola from a direct Union attack. On

November 22, the Union forces garrisoned at Fort Pickens commenced the attack and began

shelling Fort McRee and the Warrington Naval Yard.[207] Shortly thereafter, the federal ships

Niagara and *Colorado* joined the fight.[208] For the first two hours of the attack, Captain Van

Benthuysen held his men manning a battery in the naval yard at-the-ready until General

Anderson gave the order to respond.[209] During the same time, Captain Thom's marines were

ordered to withdraw from the naval yard, but two were wounded when an artillery shot brought

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[203] Field, *Civil War Marines*, 42-43. The term "Mosquito Fleet" did not refer to a specific fleet, but rather any small Confederate fleet made up of makeshift gunboats.

[204] Ibid.

[205] Ibid.

[206] "The Port Royal Fight," *Richmond Dispatch*, November 11 1861. Marines aboard the *Sampson* also disembarked and carried munitions to Fort Walker.

[207] "From Pensacola," *The Times-Picayune*, November 23, 1861.

[208] Ibid.

[209] Donnelly, *Confederate States Marine Corps*, 23-24.

down part of a nearby wall.[210] Then, at 11:00 in the morning, Captain Van Benthuysen was

ordered to fire, and his battery fired two shots before being ordered to cease fire.[211] The

following day, the marine battery fired another twenty shots at Fort Pickens.[212] However, after

they had sufficiently damaged Fort McRee, in addition to the Warrington Naval Yard, the federal

forces ended their bombardment without further action.[213] While neither force could truly be

named the victor in this engagement, Captain Van Benthuysen and his marines celebrated their

efficient work and steadiness under fire.

For several days after the bombardment ended, the marines and others in Pensacola

remained prepared should the fighting recommence. However, on November 26, General Bragg

received a message from Secretary Mallory requesting the release of marines from Captain

Thom's company for a special shipboard assignment.[214] On December 11, *The Times-Picayune*

announced the nature of this special assignment when it included a brief article which stated, "A

large detachment of marines from Pensacola, passed through Augusta, Ga, on the 3d, *en route*

for Norfolk, to ship on the C.S. steamer *Merrimack*."[215] Upon reaching Petersburg, Captain

Thom's Company C garnered much excitement as marines historically had during wartime for

the past hundred years.[216] Shortly after arriving, the 110 marines under Captain Thom were

divided between the CSS *Patrick Henry,* the CSS *Jamestown*, and the CSS *Merrimack* (later the

CSS *Virginia*).[217] Little did the marines of Company C know that they would soon take part in

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[210] Ibid., 26.
[211] Ibid., 24. This cease fire was ordered because the *Time* was docked near Van Benthuysen's battery and General Anderson feared the battery may draw fire which could damage the *Time*.
[212] Ibid., 25.
[213] "Further Details from the Bombardment of Pensacola," *The Times-Picayune*, November 25, 1861.
[214] Ibid.
[215] "A Large Detachment," *The Times-Picayune*, December 11, 1861.
[216] "Company of Marines," *The Raleigh Register*, December 11, 1861.
[217] Donnelly, *Confederate States Marine Corps*, 27.

one of the most famous naval battles in history and an engagement which would forever change the nature of marines.

However, during the interim months between the marines' movement to Virginia and this famous naval battle, the corps suffered several misfortunes. The first of these adversities occurred in Pensacola on December 21, when six marines spiked two of their own cannons, convinced the sentinel of the battery to join them, and deserted to the enemy at Fort Pickens.[218] The second misfortune occurred in early January when a marine aboard the *Sumter* was tasked with watching over a prisoner but was found sleeping on duty.[219] This marine was tried and, instead of being put to death, was put ashore and discharged from the corps.[220] Additionally, during the following month, several marines deserted from the *Sumter* while in port.[221] The third misfortune occurred in mid-January, 1862 when two marines aboard a Confederate ship anchored off of the Gosport Naval Yard began to quarrel. One marine (McLaughlin) accused the other (Dorsey) of being a thief, which caused the accused to strike the other in the face with a rifle. The blow broke McLaughlin's jaw and dislocated his neck, killing him instantly.[222] A fourth misfortune possibly occurred on February 7-8, 1862 during the battle of Roanoke Island. Although the majority of this battle was fought by Wise's Legion, a mosquito fleet under the command of Captain William Lynch took part in the battle. Some reports show that marines, possibly from Company A, served aboard the ships and were captured in the fighting and

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[218] Ibid., 28. The six marines who deserted were all born in the North which substantiates the idea that northern boatmen joined the corps to survive in the South until they could escape. These men were sent to Fort Lafayette in New York where they quickly took an oath of allegiance to the Union and were released.

[219] N.O.R. 1, 643-644: Letter from Commodore Semmes, C.S. Navy, commanding C.S.S. *Sumter*, January 10, 1862.

[220] Ibid. Being put to death was the common punishment for this type of infraction, but the court who tried the marine decided to spare him.

[221] N.O.R. 1, 665: Letter from Commodore Semmes, C.S. Navy, commanding C.S.S. *Sumter*, February 24, 1862.

[222] "Norfolk," *Richmond Dispatch*, January 17, 1862. Very little record of this event exists other than this article. However, the article states that Dorsey was arrested and investigated before the mayor of Portsmouth, VA.

destruction of the ships.[223] Although 1862 began with these misfortunes, the corps' prospects

soon changed when it experienced one of its most defining moments at the Battle of Hampton

Roads.

Although the Confederate Marines' role in the "battle of the ironclads" is largely

forgotten, the Battle of Hampton Roads was one of the corps most shining moments. Since mid-

1861, workmen in the Gosport Naval Yard in Portsmouth worked to transform the hull of the

USS *Merrimack* into the CSS *Virginia*, and the Navy had been making logistical preparations to

make the ironclad the most formidable weapon of the war. Although these preparations are what

brought the marines to Virginia, they did not board the ship until it was commissioned on

February 17, 1862, and when the *Virginia* left dock on March 8, the fifty-four marines aboard

did not know exactly what the ship's mission was.[224]

This shipboard assignment was rather unusual for the marines due to the fact that the

strange new ship did not have decks or riggings from which the marines could board enemy

ships or use their small arms. However, the *Virginia* did have ten large naval cannons. Because

of their time and training in Pensacola, the marines knew well how to operate these large guns

and were tasked with manning several of them. [225] In some ways, this assignment was more like

manning a coastal battery than shipboard duty and was perhaps the perfect combination of

traditional marine roles.

As the *Virginia* steamed down the Elizabeth River accompanied by its tenders, *Beaufort*

and *Raleigh*, the *Jamestown*, *Patrick Henry*, and *Teaser* waited at Hampton Roads for its

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[223] "The Roanoke Prisoners," *Newbern Daily Progress*, February 21, 1862. Some of the marines who were captured at Roanoke Island were paroled by the end of February while others were sent to a prison camp in New York (likely Elmira).

[224] William C. Davis, *Duel Between the First Ironclads* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1975), 79.

[225] Donnelly, *Confederate States Marine Corps*, 37.

arrival.[226] Aboard the *Jamestown* were twenty marines who manned two naval guns under the command of Lieutenant James Fendall, and aboard the *Patrick Henry* were twenty-four marines under the command of Lieutenant Henderson.[227] After the ships met at Hampton Roads, the *Virginia* and its tenders steamed towards Newport News intent on destroying the USS *Congress* and USS *Cumberland*, while the *Jamestown* and *Patrick Henry* were held in reserve.[228] During the early afternoon of March 8, the *Virginia* calmly made its way towards the *Cumberland* without returning any of the enemy's fire until it was within close range.[229] Then, as the two federal vessels' shots glanced off the ironclad's sides. The *Virginia* opened fire on both ships and rammed the *Cumberland*.[230] During the heavy exchange of fire that ensued, one of the guns under Captain Thom's command was struck by a Union shell which took off part off the muzzle, yet the men under his command continued to fire.[231] Within a short time, the *Cumberland* began listing before eventually sinking.[232] The destruction of the *Cumberland* was not only the first victory for the *Virginia* but also a great triumph for the marines that manned several of its guns during the fight.

After the *Cumberland* sank, the *Virginia* turned focused its attention on the *Congress*, and the three ships held in reserve carrying the rest of Captain Thom's Company C joined the fight.[233] At approximately the same time, several coastal batteries as well as the USS *Roanoke*, the USS *St. Lawrence*, and the USS *Minnesota* joined the fight.[234] The marines, although of a

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[226] Davis, *First Ironclads*, 81.
[227] Donnelly, *Confederate States Marine Corps*, 36-37.
[228] Davis, *First Ironclads*, 85.
[229] Ibid., 87.
[230] Ibid., 88-92.
[231] N.O.R. 7, 47: Report of Flag-Officer Franklin Buchanan, C.S.N., March 27, 1862.
[232] "Great Naval Battle," *The People's Press*, March 14, 1862. Both the *Virginia* and the *Cumberland* continued a heavy fire into one another until the federal ship finally sank. It was during this final fighting that at least two of the *Virginia*'s guns were damaged and several men were killed or wounded.
[233] Ibid.
[234] Davis, *First Ironclads*, 98.

different company, were already acquainted with the *Minnesota* from the Battle of Port Royal.

The three federal ships ran aground soon after joining the fight but continued to fire at the

Virginia as it destroyed and eventually burnt the *Congress* to the waterline.[235] Meanwhile, the

Jamestown and *Patrick Henry* continued to exchange fire with the *Minnesota* until late in the

evening.[236] At the end of the day, two federal ships lay at the bottom of Hampton Roads, and the

marines and others aboard the Confederate ships celebrated their overwhelming victory.

However, many of them knew that the following day would bring more death and carnage.

During the night, the Confederates attempted to take an account of the damage dealt to

the *Virginia* and unload the dead and wounded aboard.[237] At the same time, federal forces tried

to save as many men as possible from the *Cumberland* and *Congress* while the *Minnesota*

prepared for what many believed would be an inevitable defeat in the morning.[238] However, as

the *Congress* still burned, a new ship, the USS *Monitor*, steamed into Hampton Roads.[239] On the

morning of March 9, the *Virginia* steamed out to destroy the *Minnesota* but found the *Monitor*

blocking its route. The two ironclads hammered away at each other for hours with their massive

guns but to little avail due to the fact that neither ship was using proper armor-piercing shot.[240]

Eventually, the *Monitor* momentarily drew out of the fight, and the Virginia, believing that the

Monitor was retreating and with the threat of falling tides which might strand the vessel, returned

to Norfolk.[241]

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[235] Ibid., 100-103.
[236] "Great Naval Battle," *The People's Press*, March 14, 1862.
[237] Davis, *First Ironclads*, 105-108.
[238] Ibid., 108-110.
[239] Ibid., 111.
[240] Craig L. Symonds, *Decision at Sea: Five Naval Battles that Shaped American History* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2005), 125-126. Believing that it would only encounter wooden vessels, the *Virginia* mainly carried shells instead of solid shot which may have penetrated the *Monitor*'s armor. The *Monitor*'s eleven-inch guns were only loaded with fifteen pounds of powder instead of the thirty pounds experiments later proved the guns could handle.
[241] Ibid., 131.

After the excitement of the duel, which was claimed by both sides as a victory but truly a tactical draw, the mundane task of writing reports concerning the battle was left to the officers. Fortunately, a few of these reports and letters speak to the nature of the Confederate Marines' action during the battle. The first report to mention the marines was written by the Admiral Franklin Buchanan who wrote, "The Marine Corps was well represented by Captain Thom, whose tranquil mien gave evidence that the hottest fire was no novelty to him."[242] The second mention of the marines was in a letter written by Lt. Commander Joseph Barney to Lt. Fendall. In this letter, Barney commended Fendall and the other marines for their "coolness, rapidity, and precision" in the use of one of the *Jamestown*'s large naval guns during the battle.[243] Additionally, the Confederate Marines received the official thanks of the Confederate Congress following the battle.[244] Although the marines are rarely considered in the study of the Battle of Hampton Roads, they played a significant role in manning the guns and helping shape the *Virginia*'s triumph.

However, in some ways, the *Virginia*'s success at Hampton Roads was bitter-sweet for the marines. The *Virginia* proved that iron now ruled the sea and the long reign of the wooden sailing vessel was over. This, of course, meant that some of the traditional roles of marines were also over. In the future, marines no longer climbed the riggings of ships and stood among the sails to fire their rifles down on the enemy, nor would they board enemy vessels as they once had. The cannons fired by the marines aboard the *Virginia* acted as the evening-gun which signaled the dawn of the age of traditional marine shipboard operations.

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[242] N.O.R. 7, 47: report of Flag-Officer Franklin Buchanan, C.S.N., March 27, 1862.

[243] Donnelly, *Confederate States Marine Corps*, 36-37. According to Barney, the marines were not acquainted with the gun they operated, but drilled until they were brought to "excellence and thoroughness" in its use.

[244] Ralph W. Donnelly, "Battle Honors and Services of the Confederate Marines," *Military Affairs* 23, no. 1 (1959): 39.

Chapter 3: From Drewry's Bluff and Back Again

Although marine operations began rapidly changing after the battle of the ironclads, the Confederate Marines did not see any less action or need any fewer men. During the months following the Battle of Hampton Roads, the corps began another recruitment campaign which ran advertisements in Richmond papers promising action and excitement like that experienced by the marines aboard the *Virginia*.[245] While a few marines did soon see shipboard action aboard the *McRae* during the defense of New Orleans in April, the recruitment advertisement was initially misleading.[246] In reality, many of the marines' future assignments took place on land manning coastal and river batteries. Perhaps Second Lieutenant Ruffin Thomson, who joined the corps in 1864, summarized it best when he wrote home to his father and said, "In case of a fight, we will man the guns and fight as heavy artillerists. The Marines are drilled in artillery as well as infantry tactics, and in truth, in their proper sphere, they are simply Naval Artillerists."[247] Drewry's Bluff, the location from where Thomson penned this letter, later proved to be the epitome of this type of service for the marines.

However, before the marines reached Drewry's Bluff, Captain Van Benthuysen's Company B received orders to act as the Marine Guard at the Gosport Navy Yard following the Battle of Hampton Roads.[248] This naval yard was particularly important to the Confederate Navy, as it was the lifeblood of the *Virginia*, which was often in need of repairs and refitting. However, in anticipation of a Union attack on Norfolk, both the city and the Gosport Navy Yard were abandoned on the night of May 9.[249] After the loss of the naval yard, the *Virginia* had little

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[245] Field, *Civil War Marines*, 44.

[246] Donnelly, "Battle Honors and Services," 37-40.

[247] Lieutenant Ruffin Thomson, C.S.M.C., to "Dear Pa," Camp Beall, Drewry's Bluff, Va., March 14, 1864, Thomson Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina.

