

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE 6TH MARINES



HISTORY AND MUSEUMS DIVISION
HEADQUARTERS, U.S. MARINE CORPS
WASHINGTON, D.C.

COVER: British Prime Minister Winston S. Churchill reviews the 6th Marines, the nucleus of the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade in Iceland in July 1941, as Marines replaced British occupation troops. Churchill later remembered that "there was a long march past in threes, during which the tune United States Marines bit so deeply into my memory that I could not get it out of my head."

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by

Lieutenant General William K. Jones
U.S. Marine Corps (Retired)



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- A Brief History of the 1st Marines*, 1960, rev. eds. 1962, 1968
- A Brief History of the 2d Marines*, 1961, rev. eds. 1962, 1969
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- A Brief History of the 4th Marines*, 1970
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- A Brief History of the 23d Marines*, scheduled for preparation
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- A Brief History of the 25th Marines*, 1981

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Foreword

This historical monograph is the 13th in a series of 16 regimental histories. When completed, the series will cover in similar fashion each of the infantry and artillery regiments in the Fleet Marine Forces, active and reserve. The present narrative not only sets forth the significant actions of the 6th Marines, but also provides a general history of the Marine Corps activities in peace and war in which the regiment participated.

The author of this monograph, Lieutenant General William K. Jones, USMC (Retired), is exceptionally well qualified to write a history of the 6th Marines. General Jones, born in Joplin, Missouri, on 23 October 1916, received his A.B. degree from the University of Kansas in 1937. While at the university, he attended summer training courses in the Platoon Leaders' Class at San Diego, California. He accepted a Marine Reserve commission as a second lieutenant on 31 January 1938, entered active duty on 29 September 1939, and integrated into the regular Marine Corps in November 1940.

Upon his initial entry on active duty, he completed an abbreviated Reserve Officers' Course at Quantico, Virginia, before joining the 1st Battalion, 6th Marines at San Diego. He remained in that battalion for almost six years. In the process, he participated in the expedition to Iceland in 1941, saw combat on Guadalcanal, and commanded the battalion at Tarawa, Saipan, and Tinian. On Tarawa, he earned a Silver Star Medal and a field promotion to lieutenant colonel (one of a handful given to Marine officers in World War II). For his actions on Saipan, he received a Navy Cross.

Some of his key post-World War II assignments included command of the 1st Marines (1953-54); The Basic School (1956-58); the Recruit Training Regiment at Parris Island, South Carolina (1958-60); the 3d Marine Division (1969-70) in Vietnam and Okinawa; and Fleet Marine Force, Pacific (1970-72). His personal decorations also include three awards of the Distinguished Service Medal, the Legion of Merit, the Bronze Star Medal, and the Purple Heart.

General Jones has been a prolific writer for many years. His "Baseplate McGurk" series of leadership articles in the *Marine Corps Gazette* has been widely read and reprinted.

He retired from active duty in 1972, and is at present the Vice President of the Marine Corps Historical Foundation.

In the pursuit of accuracy and objectivity, the History and Museums Division welcomes comments on the history from key participants, Marine Corps activities, and interested individuals.



E. H. SIMMONS

Brigadier General, U.S. Marine Corps (Retired)
Director of Marine Corps History and Museums


Preface

The famous 6th Marine Regiment was 70 years old in mid-summer 1987. This short history attempts to outline some, not all, of the remarkable accomplishments of this unit. The lateness of publishing such an account is due neither to a lack of interest on the part of the Marine Corps Historical Center nor insufficient effort by that organization. In fact, for several years a Washington-based Mobilization Training Unit (MTU) took on the project in an attempt to assemble available information. Unfortunately, the job had to be shunted from one reserve officer of the unit to another as events dictated. This became evident to the author when he attempted to proofread a final draft submitted by the MTU.

Having spent the first six years of my active duty, from second lieutenant to lieutenant colonel and battalion commander, in the 1st Battalion, 6th Marines, I understandably have a deep attachment to the regiment. From my personal observation during World War II, I realized no association of men anywhere enjoyed a prouder combat record than ours. From my close association in the Marine Corps with respected leaders who were young Marines in World War I, I learned intimately about the founding of the heritage passed on to us by them. From younger Marines of yesteryear and today, I learned this heritage continues on to this day. I am confident it will do so well into the future. This great tradition continues among Marines in peace as well as in war, whether on active duty or in retirement. As a Marine veteran once wrote, "Indeed, the ordeal of not forgetting may well be the only heroism of the survivors."

Finally, I want to express my gratitude to the distinguished members of the 6th Marines, whether on active duty, retired, or in civilian life, who contributed to this history. A full list of contributors may be found in the appendices. However, my particular thanks go to my editor, Dr. V. Keith Fleming, Jr., for his contributions, advice, and encouragement. Other Marines who especially provided support were Sergeant Major Lewis L. Michelony, USMC (Retired); Colonel Loren E. Haffner, USMC (Retired); Colonel James A. Donovan, Jr., USMC (Retired); and Colonel Thomas D. Stouffer, USMC. However, as author I am responsible for the contents of the text, including opinions expressed and any errors in fact.

To those members of the 6th Marines, dead, wounded, or remembering, this volume is respectfully dedicated.



WILLIAM K. JONES
Lieutenant General
U.S. Marine Corps (Retired)

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CHAPTER 1

The First World War—The Beginning

*Background—Chateau-Thierry—Belleau Wood—Soissons—St. Mihiel
The Meuse-Argonne and Blanc Mont Ridge—The Meuse-Argonne
The March to the Rhine and the Occupation—Marine Achievements—Demobilization*

Background

So much has been written about World War I, and written so well by famous historians and novelists, it almost seems redundant, indeed presumptuous, to plow this ground again. A history of the 6th Marines would not be complete, nonetheless, without a recount of the regiment's beginning and its exploits in the First World War. To cover this period, even if in a cursory way, seems mandatory.

Prior to and well into World War I the U.S. Marine Corps closely followed the evolution of the British Royal Marines. In the 19th century, Marines of both nations served on board naval vessels, as guards of naval bases, and ashore in far-off lands on special assignments. Yet when World War I grew in ferocity, first the British and then the American Marines each provided a brigade for combat service with an infantry division in Europe as well as staff and command personnel for Army units. They also provided units for isolated outposts not related directly to the main battle effort against Germany.¹

To refresh memories, the war had been going on for three years before the United States became directly involved on 6 April 1917.² Before the war, an anxious Europe watched Germany conduct what Winston Churchill called a "twilight war." By 1914 Britain, France, and Russia realized diplomacy had failed. In the United States, it only gradually became apparent that this country would be drawn into the conflict in Europe. Not until late summer of 1916, therefore, was the National Defense Act approved which finally provided substantial increases in the size of all of the military and naval services. The act authorized the Marine Corps to increase from 344 officers and 9,921 enlisted men to 597 officers and 14,981 enlisted. It further authorized the President, in the event of a national emergency, to increase the Corps to 693 officers and 17,400 enlisted men.³ Recruiting was very slow. By the end of 1916 the enlisted strength was up to almost 11,000. No new officers were appointed until February 1917 and then only 10 were selected. When the United States entered the war the total Marine Corps strength was 419 officers and a little more than 13,000 enlisted men.⁴

The main training center development was at Par-

ris Island, South Carolina. The Marine Corps had, since 1915, maintained at an inactive naval station on the island a camp where it trained recruits from the eastern part of the country. Those from the western part were trained at Mare Island, California.⁵ Now the Corps gradually acquired all of Parris Island—an area of about 10 square miles exclusive of marsh and tide lands. There were many difficulties. The isolated area had neither railway nor highway transportation. About all of the necessary facilities for water transportation had to be provided, including docks, barges, tugs, etc., to the nearest railroad terminal. Even the water for drinking and washing had to be barged in since the salty sea water so close to the surface of the island made wells impractical.

At first the recruits had to sleep under canvas. Finally temporary buildings were erected. By 1916 Parris Island was a beehive of activity. A major thoroughfare was cleared and later became known as the Boulevard de France. A new rifle range was constructed. A sand parade field was laid out and remained unpaved until 1943.⁶

A little over a month after the United States declared war on 6 April 1917, on 14 May, the Marine Corps leased 6,000 acres at Quantico, Virginia. On 14 June 1917 the 5th Marines sailed for France and full attention could be focused on forming and training the 6th Marines.

Recruiting new enlisted men proved to be no problem after war was declared. An unusually high quality of men presented themselves for enlistment, and many successful business and professional men were among their number. The recruiting of new officers proceeded more slowly. Many outstanding men from the enlisted ranks were promoted to officers, both at the beginning and during the war. Many made careers of the Corps after the war and became distinguished officers, some of whom even reached the rank of four-star general.

