FORTITUDINE

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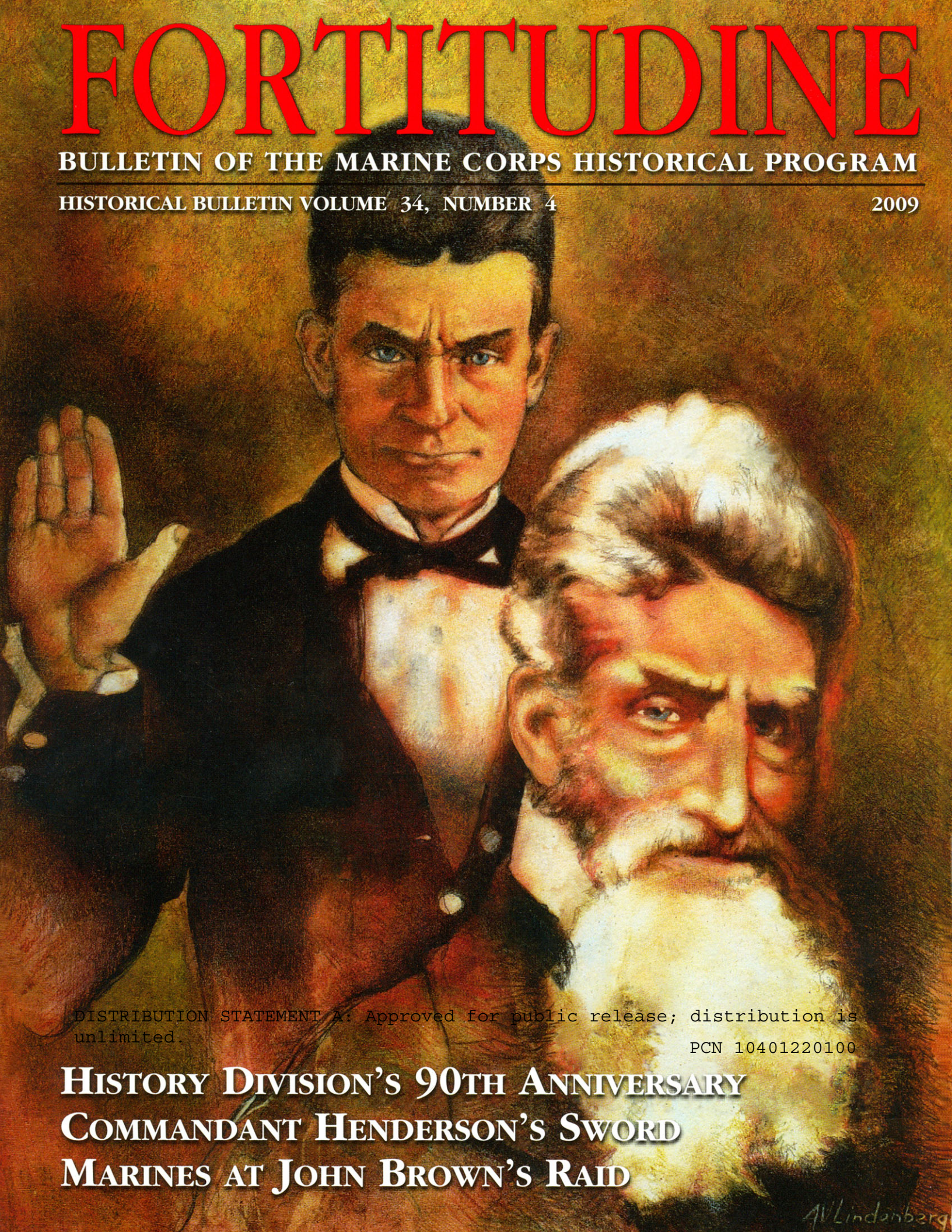

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HISTORY DIVISION'S 90TH ANNIVERSARY
COMMANDANT HENDERSON'S SWORD
MARINES AT JOHN BROWN'S RAID

FORTITUDINE

Motto of the United States Marine Corps in the 1812 era

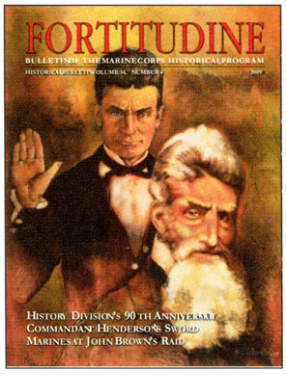
Historical Bulletin Vol. 34, No. 4 2009

"We can only know who we are by being certain of who we have been."