[248] Donnelly, *Confederate States Marine Corps*, 38.

[249] "Destruction of the Virginia," *The Daily Journal*, May 13, 1862.

choice but to try to sail up the James River towards Richmond. However, the ironclad was too heavy to traverse the shoals of the river and was scuttled by its own crew on May 11.[250] With the destruction of what some referred to as the "Colossus of Roads," little stood between Richmond and the Union Navy.[251] The only hope for the defense of Richmond was a narrow bend of the James River which was commanded by a high point on the southern bank known as Drewry's Bluff.[252]

After Norfolk was abandoned and the *Virginia* was scuttled, many of the marines of Companies B and C reported to Drewry's Bluff to aid in the defense of Richmond. The remainder of the marines of Company C were still serving aboard the *Jamestown* and the *Patrick Henry* at the time and joined the others at Drewry's Bluff when the two ships arrived and disbanded their crews.[253] Unfortunately for the Confederacy, the armaments and defenses at Drewry's Bluff were not completed and in poor condition to defend the river when the marines arrived.[254] To compensate for this lack of preparation, the artillery pieces from the two gunboats were removed and mounted on the bluff while the *Jamestown* was sunk to complete the submerged obstructions in the river.[255] Although the bluff was strengthened by these actions, it still lacked sufficient defensive capabilities to turn back Union gunboats.

Yet on May 15, five Union gunboats steamed up the James River towards Drewry's Bluff.[256] In an effort to deter or at least slow the gunboats, Companies B and C of the marines were formed into a battalion under the command of Captain John Simms and stationed on the

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[250] Ibid.

[251] "Tuesday Morning," *Richmond Dispatch*, March 11, 1862.

[252] Donnelly, *Confederate States Marine Corps*, 39.

[253] Field, *Civil War Marines*, 44.

[254] "The Defense of Richmond," *Richmond Dispatch*, May 16, 1862.

[255] Donnelly, *Confederate States Marine Corps*, 39.

[256] N.O.R. 7, 365-366: Report of Lieutenant Beaumont, U.S. Navy, commanding U.S.S. *Aroostook*, to Commander John Rodgers, May 16, 1862.The ships in the Union squadron were the *Galena, Monitor, Port Royal, Aroostook,* and *Naugatuck.*

bluffs at the river's edge downstream from Drewry's Bluff.[257] There, the marines manned rifle pits spread out over several miles and partially concealed by underbrush and waited for the Unions ships to reach their positions.[258] Although the marines were stationed on land in rifle pits and not atop a ship's riggings, their positions allowed them to carry out one of their traditional roles and act as sharpshooters.[259] Incidentally, the marines' elevated position on the bluffs simulated a ship's riggings in a way and helped the marines act as well on land as they did on the sea. When the Union ships lead by the USS *Galena* approached the marines, Captain Simms reported that they "…immediately opened a sharp fire upon them, killing three of the crew of the *Galena* certainly, and no doubt many more."[260] The commanding officer of the USS *Aroostook* reported that his command "proceeded up the river, under sharp fire of musketry from both banks."[261] Following the Battle of Drewry's Bluff, several other Union officers mentioned the marine sharpshooters and the damage they inflicted.[262]

This is the view the down river from the fort at Drewry's Bluff. A buoy can be seen through the trees, and it sits approximately where the *Jamestown* and other obstructions were located. (Photo by author)

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[257] "The Action At Drury's Bluff – Official Reports," *Richmond Enquirer*, May 27, 1862.
[258] Field, *Civil War Marines*, 45.
[259] "The Action At Drury's Bluff – Official Reports," *Richmond Enquirer*, May 27, 1862.
[260] Ibid.
[261] N.O.R. 7, 366: Report of Lieutenant Beaumont, U.S. Navy, commanding U.S.S. *Aroostook*, to Commander John Rodgers, May 16, 1862.
[262] N.O.R. 7, 357-366.

However, the marine sharpshooters alone could not do enough damage to turn the Union ships back down the James. Shortly after 7:00 in the morning, the *Galena* reached Drewry's Bluff, and the pilots aboard sighted the *Jamestown* and other obstructions.[263] Although artillery fire met any attempt to remove the obstructions, the Union commanding officer of the expedition, Commander John Rodgers, was more concerned about the sharpshooters and stated in a report that they would hinder the removal of the obstructions.[264] Because of this hindrance, the *Galena* anchored approximately 600 yards down river from Drewry's Bluff and began firing on the battery at 7:45.[265] The *Monitor* drew up close to the *Galena*, and the other three ships in the squadron anchored approximately 700 yards further downstream than the *Galena*.[266] The five Union ships fired at Drewry's Bluff for approximately three hours but to little avail.

This eight-inch Columbiad is positioned at the corner of Fort Drewry. The elevated position of the guns which provided a great advantage for the Confederate artillerists can be seen in this image. (Photo by author)

The inefficiency of the Union gunboats was partially because their guns could not be elevated to an effective angle when they ventured too close to the Bluff.[267] The Union ships'

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[263] N.O.R. 7, 357: Report of Commander Rodgers, U.S. Navy, commanding U.S.S. *Galena*, to Flag-Officer Goldsborough, May 16, 1862.
[264] Ibid.
[265] Ibid.
[266] Ibid.
[267] Donnelly, *Confederate States Marine Corps*, 41.

inefficiency was also due to the accuracy of the artillery positioned at Drewry's Bluff. The day after the battle, the *Richmond Dispatch* reported that the men manning the artillery were seamen who were "the best of gunners" and more reliable than militia.[268] It is likely that a few of the marines from Company C who served aboard the *Virginia, Jamestown,* and *Patrick Henry* were numbered with these seamen who operated the guns on the Bluff and delivered deadly fire to the Union ships. During the engagement, the precision firing from the battery at Drewry's Bluff put eighteen holes in the *Galena* and disabled the guns on the *Naugatuck*.[269] Additionally, the marine sharpshooters kept up their fire during the three-hour artillery exchange and hindered the Union gun crews from operating their guns.[270] Because of these reasons, the fortifications at Drewry's Bluff were largely undamaged, and the Confederates suffered very few casualties throughout the engagement.

Shortly after 11:00, the *Galena* exhausted its ammunition and turned back down the river ending the engagement.[271] As the *Galena* limped back down the river, its crews worked to extinguish fires ignited by Confederate shot.[272] The other four Union ships followed the *Galena's* example and likewise retreated. As the ships passed back between the rifle pits, the marines continued their fire until the ships were out of range. Throughout the battle, the marines did not suffer a single casualty.[273] After the battle, Confederate papers praised the marines for

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[268] "The Defense of Richmond," *Richmond Dispatch*, May 16, 1862.

[269] N.O.R. 7, 357: Report of Commander Rodgers, U.S. Navy, commanding U.S.S. *Galena*, to Flag-Officer Goldsborough, May 16, 1862.

[270] David M. Sullivan, "Tennessee's Confederate Marines: Memphis Detachment," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 45, no. 2 (1986): 154.

[271] N.O.R. 7, 357: Report of Commander Rodgers, U.S. Navy, commanding U.S.S. *Galena*, to Flag-Officer Goldsborough, May 16, 1862.

[272] "Attack on the River Batteries," *The Greensboro Patriot*, May 22, 1862.

[273] Field, *Civil War Marines*, 45.

playing a significant role in the victory, and the corps received the official thanks of the

Confederate Congress on September 16, 1862 for their actions at Drewry's Bluff.[274]

Although the battle at Drewry's Bluff was over, this strategic location remained vital to

the defense of Richmond and soon became home for many of the Confederate Marines.

Sometime in mid-summer 1862, Company A of the marines was transferred from Savannah to

Richmond and there joined Companies B and C to form a three-company field battalion.[275] The

battalion was stationed at Camp Beall, which was located within the military instillation at

Drewry's Bluff, and the Richmond area became the base of Confederate marine operations.[276]

Despite this fact and the reality that the war raged on in Virginia, the marines at Camp Beall did

little for the remainder of the year besides drill, expand the fortifications of the Bluff, perform

guard duty, and build permanent barracks.[277]

Although little marine activity occurred in Virginia during the latter months of 1862, the

corps continued to grow and receive assignments further south. In Mobile, Alabama, newspapers

printed advertisements promising a fifty-dollar bounty to any able-bodied man who joined the

corps and "prize money" to anyone involved in the capturing or sinking of an enemy vessel.[278]

Apparently, this advertisement persuaded some to join the corps because in September, Admiral

Franklin Buchanan wrote a letter to Colonel Beall which stated that over one hundred marine

recruits were at Mobile Station.[279] Although these marines were already serving aboard the ships

of the Mobile Squadron in August, Buchanan reported that they lacked sufficient training and

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[274] Donnelly, "Battle Honors and Services," 39.

[275] Donnelly, *Confederate States Marine Corps*, 43.

[276] Ibid., 91. It is important to note that the Camp Beall was located within the military instillation of Drewry's Bluff because of the fact that many marine bases of the era were surrounded by walls to deter desertion. Although the camp did not have physical walls, the fort at Drewry's Bluff which surrounded the camp effectively deterred desertion.

[277] Ibid., 43-48.

[278] "C.S. Marines---$50 Bounty," *Mobile Advertiser and Register*, August 8, 1862.

[279] Donnelly, *Confederate States Marine Corps*, 69.

equipment.[280] To provide training and organization for the new recruits, Colonel Beall sent

Captain Julius Meiere, who had served as the captain of Company C during the Battle of

Drewry's Bluff. Upon his arrival in Mobile in October, Captain Meiere began requesting officers

from the corps to serve under his command.[281] Once these officers arrived, the group of marines

was officially formed into Company D with Captain Meiere commanding.[282]

After this company was established, the advertisements apparently continued to draw

more recruits while others were conscripted into the corps.[283] Within months of the formation of

Company D, enough men were enlisted to form Companies E and F.[284] The men in these

companies performed several traditional roles in Mobile such as guarding the naval yard and

served aboard the ships of the Mobile Squadron.[285] However, these companies also provided

men to other companies which were not at full strength and for special assignments.[286]

One of these special assignments finally gave some of the marines the opportunity to

experience the excitement promised by the Richmond papers after the Battle of Hampton Roads.

In late 1862, thirty-six marines which formed core of Company E were transferred from Mobile

to Savannah to act as the marine guard aboard the newly commissioned ironclad CSS *Atlanta*.[287]

Shortly thereafter, Lieutenant Henry Graves was transferred in February 1863 from Camp Beall

to Savannah, where he chose men from the conscript camps to serve as the marine guard aboard

the nearly completed ironclad CSS *Savannah*.[288] Several marines from Mobile joined these

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[280] Ibid., 72.
[281] Ibid., 70.
[282] Ibid., 71.
[283] Lieutenant Henry L. Graves, C.S.M.C., to "My Dear Mother," Savannah, Georgia, February 5, 1863, in *Graves Family Papers, Accession 2716, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina.*
[284] Donnelly, *Confederate States Marine Corps*, 71-74.
[285] Field, *Civil War Marines*, 45-46.
[286] Ibid.
[287] Donnelly, *Confederate States Marine Corps*, 91-93.
[288] Lieutenant Henry L. Graves, C.S.M.C., to "My Dear Mother," Savannah, Georgia, February 5, 1863, in *Graves Family Papers, Accession 2716, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina.* Conscription

conscripts and served aboard the CSS *Sampson* until the *Savannah* was completed.[289] Despite

these assignments, however, the marines in Savannah saw very little action during the first

months after their arrival.

However, the monotony of patrol duty was broken on June 14, 1863 when Commander

William Webb commanding the *Atlanta* learned that two Union ironclads were operating in

Wassaw Sound at the mouth of the Wilmington River.[290] Fearing that the two monitors might try

to steam up the river and gain an advantage against Savannah, Commander Webb decided to take

the *Atlanta* downriver and destroy the ships. During the evening of June 15, the *Atlanta* weighed

anchor and began steaming towards its fate.[291]

As the *Atlanta* neared the USS *Weehawken* and USS *Nahant* during the early hours of

June 17, the marines under the command of Lieutenant James Thurston stood ready at two of the

Atlanta's guns.[292] However, as the *Atlanta* approached within a mile of the Union ships, it ran

aground and came to an abrupt stop.[293] Commander Webb instantly ordered the ship's engines to

be reversed, and after approximately fifteen minutes, the *Atlanta* was afloat again.[294] Once he

was sure the ship was fully afloat, Commander Webb gave the order to steam ahead with hope

that the *Atlanta* could reach deeper water, but like many early ironclads, the vessel proved

difficult to handle and disobeyed its helm.[295] Within a few minutes of freeing itself from the

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camps were facilities where newly conscripted soldiers were sent to be trained before they entered military service. However, the Confederate Navy and Marines could go to these facilities and choose the conscripts they believed could best perform the roles of naval service.

[289] Donnelly, *Confederate States Marine Corps*, 93.

[290] Ibid., 94. Commander Webb was no stranger to ironclad warfare as he commanded the *Teaser* during the Battle of Hampton Roads.

[291] Ibid.

[292] Ibid., 95.

[293] N.O.R. 14, 290: Report of Commander Webb, C.S. Navy, commanding C.S.S. *Atlanta*, to Secretary Mallory, October 19, 1864.

[294] Ibid.

[295] Ibid. The *Atlanta* had proved to handle poorly during its sea trials, but there was little that could be done to correct the problem.

river's bottom, the *Atlanta* once again ran aground.[296] While the *Atlanta's* crew again freed the

vessel, the Union ships became aware of the Confederates' presence, and the USS *Weehawken*

began steaming towards them.[297] However, as the Union monitor steamed towards the

Confederate ironclad, the *Atlanta* ran aground a third time.

Aboard the *Weehawken* was Commander John Rodgers, who had commanded the *Galena*

at Drewry's Bluff and was now in command of both Union monitors in Wassaw Sound. Surly,

driven by revenge for the damage inflicted on his ship a month previously, Commander Rodgers

ordered the *Weehawken's* powerful eleven-inch and fifteen-inch Dahlgren guns to fire at the

Atlanta.[298] Unlike the *Virginia* and the *Monitor* at the Battle of Hampton Roads, the ironclads

engaged at Wassaw Sound used proper powder charges and munitions capable of piercing armor.