Consequently, when the 6th Marines was organized on 11 July 1917 at Quantico, over half the Marines were college men, with a large number of athletes among them. Two thirds of one company came straight from the University of Minnesota—300 students enlisted en bloc, for example.⁷ Even though the new men were relatively inexperienced, there were plenty of noncom-

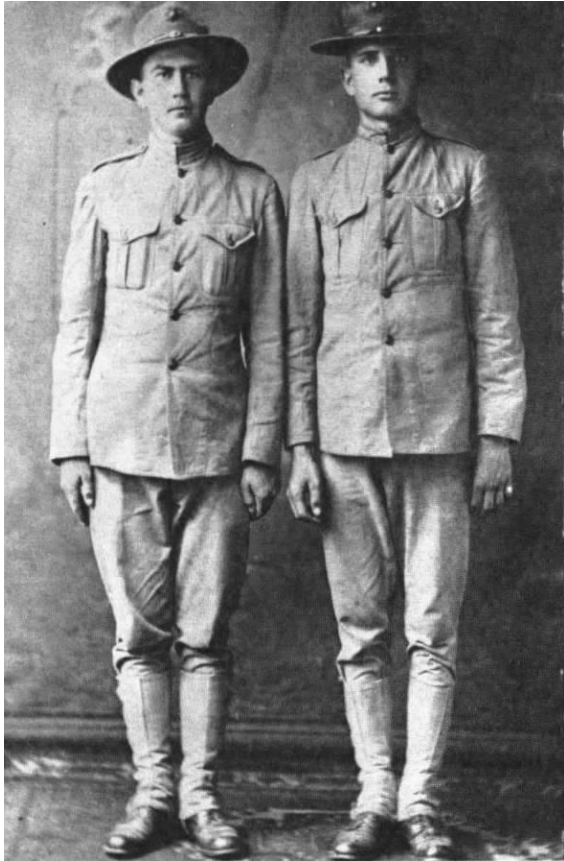


Photo courtesy of Mrs. Lathe W. Bennet

Two new Marines on liberty pose in khaki summer uniforms during training on the 6,000 acres leased by the Corps at Quantico, Virginia, beginning in May 1917, to prepare Marines for combat in World War I.

missioned officers and captains and above to provide the necessary leadership. Sergeant Major John H. Quick and First Sergeant Daniel Daly, both long-service veterans, already had won the Medal of Honor during earlier engagements. The regimental commander, Colonel Albertus E. Catlin, had earned his Medal of Honor at Vera Cruz. He wrote the following: "If we had time and opportunity to pick men individually from the whole of the United States, I doubt whether we should have done much better. There were as fine a bunch of upstanding American athletes as you can meet, and they had brains as well as brawn."⁸

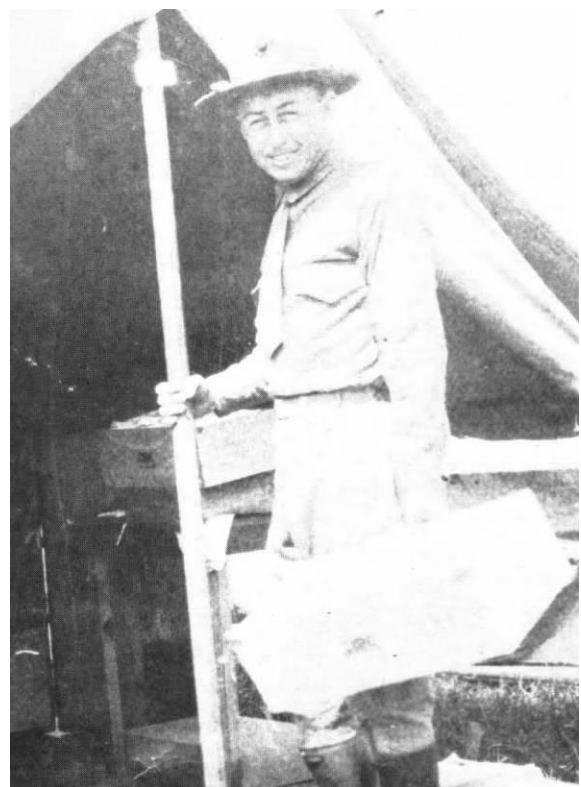
According to First Class Private, later General, Gerald Cathrae Thomas, he and some friends enlisted among the above-mentioned group. This surge of patriotic fervor that swept the nation took the young student from Illinois Wesleyan University first to Parris Island for recruit training. Then, he and others moved to Quantico, where he joined the 1st Battalion, 6th Marines Intelligence Section. His battalion

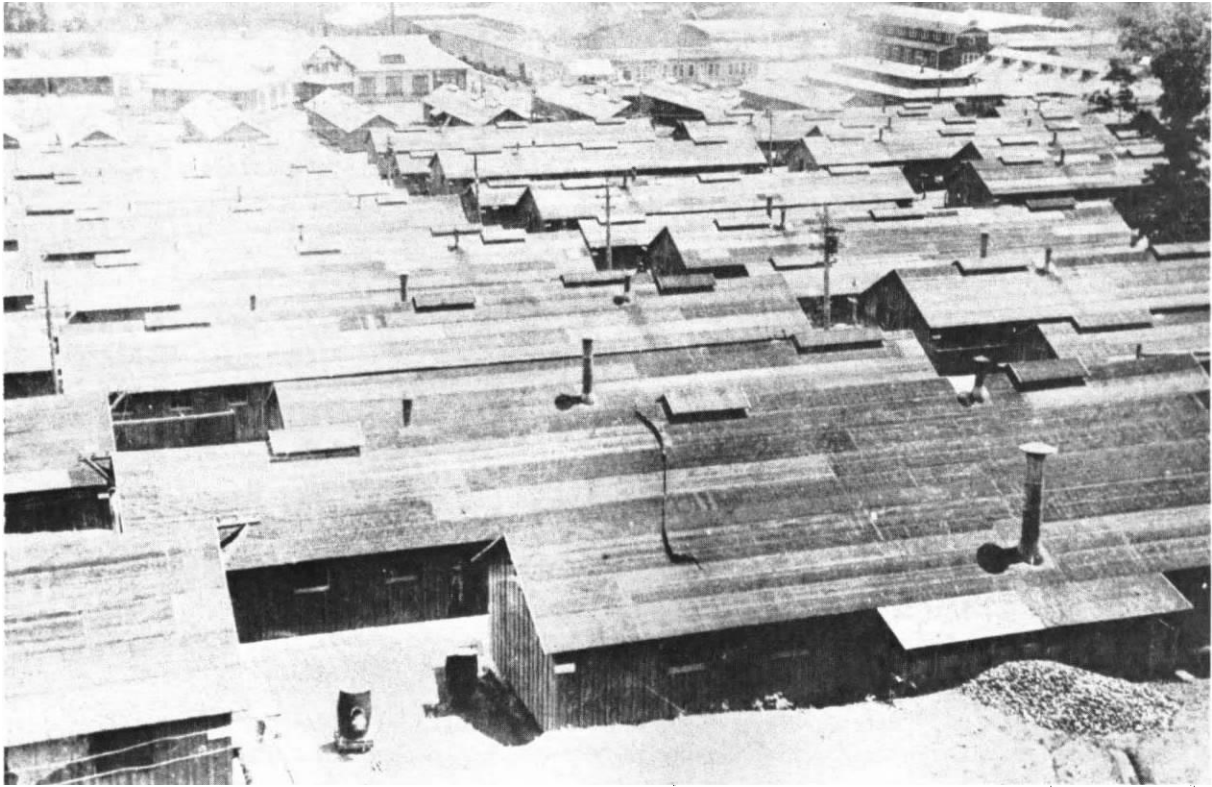
commander, Major John A. "Johnny the Hard" Hughes kept him busy. Years later while a colonel he argued with friends formerly in the 5th or 6th Marines who had been in France as to who had the toughest commander. They must have all been "tough" considering what they accomplished in France. At Quantico, Thomas was assigned to the Company Officers Course. He didn't find it very useful later.

He recalled they went by train from Quantico to Philadelphia where they embarked. Trained and ready, the 6th Marines together with the 6th Machine Gun Battalion arrived in France in late 1917. Ships had piled up waiting to be unloaded. Instead of immediately rushing to the front as they had expected, they unloaded cargo when they finally docked. When the 5th Marines arrived in France in mid-1917 they had expected to see action against the enemy in a short time. Instead the only action they had seen was as working parties unloading ships for the Army. They were disgusted. So with the arrival of the 6th Marines their hopes rose. In early 1918, the Marines were brought together as the 4th Brigade (Marines), 2d U.S.

Second Lieutenant Clifton B. Cates, who later became Commandant of the Marine Corps, stands in front of the canvas tent which he used as quarters while in training with the 6th Regiment at Quantico in 1917.

C.B. Cates Papers, MCHC





C.B. Cates Papers, MCHC

These clusters of temporary wartime-construction, tarpaper-covered wooden buildings house Marine units undergoing combat training for service in France in World War I.

Division. Its 280 officers and 9,164 enlisted Marines made it a big brigade.⁹

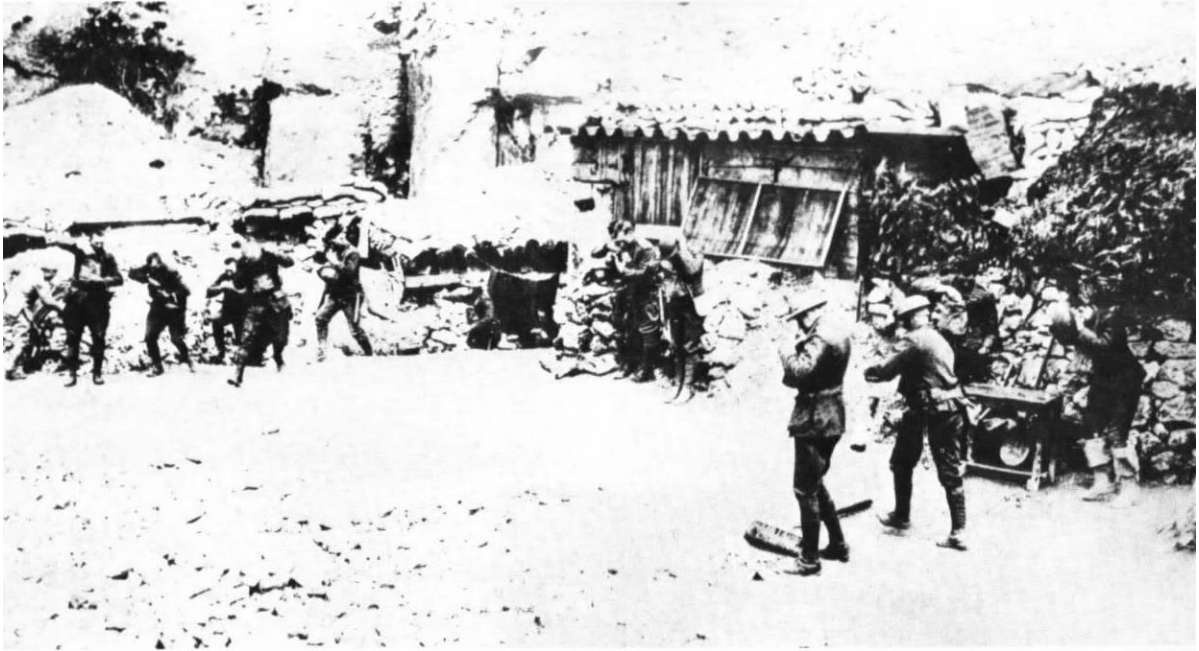
On 17 March, the brigade went into the trenches southeast of Verdun, under the tutelage of the French, with well prepared trenches and other defensive positions. They learned quickly the grim realities of trench warfare—cooties, rats, “wire parties,” raids, and poison gas. They made many patrols and raids—both day and night. They also learned the difficulties of relieving troops in front-line positions, how to coordinate the fire of their weapons with supporting artillery fire, and how to best deal with German raiding parties. Their brigade commander was Brigadier General Charles A. Doyen, who had brought the 5th Marines to France as a colonel earlier. Although the Verdun defensive deserves longer treatment than given above due not only to the discomfort encountered but also to its length—March 17th to May 9th—space does not permit. Suffice to say the 4th Brigade suffered in that time 128 killed and 744 wounded. One 6th Marines company, in mid-April in a reserve position, was caught in a German gas barrage and 40 men died.

General John J. Pershing, Commander of the American Expeditionary Forces, was both demanding and unforgiving with elderly, ill officers so when

Marines in training to fight in France line up outside one of the crude temporary buildings erected at Quantico. Many American college students enlisted.

Historical Collection MCHC



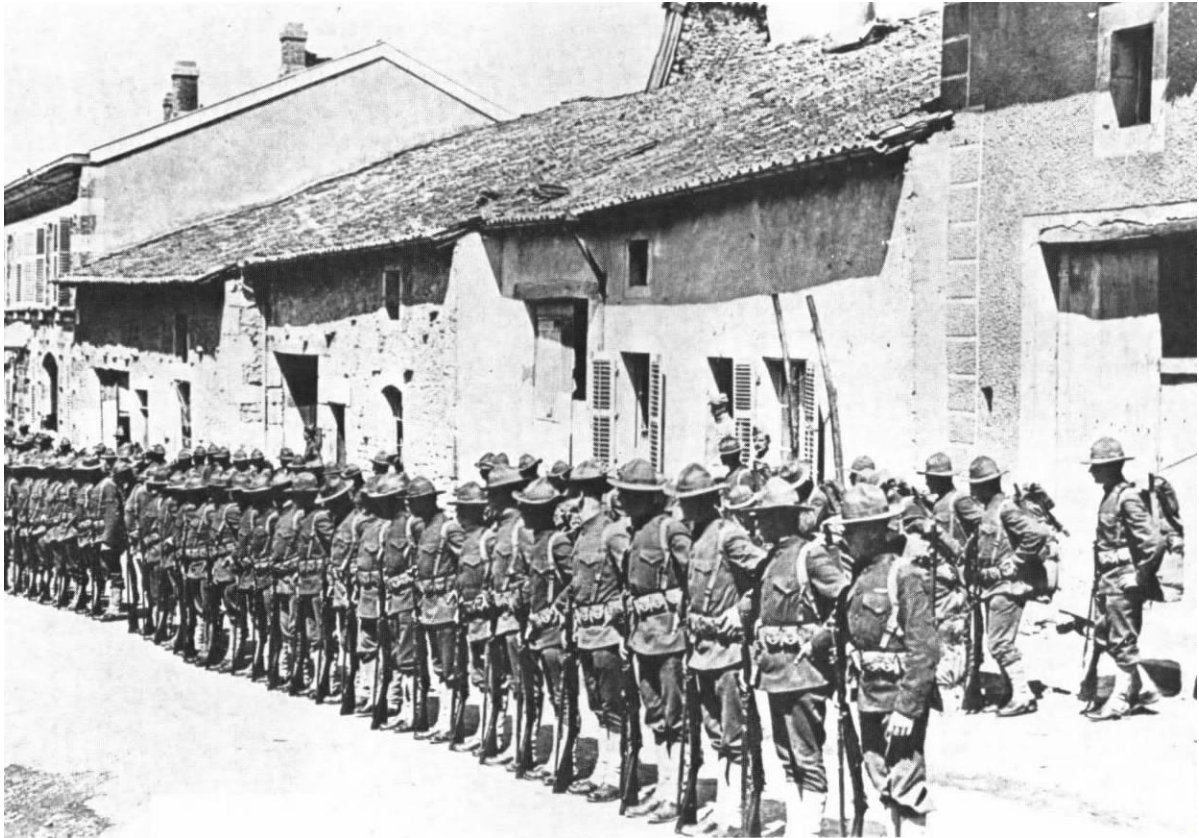


C.B. Cates Papers, MCHC

A group of Marines go through a gas mask drill outside World War I dugouts in France.

Men of a newly arrived unit, whose Marine Corps green wool uniforms and canvas leggings have not yet been replaced by Army olive drab and puttees, dress ranks in France.

Department of Defense (USMC) Photo 514924





C.B. Cates Papers, MCHC

Posing for a photograph which illustrates the conditions under which the 6th Regiment of Marines gained its first exposure to combat, 2dLt Clifton B. Cates stands in a trench near Verdun in April 1918.

Doyen fell ill he was invalided back to the United States. An Army officer, Brigadier General James G. Harbord, took command of the brigade. He had been Pershing's chief of staff.

Their familiarization period abruptly terminated. The first of the great German drives against the Western Front began in 1918. Nothing seemed to stop them as they advanced. On 27 May 1918, Ludendorff launched his Chemin des Dames offensive with over 50 divisions. It sliced the northern part of the Allies' front in half. A four-kilometer gap opened, allowing the Germans to reach the Marne River at Chateau-Thierry, perilously close to Paris. There was utter confusion as the allies tried to reorganize their lines.

Several reserve divisions were rushed into the breach including the 2d Division and its 4th Brigade of Marines.

Chateau-Thierry

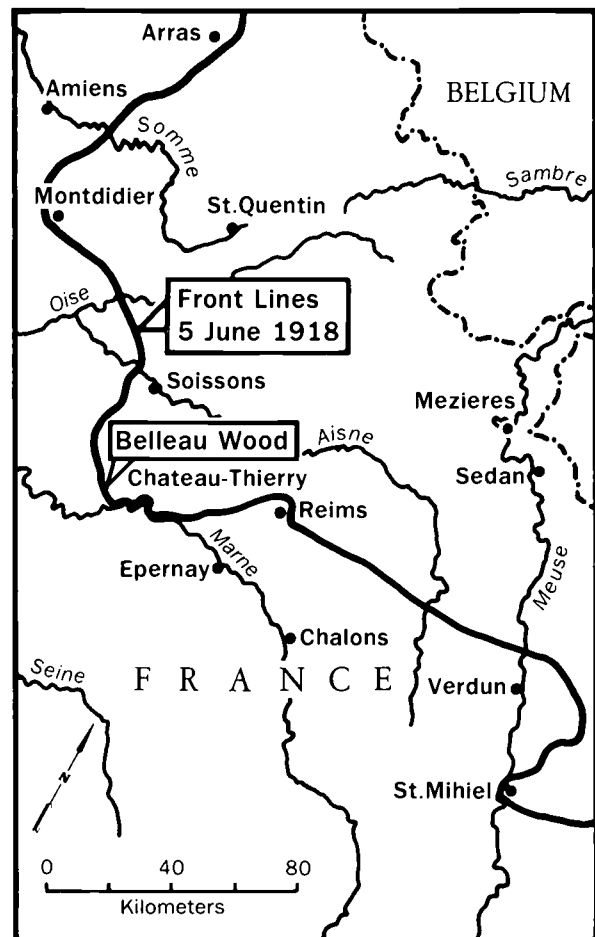
The 2d Division was deployed across the Chateau-Thierry-Paris road where it stopped the German advance on Paris. This is called the Aisne defensive. This

phase lasted from 31 May to 5 June 1918. It was a magnificent effort that had a tremendous psychological effect on the flagging morale of the French and British, both their armies and their civilians. The end of this defensive action still did not include Hill 142, Bois de Belleau, Bouresches, or Vaux.¹⁰

The French division commander in that sector thought he still had some soldiers fighting in Belleau Wood west of Chateau-Thierry. He asked the Marines to counterattack. A French colonel, however, advised Colonel Wendell Neville, commanding the 5th Marines, to retreat. He is supposed to have roared: "Retreat, hell! We just got here!" Other American soldiers and Marines subsequently claimed the quotation, but Neville himself later attributed it to Captain Lloyd W. Williams, commanding the 51st Company, 2d Battalion, 5th Marines.¹¹

A French aviator reported that he saw the American lines falling back. The alarmed corps commander inquired down through channels, so the brigade com-

*Area of World War I
Regimental Operations*





C.B. Cates Papers, MCHC

Marines peer out of the door of a French railroad car in May 1918. This is one of the famous "40 and 8" cars designed to transport either 40 men or 8 horses.

mander asked Major Thomas Holcomb, who commanded the 2d Battalion, 6th Marines. "When I do my running," Holcomb answered, "It will be in the opposite direction."¹²

The stopping of the German advance that took

Three Marine riflemen talk quietly while resting amid the vegetation of Belleau Wood.

C.B. Cates Papers, MCHC



place 2-5 June was a major victory for the allies. The enemy did roll back the French outposts into the 2d Division lines. Both long-range rifle fire and machine gun fire by the Marines made the Germans halt their offense and shift to the tactical defense along their front.