Because of this, the *Weehawken's* first fifteen-inch shot pierced the armor just above the port

broadside gun, which was manned by the marines.[299] Commander Webb reported that the shot

sent splinters from *Atlanta's* oak siding into the marines and caused "the solid shot in the racks

and everything movable" to be hurled across the deck.[300] According to Webb, this one shot and

the resulting carnage knocked down, disabled, or wounded every marine manning the port

broadside gun.[301] After this devastating blow, the *Weehawken* landed another shot which ripped

through the *Atlanta's* iron-plating and another which knocked off a great portion of the pilot

house.[302]

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[296] Ibid.
[297] Ibid., 291.
[298] Luraghi, *Confederate Navy*, 215.
[299] N.O.R. 14, 291: Report of Commander Webb, C.S. Navy, commanding C.S.S. *Atlanta*, to Secretary Mallory, October 19, 1864.
[300] Ibid.
[301] Ibid.
[302] N.O.R. 14, 265: Report of Captain Rodgers, U.S. Navy, commanding U.S.S. *Weehawken*, to Rear-Admiral S.F. Du Pont, June 17, 1863.

During the engagement, the *Atlanta* fired only seven shots, none of which dealt damage to the Union monitors.[303] The failure of the *Atlanta* to hit the Union vessels was not due to poor manning of the ship's guns, but rather the inability of the guns to be adjusted to a proper angle to fire against the monitors. Because the ironclad was aground and the tide was pushing against it, the guns were not vertically angled properly. While the guns could adjust to account for this, the true detriment of the *Atlanta* was the fact that the guns could not be adjusted laterally. Captain Rodgers, knowing this critical design flaw of Confederate ironclads, ordered the *Weehawken* and *Nahant* to be positioned on the "quarters" of the *Atlanta* where the Confederate guns could not hit them.[304]

Once the Union ships moved into position, the marines and sailors could only helplessly stand at their guns, and Commander Webb had little choice but to surrender. After the Confederate flag was replaced by the United States flag, the 145 men from the *Atlanta*, including twenty-eight marines, were loaded onto Union ships and sent as prisoners to Port Royal.[305] The *Atlanta* itself was quickly repaired by the Union Navy and put back into service under the American flag. In 1864, Commander Webb wrote a report detailing the capture of the *Atlanta* and stated that the men aboard the ship acted with bravery and coolness during the battle and obediently followed orders.[306] However, the marines and sailors were simply helpless in fighting their own lost cause aboard the doomed ironclad.

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[303] Donnelly, *Confederate States Marine Corps*, 95.

[304] N.O.R. 14, 291: Report of Commander Webb, C.S. Navy, commanding C.S.S. *Atlanta*, to Secretary Mallory, October 19, 1864. The "quarters" of the ship simply meant the areas between the bow and stern guns and the port and starboard guns. When the Union ships were in these areas, the Confederate guns could not be brought around and aimed at them.

[305] N.O.R. 14, 289: Report of Secretary Jones to Lieutenant Commanding J.S. Kennard, June 17, 1863.

[306] N.O.R. 14, 291: Report of Commander Webb, C.S. Navy, commanding C.S.S. *Atlanta* to Secretary Mallory, October 19, 1864. While Webb praised his men for obedience in following orders, several other Confederate officers who watched the battle while on other ships stated that they believed the crew mutinied and forced Webb to surrender. There is no real documentation or proof to substantiate this claim. This accusation was

Within a month, twenty-one of the *Atlanta's* captured marines were exchanged and began serving as temporary crewmembers aboard ships such as the CSS *Isondiga*.[307] Three other marines were later exchanged in the final months of 1864 while another two deserted.[308] Although the capture of the *Atlanta* is a rather small portion of the saga of the Confederate Marines, it came at a critical point in the war. Within a few weeks of the ship's and the marines' capture, the Battle of Gettysburg was lost, and Vicksburg fell to the Union. These defeats occurring within such a short time caused a great blow to Confederate morale and changed the momentum of the war.

Despite these defeats and discouragements, the Confederate Marines continued to recruit and see action both on land and sea, and for a brief time during the latter half of the summer of 1863, the corps actually enjoyed a series of small victories near Charleston. The first of these victories came during the Second Battle of Charleston Harbor and occurred sometime in late July or early August 1863. The victory was recorded by marine Lieutenant Henry Doak, who commanded the marine guard aboard the ironclad CSS *Charleston*, which played a significant role in the engagement.[309] According to Doak, three regiments of Union infantry attempted to use small boats to navigate a small channel between Fort Wagner and James Island with the intent of landing and attacking Fort Wagner.[310] However, with the *Charleston* positioned at the end of the channel, the marines loaded the ship's guns with double-canister and fired at the Union boats.[311] In addition to fire from the naval artillery, Doak recorded that some marines also

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likely created because the Confederates believed that the *Atlanta* could not be defeated and they could not believe that Webb would surrender so easily.

[307] Donnelly, *Confederate States Marine Corps*, 95.
[308] Ibid. The fate of the last marine is unknown.
[309] Field, *Civil War Marines*, 48.
[310] Donnelly, *Confederate States Marine Corps*, 126.
[311] Ibid.

used small-arms to end the enemy's advance.[312] Within moments, the Union boats were splintered and much of the Union force was killed in the fighting or drowned when the boats sank. Those who did survive quickly surrendered.[313]

The next small victory occurred on August 4 near Cumming's Point in Charleston Harbor. During this time, the Second Battle of Charleston Harbor continued, and Union forces were still determined to gain a foothold near Battery Gregg and Fort Wagner. In an attempt to gain this advantage, Union soldiers began constructing a battery near the mouth of Vincent's Creek where they would be able to observe Confederate movements on Cumming's Point.[314] For several nights prior to August 4, the Union pickets guarding the partially constructed battery had been "annoying" the Confederates on Cumming's Point.[315] After having tolerated this annoyance long enough, the Confederates decided to act.

On the night of August 4, thirty men from Company F of the 25th SC Infantry under the command of Captain M. Henry Sellers boarded two small boats with the mission of attacking the Union pickets.[316] Additionally, two boats under the command of Navy Lieutenant Alexander Warley were manned by a detachment of marines from the CSS *Chicora* and CSS *Palmetto State* and followed the South Carolinians to lend aid when necessary.[317] When the expedition reached the mouth of Light-House Creek, the infantry landed and waded through a knee-deep marsh until

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[312] Ibid.

[313] Ibid. This engagement is not well documented, and some believe that it may never have occurred. This doubt is due to the fact that Doak was quite advanced in age when he recorded the event. However, numerous small engagements such as this occurred in the Charleston area, and it is likely that not all of them were mentioned in official reports.

[314] N.O.R. 14, 738: Report of Brigadier-General Ripley, C.S. Army, covering operations for the defense of Charleston, August 1-20, 1863, inclusive.

[315] Ibid.

[316] N.O.R. 14, 747: Report of Brigadier-General Ripley, C.S. Army, regarding joint expedition for the capture of unfinished battery at the mouth of Vincent's Creek, August 5, 1863.

[317] "Capture of Yankee Boat and Crew," *The Weekly Advertiser*, August 12, 1863.

they came within range of the enemy pickets.[318] Shortly after the two forces began skirmishing,

the Union pickets broke up and ran to their boats in an attempt to escape.[319] While the South

Carolinians on shore fired at the fleeing boats, Lieutenant Warley and the marines took their

boats around to the mouth of Vincent's Creek, where they cut off the Union boats and began a

sharp skirmish with them.[320] During the fighting, one of the Union boats escaped but not without

damage.[321] However, the other Union vessel described as a "fine barge" surrendered to

Lieutenant Warley and the marines.[322] Although the victory was somewhat minor, with the

unfinished battery taken and the pickets driven off, the threat to Cumming's Point was

eliminated.

The last of these small victories occurred where the war began and followed the Union

naval attack against Fort Moultrie and Fort Sumter on September 8. After the USS *New Ironsides*

and five monitors attempted to weaken the forts through bombardment, Union soldiers and

marines piled into at least thirty small boats to attempt a night landing to take Fort Sumter.[323]

When the Union barges were sighted, the guns of Fort Moultrie and Battery Bee began a deadly

barrage against them while Confederate infantry positioned at Fort Sumter sent a hail of rifle-

bullets into the little fleet.[324] Lieutenant Doak recorded that, during the engagement, the

Charleston repeated its previous performance and the marines sent canister and rifle fire into the

enemy.[325] However, the marines aboard the *Chicora* were also credited with carrying out the

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[318] Ibid.
[319] Ibid.
[320] N.O.R. 14, 738: Report of Brigadier-General Ripley, C.S. Army, covering operations for the defense of Charleston, August 1-20, 1863, inclusive.
[321] Ibid.
[322] "Capture of Yankee Boat and Crew," *The Weekly Advertiser*, August 12, 1863. Aboard the captured Union barge was Captain Louis Payne of the 100th NY Infantry, a sergeant, and approximately ten enlisted men.
[323] "From Charleston," *The Camden Confederate*, September 11, 1863.
[324] Ibid.
[325] Donnelly, *Confederate States Marine Corps*, 126.

same action.[326] Eventually, a portion of the Union force succeeded in landing near Fort Sumter, but were turned back after a short engagement with the Charleston Battalion, who rained bricks and grenades down upon them.[327] After the Union forces withdrew from the harbor and many of their boats had been reduced to splinters, the Confederates were left with three captured flags, four barges, and many prisoners.[328]

Fort Sumter and Charleston Harbor, where the night attack of September 8-9 took place, can be seen in the background of this modern-day image of Fort Moultrie. (Photo by author)

Although the marines' role in this engagement is sparsely documented and somewhat speculative, it is certain that marines, whether aboard the *Charleston, Chicora*, or both, played a vital part in preventing a successful Union attack on the night of September 8-9. However, this victory was bittersweet, as just two days prior, Federal forces occupied the abandoned Fort Wagner and gained the foothold on Morris Island they had been so desperately trying to obtain. Although some marines continued to serve aboard ironclads, after the summer's end, the remainder of 1863 was rather quiet for the marines.

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[326] Ibid.

[327] "From Charleston," *The Camden Confederate*, September 11, 1863.

[328] Ibid.

However, the marines did not sit idly by and wait for action. During late 1862 through the end of 1863, the marines stationed at Drewry's Bluff helped transform their new home into a small village. Within a year, permanent marine barracks were built at Camp Beall, the earthworks of the fort were expanded, new guns were mounted, and the marines were, of course, constantly drilled in their use.[329] By the later months of 1863, families of the marines and other members of the garrison began to occupy log cabins on the Bluff, and a hotel, post-office, and Masonic Lodge were added to serve guests and residents alike.[330] Additionally, the steamship *Shultz* frequently ran advertisements in the local papers advertising passage to and from the little military village.[331] The town on the Bluff was completed with the building of a small church complete with a graveyard beside it.[332] While the marines at Camp Beall enjoyed a rather comfortable post, they were sent out at times to fill in where needed or given special assignments. However, most of these special assignments failed to produce any real actions, and the marines were simply left to drill.[333]

Further south in Savannah, some marines performed mundane tasks such as guarding prisoners of war, guarding the naval buildings, overseeing barracks, and drilling new recruits.[334] However, other marines in Savannah were given a special assignment as they awaited action during the final months of 1863 and early months of 1864. The assignment required the marines to serve as Provost Marshal during the Navy's court-martial hearings.[335] Apparently, these hearings were the result of instances in which sailors became idle due to the lull in action.

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[329] Donnelly, *Confederate States Marine Corps*, 48.
[330] Ibid.
[331] "For Drewry's Bluff," *Richmond Dispatch*, September 4, 1863.
[332] "A Church at Drewry's Bluff," *The Message*, September 1, 1863.
[333] Donnelly, *Confederate States Marine Corps*, 49.
[334] Ibid., 96-97.
[335] Ibid., 96.

Marine Lieutenant Henry Graves recorded one such instance while serving aboard the *Savannah*. In a letter to his sister, Graves wrote that on Christmas Eve, the officers sat quietly in the *Savannah* drinking eggnog when a crewman came and told him that the captain of the ship requested him and his marines on deck.[336] Upon reaching the upper deck, Lieutenant Graves found approximately twenty sailors who had stolen several gallons of medicinal whiskey from the surgeon and were quite intoxicated.[337] He immediately ordered the marines to load their muskets, fix bayonets and surround the drunken sailors.[338] Eventually, the marines secured all of the disorderly sailors and turned them over to the property authorities. Although the fate of these sailors is not known, Lieutenant Graves wrote that he believed "two or three of them would be court-martialed and shot."[339]

While this incident was the most excitement the corps experienced during the final months of 1863, the new year quickly brought action and excitement for Confederate Marines spread throughout the South. Their first major action in 1864 began in mid-January when several naval officers were ordered to detail men to Commander John Taylor Wood in Wilmington, NC for "special service."[340] Of the roughly 300 sent for this special service, twenty-five of them were marines from Company C under the command of Captain Thomas Wilson.[341] Although the small group of marines likely did not know the nature of the "special service" until they reached Wilmington, they soon took part in one of the most daring exploits of the Confederate Navy.

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[336] Lieutenant Henry L. Graves, C.S.M.C., to "My Dear Sister," Steamer *Savannah*, December 26, 1863, in *Graves Family Papers, Accession 2716, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina.*

[337] Ibid.

[338] Ibid.

[339] Ibid.

[340] N.O.R. 9, 449: Order of the Secretary of the Navy of the Confederate States to Lieutenant Hoge, C.S. Navy, regarding command, January 16, 1864.

[341] Donnelly, *Confederate States Marine Corps*, 104.

After they arrived in Wilmington, the marines and sailors selected for this special service learned that their mission was to raid Union ships operating on North Carolina's coast. Although few of them had taken part in such a mission, their commanding officer for the assignment, Commander Wood, had earned a reputation for carrying out similar exploits on the Rappahannock River, where he captured the USS *Satellite* and USS *Reliance*.[342] Shortly after learning what their mission entailed, the men prepared for the raid and were issued three days' worth of rations, mess kits, pea-jackets, blankets, and other gear for bivouacking.[343] Additionally, they were armed with rifles, cutlasses, and revolvers.[344] Then, the men and several small boats were loaded onto trains and sent to Kinston, NC.[345] After arriving there on January 31, the expedition's fourteen small boats were launched and the sailors and marines quietly rowed down the Neuse River towards New Bern.[346]

Within hours of the Confederate expedition's launch, the Battle of New Bern began, and three Union gunboats from the North Atlantic Blocking Squadron were sent to aid in the attack. One of these ships, the USS *Commodore Hull*, quickly ran aground and could not be moved, while another gunboat, the USS *Lockwood*, steamed up the Trent River.[347] However, the most powerful of these three ships, the USS *Underwriter*, set a course up the Neuse River towards New Bern.[348] As night fell on February 1, this mighty sidewheel steamship sat quietly moored to

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[342] "Capture of the 'Underwriter,'" *Richmond Dispatch*, February 10, 1864.

[343] N.O.R. 9, 450: Instructions from Commander Wood, C.S. Navy, to Lieutenant Gift, C.S. Navy, regarding preparations, January 25, 1864.

[344] Ibid. Because the age of the wooden sailing vessel was largely over, the cutlasses and revolvers were somewhat foreign to the marines who typically only used rifles when they were not manning artillery.