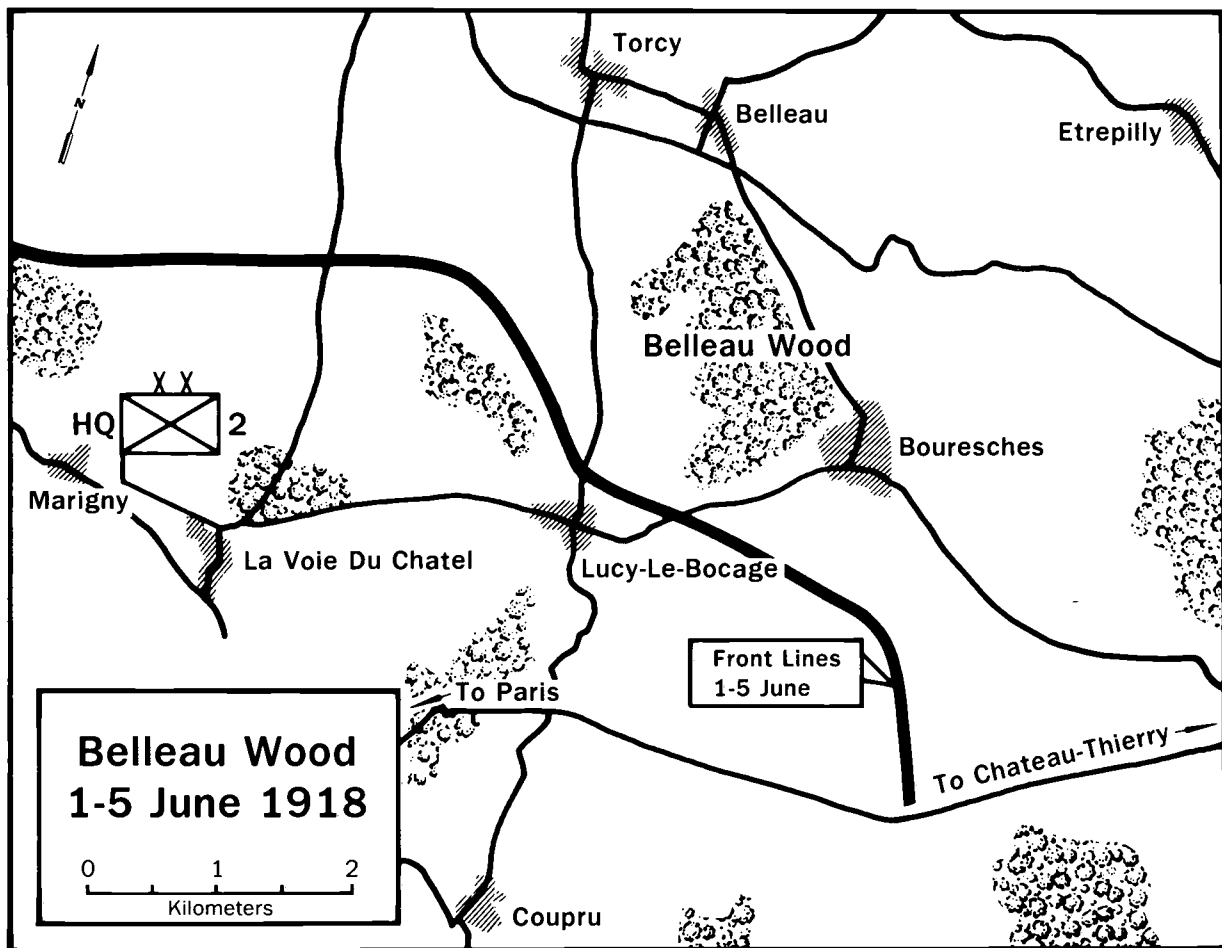
When Harbord took command of the 4th Brigade, Pershing told him he was getting the best troops in France and that if he failed Pershing would know whom to blame.¹³ Neither he nor the 4th Brigade ever "failed" during their stay in France.

Belleau Wood

The Germans attacked again on the 4th and 5th of June. They were unsuccessful. Finally the German offensive halted and they dug defensive positions. Belleau Wood, in front of the Marines, was a one-square-mile, easily fortified area full of trees and boulders. Two battalions of the *461st Imperial German Infantry*, strongly supported by Maxim machine gunners, occupied this formidable natural fortress.

The trees were so densely planted visibility was limited except where an axe or shell had cleared a portion. Unlike American forests, Belleau Wood had been cared for by a forester who cleared out the underbrush. Even though there was a lack of undergrowth for cover, the high rocky ground was full of gullies and crags in which the Germans could hide. Belleau Wood had once been a hunting preserve for the Chateau of Belleau, which was about a half mile north of the wood.

The American attack began on the morning of 6



June. The 1st Battalion, 5th Marines led the charge across wheat fields dotted with blood-red poppies. The enemy machine gunners waited for the Marines to get close before opening fire on their neatly dressed lines—offensive tactics still preached by the French but not practiced by them after they gained experience earlier in the war.¹⁴

When the Germans did open fire, casualties among the Americans were heavy. Retired Lieutenant General Merwin H. Silverthorn, an unusually religious man, claimed until his death in 1985 that it was during this episode that he suddenly became religious. His platoon, close to the left flank of the 6th Marines line, was commanded by an Army lieutenant named Coppinger. At the bottom of a ravine it was raked by enemy machine gun fire. Coppinger and Silverthorn hid behind a pile of wood. After five minutes, Coppinger shouted “Follow me!” and ran over the top of the ravine towards the Germans. He looked back and said in wonder, “Where the hell is my platoon?” He had started with 52 men. Only six were left. He said to Silverthorn, “I’m going back.” Silverthorn thought,

“Here’s where you and I part company, because we just got across that place and that’s the last thing I’m going to do—go back.” He kept going until he found the remnants of another platoon to join. The platoon he joined was commanded by another sergeant, named Gay. As they started forward across the field, Gay was hit in the back. Silverthorn bound the wound, which wasn’t too bad, and told Gay to stay still and he would come back for him after dark. He then took charge of the platoon and they charged ahead in rushes. The noise was awesome. Silverthorn was wounded in the knee. He told the only man he had left, an automatic rifleman, to move on into the woods where he was needed. Silverthorn said, “I’m going to stay out of sight where I am until it’s dark and I can get out under cover.” He thought of his father who was wounded at Gettysburg, yet lived to be 96.¹⁵ Nevertheless, in spite of the noise, casualties, and confusion, the 1st Battalion, 5th Marines, captured Hill 142, west of the woods, by noon and began to move into Belleau Wood itself.

On the right, Major Berton W. Sibley’s 3d Battal-

ion, 6th Marines, was doing better than Silverthorn's battalion. There was no yell or rush, but a relentless, steady attack. Although taking advantage of better cover, men were hit and fell; closer and closer they came to the wood.

The 6th Marines' commander, Colonel Catlin, hurried to a small rise where he could watch the attack through field glasses. He saw Sibley's Marines plunge into the wood. His French liaison officer begged him to find a safer place, but Catlin ignored the bullets flying around him. One struck him in the chest. It swung him around, knocking him to the ground. His right side was paralyzed and he couldn't stand. The French liaison officer dragged the big man to a shelter trench. The bullet had gone through Catlin's lung, but he never lost consciousness or experienced pain. Since the bleeding was internal, nothing could be done for him until treatment arrived. He was never able to return to the front.¹⁶ Lieutenant Colonel Harry Lee took over command of the 6th Marines. He kept it until demobilization in August 1919.

The 2d and 3d Battalions of the 6th Marines, together with the 2d Battalion, 5th Marines, entered

the wood. War correspondent Floyd Gibbons heard Gunnery Sergeant Daniel Daly of the 6th Marines yell, "Come on, you sons of bitches. Do you want to live forever?"¹⁷ Two platoons of the 2d Battalion, 6th Marines, one of them commanded by then-Lieutenant Clifton B. Cates (later the Nineteenth Commandant of the Marine Corps) got into the village of Boursches, and experienced repeated counterattacks. When their ammunition ran low, Sergeant Major John H. Quick brought some more to the platoons in a Ford truck. For this, he received the Army's Distinguished Service Cross to add to the Medal of Honor he already had received before World War I.

Since company designations in those days were listed numerically rather than alphabetically as they are now, it might be well to relate the two:

Sixth Marines		
1st Bn	2d Bn	3d Bn
74th (A) Co	78th (E) Co	82d (I) Co
75th (B) Co	79th (F) Co	83d (K) Co
76th (C) Co	80th (G) Co	84th (L) Co
95th (D) Co	96th (H) Co	97th (M) Co

This damaged private hunting lodge, a landmark for those Americans who fought in Belleau Wood in World War I, stands near shell-scarred trees after the battle's end.

C.B. Cates Papers, MCHC





C.B. Cates Papers, MCHC

A dead German soldier in his position after the hotly contested battle for Belleau Wood.

Major Thomas Holcomb, later the Seventeenth Commandant of the Marine Corps, commanded the 2d Battalion, 6th Marines, from August 1917 to January 1919. At Belleau Wood he instructed Sergeant Don V. Paradis of the 80th (G) Company to take a Private Slack across the wheat field, and find Major Sibley and the 1st Battalion, 5th Marines. He desired their map location and other information. Paradis, followed by Slack, crossed the wheat field safely, and found Sibley. "For God's sake," Sibley said, "tell Major Holcomb not to take Captain Coffenberg and the 80th Company away from me! We've lost at least half of our battalion."

"Come on, Slack, let's get back," Paradis said, but the private was horrified: "You aren't going the same way we came?" "It's the shortest route," thought Paradis, as he headed back through the smoke alone. Wounded men kept calling for help. He found Holcomb, gave him the message, and requested permission to go back and help the wounded. Holcomb refused. He had more messages to be carried.

Lieutenant Cates, while leading his platoon across a wheat field towards Bouresches, had an enemy machine gun bullet knock off his helmet. It also knocked him unconscious. When he came to, he couldn't put his helmet back on properly because of a dent the size of a fist. Machine gun bullets were flying all around. Men were falling all around him. "My first thought was to run to the rear. I hate to admit

it but that was it," he said later. Seeing four Marines in a ravine, he got to them and fell at their feet. One took off the dented helmet and poured wine from his canteen over the lump on Cate's head, "God damn it," the lieutenant growled, "don't pour that wine on my head, give me a drink of it." It revived him. He grabbed a French rifle and led the Marines into Bouresches.¹⁸

Lieutenant Cates was both gassed and wounded. For his heroism at Bouresches and in the Belleau Wood fighting he received the Navy Cross, the Army's Distinguished Service Cross, and an oak leaf cluster in lieu of a second Distinguished Service Cross.¹⁹

The Marines had almost no information on the Germans' dispositions. The French had told them the wood was lightly held. The artillery fire supporting the attack was ineffective. During the afternoon the casualties climbed. The brigade losses for the first day were 31 officers and 1,056 enlisted men killed, wounded, or missing.²⁰

Floyd Gibbons' left eye was shot out. Rumors started that he had been killed. Upon hearing them, the Army censor, thinking him dead, wanted to do Gibbons a last favor. He released Gibbons' previously-filed report of the action in Belleau Wood. Gibbons' article named the Marine Brigade, going against the AEF chief censor's edict forbidding mention of the kind of troops involved in any action. As a result, the fol-

lowing day's newspapers electrified the American public with Gibbons' colorful story of the fighting in which he praised the exploits of the Marine Brigade. This caused considerable jealousy in Army units even though nobody in the Marine Corps had anything to do with releasing the story.

On 7 June, preparations were made for resuming the attack. The Germans added fresh troops to their defense in anticipation of renewed assaults. They still held most of Belleau Wood, in spite of the loss of the town of Bouresches. American artillery shelled the enemy all night. At 0400 the 3d Battalion, 6th Marines, one of the assaulting units on 6 July, attempted to advance its lines to the north, but each position they reached was flanked by German machine guns. The battalion finally withdrew even further to a ravine to allow friendly artillery to shell the enemy's front lines.

On 9 June, the 1st Battalion, 6th Marines, made a limited attack on the southern part of the wood. It was preceded by a heavy artillery bombardment. Actually, these Marines only reached the enemy's main line of resistance, which had successfully stopped the 3d Battalion, 6th Marines, three days before.

On 11 June, the 2d Battalion, 5th Marines, with the 1st Battalion, 6th Marines, on its right, advanced to a line across the narrow part of the wood which sepa-

rated the northern from the southern part. Their advance was stopped after heavy losses. The Germans still held the larger northern part. The troops of the German *28th Division*, which had been driven from the southern part of the wood, lost nearly 800 men. Their counterattack against the Marines to retake the southern part failed early the following morning.

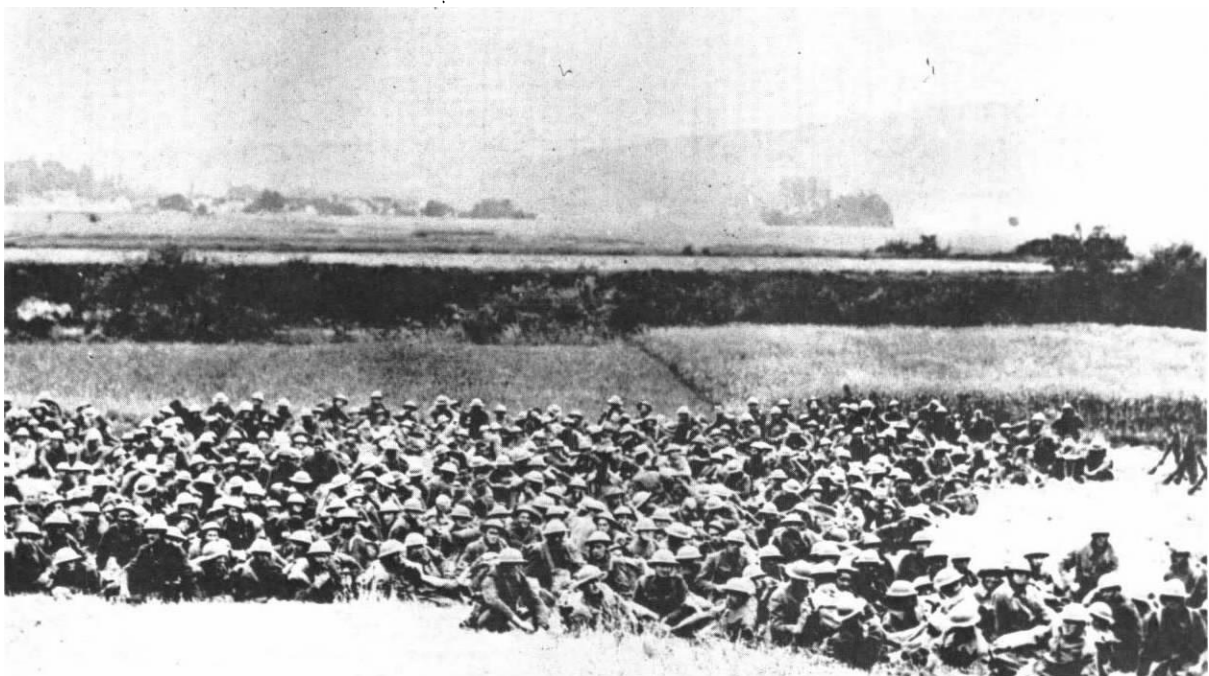
Within two days the 2d Battalion, 5th Marines, and the 1st Battalion, 6th Marines, captured more than 400 prisoners and 60 machine guns. A wounded captured German officer reported that the Germans planned to counterattack early on 13 June.

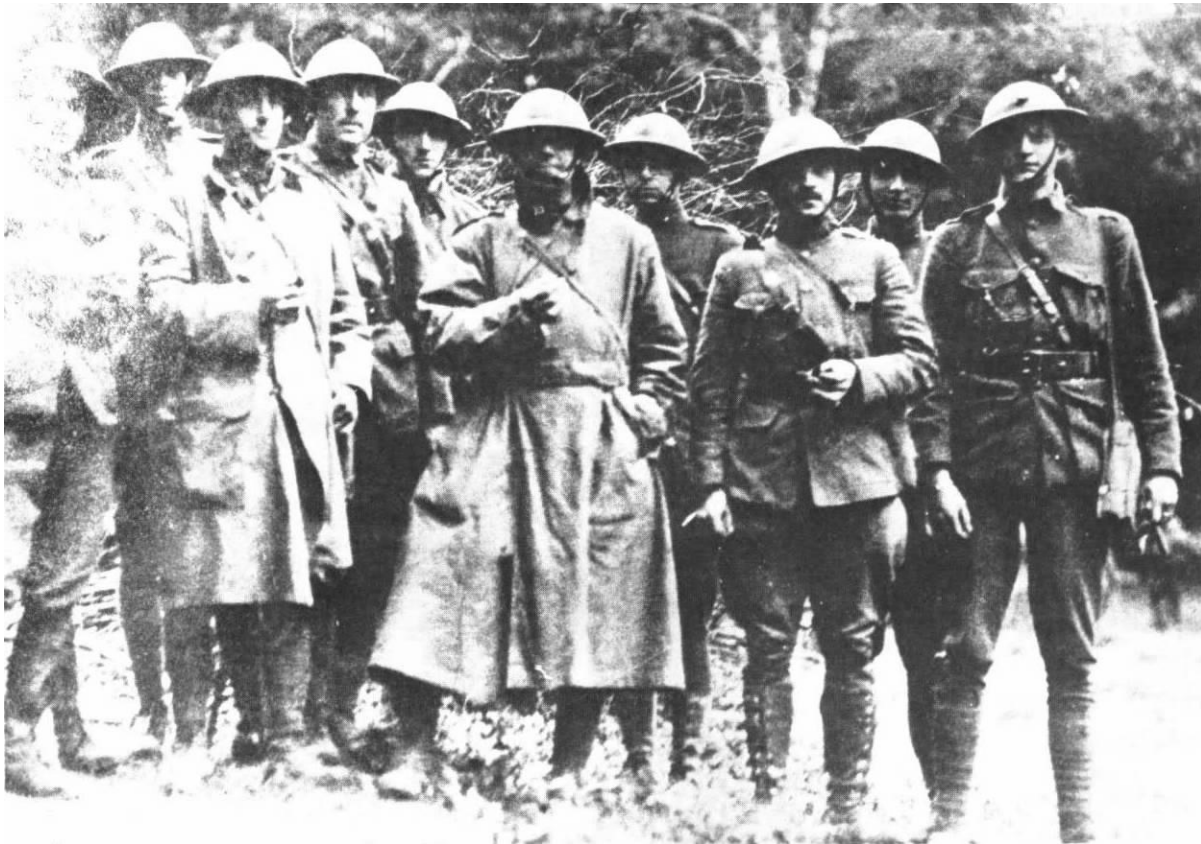
The counterblow occurred on schedule at 0400. It was preceded by a heavy artillery bombardment and extended as far south as the village of Bouresches. Except for the village, which they almost recaptured, the German infantry assault failed. The German artillery continued harassing fire throughout the day using high explosive and mustard gas shells. The 1st Battalion, 6th Marines, in the southeastern section of the wood, and in Bouresches particularly, had 450 casualties.

The Marine Brigade had experienced severe losses, its units were hopelessly mixed, and the men were exhausted from continuous heavy fighting. The enemy's harassing artillery fire continued while the Germans reinforced the small section of the northwest part of

Survivors of Maj Thomas Holcomb's 2d Battalion, 6th Marines, pause while enroute to a rest area following the 20 days of intense fighting in Belleau Wood in June 1918.

Department of Defense (USMC) Photo 4938





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A group of Marine officers in France in World War I, one of whom (right) has placed the distinctive Marine Corps emblem on the front of his British-style steel helmet.

the wood still under their control. The German *Fourth Reserve Corps*, however, had also suffered heavy losses, its counterattack had failed, and they had been surprised by the determined Marines as fighting men.