[345] Donnelly, *Confederate States Marine Corps*, 103.

[346] N.O.R. 9, 451: Detailed report of Commander Wood, C.S. Navy, February 11, 1864.

[347] N.O.R. 9, 443: Report of Commander Davenport, U.S. Navy, to Acting Rear-Admiral S. P. Lee, February 17, 1864.

[348] Ibid.

the shore.[349] Little did its crew know that Commander Wood and a small reconnaissance party

had sighted the *Underwriter* and decided it would be the target of their raid.[350]

When the reconnaissance party returned to the rest of the expedition, Wood explained his

plan and took a moment to say a prayer of protection with his men.[351] Then, the expedition began

quietly traveling down the Neuse River towards the *Underwriter*.[352] As the Confederates neared

the Union gunboat in the early hours of February 2, Federal sailors and marines sighted and

identified the boats, but did not have time to load their powerful artillery.[353] However, they

quickly began to rain down a hail of rifle-bullets into the Confederate boats.[354] Despite this

heavy fire, the boats spread around the *Underwriter*, and sailors began to board it from all

sides.[355] During this time, the undaunted Confederate Marines stood up in the boats and provided

an accurate covering fire until the sailors had boarded the gunboat.[356] The marines then

performed their most time-honored role and boarded the *Underwriter*, fighting hand-to-hand

until the Federal crew surrendered.[357]

Soon after the ship was taken, Union infantry and artillery positioned at Fort Stevens and

other batteries along the bank opened fire on the *Underwriter*.[358] As the prisoners and wounded

were loaded into the small boats, the marines guarded the prisoners still aboard the *Underwriter*

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[349] Luraghi, *Confederate Navy*, 306.

[350] Ibid.

[351] Ibid.

[352] N.O.R. 9, 453: Unofficial letter of Lieutenant Gift, C.S. Navy, to Commander Jones, C.S. Navy, making reference to expedition, February 13, 1864.

[353] Ibid. The *Underwriter* was armed with two eight-inch shell guns, one thirty-pounder rifle, and one twelve-pound howitzer.

[354] Ibid.

[355] N.O.R. 9, 443: Report of Commander Davenport, U.S. Navy, to Acting Rear-Admiral S. P. Lee, February 17, 1864.

[356] "Capture of the 'Underwriter,'" *Richmond Dispatch*, February 10, 1864.

[357] Donnelly, *Confederate States Marine Corps*, 104.

[358] N.O.R. 9, 453: Unofficial letter of Lieutenant Gift, C.S. Navy, to Commander Jones, C.S. Navy, making reference to expedition, February 13, 1864.

and held ranks as artillery shells burst around them.[359] While the Union batteries kept up their fire, the Confederates tried to find a way to take the ship upriver, but it was under low steam and hard aground which meant that it could not be quickly moved.[360] Eventually, the raiders determined that the *Underwriter* should be fired to prevent Union forces from retaking it.[361] Then, the marines and sailors along with their prisoners rowed back up the river under the glow of the burning *Underwriter*.

The news of the daring exploit garnered attention both in the North and South and spread to newspapers as far away as Scotland.[362] While the story circulated in the papers, officers wrote their official reports of the event. In both newspapers and reports, the marines were given special mention and praised for their courage under fire and value to the mission. In his detailed report to Secretary Mallory, Commander Wood noted, "Captain Wilson, with twenty-five marines, rendered most valuable services."[363] In a letter to Colonel Beall, Wood wrote,

> "It gives me great pleasure to report to you the fine bearing and soldierly conduct of Captain Wilson and his men… Though their duties were more arduous than those of the others, they were always prompt and ready for the performance of all they were called upon to do. As a body they would be a credit to any organization, and I will be glad to be associated with them on duty at any time."[364]

Within two weeks of the venture, the Confederate Congress learned of the destruction of the *Underwriter* and issued their official thanks to the marines and sailors who participated in the mission.[365] However, all of these accolades did not come without a cost. During the engagement, one marine was killed and four others were wounded.[366]

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[359] "Capture of the 'Underwriter,'" *Richmond Dispatch*, February 10, 1864.
[360] N.O.R. 9, 451: Detailed report of Commander Wood, C.S. Navy, February 11, 1864.
[361] Ibid.
[362] "Wednesday, February 17, 1864," *The Courier and Argus*, February 17, 1864.
[363] N.O.R. 9, 451: Detailed report of Commander Wood, C.S. Navy, February 11, 1864.
[364] N.O.R. 9, 453-454: Letter of commendation from Commander Wood, C.S. Navy, to the Colonel Commandant of the C.S. Marine Corps regarding the conduct of Captain Wilson and his men, February 16, 1864.
[365] Donnelly, "Battle Honors and Services," 39.
[366] Donnelly, *Confederate States Marine Corps*, 104.

As Captain Wilson and his marines were praised for the destruction of the *Underwriter*, other detachments continued to serve elsewhere. Shortly after the raid, marines sent from Drewry's Bluff began serving as guards aboard the newly constructed CSS *North Carolina* and CSS *Raleigh*.[367] However, the marines' service aboard the *Raleigh* was short-lived, as the ironclad was burned on May 7 after its keel broke when it ran aground on a sandbar near Wilmington.[368]

Meanwhile, several new enlisted men and officers, including Second Lieutenant Ruffin Thomas, joined the corps at Camp Beall.[369] Although the marines continued to drill at Drewry's Bluff and guard the naval yards in Richmond, life in the little military village remained rather uneventful.[370] Lieutenant Thomas expressed his greatest concern during his first days on the Bluff when he wrote home to his father and asked him to send new shirts and socks because he needed to be well dressed in the presence of his new "civilized company."[371] However, spring soon brought action to Drewry's Bluff once again.

Before the siege of Petersburg began, other efforts were made to cut supply lines between Richmond and the railroad hub of Petersburg. One of these attempts was carried out by the Army of the James under the command of General Benjamin Butler.[372] As the Army of the James advanced towards Richmond, its line of march passed near Drewry's Bluff. On May 9, Federal cavalry forces passed within three miles of the Bluff, and Major George Terrett commanding the

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[367] Ibid., 104-105.

[368] N.O.R. 9, 770: Statement of John B. Patrick, seaman, lately belonging to the C.S. ram *Albemarle*, taken before fleet Captain John S. Barnes, U.S. Navy, June 26, 1864.

[369] Second Lieutenant Ruffin Thomas, C.S.M.C., to "Dear Pa," Richmond, Virginia, January 18, 1864, in *Graves Family Papers, Accession 2716, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina.*

[370] Donnelly, *Confederate States Marine Corps*, 51.

[371] Second Lieutenant Ruffin Thomas, C.S.M.C., to "Dear Pa," Richmond, Virginia, January 18, 1864, in *Graves Family Papers, Accession 2716, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina.*

[372] O.R. 36 part 1, 20: Letter from Maj. Gen. Benjamin Butler to Secretary Stanton, May 9, 1864.

Marine Battalion was warned that that marines should be prepared to mount a defense.[373] Upon

receiving this warning, the marines positioned themselves in the outer earthworks of Fort Drewry

and waited for the enemy to arrive.[374] Although the Union forces did shell the Confederates at

the Bluff on May 9, the marines saw little action until May 12.[375]

Pictured here are the remnants of the outer earthworks of Fort Drewry where the marines primarily served during the Second Battle of Drewry's Bluff. (Photo by author)

On the 12th, Union forces arrived at the fort's outer earthworks and began skirmishing

with the marines and other Confederate troops.[376] As night fell, the skirmishing subsided and

pickets were deployed. However, the fighting resumed with a ferocity the next morning.

Although the Confederates had their earthworks, the Union skirmishers had the advantage of

being armed with Spencer repeating rifles.[377] Partially due to this advantage, Union forces

captured a line of the outer earthworks as May 13 dawned.[378] However, Butler was cautious as

usual and did not press the attack. During the next two days, little progress was made by either

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[373] Donnelly, *Confederate States Marine Corps*, 50.
[374] Ibid.
[375] "The War in Virginia," *Fayetteville Semi-Weekly Observer*, May 12, 1864.
[376] Donnelly, *Confederate States Marine Corps*, 51.
[377] Ibid.
[378] O.R. 36 part 1, 20.

army, but as they held their lines, General Pierre Gustav Toutant Beauregard concentrated his
forces and planned his response.

On May 16, the units on the left of Beauregard's lines launched an attack on the right of
the Union position in front of Fort Drewry.[379] After the Confederates turned the Union forces'
right flank, they captured a general, many men, and several pieces of artillery.[380] With their lines
broken, the Federal forces withdrew to their Bermuda Hundred entrenchments under the
covering fire of sharpshooters.[381] During the fight that led to the Confederate victory, marine
Lieutenant Francis Cameron and the marines under his command played a significant, yet
unspecified role, in defeating Butler.[382] Although the details of the marines' role in the Second
Battle of Drewy's Bluff are a bit obscure, it is certain that they were in the middle of the fighting
and played a vital role in protecting the Bluff and Richmond just as they had done two years
prior.

During the two years between the two battles of Drewry's Bluff, the Confederate Marine
Corps grew and transformed into an integral part of the Confederate military. Part of this growth
was due to the fact that the number of companies doubled during those two years, and many new
officers joined the corps. Another factor in the transformation was the many moments of triumph
the corps experienced. From May of 1862 to May of 1864, the marines twice defended Drewry's
Bluff and saved the Confederacy's capital. Additionally, they protected one of the South's most
important ports, Charleston, and kept supply lines open for the Confederate Army. The corps
also experienced one of its proudest moments when the marines helped capture and destroy the
Underwriter. Of course, these victories did not come without a share of defeat, such as when

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[379] "The Fight on Monday Last at Drewry's Bluff," *Semi-Weekly Standard*, May 20, 1864.
[380] Ibid.
[381] O.R. 36 part 1, 20.
[382] Donnelly, *Confederate States Marine Corps*, 51.

they helplessly stood at their guns while the *Atlanta* was taken. Yet even these defeats helped strengthen the corps and turn the marines into battle-hardened veterans.

As these veterans were still celebrating their second victory at Drewry's Bluff, however, the war itself was once again beginning to change. After General Butler's push towards Richmond failed, Union eyes turned towards Petersburg and Confederate logistics. Little did the marines know at the time that this change would not simply change their roles as the invention of the ironclad had, but it would also bring about the end of the corps and the Confederacy.

Chapter 4: A Short-Lived Corps

As the spring of 1864 drew to an end, the Confederate Marines in Virginia resumed their usual duties while still celebrating their victory at Drewry's Bluff. These marines must have thought that they would simply guard the two naval yards in Richmond and remain in the relative comfort of Camp Beall until Union forces once again attempted to follow the James River to Richmond. For companies A, B, and C, this assumption was partially true. However, June 1864 through April 1865 proved to be perhaps the most eventful year for the corps as a whole. Although eventful, the last year of the war was quite different for the corps. While the majority of the major engagements the marines participated in during the previous two years of the war resulted in victory, the majority of their remaining engagements ended in defeat.

The final year of the Confederate States Marine Corps, however, initially began with victory and seemed as if it would be quite promising. During the first days of April 1864, Secretary Mallory sent a telegraph to Flag-Officer William Hunter in Savannah stating that he desired a strong seaworthy ship for a special assignment.[383] Although seemingly no action was initially taken in relation to the telegraph, the Confederate Navy in Savannah apparently began searching for a suitable ship. On May 31, fifteen officers and 117 men including a detachment of marines from the Savannah Squadron boarded seven small boats with the intent of attacking a Union vessel operating in the Ossabaw Sound.[384] As the expedition under the command of navy First Lieutenant Thomas Pelot neared the Ossabaw Sound, the officers sighted the side-wheel steamer USS *Water Witch*.[385] This formidable ship was not only a prime target for the expedition but also a suitable match to the description of the ship Secretary Mallory desired. Whether for

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[383] N.O.R. 15, 742: Report of Flag-Officer Hunter, C.S. Navy, relative to the prize steamer *Water Witch*, June 9, 1864.

[384] Donnelly, *Confederate States Marine Corps*, 98.

[385] Ibid.

this purpose or simply for general use in the Confederate Navy, the officers decided that their

force would capture, not destroy, the Union vessel and take it back to Savannah. Although

records of the marines' role in this engagement were either lost, destroyed, or unkept, the

marines likely served in a very similar capacity to when they helped take the *Underwriter*.

As the first minutes of June 3 passed, the sailors and marines of the expedition allowed

the tide to silently carry their boats to the *Water Witch*.[386] As the expedition neared the Federal

vessel, a flash of lightning silhouetted the Confederates against the water. [387] Upon seeing the

ghostly forms glide atop the water towards his ship, a Union officer called out and asked who

was approaching.[388] Lieutenant Pelot simply replied "rebels," and gave the command for his men

to board the ship.[389]

The Union officer sounded the alarm and alerted the ship's crew, but his warning came

too late for the federal sailors to man the ship's artillery.[390] However, the *Water* Witch was under

steam, so the crew began operating its paddlewheel in an attempt to disrupt or capsize the

Confederate boats as the raiders boarded the ship from both the port and starboard sides.[391]

During this same time, Union seamen attempted to defend the *Water Witch* with small arms,

while the Confederate Marines likely responded while standing in their violently rocking boats

as they had done during the attack on the *Underwriter*.[392] Eventually, the Confederate sailors,

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[386] N.O.R. 15, 476: Extract of a letter from Lieutenant-Commander Carpenter, U.S. Navy, regarding the attack, July 20, 1864.
[387] Ibid.
[388] Ibid.
[389] N.O.R. 15, 501: Report of Lieutenant Price, C.S. Navy, second in command of the expedition, June 8, 1864.
[390] N.O.R. 15, 476: Extract of a letter from Lieutenant-Commander Carpenter, U.S. Navy, regarding the attack, July 20, 1864. The *Water Witch* was outfitted with a 30-pounder rifle, two 12-pounder Dahlgren howitzers, and a 12-pounder rifled brass gun.
[391] N.O.R. 15, 501: Report of Lieutenant Price, C.S. Navy, second in command of the expedition, June 8, 1864.
[392] Donnelly, *Confederate States Marine Corps*, 98.

likely followed by the marines, reached the decks of the ship, and a sharp hand-to-hand fight ensued.[393] Shortly after reaching the decks, Lieutenant Pelot was killed by a Union bullet, and Second Lieutenant Joseph Price found himself in command of the expedition.[394] Despite this rapid changed in command, the Confederates continued to fight, and within twenty minutes, the outnumbered Union crew surrendered.[395]

Once the *Water Witch* was secured by the Confederate raiders, Lieutenant Price took the ship up the Vernon River. Despite some trouble navigating the river, the expedition eventually reached Beaulieu Battery, where the Union prisoners disembarked and were put under the charge of marine Lieutenant Edward Neufville.[396] The next morning, Neufvill and his marines escorted the prisoners to Savannah.[397]

As the final tasks of the expedition were carried out, the officers involved began writing their reports. In one of these reports, Flag-Officer William Hunter proudly suggested that the captured prize may very well be suited for the special assignment Secretary Mallory had written him about.[398] In another report, Lieutenant Price, although not specifically mentioning the marines, noted that all of the men who took part in the expedition carried out their duties with gallantry.[399] In the perhaps most interesting report, however, Flag-Officer Hunter noted that marine Private Thomas Veitch markedly distinguished himself during the expedition, although

[393] N.O.R. 15, 501: Report of Lieutenant Price, C.S. Navy, second in command of the expedition, June 8, 1864.