During the gas attack and harassing artillery fire, the 2d Battalion, 6th Marines, tried to relieve the 2d Battalion, 5th Marines, but lost so many men from the gas they were unable to do so. The 2d Battalion, 5th Marines, refused to leave, so both battalions defended the eastern edge of the wood. Lieutenant Colonel Logan Feland took command of the three battalions—the 1st and 2d Battalions, 6th Marines, and the 2d Battalion, 5th Marines. He reorganized the position and ensured a more sound defense of the area.

This was followed by a brief period when the 4th Brigade was out of the front lines. Its battalions received 2,800 Marine replacements, reorganized, and were given all available equipment. During this period the Marines were relieved by the 7th Infantry Division. The front lines remained unchanged.

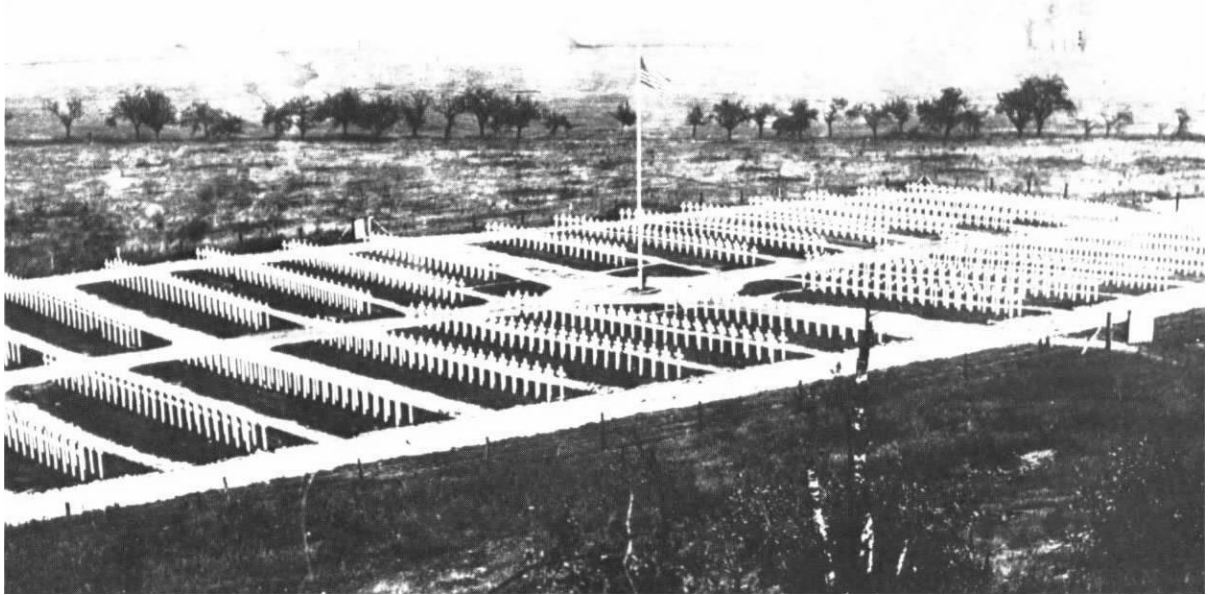
On the night of 22-23 June the 3d Battalion, 6th Marines, took over the line along the eastern edge of

the wood, relieving the Army troops. A battalion of the 5th Marines was on each of its flanks.

At 1700 on 25 June an American artillery barrage lasting four hours fell on the German lines. It caused heavy casualties, demoralized the enemy, and prevented him from reinforcing his positions. By 2130 that evening the Marines controlled the wood and braced themselves for the expected counterattack. It never came.

On 26 June 1918 the American Expeditionary Force headquarters received a message, "Belleau Wood now U.S. Marine Corps' entirely." Twenty days of intense fighting were over. The Marine's tenacious attacks earned them the nickname "Devil Dogs" from the Germans.

The Marine Brigade had suffered almost 5,000 casualties—about 55 percent of its strength. These were the heaviest losses experienced by any American brigade during a single offensive in World War I. The 6th French Army issued an order on 30 June 1918, changing the name of the Bois de Belleau to the Bois



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American cemetery near Belleau Wood, photographed in 1919.

de la Brigade de Marine. The brigade received a citation for gallantry signed by General Henri Petain*.

Now the site of an American cemetery, more than 2,200 men lie buried in Belleau Wood, with 249 of them listed as unknown. The interior walls of the chapel, located near the center of the cemetery, has the names of 1,060 men who were never recovered, among whom are those listed as “unknown” and buried in the cemetery.

Warrant Officer Arthur Martin, USA (Ret), grounds supervisor for the cemetery, says: “The Marines had been considering the idea of advancing in small groups, Indian style, instead of in line, as was common in World War I trench warfare. . . .

“When the fighting began, the Marines switched to what are now referred to as squad tactics.”²¹

The first fighting by the Marine Brigade in the Chateau-Thierry sector was a magnificent stubborn defense between 31 May and 5 June. The second phase was the capture of Belleau Wood. Together they were listed as a major operation called the Aisne Defensive.

During 31 days of intense fighting the 2d Division as a whole suffered an estimated 1,811 battle deaths, of which 1,062 were Marines, and 7,252 additional casualties, of which 3,615 were Marines. It was that fighting and 9,063 American casualties that made the

*French maps still use the name, Bois de Belleau; however, a masonry marker at the entrance to the wood reads Bois de la Brigade de Marine. Robert Sherrod, *Fortitudine* (Summer, 1980), p. 8.

names Belleau Wood and Chateau-Thierry famous.²²

After being relieved by another American division on 5-6 July 1918, the 4th Brigade moved to the rear area and took up defensive positions near Nanteuil-sur-Marne. It remained there until 16 July.

The Germans attacked the American line on 15 July. It turned out this was their last offensive and it failed. From that time on they were on the defensive.²³

It is well to pause here and mention a famous book named *Through the Wheat*, a novel by Thomas Boyd. Boyd was born on 3 July 1888 in Defiance, Ohio. He enlisted in the Marine Corps 26 May 1919, and eventually ended up in the 1st Battalion, 6th Marines. The hero, a Private Hicks, is an ordinary young man trapped by World War I. In recounting his own experiences through Private Hicks, Boyd created the archetype of the modern warrior. He used such burning, vivid strokes of realism that F. Scott Fitzgerald—a man impatient with bad writing—closed his review with these words, “*Through the Wheat* is not only the best combatant story of the great war but also the best war book since *The Red Badge of Courage*.” Retired Marine General Gerald C. Thomas, who also participated as a member of the 6th Marines in the battle for Belleau Wood, considered the book to be the best description of what the Marines experienced. Unfortunately the book has been out of print for some time. However, the Marine Corps Historical Center in the Washington Navy Yard contains the first edition of

Boyd's book, which contains illustrations by Captain John W. Thomason, Jr., another Marine who was also there.

Soissons

General Harbord was appointed to the rank of major general, and took command of the 2d Division. Colonel Neville had been evacuated to a base hospital after leaving the Chateau-Thierry sector, but returned in time to resume command of the 4th Brigade for the forthcoming Aisne-Marne offensive. The Marine Brigade entered the front lines near Soissons.

This was to be a major operation in 1918 on the Western Front. The 4th Brigade was hurriedly and secretly sent to the Soissons sector. The 5th Marines moved by forced night marches through rain and mud. The roads were jammed with troops, artillery, and tanks. Although fatigued, the Marines arrived in time to attack on the morning of 18 July. The 6th Marines were transported by camions (trucks) with Vietnamese drivers, and remained in reserve the first day. It was a glorious victory. Rather than the preliminary bombardment, massed American and French artillery, firing by the map, laid down a rolling barrage, and the picked American and French divisions charged. The attack immediately broke through the most sensitive portion of the German line to the heights south of Soissons. The enemy infantry lines were overrun, as was his artillery. His communications were interrupt-

ed. The end result was a general, although stubborn German withdrawal from the Marne in order to prevent disaster. Paris was saved. The attack continued the next day. The results of the two days' fighting were 3,000 prisoners and 66 field guns. The tide of war was turned definitely in favor of the Allies.

The 6th Marines first moved from their corps reserve positions to the vicinity of Beaurepaire Farm. On the 19th, the second day of the attack, it was not until 0630 that the leading battalion of the regiment received orders to lead the attack that day. The Germans were still desperately attempting to stop the allies' drive.

The 6th Marines, under Lieutenant Colonel Harry Lee, advanced on about a 2,500-yard front. The 1st Battalion, commanded by Major John A. Hughes, was on the left flank; the 2d Battalion, commanded by Major Thomas Holcomb, was on Hughes' right; and the 3d Battalion, commanded by Major Berton W. Sibley, was in reserve. The ground was level, and contained no cover except for an occasional wheat field. This attack started in full view of the enemy and with insufficient artillery support. The accompanying tanks slowed the infantry. German artillery and machine gun fire decimated the 6th Marines. Within a half hour so many men of the 1st and 2d Battalions had been cut down it was necessary to commit two companies from the 3d Battalion to fill the ever-widening gap. The losses to the 1st and 2d Battalions averaged more

Part of the 3d Platoon, 96th Company, 2d Battalion, 6th Regiment rests at Ronvaux, France.

C.B. Cates Papers, MCHC





C.B. Cates Papers, MCHC

A 1918 Marine command post occupies these dugouts in the Champagne region of France.

than 50 percent. It was almost impossible to evacuate the wounded. Cates, now commanding a company, sent back a scribbled message from an abandoned trench: “. . . I have only two men left out of my company and 20 out of other companies. . . . I have no one on my left and only a few on my right. I will hold.”²⁴

Lee ordered his troops to dig in, and they suffered from enemy artillery fire throughout the next day. The regiment was relieved by a French unit that night and moved to the rear. The 5th Marines had enjoyed pursuing a demoralized enemy the first day. The 6th Marines had the bitter experience of trying to overcome the enemy with little more than their bare bodies. The Marines were again cited in French Army Orders.

The 4th Brigade was relieved about midnight on 19 July. It remained in a reserve position still farther in the rear. Still in reserve, it remained in that area until 31 July. In spite of sleepless nights, long marches through rain and mud, thirst, and heavy casualties among friends, the Marines again had met the test of combat.

It was during this quiet period that the brigade was visited by Franklin D. Roosevelt, the young Assistant Secretary of the Navy. He had just toured Belleau Wood where he was impressed by the splendid work of the brigade. He authorized the enlisted Marines to wear the Marine Corps emblem on the collar of their

Army-issue uniforms (until then a privilege reserved only for the officers).²⁵

On 25 July, Brigadier General John A. Lejeune, later the Thirteenth Commandant of the Marine Corps, assumed command of the brigade. Colonel Wendell C. Neville, later the Fourteenth Commandant, took command of the 5th Marines, relieving Colonel Logan Feland. General Lejeune retained command until 29 July 1918 when he became commanding general of the 2d Division. Colonel Neville then resumed command of the 4th Brigade.

When assuming command of the brigade, General Lejeune had issued a general order which read:

I have this day assumed command of the 4th Brigade U.S. Marines.

To command this brigade is the highest honor that could come to any man. Its renown is imperishable and the skill, endurance, and valor of the officers and men have immortalized its name and that of the Marine Corps.²⁶

As recounted above, Lejeune's elation was short-lived, only four days, as he was promoted to major general and given command of the 2d Division when General Harbord was detached to take command of the A.E.F. Services of Supply. (Lejeune had arrived in France earlier expecting to take command of a Marine Division for which Marine Commandant George Barnett was pushing.) However, General Pershing

bluntly refused the idea and ordered Lejeune to take command of a National Guard brigade.

St. Mihiel

During August 1918 the brigade rested and refitted. On 2 September it started to move to positions for participation in the St. Mihiel offensive through a series of night marches. From 12 to 16 September, the brigade was engaged in this battle.

The 6th Marines attacked in a column of battalions. The 2d Battalion led the attack with four companies abreast, followed by the 1st and then the 3d Battalion. It was during this attack that the 2d Battalion displayed extraordinary bravery. Some of its members performed some of the most outstanding acts of heroism seen in the American forces during the war.²⁷ It was 13 September, the second day of the offensive, when the 4th Brigade passed through the 3d Brigade which had led the attack the previous day. Compared to Belleau Wood and Soissons, it was an easy fight. Still, there were 706 fresh Marine casualties when it was over. On 20 September the brigade moved to a rear area and from there by train in boxcars. These were referred to as "40 and 8s" because they could hold 40 people or eight horses. The Americans began preparing for the Meuse-Argonne offensive.

The Meuse-Argonne and Blanc Mont Ridge

The allies were now at the Hindenberg Line. The key terrain feature in the area was Blanc Mont—"White Mountain"—which had been in German hands since 1914. The Marines were to attack it frontally with French troops on their right and left.

In a post-war snapshot, these little-damaged dirt-covered German bunkers, captured by men of the 6th Regiment in World War I, remain intact on Blanc Mont Ridge in France.

C.B. Cates Papers, MCHC





C.B. Cates Papers, MCHC
An unidentified Marine, wearing the Army woolen uniform, with cloth puttees around his legs, sits on a rooftop somewhere in France during World War I.

The 2d Division's infantry units were sent to the rear where the depleted ranks of the 4th Brigade were refilled by replacements from the 1st Marine Training Regiment.

The Meuse-Argonne

The 2d Division was assigned to V Corps of the 1st Army for the final drive. This was to be the center corps of the 1st Army front. The 2d Division was assigned the left sector of the Corps, placing this division in the approximate center of the front.

The attack jumped off on 1 November 1918. The Marine Brigade led the division which attacked in columns of brigades. The 5th Marines were on the brigade's left with the 6th Marines on the right. Both attacked in columns of battalions. The 1st Battalion led the 6th Marines assault, followed by the 3d and then the 2d Battalion. The infantry attack started at 0530, preceded by a heavy artillery rolling barrage. The columns of battalions paused at each objective to allow the next battalion to leapfrog to the front line battalion.

The 2d Division sector averaged only two kilometers in width, and was supported by more than 300 artillery pieces of various calibers. Also, a company of 15 light tanks was provided to assist the infantry. The division was supposed to drive a wedge deep in the German lines for future exploitation.

The German Army was attempting to withdraw from France. It planned to set up a line on the east bank of the Meuse River. To do this, strenuous rear-guard action was ordered to delay the Americans. The German morale was broken, they were facing gradual starvation, and their fighting power was rapidly diminishing.

The artillery fire supporting the Americans was intense. The first objective was reached at 0800. The 2d Battalion, 5th Marines, and the 3d Battalion, 6th Marines, passed through the front lines and assumed the lead. The second objective was reached about noon in spite of the heavy belts of barbed wire encountered, and the enemy artillery and machine gun fire. The 2d Battalion, 6th Marines, passed through the 3d Battalion and continued the attack.

By now, all of the Germans' organized positions and a great deal of their artillery had been overrun. The enemy retreated from his sector during the night. A line of exploitation about two miles in front of the third objective was assigned.

On the third objective the Americans dug in and waited for the expected counterattack. Instead, the enemy covered his night withdrawal with the remnants of several divisions.

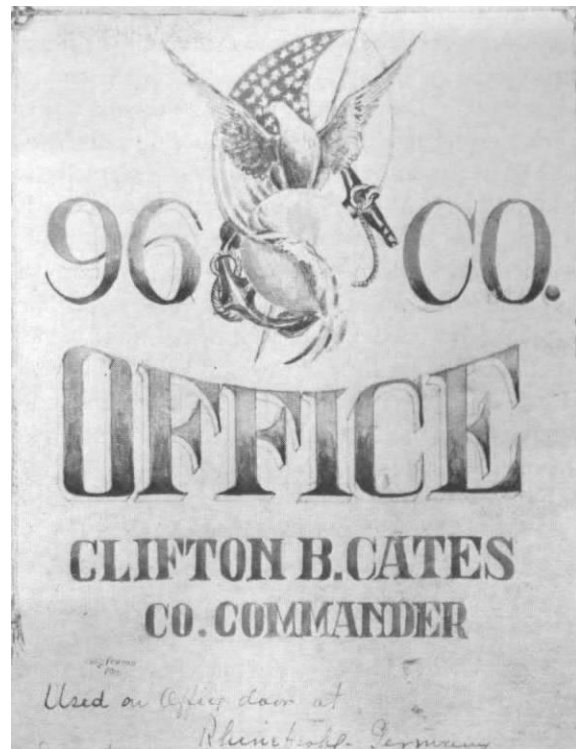
The Marines had made an advance against organized resistance at least equal to any made during the war by an American division in a single day. They were exhausted. Mud, rain, and sleepless nights made it all the more difficult. Their food, when they could get it, consisted of Argentine beef cooked with whatever vegetables their cooks could find. They called it "slop." It probably was. Boring, repetitious, but necessary for sustenance. They didn't have the luxury of "C" rations, "D" rations, "K" rations, or the modern MRE's (Meal, Ready-to-Eat).

The 4th Brigade took a day of respite and did not join in the follow-up exploitation. However, during their part in the attack the Marines established their front lines along the Meuse, facing the Germans on the other side of the river. The 4th Brigade was then relieved by an Army brigade, moved to the rear, and prepared to force a crossing of the river. This took awhile due to the utter confusion in the rear with its

poor roads, traffic jams, and supply echelons attempting to catch up with the advancing troops. It was impossible to even evacuate the sick and wounded. The crossing continued to be postponed from day to day.

Finally the orders for the crossing arrived. The infantry battalion commanders did not receive their orders until 0500 on the day of the crossing. Their men were still in bivouac under the cover of woods behind the river. There was confusion as to when the operation was to start. As a result the artillery began firing their preparatory fires an hour too soon. Most of the supporting fire had been delivered before the infantry even reached the designated crossing sites. The Army engineers were ready to throw two pontoon bridges across the river. The enemy soon located them and prevented them from being put into place by heavy artillery and machine gun fire. German artillery also pounded the roads leading to the river. Fortunately, the Marines followed a railroad track leading to their crossing site and were not hit. The three battalions of the 6th Marines and one of the battalions of the 5th Marines were assigned to make the main crossing. As dawn approached, the bridges still had not been constructed. The battalion commander agreed that there was nothing to be done but to withdraw to the cover of woods before daylight arrived.

Once they reached the woods, they learned that the



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This elaborately designed and painted sign hung on an office door of a U.S. Marine occupation force company in Rhinebrohl, Germany, in December 1918.

This post-war photograph of a chateau which once served as the command post of the 2d Battalion, 6th Regiment, belies the myth that Marines only lived in trenches.

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armistice had been signed to become effective at 1100. They were lucky. The war was over without them trying to force a crossing against a stubborn enemy.

The news of the armistice was disseminated rather slowly to front line units of the opposing sides. Nobody knew the terms of the armistice—it seemed too good to be true. Most of the men were exhausted. After awhile, as the good news penetrated their consciousness, they began building bonfires for warmth and gathered in groups to talk and sing songs. The next night they fired most of their pyrotechnics in joy, although there was little of the enthusiasm being experienced in the civilian world. The Germans were in a quiet, depressed mood, although thankful it was all over. It was 11 November 1918.

The March to the Rhine and the Occupation

On 17 November, the 2d Division began its march to the Rhine River.* Through French villages, across the border into Belgium, everywhere the Americans were greeted by cheering civilians, dressed in their best, with tears running down their faces. Luxembourg was reached on 23 November where they were billeted in a barn. Marching distances were long, sometimes up to 52 kilometers. Roads were horrible, the weather cold and raining, the food irregular, the packs heavy, and the sleep spotty in super-ventilated hay barns. The German frontier was finally reached on 25 November. A short pause there and on 1 December the march pressed on. They reached the Rhine on 10 December 1918.²⁹

Occupation duty quickly became boring. The most noteworthy accomplishment was the establishing of a Rhine River patrol manned and commanded by Marines.