[394] Ibid.

[395] N.O.R. 15, 476: Extract of a letter from Lieutenant-Commander Carpenter, U.S. Navy, regarding the attack, July 20, 1864.

[396] Donnelly, *Confederate States Marine Corps*, 98.

[397] Ibid.

[398] N.O.R. 15, 742: Report of Flag-Officer Hunter, C.S. Navy, relative to the prize steamer *Water Witch*, June 9, 1864. The *Water Witch* was never used for the secret mission Secretary Mallory alluded to. Instead it was kept under close supervision so that the Union Navy could not recapture it. In fact, to prevent recapture of the ship, Flag-Officer Hunter ordered that approximately 100 pounds of gunpowder be kept aboard the vessel at all times in case it needed to be fired and blown up. In December 1864, this was exactly the ship's fate.

[399] N.O.R. 15, 501: Report of Lieutenant Price, C.S. Navy, second in command of the expedition, June 8, 1864.

no information as to how he did this is provided.[400] Although the Confederate Marines are only

briefly mentioned in the saga of the capturing of the *Water Witch*, they undoubtedly played a

significant role in the success of the expedition and rightly held a claim to this victory.

While the *Water Witch* was certainly a prize and its capture was a proud moment for the

corps, another exploit which would have greatly overshadowed the raid almost occurred shortly

thereafter. Soon after the Siege of Petersburg began, General Robert E. Lee wrote a letter to

President Jefferson Davis which detailed a plan to overtake the guards at Point Lookout and

release the Confederate prisoners held there.[401] If accomplished, the exploit could act as a

diversion for Lee's army, and if nothing else, would be a great morale boost for the Confederacy.

Although the majority of the operation would be accomplished by Maryland troops from the

Army of Northern Virginia, General Lee desired to capture several Union gunboats and use them

in the attack against the Federal prisoner-of-war camp.[402] According to the plan, Commander

John Wood would procure these boats, then he would lead a group of sailors and marines in an

operation quite similar to the capture of the *Underwriter*.[403] Although the initial plan was

amended several times, the operation began to take shape in early July, and 130 marines from

Drewry's Bluff and Richmond traveled to Wilmington where they prepared for the daring

expedition.[404] However, due to the plan's discovery by Union forces, the expedition was

abandoned by July 11, and the marines returned to Virginia where they resumed their standard

duties.[405]

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[400] N.O.R. 15, 500: Report of Flag-Officer Hunter, C.S. Navy, transmitting detailed report of Lieutenant Price, C.S. Navy, June 9, 1864.

[401] O.R. 37 part 1, 767: Letter from General Robert E. Lee, C.S. Army, to President Jefferson Davis, June 26, 1864.

[402] Donnelly, *Confederate States Marine Corps*, 109.

[403] Ibid.

[404] Ibid., 109-110.

[405] Ibid., 113.

Although the marines experienced a few minor successes during the remainder of July, the failed attempt to take Point Lookout seemed to begin a series of misfortunes and defeats for the corps. The first of these defeats began when Federal naval forces under Admiral David Farragut and army units under Major General Gordon Granger arrived at Mobile Bay and prepared for an assault.[406] Upon arrival, the first task of the Union force was to find a way to maneuver past the forts situated on the barrier islands guarding the channel into the bay. On August 3, Federal troops landed on Dauphin Island with the mission of attacking Fort Gaines and opening one side of the channel.[407] However, the commanding officer of Mobile Bay's outer defenses, Brigadier General Richard Page, ordered every available man in Mobile to report to Fort Gaines and act as reinforcements.[408] Among the men who reported to the fort were approximately forty marines from Company D under the command of Captain Julius Meiere.[409] When all of the reinforcements arrived at the fort, they were organized into a Provisional Battalion composed of 326 muskets.[410]

On August 4, Union forces organized a line of entrenchments and batteries across the island approximately 1,200 yards from Fort Gaines and positioned six three-inch Rodman guns against the fort during the night.[411] Early in the morning of August 5, the Confederates responded, and the battalion of reinforcements set up a picket line several hundred yards in front of the Union positions.[412] This type of duty was relatively new to the marines of Company D, as

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[406] O.R. 39 part 1, 429: Report from Major General Dabney H. Maury, C.S. Army, to General Samuel Cooper, C.S. Army, September 1, 1864.

[407] O.R. 39 part 1, 410: Report from Captain M. D. McAlester, U.S. Army, to Brigadier General Richard Delafield, U.S. Army, August 20, 1864.

[408] O.R. 39 part 1, 429: Report from Major General Dabney H. Maury, C.S. Army, to General Samuel Cooper, C.S. Army, September 1, 1864.

[409] Sullivan, *Biographical Sketches*, 131.

[410] Donnelly, *Confederate States Marine Corps*, 81.

[411] O.R. 39 part 1, 410: Report from Captain M. D. McAlester, U.S. Army, to Brigadier General Richard Delafield, U.S. Army, August 20, 1864.

[412] Ibid.

they had primarily served aboard ships and guarded naval yards prior to this engagement. However, shortly after the battalion took its position amongst the sand dunes, it quickly became engaged in a fierce skirmish with Union pickets.[413] As the sun appeared on the horizon and climbed into the sky, the Union forces' attention turned from the Confederate pickets and towards a larger concern.

As the skirmish drew to a close, fourteen Union ships and three ironclads entered Mobile Bay near Fort Morgan.[414] Admiral Farragut chose this location in the channel because he determined that it afforded the quickest passage past the Confederate forts and mines in the channel.[415] However, soon after the ironclad USS *Tecumseh* entered the bay and fired the first shots of the battle, it struck a Confederate mine and sunk within minutes with very few survivors.[416] Despite this initial shock, the Union fleet continued into the bay. After the ships entered the bay, the garrison at Fort Gaines opened fire with its two ten-inch Columbiads but was quickly silenced by the enfilading fire from the infantry's three-inch Rodman guns.[417]

Once the Union vessels were inside of Mobile Bay, another obstacle to their mission arose. Directly ahead of them lay the CSS *Tennessee*, which Admiral Farragut recognized as a formidable opponent.[418] Aboard the fearsome ironclad were thirty-four marines under the command of Lieutenant David G. Raney.[419] As the marines aboard the *Tennessee* opened fire on the Federal fleet, the CSS *Gaines*, CSS *Selma*, and CSS *Morgan*, positioned under the cover of

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[413] Donnelly, *Confederate States Marine Corps*, 81.
[414] O.R. 39 part 1, 425: Report from Major General Dabney H. Maury, C.S. Army, to Secretary of War James Seddon, August 5, 1864.
[415] Luraghi, *Confederate Navy*, 324.
[416] O.R. 39 part 1, 434: Letter from Brigadier General Gabriel Rains, C.S. Army, to President Jefferson Davis, October 21, 1864.
[417] O.R. 39 part 1, 410: Report from Captain M. D. McAlester, U.S. Army, to Brigadier General Richard Delafield, U.S. Army, August 20, 1864.
[418] O.R. 39 part 1, 425: Report of Rear-Admiral Farragut, U.S. Navy, transmitting report of board appraisement of C.S. ram *Tennessee*, September 19, 1864.
[419] Field, *Civil War Marines*, 51.

Fort Morgan, delivered a sharp enfilading fire into the Union vessels.[420] Admiral Franklin

Buchanan, commanding the *Tennessee*, believed that he could use his ironclad in conjunction

with these gunboats to carry out a repeat performance of the Battle of Hampton Roads in which

he commanded the *Virginia.* Initially, his plan worked, and the Confederate gunboats reduced

portions of the USS *Oneida* and flagship USS *Hartford* to splinters.[421] As the marine guards and

sailors aboard the gunboats kept up their fire, Admiral Buchanan decided to ram the *Hartford*

with the *Tennessee*, but the ironclad could not be steered quickly enough to hit its mark.[422] After

missing the *Hartford*, Admiral Buchanan ordered his men to ram several other ships in the Union

fleet, but again, the ironclad was too slow and difficult to maneuver.[423]

While the crew of the *Tennessee* continued to try to ram the Union ships, the tide of the

battle changed. During this time, several Federal gunboats broke away from the fleet and

engaged the Confederate gunboats.[424] During the artillery exchange that ensued, the *Gaines* was

hit multiple times and withdrew to the cover of Fort Morgan, where the crew beached the

vessel.[425] Meanwhile, the USS *Metacomet* engaged the *Selma* and forced its capitulation.[426] The

crew of the *Morgan*, however, was able to slowly make its way back to the safety of Mobile.[427]

Despite the withdrawal and capture of the gunboats, Admiral Buchanan was undaunted.

Perhaps this overconfidence in his ship is what caused him to engage the entire Union fleet with

only the *Tennessee*. Shortly after 9:00 in the morning, the Confederate ironclad steamed towards

the Union fleet.[428] While the USS *Brooklyn* opened fire with its 100-pounder Parrot, the USS

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[420] Luraghi, *Confederate Navy*, 325.
[421] Ibid.
[422] Ibid.
[423] N.O.R. 21, 783: Abstract log of the U.S.S. Brooklyn, Captain James Alden, U.S. Navy, commanding.
[424] Luraghi, *Confederate Navy*, 325.
[425] Donnelly, *Confederate States Marine Corps*, 80.
[426] Luraghi, *Confederate Navy*, 325.
[427] Donnelly, *Confederate States Marine Corps*, 80-81.
[428] N.O.R. 21, 783: Abstract log of the U.S.S. Brooklyn, Captain James Alden, U.S. Navy, commanding.

Monongahela and USS *Lackawanna* rammed the *Tennessee*, but inflicted more damage upon themselves than the ironclad.[429] The *Hartford* then rammed the *Tennessee*, but also damaged itself more than its enemy, yet the fight raged on.[430]

Throughout the fight, the marines aboard the *Tennessee* had been faithfully manning some of ship's guns. However, soon after the attempts to ram the ironclad, the *Lackawanna* silenced their ordnance. Captain John Marchand, commanding the *Lackawanna*, noted in his journal that the marines and sailors aboard his ship fired small arms into the ports of the *Tennessee* and prevented the Confederate Marines and sailors from reloading their guns.[431] Captain Marchand then recorded that one of his ship's nine-inch guns was fired at one of the *Tennessee's* gun ports.[432] This shot apparently caused the shutter on the port to jam which rendered the gun at that port useless.[433] Much like the capture of the *Atlanta*, the marines helplessly stood at their gun while the attack continued.

However, the attack did not continue much longer. Soon after the wooden ships rammed the *Tennessee*, three of the Union monitors turned their attention from the Fort Morgan to the Confederate juggernaut.[434] As the monitors focused on the ironclad, Admiral Buchanan still believed that he could repeat his performance at Hampton Roads. However, he forgot or disregarded the fact that the *Monitor* had not been properly equipped with solid shot and did not use appropriate amounts of powder when battling the *Virginia*. The Union did not forget this valuable lesson, and the USS *Manhattan* fired 440 pounds of solid iron from one of its 15-inch

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[429] N.O.R. 21, 819-820: Extract from Journal of Captain Marchand, U.S. Navy, commanding U.S.S. Lackawanna.

[430] N.O.R. 21, 783: Abstract log of the U.S.S. Brooklyn, Captain James Alden, U.S. Navy, commanding.

[431] N.O.R. 21, 819-820: Extract from Journal of Captain Marchand, U.S. Navy, commanding U.S.S. Lackawanna.

[432] Ibid.

[433] Ibid.

[434] Luraghi, *Confederate Navy*, 327.

Dahlgren smoothbore guns through the side of the *Tennessee*.[435] Soon after, the USS *Chickasaw*

and USS *Winnebago* opened fire with their 11-inch Dahlgren guns and opened cracks and holes

in the Confederate armor.[436] In the fray, the *Tennessee's* smokestack was shot off, and the ship's

steam was greatly reduced, causing the ironclad to become almost immobile.[437] The *Tennessee*

attempted to escape to the safety of Fort Morgan, but could not outrun the Union vessels. Finally,

at 10:40, the crew of the once fearsome ironclad raised the white flag.[438] Federal forces secured

the defeated ship, and its compliment of sailors and marines were put aboard other ships to be

sent to prison camps.

As the naval battle drew to a close, the disheartened marines amongst the dunes in front

of Fort Gaines prepared to take up their picket line again. On the morning of August 6, Federal

sharpshooters began targeting the Provincial Battalion while the *Winnebago* shelled Fort

Gaines.[439] The battalion of reinforcements was relieved about mid-morning, but the soldiers sent

to relieve them soon fell back, losing approximately 600 yards of ground before order could be

reestablished.[440] During the remainder of the day and early hours of August 7, the Union force

positioned four 30-pounder guns in addition to their six Rodman guns and positioned their

infantry to attack.[441] While the Union force prepared to attack, Colonel Charles Anderson,

commanding Fort Gaines, discussed surrender. When marine Lieutenant Rapier learned of the

possible surrender, he became irate and declared he would rather fight than capitulate.[442]

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[435] Ibid. The sides of the *Tennessee* were made of two feet of solid wood covered in five inches of iron.
[436] Ibid.
[437] N.O.R. 21, 786: Abstract log of the U.S. ironclad *Chickasaw*, Lieutenant-Commander George H. Perkins, U.S. Navy, commanding.
[438] Ibid.
[439] Donnelly, *Confederate States Marine Corps*, 81.
[440] Ibid., 82.
[441] O.R. 39 part 1, 410: Report from Captain M. D. McAlester, U.S. Army, to Brigadier General Richard Delafield, U.S. Army, August 20, 1864. During that same time, Confederate forces evacuated Fort Powell, another fort protecting the bay, and blew it up.
[442] Donnelly, *Confederate States Marine Corps*, 82.

However, the next morning, Colonel Anderson surrendered the garrison.[443] After the capitulation, which many Confederates deemed "shameful," the officers of the garrison signed a document which stated they agreed with Colonel Anderson's surrender.[444] While Captain Meiere's signature appeared on the document, marine Lieutenants James Fendall and John Rapier's emphatically did not.[445]

Although the marines' service during the Battle of Mobile Bay is somewhat obscure, the records which do exist enable their general service to be understood. While a more in-depth account of their service cannot be rendered, the battle is an important part of the Confederate Marines Corps' history due to the fact that it was the first time the marines had intentionally fought on both land and sea during a battle. Additionally, the battle is significant because of the number of marines in the engagement. Spread out amongst the ships and Fort Gaines, approximately 110 marines did their parts to try to obtain victory.[446] However, with the Confederate defeat, came the largest number of marines to be captured at once up to that point in the war. According to a Federal officer's letter, approximately sixty marines were captured throughout the battle and subsequent surrenders.[447] To make their defeat worse, some of the marines were sent to a prison camp on Ship Island where the corps experienced its first victory.[448] Eventually, some of these marines escaped from prison, while others were exchanged

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[443] O.R. 39 part 1, 426: Report from Major General Dabney H. Maury, C.S. Army, to Secretary of War James Seddon, August 8, 1864.

[444] Donnelly, *Confederate States Marine Corps*, 82.

[445] Ibid.

[446] Field, *Civil War Marines*, 51.

[447] Donnelly, *Confederate States Marine Corps*, 82-83.

[448] Ibid.

and returned to duty.[449] However, the future of the corps remained bleak, and as the end of the

Confederacy loomed on the horizon, desertions began to increase.[450]

Despite the misfortunes which began befalling the corps, a few marines participated in a

small victory just over a month after the surrender of Fort Gaines. On September 9, a small band

of men assembled under the command of James P. Hopkins, an officer aboard the CSS

Albemarle, for the purpose of raiding a U.S. mail boat.[451] The raiding party, numbering

approximately twenty-five men, was composed of marines and sailors from the *Albemarle* and

members of the 10th NC Artillery and 50th NC Infantry. [452] That night, the raiders quietly traveled

up the Currituck Canal until they reached the mail steamer *Fawn*.[453] Upon reaching the small

ship, Hopkins demanded its surrender, produced his revolver, and fired into the ship's crew.[454]

Upon hearing this shot, the marines and other raiders leveled their muskets and fired as well.[455]

After this volley which killed or wounded seven people, the crew and passengers of the *Fawn*

immediately surrendered.[456] The raiders then pillaged most of the valuable contents from the

boat including $25,000 before they took one colonel, two majors, several soldiers, government

officials, and citizens as prisoners.[457] Finally, Hopkins's raiders set fire to the mail boat, which

completely destroyed it, and returned to their posts.[458] Although perhaps not the most noble or

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[449] Ibid. While most of the marines captured at Mobile Bay returned to service in the corps, some records show that others joined the Union Army or Navy upon their release. On October 13, 1864, Lieutenants Fendall and Rapier escaped from prison in New Orleans and returned to service shortly thereafter.

[450] Ibid., 57.

[451] N.O.R. 10, 457: Report of Acting Rear-Admiral Lee, U.S. Navy, September 15, 1864.

[452] "A Gallant Affair," *Fayetteville Semi-Weekly Observer*, September 19, 1864.

[453] Ibid.

[454] "Capture of a Yankee Mail Boat," *The Greensboro Patriot*, September 22, 1864.

[455] N.O.R. 10, 458: Report of Commander Macomb, U.S. Navy, commanding U.S.S. *Shamrock*, September 15, 1864.

[456] N.O.R. 10, 457: Report of Acting Rear-Admiral Lee, U.S. Navy, September 15, 1864.

[457] Ibid. The prisoners taken from the ship were eventually released.

[458] O.R. 42 part 1, 956: Report of Colonel David W. Wardrop, Ninety-ninth New York Infantry, commanding Sub-District of Albemarle, September 10, 1864.

exciting engagement the marines participated in, this raid was one of the only victories of note

for the marines during the latter half of 1864.

During the months following this brief hiatus from misfortune, the marines saw limited

action and continued their regular duties while watching their Confederacy turn into a lost cause

a bit more each day. Throughout the first days of December, the marines stationed in Savannah

awaited the inevitable arrival of General William T. Sherman and his army, which had been

wreaking havoc through Georgia for several weeks. As the inevitable neared, an order went out

to all Confederate forces operating in the Savannah area to report for duty and serve in the

defense of the city.[459] In response to this order, Captain John Tattnall and approximately fifty

marines from Company E reported for service and were positioned in trenches near King's

Bridge on the Ogeechee River approximately eight miles southwest of the city.[460] As the Union

force approached Savannah, the Confederates held out hope, thinking that Sherman's munitions

and supplies must be running low, and if he could not reach the Union Navy, access to which

they blocked, he would be forced to turn back.[461]

On December 10, Union forces began arriving at the Confederate earthworks around the

city.[462] The next day, Federal troops arrived at the marines' position at King's Bridge, which had

been partially burnt so that the Union troops could not use it.[463] Throughout the days that

followed, elements of the XV and XVII Corps consistently held a position at King's Bridge and

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[459] Field, *Civil War Marines*, 51.

[460] Lieutenant Henry L. Graves, C.S.M.C., to "My Dearest Mother," Charleston, South Carolina, December 28, 1864, in *Graves Family Papers, Accession 2716, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina*. The marines most likely arrived in the trenches on December 8. According to Graves, the marines were the only regular Confederate troops in the vicinity.

[461] "Confederate States of America-Wilmington N.C., Thursday, December 15, 1864," *Wilmington Journal*, December 15, 1864.

[462] O.R. 44, 31: Timeline of movements of the Seventeenth Corps, Fourth Division, Artillery Brigade, U.S. Army.

[463] Ibid. The records are unclear as to whether the marines played a role in the destruction of the bridge.

attempted to take and repair it.[464] Marine Lieutenant Henry Graves recorded that during this time, he, the other marines, and even his African-American body servant skirmished with the Federal troops.[465] After twelve days of holding this position, however, the marines withdrew from their trenches as Confederate forces evacuated the city.[466] After leaving their trenches, the retreating marines marched through the night and reached Savannah during the early hours of December 21.[467] There, the platoon which had been in the trenches was joined by the marine guard which served aboard the *Savannah* before it was destroyed to prevent capture.[468] Eventually, the marines along with the other defeated defenders of Savannah made their way to Charleston.[469]

As the marines arrived in Charleston on December 23, the next engagement the corps played a role in was beginning approximately 175 miles away in Wilmington. There, Union naval forces under the command of Admiral David Porter and land forces under the command of General Benjamin Butler were converging on Fort Fisher. [470] This largely earthen fort protected the port city of Wilmington, which was vital to Confederate logistics and had been suspected as a Union target for months. Because of the suspected Federal assault, Major General William Whiting, second-in-command of the defenses of Wilmington, had taken measures to strengthen the fort during the summer and fall of 1864.[471]

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[464] O.R. 44, 756-757: Special Field Orders No. 199.
[465] Donnelly, *Confederate States Marine Corps*, 98.
[466] Field, *Civil War Marines*, 51.
[467] Donnelly, *Confederate States Marine Corps*, 98.
[468] Field, *Civil War Marines*, 52. The large floating battery had little to no chance of escape and was burned to prevent its capture by Union forces.
[469] Donnelly, *Confederate States Marine Corps*, 98.
[470] O.R. 42 part 1, 966-970: Report from Major General Benjamin F. Butler, U.S. Army, to Lieutenant General Ulysses S. Grant, January 3, 1865.
[471] N.O.R. 10, 774-775: Letter from Major-General Whiting, C.S. Army, to the Secretary of the Navy, stating his reasons for urging the retention of the C.S. steamers *Chickamauga* and *Tallahassee* at Wilmington, N.C., October 6, 1864.

As part of this strengthening of the fort, General Whiting wrote a letter to Secretary

Mallory and requested that the CSS *Chickamauga* and CSS *Tallahassee* be left in port at

Wilmington so that the crews and guns aboard the ships could be removed and used in defense of

the Cape Fear River.[472] In his letter, General Whiting noted that the crews of these ships, which

included marines, were skilled artillerists and, if positioned at naval batteries, would be more

valuable and effective than ironclads.[473] Secretary Mallory granted General Whiting's request,

and the marines aboard the ships joined the marine guard already serving in Wilmington under

the command of Captain Alfred Van Benthuysen.[474] Meanwhile the sailors constructed "Battery

Buchanan" near the mouth of the river and armed it with a 32-pounder and an eight-inch

Columbiad.[475] On November 3, Captain Van Benthuysen ordered Second Lieutenant John

Roberts to take twenty-three marines and form a guard for this battery.[476] With the battery in

place and the other defenses strengthened, Fort Fisher was one of the most formidable fortresses

in the world at the time and earned the name "Southern Gibraltar."

During the following weeks, Lieutenant Roberts was relieved by Lieutenant James

Murdoch, and the marines at the battery did little more than help chase away the occasional

Union raiding party.[477] However, as they guarded the battery, Union forces planned their attack.

The original plan entailed the USS *Louisiana* being packed full of gunpowder and detonated near

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[472] Ibid.

[473] Ibid. General Whiting made special note concerning the ironclads because the *North Carolina* and *Raleigh* were originally tasked with defending the mouth of the river but were both sunk or scuttled. Whiting also reminded Secretary Mallory that the defense of rivers, whether through use of ironclad or batteries on land, was the Navy's responsibility. By making both of these notes, it is clear that Whiting blamed the Navy for weakness in the defenses of Wilmington.

[474] Donnelly, *Confederate States Marine Corps*, 117. Records show that the company of marines serving in Wilmington was made up of men from Companies A, B, C, E, and F.

[475] N.O.R. 10, 800: Extract from the official diary of Colonel William Lamb, commanding the defenses of Confederate (Federal) Point, with headquarters Fort Fisher, N.C., October 27, 1864.

[476] Donnelly, *Confederate States Marine Corps*, 117.

[477] Ibid. The number of marines who acted as a guard at Battery Buchanan roughly numbered the same as a guard aboard a ship.

Fort Fisher to weaken its defenses.[478] Then, Admiral Porter and General Butler were to launch

their attacks simultaneously to create a devastating amphibious assault which would quickly lead

to the fort's surrender.[479] However, adverse weather conditions caused the attack to be

delayed.[480] Throughout the numerous delays, Admiral Porter became increasingly frustrated and

impatient, which caused him to launch the naval portion of the attack without General Butler and

the Army.[481] During the evening of December 23, Admiral Porter's sailors were near the fort and

preparing to attack.

During that night, the *Louisiana*, packed with 235 tons of black powder, was towed near

Fort Fisher, and fuses were set to detonate at 1:18 the following morning.[482] The fuses, however,

failed, but the powder charge was eventually ignited by a small fire the sailors had kindled in the

stern of the ship.[483] At approximately 1:40 in the morning on Christmas Eve, the Confederate

Marines and other members of the Fort Fisher garrison were awoken by the deafening explosion

of the *Louisiana*.[484] The powder ship, however, was positioned too far from the fort to be

effective and did very little damage. The explosion did, however, alert the Confederate forces

that Federal attack would likely soon occur. Because of this, additional marines under the

command of Captain Van Benthuysen were sent to Battery Buchanan to further strengthen it.[485]

Although the bombardment and Fort Fisher's answer continued into the evening, the marines

saw relatively little action.

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[478] O.R. 42 part 1, 964-965: Report of Major General Benjamin F. Butler, U.S. Army, commanding Department of Virginia and North Carolina, December 20, 1864.
[479] Ibid.
[480] Ibid.
[481] O.R. 42 part 1, 965-966: Report of Major General Benjamin F. Butler, U.S. Army, commanding Department of Virginia and North Carolina, December 27, 1864.
[482] N.O.R. 11, 226-227: Report of Commander Rhind, U.S. Navy, in charge of powder vessel *Louisiana* regarding the explosion, December 26, 1864.
[483] Ibid.
[484] Ibid.
[485] Donnelly, *Confederate States Marine Corps*, 118.

During the evening of December 24, General Butler and his transports filled with troops arrived. On Christmas morning, a portion of this force was landed north of the fort and carried out a reconnaissance while the Navy resumed its bombardment. At approximately 2:00 in the afternoon, the main body of the Federal troops landed and captured several hundred Confederate soldiers and Battery Anderson as they proceeded towards Fort Fisher.[486] Upon learning of the impending land assault, which was often the downfall of coastal forts during the war, a message was sent to Battery Buchanan requesting reinforcements to be sent to the fort.[487] Shortly after the message reached the battery at 5:20, approximately two-thirds of the marines and sailors rushed to the fort to help repulse the Federal assault which commenced shortly after they arrived.[488]

The primary responsibility of the marines during this engagement was manning the fort's guns in an attempt to silence the Federal naval guns, which were inflicting a sharp enfilading fire against the fort.[489] During the fight, a detachment of marines combined with sailors manned two powerful seven-inch Brooke rifles, which were repeatedly fired and reloaded until both of their barrels burst.[490] Although several marines were injured when the guns exploded, those who were not too badly wounded requested to man other guns and quickly resumed their role in the fight.[491] Throughout the remainder of Christmas day, the marines kept up their accurate fire for which they were later commended by General Whiting.[492] However, as night fell, the

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[486] O.R. 42 part 1, 982-984: Report of Brevet Brigadier General Newton Martin Curtis, 142nd NY Infantry, commanding First Brigade, December 28, 1864.

[487] Donnelly, *Confederate States Marine Corps*, 118.

[488] Ibid.

[489] N.O.R. 11, 365: Report of Major General Whiting, C.S. Army, transmitting report of colonel Lamb, C.S. Army, commanding Fort Fisher, December 31, 1864.

[490] Field, *Civil War Marines*, 52.

[491] Donnelly, *Confederate States Marine Corps*, 118.

[492] N.O.R. 11, 365: Report of Major General Whiting, C.S. Army, transmitting report of colonel Lamb, C.S. Army, commanding Fort Fisher, December 31, 1864.

Confederate garrison used canister and musket fire to force the Union troops back, effectively

ending the fighting for that day.[493]

During the night, the Union Navy continued a limited bombardment while the marines

continued to man their guns.[494] During this same time, however, General Butler worried that

Major General Robert Hoke's division was closing in to the north and once again convinced

himself that the Confederate defenses were too strong, just as he had done at Drewry's Bluff.[495]

Although limited bombardment and skirmishing continued throughout the following day, the

majority of Federal troops fell back to their transports, and by the end of December 27, the fleet

had set a course for Virginia.[496]

Despite their victory and the limited damage to the fort, the marines and other

Confederate forces were tired after this fight, and many of them must have known the war was

drawing to a close. Yet, the marines continued to perform their duties and vigilantly watched for

the Union fleet to return. Five marines, however, decided to determine their own fate and

deserted to Federal forces on New Year's Day.[497]Despite this poor beginning to 1865, the

majority of the corps stood firm in its devotion to the Confederacy and awaited their next

engagement.