Major Charles D. Barrett relieved Lieutenant Colonel Earl H. Ellis as brigade adjutant. Ellis was assigned to duty as second in command of the 5th Marines.

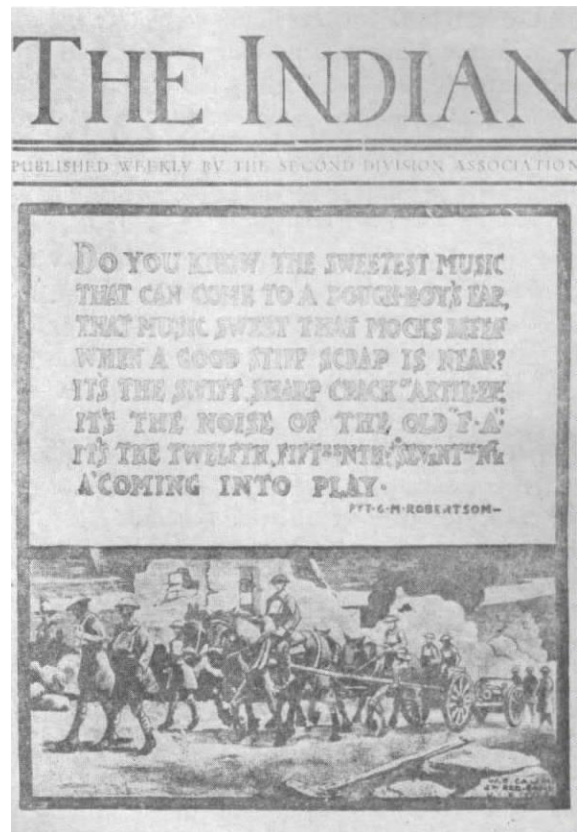
General Headquarters, American Expeditionary Forces ruled that the Marines serving with the 2d Division were entitled to silver bands on the staffs of their regimental colors for battle participation in the following engagements:

Toulon sector, Verdun, from 15 March to 13 May 1918

Aisne defensive in Chateau-Thierry sector, from 31 May to 5 June 1918

Chateau-Thierry sector (capture of Hill 142, Bouresches, Belleau Wood), from 6 June to July 1918

*It was not a jaunt. The division marched about 200 miles. It was cold, raining, and snowing sometimes. The roads were muddy and slippery. Each man carried 100 pounds of equipment.



Historical Collection MCHC

A soldier's poem decorates the cover of an issue of The Indian, a weekly magazine published by the American 2d Division in Germany during the months of occupation duty after the Armistice. The magazine's name derived from the division's shoulder patch, itself derived from a U.S. coin then in circulation.

Aisne-Marne (Soissons) offensive, from 18 to 19 July 1918

Marbache sector, near Pont-a-Mousson on the Moselle River, from 9 to 16 August 1918

St. Mihiel offensive, in the vicinity of Thiaucourt, Xammes, and Joulay, from 12 to 16 September 1918

Meuse-Argonne (Champagne) including the capture of Blanc-Mont Ridge and Saint Etienne, from 1 to 10 October 1918

Meuse-Argonne (including crossing of the Meuse River), from 1 to 11 November 1918.³⁰

The Marines, of course, were anxious to return home. In spite of extensive athletic programs, amateur theatrical productions, professional entertainers, and educational programs, occupation duty became more and more monotonous. Hagglng between the Germans and the allies continued at the peace conference concerning the terms of the final document.

The men were anxious to look like Marines again. When first in France they wore their green wool uniforms. Pershing soon made them switch to Army issue uniforms, claiming supply problems and the need



Photographs from the album of Cpl George A. MacGillivray, sitting on the right in the front row of the top photograph taken in Germany in 1919. The photograph shows a working party from the 80th Company (later Company G), 2d Battalion, 6th Marines. These Marines are wearing a wide variety of uniform items, including (see third Marine from left) a German army belt. Posing for the bottom photograph are the 37 Marines left of the approximately 200 original members of the 80th Company. The remainder were killed or wounded in the various battles in France, and their positions filled with replacements. Standing on the right in the rear row is GySgt Don V. Paradis, a wartime volunteer who always claimed he originally became an NCO because he was bigger than anyone else in the company. His valor in France earned him two Silver Stars (precursors to the modern Silver Star Medal) for his campaign medal. Cpl MacGillivray kneels on the left of the front row. His son, in another, later war, fought on Guadalcanal.





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French sculptor Charles Raphael Peyre's "Crusader for the Right" (frequently erroneously called "Iron Mike"), paid for by donations from World War I Marines stationed in France and Germany, and later erected at Quantico, exemplifies those veterans' view of themselves and their contributions to victory in the war.

to confuse the enemy as to unit designation. Except in rear areas, the field hat had to be replaced by the Army's soft overseas cap. They didn't mind wearing the flat British-style helmets, sometimes adorning them with Marine emblems.³¹ They were suspicious of Pershing's reasons from the start. That suspicion increased as their fame as fighting men grew.

At last orders were received, and trains began taking Marines to Brest for the voyage home. This started in the middle of July.

The 4th Brigade arrived back in the United States in early August. It took part in a parade in New York City with the rest of the 2d Division shortly thereafter, and was reviewed later by President Woodrow Wilson in Washington, D.C. It then returned to Quantico, where demobilization began almost immediately.

Marine Achievements

Without a doubt, the arrival of the Americans in the latter stages of World War I bolstered the morale of the Allies. With the saving of Paris, the capture of Belleau Wood, and the breaching of the Hindenburg Line, even the most skeptical of the Allies became convinced that the Americans were first-class fighting men. This was also true of the German Army, particularly in regards to the more experienced American divisions. Their intelligence reports at first were contemptuous, but that opinion gradually changed. In the end, the Germans referred to the 2d Division as "a shock unit"—their highest classification. As Colonel Ernest Otto of the German Army said after the war in his writings, "The Second Division had answered the question, how would the Americans act in real bat-

The star and Indian head design from the insignia of the American 2d Division decorates one of a number of similar monuments erected by the division soon after the Armistice.

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These Americans stand in formation after being awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, the U.S. Army's equivalent of the Navy Cross, at a ceremony in Lutesdorf, Germany after the 11 November 1918 Armistice. Marine units stayed in Europe until August 1919.

tle?" The rising morale of the allies with the appearance of the Americans on the Western Front was matched by the corresponding discouragement of the enemy.

The Marine Corps' long stress on rifle marksmanship paid off in France. The Marines coolly lay in their positions, adjusted rifle slings to their arms, estimated the windage and range, and carefully squeezed off shots from ranges up to 800 yards. The bewildered Germans sustained casualties and had never seen such marksmanship.

Because of the success of the 2d Division, the French wanted to break up the division and use the Americans as shock troops to lead their attacks. Lejeune soon learned about the idea and vigorously opposed it. The division was allowed to remain as a unit.

The Marines, nevertheless, did not hold the market on valor and fighting ability in the 2d Division. The Army brigades fought and bled equally as much. In fact, other American divisions besides the 2d Division made splendid records and contributed to the ultimate defeat of Germany. Nonetheless, as Army historian S. L. A. Marshall summarized the Marines' sense of motivation years later in his writings about World War I, "The Marine Brigade because it was unique—a little raft of sea soldiers in an ocean of army—was without doubt the most aggressive body of die-hards on the Western Front." Its losses were 1,514 killed in action; 778 dead of wounds; 8,529 wound-

ed; 161 carried as missing in action; and 986 injured from poison gas. The brigade's total casualties, 11,968, represented 127 percent of the 9,444 men with which it first entered combat. Few of the original men survived the war unscathed.

More important in the long run, the Marines' outstanding record in World War I, their sevenfold expansion, close combat against a sophisticated enemy, high casualty rate, generous publicity, and growing estrangement from the other services erased once and for all the image of being nothing but a small organization of ceremonial troops. As we shall see later, the experiences gained in World War I and the attacks on the Marine Corps after the war (almost causing its extinction) created an intellectual revolution in the officer corps. It was led by Lejeune and the enigmatic Pete Ellis, and caused an organizational search for a unique mission that highlighted both the newly proven combat capability ashore and the Marines' traditional maritime background.

Demobilization

The strength of the Marine Corps increased approximately seven and a half times during the war. In addition to performing regular duties such as recruiting, and officer and enlisted training, it had to guard naval stations all over the world, and provide detachments for sea duty, in France, and other places.

As soon as the armistice was announced on 11

November 1918, a clamor arose from parents, relatives, sweethearts, and families for the early return and discharge of all the men serving, whether they had been in France or not. Members of the Marine Corps Reserve and those of the regular service who had enlisted for the duration of the war caused particular concern. A wholesale reduction of the Corps overnight would be catastrophic. The 4th and 5th Marine Brigades were still in Europe under the Army's command. Troops were in far-flung places like Guam. A solution had to be found.

On 20 November 1918, only nine days after the armistice, Marine Corps Order No. 56 was issued, providing for at least limited demobilization. It stated that members of the Marine Corps Reserve and those men of the regular service who had enlisted for the duration of the war, who desired to complete their education or who had urgent family or business interests which required their immediate and personal attention would be demobilized. On 1 May this had

to be modified so that only those with urgent financial dependency reasons could qualify.

Following the issuing of the Act of 11 July 1919, which provided funds to sustain a Corps with an enlisted strength of 27,400 men with corresponding officers, Marine Corps Order No. 42 of 12 July 1919 promulgated detailed instructions for the establishment of demobilization centers and the procedures to be followed. This order also had special instructions concerning duration of the length of service of the wartime men and those serving in the tropics eligible for discharge. By the latter part of December 1919, practically all of those eligible had been discharged.

In August 1919, the 5th Brigade was returned to the Naval Operating Base, Hampton Roads, Virginia. The 4th Brigade, with the 6th Marines, was already in Quantico. The demobilization of these units was completed on 13 August, a remarkably short time.³²

On that date, 13 August 1919, the 6th Marines was deactivated. So ended the regiment's World War I tour.