The marines stationed at Fort Fisher, however, did not have to wait long. On January 12,

the Federal fleet returned to the North Carolina coast and converged near Battery Buchanan.[498]

However, the Federal land forces in this expedition were not commanded General Butler but

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[493] Ibid.

[494] N.O.R. 11, 348: Abstract log of the U.S.S. *Cherokee*, Acting Volunteer Lieutenant W.E. Dennison, U.S. Navy, December 26, 1864.

[495] O.R. 42 part 1, 965-966: Report of Major General Benjamin F. Butler, U.S. Army, commanding Department of Virginia and North Carolina, December 27, 1864.

[496] N.O.R. 11, 348: Abstract log of the U.S.S. *Cherokee*, Acting Volunteer Lieutenant W.E. Dennison, U.S. Navy, December 26, 1864.

[497] Donnelly, *Confederate States Marine Corps*, 118.

[498] O.R. 46 part 1, 393: January 3-17, 1865. – Expedition to capture Fort Fisher, N.C., and its dependencies.

rather by Major General Alfred Terry, who was much more aggressive and offensively minded.[499] The following day, Union forces began landing largely uncontested near the fort while the Federal Navy launched a bombardment which lasted until midnight.[500] While these initial phases of the Union assault were taking place, approximately fifty Confederate Marines reported to Fort Fisher and helped man the artillery.[501] Lieutenant Henry Doak and a detachment of marines were tasked with manning three nine-inch Dahlgren guns and kept them firing at the Federal Navy throughout the remainder of the day and the next. [502] During January 14, Union land forces maneuvered and positioned themselves to attack Fort Fisher the following day after it had been severely weakened by the Navy's guns.

On January 15, the full Federal assault began with the resumption of the Navy's bombardment, which dismounted Lieutenant Doak's guns along with most other ordnance in the fort.[503] Despite the great destruction inflicted by the bombardment, Colonel William Lamb noted that Captain Van Benthuysen and his marines continued to resist with "gallantry and determination."[504] However, as the fortress was weakened, Union soldiers moved closer to it and took up positions in rifle pits.[505] After his Dahlgren guns were rendered useless, Lieutenant Doak and his marines were ordered to man a mortar battery which they used to rain down shrapnel into the Federal rifle pits.[506] However, just as the marines found their range with the mortar, a Union shell burst above the battery, wounding Lieutenant Doak and wounding or killing several

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[499] Ibid.

[500] N.O.R. 11, 475: Abstract log of the U.S.S. *Unadilla*, Lieutenant-Commander Ramsey, U.S. Navy, January 13, 1865.

[501] Donnelly, *Confederate States Marine Corps*, 118.

[502] Field, *Civil War Marines*, 52.

[503] Donnelly, *Confederate States Marine Corps*, 118-119.

[504] "Wilmington," *New York Daily Herald*, January 26, 1865.

[505] Donnelly, *Confederate States Marine Corps*, 118-119. Reports do not indicate what the other marines were doing during this engagement, but Union reports state that they were being fired upon by sharpshooter which could have very well been marines who did not have an artillery piece to man.

[506] Field, *Civil War Marines*, 52.

members of his gun crew.[507] After the mortar and other pieces of artillery were silenced, the Union soldiers attacked Fort Fisher at 4:00 in the afternoon and by 5:00 were inside its walls.[508] Throughout the remainder of the day, the battle was hard-fought within the fort, and the guns at Battery Buchanan were turned on the fort in an attempt to disrupt the Union advance.[509] However, the marines and other Confederate troops within the fort were fighting their own lost cause as the Federal forces advanced traverse by traverse until there was little for the Confederates to do but run.

Although several officers and men had been wounded during the fighting, many of the marines were determined to serve to the best of their ability until the end. With this mindset, Captain Van Benthuysen, despite a relatively severe head-wound, led a detachment of marines to find General Whiting and Colonel Lamb, who had both been wounded and lead them to safety.[510] Acting as a personal guard for the two commanding officers, the marines made their way to Battery Buchanan, hoping to find men there or a means of escape.[511] However, when they arrived at the battery, they found it completely abandoned and devoid of any boats or other way to escape. Out of options, the small band simply waited for the Federals to arrive. Finally, at approximately 10:00 at night, General Terry met them and accepted the official surrender of the fort from General Whiting.[512]

After the fierce fighting had ended, the marines received much praise for their service. General Whiting made special note about Captain Van Benthuysen acting as his guard, and a

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[507] Ibid.

[508] O.R. 46 part 1, 131: Reports of the Twenty Forth Corps, Second Brigade, First Division, January 15, 1865.

[509] Ibid.

[510] O.R. 46 part 1, 440: Reports of Major General William H. C. Whiting, C.S. Army, of operations January 15, January 18, 1865.

[511] Ibid.

[512] Rod Gragg, *Confederate Goliath: The Battle of Fort Fisher* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1991), 229.

midshipman serving at Battery Buchanan stated in his diary that "the company of marines fought splendidly."[513] Despite this excellent service, however, the marines' effort was rewarded by defeat, and January 15 had proven to be one of the worst days in the corps' history. Following the surrender, six marine officers and sixty-six enlisted men were made prisoners-of-war and were sent to various prison camps or hospitals throughout the North.[514] Of these captured, at least four officers and ten enlisted men were severely wounded, and three of the enlisted men eventually died of their wounds.[515] Although a few of the officers eventually returned to service, many of the marines captured at Fort Fisher did not see service again.[516]

Despite the great reduction in the size of the corps and the reality that the war was drawing to a close, the marines elsewhere in the South continued to perform their regular duties. Captain Tattnall, commanding Company E in Charleston, still attempted to recruit new men for the corps and promised them good pay.[517] However, the reality was that the corps did not even have adequate accoutrements for its men, and whatever money they could pay was all but worthless.[518] Because of this, Colonel Beall sent Second Lieutenant Ruffin Thomas to North Carolina to find and procure equipment for the corpsmen.[519] Elsewhere, small detachments of marines continued to serve as guards aboard the few remaining Confederate ships and on land at places like the Naval Ordnance Works in Charlotte, North Carolina.[520] Despite these efforts and continued service, the Confederacy was crumbling. On February 17, Charleston was evacuated,

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[513] N.O.R. 11, 378: Extract from diary of Midshipman Cary, C.S. Navy.

[514] Donnelly, *Confederate States Marine Corps*, 119. The officers captured were Captain Alfred Van Benthuysen, First Lieutenant David Bradford, Second Lieutenant Henry Doak, Second Lieutenant James Murdoch, Second Lieutenant Thomas St. George Pratt, and Second Lieutenant John Roberts.

[515] Field, *Civil War Marines*, 52.

[516] Donnelly, *Confederate States Marine Corps*, 120.

[517] Ibid., 128.

[518] Colonel Lloyd J. Beall, Commandant, C.S.M.C., to Lieutenant Ruffin Thomas, C.S.M.C, Richmond, March 16, 1865, *Thomas Papers*., *Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina*.

[519] Ibid.

[520] Donnelly, *Confederate States Marine Corps*, 129.

and the marines serving their traveled with Flag-Officer John Tucker to Drewry's Bluff.[521]

There, the majority of the remaining corpsmen waited for action and hoped for victory.

During the final days of March and first days of April, the corps experienced the action it

was awaiting but was denied victory. On March 25, Federal forces laid siege to Mobile, the last

major Confederate port.[522] As a part of this campaign against the port city, Union forces attacked

Spanish Fort and Fort Blakely which protected the rivers leading into the bay.[523] During the

defense of these forts, two small marine detachments helped man the guns aboard the CSS

Nashville and CSS *Morgan* and provided accurate fire against the Federal forces despite having

insufficient amounts of ammunition and defective fuses for their shells.[524] Additionally, another

detachment of marines fought on land during the defense of Fort Blakely.[525] Despite, the efforts

of the marines and other Confederate forces, both forts capitulated by April 9, and the door to

Mobile was open.[526] However, before the city was taken, both the *Nashville* and the *Morgan*

were able to escape up the rivers allowing their marine guards to continue their service a bit

longer.[527]

While the marines played a small role in the final defense of Mobile, the majority of the

remaining active marines were taking part in a more decisive campaign further north. After more

than nine months of stalemate in the trenches of Petersburg and Richmond, the Siege of

Petersburg ended, and the Appomattox Campaign began with the Battle of Lewis's Farm. A few

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[521] Ibid.

[522] N.O.R. 22, 67: Letter from Major-General Canby, U.S. Army, to Acting Rear-Admiral Thatcher, U.S. Navy, regarding details of the proposed forward movement, March 24, 1865.

[523] N.O.R. 22, 99-102: Detailed report of Lieutenant Bennett, C.S. Navy, commanding C.S.S. *Nashville*, regarding operations against the enemy near Spanish Fort and at Blakely, April 25, 1865.

[524] Ibid.

[525] Donnelly, *Confederate States Marine Corps*, 85.

[526] N.O.R. 22, 92: Detailed report of Acting Rear-Admiral Thatcher, U.S. Navy, of the occupation of Forts Huger and Tracy and expected evacuation of Mobile, April 12, 1865.

[527] N.O.R. 22, 95: Detailed report of Acting Rear-Admiral Thatcher, U.S. Navy, regarding the surrender of Mobile, April 15, 1865.

days after this battle, the last remaining railhead supplying the Confederate Army was captured

at the Battle of Five Forks. With this severe logistical defeat, General Robert E. Lee had little

choice but to abandon the cities he had fought so long to protect.

When his army began departing on April 2, the marines at Drewry's Bluff once again

took up their muskets and were organized into Flag-Officer John Tucker's Naval Brigade before

leaving their military village high above the James River.[528] As the marines, now serving in the

Department of Richmond with the Army of Northern Virginia, prepared to depart Richmond,

Secretary Mallory and Colonel Beall were also making preparations to evacuate. Unfortunately,

part of these preparations entailed Secretary Mallory ordering Colonel Beall to burn all marine

records so that they would not fall into enemy hands.[529] During the night of April 2 and the early

morning of April 3, the marines slipped out of Richmond and bivouacked for the night once they

were a safe distance away.[530]

The next morning, the marines, along with the rest of the Naval Brigade, awoke early and

marched until approximately 9:00 in the evening.[531] After three hours of rest, the marines began

marching again at midnight.[532] Sometime during this march, the Department of Richmond began

following the Danville Railroad to Amelia Court House, where the various columns were

supposed to join together and be resupplied.[533] Once the army was concentrated and resupplied,

General Lee planned to turn south and join his army with General Joseph Johnston and defeat

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[528] Donnelly, *Confederate States Marine Corps*, 57.

[529] "Researching Confederate Marines in the Civil War," Prologue Magazine, National Archives, last modified December 6, 2017, https://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/2001/winter/confederate-marines-in-the-civil-war.html.

[530] Donnelly, *Confederate States Marine Corps*, 57.

[531] Unknown Confederate Marine, to "My Dear Friends, Mr. and Mrs. Mayor," Rebel Hill, March 24, 1867, Appomattox Court House National Historical Park's Archives.

[532] Ibid.

[533] Brigadier General Vincent J. Esposito, ed., *The West Point Atlas of War: The Civil War* (New York: Tess Press, 1995), 144.

General Sherman before returning his attention to General Grant. However, when the various columns of the army arrived at Amelia Court House on April 5 expecting to find rations, they were sorely disappointed to find almost every kind of supply expect for food waiting for them on the trains. Because of this and the fact that Federal cavalry forces to the south blocked their route, the Confederates were forced to continue west.[534]

The following day, the Army of Northern Virginia continued west, still hoping to receive rations and turn south. However, during the afternoon of April 6, portions of the Federal army caught up to the Confederates near Sailor's Creek. As the battle began and intensified, General Richard Ewell positioned the Department of Richmond on a hillside near Little Sailor's Creek, while General Horatio Wright positioned the Federal VI Corps on a hillside on the opposite side of the creek.[535] Unfortunately for Ewell's men, they lacked artillery. However, the Union forces across the creek had several well-aimed cannons which delivered a merciless hail of shrapnel down on the helpless Confederates, whose rifles could not reach their enemies.[536] Following this artillery barrage, the Federal forces charged the Confederate forces in their make-shift fortifications.[537] As they did, the Confederates laid down a sharp fire against them. However, the Federals gained ground and would have overrun the Confederate position had it not been for the marine battalion positioned in the center of General Ewell's line.[538]

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[534] Ibid.

[535] Elizabeth R. Varon, *Appomattox: Victory, Defeat, and Freedom at the End of the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 13.

[536] Ibid.

[537] O.R. 46 part 1, 906: Report of Major-General Horatio G. Wright to Colonel George D. Ruggles, April 29, 1865.

[538] O.R. 46 part 1, 980: Report of Brigadier General Truman Seymour to Major C. H. Whittelsey, April 15, 1865. After the battle, several Union officers made note in their reports of the ferocity and effectiveness with which the marines fought.

Left: The hillside on which the marines were positioned during the Battle of Sailor's Creek. Little Sailor's is located just inside the tree line at the bottom of the hill. Right: This field piece marks the location of where the Union guns were situated during the Battle of Sailor's Creek. The marines would have been located just on the other side of the tree line seen in this picture. Only about 800 yards separated the two forces. (Photos by author)

However, following this short moment of triumph, the marines and other Confederate forces jumped over their fortifications and charged the enemy, pushing them back across the swollen creek.[539] After the Confederates were well past their own fortifications, the Federals then charged again with the aid of canister fire from their artillery.[540] During and following this charge, the Confederates were thrown into disarray, and many of the them, including General Ewell, were captured. However, the marine battalion was able to slip away into the forest and take up a battle line which remained uncontested until Brigadier General Joseph Keifer discovered it later in the evening.[541] Shortly thereafter, General Keifer went to Flag-Officer Tucker and accepted the surrender of the Naval Brigade.[542]

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[539] Varon, *Appomattox: Victory, Defeat, and Freedom*, 13.
[540] Ibid.
[541] Donnelly, *Confederate States Marine Corps*, 61.
[542] Ibid., 62.

Little Sailor's Creek where the majority of the marine's action during the Battle of Sailor's Creek took place. During the battle, the creek was flooded out of its banks. (Photo by author)

When the battle was over, General Ewell, seven other generals, and 8000 men had been killed, captured, or wounded. Included in this number were seven marine officers and forty-five enlisted men.[543] Although April 6 proved to be one of the most disastrous single days for the Confederacy and the majority of marines in Virginia were captured, a few dozen marines managed to escape and continue marching towards a small village called Appomattox Court House.

The vanguard of the Army of Northern Virginia reached this village on April 8, and a small detachment fought a fierce battle with Federal cavalry that evening. The next morning, General Gordon, now commanding the II Corps, moved his men west of the village in an attempt to clear the Richmond-Lynchburg Stage Road of a small Federal cavalry force so that the Army of Northern Virginia could continue on towards Lynchburg. Initially, the Confederates' plan succeeded, but their advance was stopped by the Army of the James emerging from fog which shrouded the field in front of them. The Confederates continued to fight, but after the Army of the Shenandoah arrived to the south, they were forced to fall back past the Appomattox River

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[543] Ibid.

east of the village. The marines' location and role during this battle is not recorded and quite

unclear. However, it is likely that they simply joined infantry regiments and fought in this battle.

The Richmond-Lynchburg Stage Road just west of the village of Appomattox Court House. On April 9, General Gordon's Second Corp lined up near where the road veers to the left. Much of the Battle of Appomattox Court House was fought on the hillside pictured here and in the fields beyond it. (Photo by author)

While the II Corps fought near the village, the I and III Corps fought the Army of the

Potomac several miles east of the village. However, they too were forced towards the

Appomattox River. The Army of Northern Virginia was surrounded by Federal forces on three

sides who held the strategic high-ground, and by the flooded James River on their fourth side.

With this realization, General Lee rode into the village and met General Grant in the home of

Wilmer McLean and surrendered his tired and starving army. During the next two days, the

cavalry and artillery formally surrendered and received their parole passes so that they could

travel home safely.

However, on April 12, exactly four years after the firing on Fort Sumter, the infantry

surrendered. For nine hours, the infantrymen who had fought so hard throughout the war

marched up the Stage Road lined with Union soldiers. Once they reached the village, they fixed

their bayonets and locked their rifles together. Then, they took of their accoutrements, hung them

on the bayonets, furled their flags, and walked away, many of them with tears in their eyes.

Among these infantrymen were four marine officers and twenty-two enlisted men who had remained devoted to the corps and the Confederacy to the very end.[544] These marines did not have a flag to lay down but rather simply laid down their muskets signaling the beginning of the end of the Confederate States Marine Corps.

The village of Appomattox Court House shrouded in fog much like it would have been on the morning of April 9. This is the scene the marines saw as they marched up the Richmond-Lynchburg Stage Road to stack their arms. (Photo by author)

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[544] "Alphabetical Listing for Parole Passes," Appomattox Court House, National Park Service, last modified September 20, 2018, https://www.nps.gov/apco/learn/historyculture/parole-passes-a.htm.

Conclusion

After the marines laid down their arms on the Stage Road at Appomattox Court House, each one received parole pass stating their name, rank, and unit. These simple pieces of paper allowed the marines to acquire food from Union camps, board a steamship or train, and, most importantly, go home undisturbed. For the twenty-six marines who surrendered at Appomattox, their peculiar service was over. However, as these marines set out on their journey home, the war continued further south, and marines continued to serve.

During the evacuation of Richmond, Secretary Mallory advised Rear Admiral Raphael Semmes to destroy the ships of the James River Squadron.[545] After Mallory's advice was taken on the night of April 2, the sailors and marines who had served aboard the ships were organized into another Naval Brigade under the command of Raphael Semmes.[546] Although many of the men in this brigade deserted or were picked up by the enemy, the majority of the brigade continued to serve and eventually reached the new Confederate capital, Danville, Virginia.[547] When they arrived there, the marines and sailors assumed a familiar role and were assigned to the batteries protecting the north side of the Dan River.[548] After several days of manning the guns, however, news of General Lee's surrender reached Danville, and the Naval Brigade was sent further south in hopes of reaching General Joseph E. Johnston's army.[549] However, by the time the Naval Brigade reached Greensboro, North Carolina, General Johnston had already begun discussing surrender. After Johnston officially surrendered on April 26, formal surrender

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[545] Donnelly, *Confederate States Marine Corps*, 62.
[546] "Latest by Telegraph," *The Cincinnati Enquirer*, April 10, 1865. This "brigade" was made up of two regiments which each contained five companies. This is an example of the fact that by the end of the war, brigades were often reduced to regiments, and regiments were reduced to companies.
[547] Ibid.
[548] Donnelly, *Confederate States Marine Corps*, 64.
[549] Ibid.

procedures were carried out much like at Appomattox, and on May 1, twenty Confederate

Marines belonging to the Naval Brigade surrendered and received their parole passes.[550]

The marines who served in the Naval Brigade, however, were not the only Confederate

Marines surrendered at Greensboro. As the Confederacy rapidly crumbled, Captain John Tattnall

and sixteen other marines serving in his Company E made their way through North Carolina and

eventually reached Greensboro where they received their parole passes on April 28.[551] Like the

marines surrendered at Appomattox Court House, the marines paroled at Greensboro were

allowed to return home and restart their lives.

Soon after the surrender at Greensboro the remainder of marines in the field either

surrendered or were captured. On May 5, many of the marines who escaped aboard the *Nashville*

and *Morgan* following the battles of Fort Blakely and Spanish Fort finally capitulated thirty-five

miles upstream from Mobile at a place known as Nanna Hubba Bluff.[552] There, Lieutenants

David Raney Jr., James Fendall, and John Rapier surrendered along with twenty-four enlisted

marines from Company D.[553] At approximately the same time, the remainder of marines serving

in Georgia were surrendered, although the circumstances of their surrender are neither clear nor

well documented.[554] Additionally, nineteen marines serving as infantry with Lieutenant General

Richard Taylor were surrendered during this same time.[555] Finally, the last major surrender of

Confederate Marines occurred on May 9 when fourteen marines from Company D surrendered

and were paroled in Meridian, Mississippi.[556]

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[550] Ibid.
[551] Ibid., 131.
[552] Field, *Civil War Marines*, 54.
[553] Ibid.
[554] Donnelly, *Confederate States Marine Corps*, 100.
[555] Field, *Civil War Marines*, 54.
[556] Ibid.

However, even after this final major surrender of marines, at least one remained in the field determined to serve the Confederacy until the end. This one lone marine, Captain Alfred Van Benthuysen, was determined to fight until he had no option but to surrender just as he had done at Fort Fisher. After returning to service following his exchange and recovery from a headwound suffered at Fort Fisher, Van Benthuysen joined President Jefferson Davis on his flight through the South.[557] During this escape, Van Benthuysen carried the Confederate President's personal papers and split from the main body of the fleeing party.[558] However, he eventually surrendered and was paroled in Baldwin, Florida during the last days of May or first days of June.[559] Because of this late surrender date, Alfred Van Benthuysen quite likely holds the distinction of being the last Confederate Marine to surrender.

Although all of the marines had surrendered by mid-June, the war, in some ways, was not yet over for some. As the Army of Northern Virginia made its way towards Appomattox, some marines straggled behind the army and were picked up by Union troops. Others, such as the marines at Sailor's Creek, were captured before they could surrender. Unlike the marines who surrendered at Appomattox or Greensboro, these men did not receive parole passes and could not go home. Instead, they were sent to prison camps, such as Libby Prison, and remained there until the end of June.[560] With the release of these men in the summer of 1865, the last remnants of the Confederate States Marine Corps became a part of history.

Although the corps was no more, and the war was over, the effects of it were not. While many of the former marines quickly returned to their families and tried to return to a sense of normalcy, many of them could never hope to be the same. First Lieutenant Henry Graves, who

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[557] Sullivan, *Biographical Sketches*, 274.
[558] Ibid.
[559] Donnelly, *Confederate States Marine Corps*, 120.
[560] Ibid., 62

chronicled much of his service in the Confederate States Marine Corps through letters written to his family certainly changed at the end of the war. After surrendering with Company E at Greensboro, Graves quietly returned home and began tending to his family's plantation.[561] However, the letters he wrote to his family and friends, which had been five or more pages during the war, shrank to only a few pages, and he confessed that after the war he had a "disinclination to letter writing."[562] Graves did not try to contact his old friends from the war, and when one of them contacted him and attempted to discuss the war, he would politely reply but discuss farming instead of the war.[563] While Graves seemed to try to forget the war, he did not allow it to keep him from having a good life. After helping rebuild his family's plantation and fortune, Henry Graves went on to start a family and eventually served in Georgia's state government.[564]

Unfortunately, the loss of the war and defeat of the cause they were once willing to die for effected other marines in much different ways. Alfred Van Benthuysen, who was always determined to fight until the end, also went on to marry and became a deputy sheriff in New Orleans.[565] However, he never fully let go the loss of the war and became an active member of the Ku Klux Klan in Louisiana.[566] While these two former marines represent different ends of a spectrum, many of the other marines fell somewhere in the middle, but were nonetheless effected by the war for years to come.

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[561] Lieutenant Henry L. Graves, C.S.M.C., to "My Dear Mother," Plantation, September 9, 1866, in *Graves Family Papers, Accession 2716, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina.*

[562] Lieutenant Henry L. Graves, C.S.M.C., to "My Dear Brother," Home, September 2, 1867, in *Graves Family Papers, Accession 2716, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina.*

[563] Ibid.

[564] Sullivan, *Biographical Sketches*, 82.

[565] Ibid., 275.

[566] Ibid.

In addition to changing the way people lived their lives, the war also continued to take lives long after the men stacked their arms at Appomattox. One of these men was John Pearson, Jr., a Confederate Marine from Arkansas. Pearson was quite ill during the evacuation of Richmond and was left behind in the Naval Hospital when the rest of the marines in the city set out with General Lee's army.[567] After Richmond was taken over by Federal forces, Pearson attempted to return home before he was fully recovered.[568] Unfortunately, Pearson's long journey home in poor health only further weakened him, and he passed away in the winter of 1865.[569] In a way, John Pearson, Jr. was the Confederate States Marine Corps' final casualty.

As the years passed by, and the American Civil War became more and more removed from the public's mind, the Confederate States Marine Corps became all but forgotten. Some of the former marines would put on their old uniforms and march in parades, but they were often seen as just another Confederate wearing grey. Few people could distinguish the marine uniform, and fewer took any real notice of what type of soldier the former marines once were. However, this too became a thing of the past, when the veterans of the corps passed away throughout the early twentieth-century. On March 28, 1929, the only living former Confederate Marine officer, Second Lieutenant Eugene Smith, suffered a stroke and passed away.[570] With his death, few, if any, former Confederate Marines remained who could carry on the memory of the corps.

During the first one hundred years after the Civil War's end, no one truly studied or wrote about the Confederate Marines, and by 1961, many had never heard of the corps or realized that it existed.[571] However, as the centennial of the war approached, the corps was

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[567] David M. Sullivan, "John Albert Pearson, Jr.: Arkansas Soldier and Confederate Marine," *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 45, no. 3 (Autumn 1986): 259.
[568] Ibid.
[569] Ibid.
[570] Sullivan, "Tennessee's Confederate Marines," 168.
[571] "The Centennial Scrapbook: The War for the Union 1861-1865 in Pictures No. 26," *The Noblesville Ledger*, June 19, 1961.

briefly rediscovered, and several short articles describing actions of the corps appeared in newspapers across the country. Yet, when the centennial celebrations were over, the corps largely returned to obscurity, and a scholarly historiography of the corps still did not exist. However, during the 1980s, two men, David M. Sullivan and Ralph W. Donnelly, picked up the torch for the corps and began publishing several books and articles concerning the Confederate Marines. While these works truly began the historiography of the corps and temporarily garnered limited interest in it, historians have not produced a new work concerning the Confederate Marines since. Today, the majority of people, even Civil War enthusiasts, are again surprised to learn that the Confederate States Marine Corps existed. At best, the Confederate States Marine Corps today, is a footnote in the seemingly endless histography of the American Civil War. However, the marines in grey are a fascinating and important part of Civil War history, and their story deserves to be told.

Throughout the course of the war, Confederate Marines served aboard at least thirty-five ships, on two floating batteries, and were a part of at least three land batteries.[572] They served all across the South, and served in almost every major naval or coastal engagement of the war. Additionally, by the end of the war, many Confederate Marines were veterans of major land battles. However, few have ever heard of the corps, and even those who know of them, do not consider the important roles they played in major engagements such as the Battle of Hampton Roads or the Battle of Sailor's Creek. The age-old rivalry between navies and marine corps is largely to blame for the forgotten nature of the Confederate Marines, as the Confederate Navy often overshadowed the small corps and received most of the glory earned in countless engagements.

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[572] Donnelly, *Confederate States Marine Corps*, 264-265.

Within these engagements, the Confederate Marines did not neatly fit into any specific category. At the beginning of the war, Secretary Mallory strongly advocated for a marine corps which could serve on sailing ships and act as sharpshooters from their riggings as marines had done for many years prior. However, within the first year of the war, technological advancements caused this traditional marine duty to become obsolete. Yet, just as technology progressed and adapted during the terrible war, so did the Confederate Marines. Following the introduction of the ironclad, the marines quickly accepted the fact that their primary role was to act as naval artillerists.[573] Additionally, the marines became an important component of naval raids during the latter years of the war. However, in carrying out these duties, the Confederate Marines used many traditional marine tactics and showed that the traditional roles of marines were not lost during the Civil War, but rather adapted.

Another peculiar aspect of the unit was the way in which it was organized. The corps was divided into six companies which could be further divided into small detachments to serve as guards aboard ships or be sent on special assignments. Because the marines primarily operated in these small detachments, the corps had an unusually large number of officers who could command the men instead of an army or naval officer.[574] This not only preserved the corps' autonomy, but also ensured that the army or navy could not use the corps as a singular force, risking its possible destruction in a single battle.

Overall, the Confederate States Marine Corps was extremely vital to the Confederate war effort, yet is one of the most obscure and least discussed units of the war. During its short life, the corps adapted to meet the needs of the Confederacy, took part in some of the most decisive

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[573] Lieutenant Ruffin Thomson, C.S.M.C., to "Dear Pa," Camp Beall, Drewry's Bluff, Va., March 14, 1864, Thomson Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina.

[574] II N.O.R. 2, 251: Letter from Colonel Lloyd J. Beall, C.S.M.C., to Secretary of the Navy Stephen Mallory concerning the officers of the marine corps, August 14, 1862.

battles of the war, and likely performed a wider array of duties than any other unit during the war. For all of these accomplishments throughout its peculiar service, Colonel Beall was proud of his corps and wrote towards the end of the war, "Upon all occasions when the marines have been called upon for active service, they have displayed the promptness and efficiency of well-disciplined soldiers."[575] Although largely forgotten and lost amongst the inexhaustive records of the Civil War, the Confederate States Marine Corps is there between the lines having served gallantly in many key engagements and in almost every theater of the war.

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[575] II N.O.R. 2, 750: Letter from Colonel Lloyd J. Beall, C.S.M.C., to Secretary of the Navy Stephen Mallory concerning the state of the marine corps, October 30, 1864.

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