Gen Leonard F. Chapman Jr.
24th Commandant of the Marine Corps

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Errata: Jack Shulimson, LtCol Leonard A. Blasiol, Charles R. Smith, and Capt David A. Dawson. *U.S. Marines in Vietnam: The Defining Year 1968* (Washington D.C: History and Museums Division, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, 1997). On page 293, first column, second paragraph, the two references to "Company I" should read "Company L."



About the Cover: The drawing of a younger and older John Brown was created with fine art colored pencils blended with a natural turpentine substitute (natural Turpenoid) in an essentially complementary color scheme of muted reds and greens. The support is primed canvas mounted on masonite.

Amy V. Lindenberger, CPSA <www.civilwarfineart.com>

This bulletin of the Marine Corps historical program is published for Marines, at the rate of one copy for every nine on active duty, to provide education and training in the uses of military and Marine Corps history. Other interested readers may purchase single copies or four-issue subscriptions from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office. The appropriate order form appears in this issue.

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History Division Celebrates 90 Years

Dr. Charles P. Neimeyer

By the time of publication for this issue of *Fortitudine*, History Division should be moved into its new home. It is a brick building across the street from our modular one in which History Division has been housed for the last four years. History Division will occupy the first floor of the building, which includes a spacious atrium that the National Museum of the Marine Corps will help decorate with artifacts befitting the heritage of the Corps. History Division's mailing address will change from 3079 Moreell Avenue to 3078 Upshur Avenue. The staff's phone numbers and email addresses will remain unchanged. History Division will share the building with the Staff Non-Commissioned Officer Academy and Enlisted Professional Military Education programs, which will still be operating on the second floor of the building.

During the past few months, History Division has published several occasional papers on the Marine Corps advisory effort in Vietnam, *Marine Advisors with the Vietnamese Marine Corps,* by Charles D. Melson, Chief Historian, and Wanda J. Renfrow, and *Marine Advisors with the Vietnamese Provincial Reconnaissance Units, 1966–1970,* by Colonel Andrew R. Finlayson, and on close air support during the battle for Khe Sanh, Vietnam, *Close Air Support and the Battle for Khe Sanh,* by Lieutenant Colonel Shawn P. Callahan. Also, Dr. Nathan S. Lowrey's monograph, *Marines in Afghanistan, 2001–2002,* has been completed and is scheduled for publication. History Division recently published a battle study on an-Nasiriyah by Colonel John R. Andrew Jr. Nearing completion is an oral history anthology on the "Awakening" in al-Anbar Province, Iraq, compiled by Colonel Gary W. Montgomery, Chief Warrant Officer-4 Timothy S. McWilliams, and Lieutenant Colonel Kurtis P. Wheeler. The anthology will be published in two volumes, with one focusing on the perspectives of leaders in the Marine Corps and U.S. Army regarding the "Awakening," and the other focusing on the perspectives of Iraqis. The Field History unit collected this information in record time thanks to the efforts of Major General John F. Kelly and Colonel Bradley E. Weisz. We hope to continue our collection efforts this year thanks to Major General Richard T. Tryon and his II Marine Expeditionary (Forward) staff.

The Marine Corps University Press has been busy these last several months also. Dr. Paula Holmes-Eber, Dr. Patrice M. Scanlon, and Ms. Andrea L. Hamlen of Marine Corps University have just completed a sequel, *Applications in Operational Culture: Perspectives from the Field,* to a successful book, *Operational Culture for the Warfighter,* by Dr. Barak A. Salmoni and Dr. Holmes-Eber, published by the press in 2008. Another press publication nearing completion is, *The Iranian Puzzle Piece: Understanding Iran in the Global Context,* by Dr. Amin Tarzi, a faculty member of Marine Corps University, who collected and edited these papers from a symposium in 2008. Finally, work is proceeding apace on the inaugural edition of the *Marine Corps University Journal.* The journal is intended as a forum for scholars of national security affairs, and in the future, we hope to highlight the work of faculty from the Marine Corps University. The first edition will include substantive articles on a wide array of topics ranging from the torture of prisoners to obtain intelligence and the growth of "feral cities" and their potential future impact on U.S. national security. This edition should be hitting the streets by late 2009.

History Division welcomes our new Marine Corps University president, Major General Robert B. Neller. He earned his bachelors degree in history and speech communication from the University of Virginia in 1975 and his masters degree in Human Resource Management from Pepperdine University. Serving as an infantry officer for his entire Marine Corps career, he attended the Advanced Armor Officer Course at Fort Knox, Kentucky. He commanded the 3d Light Armored Infantry Battalion and deployed with this unit to Somalia in 1992. After service overseas at the NATO Defense College in Rome, Italy, and a tour on the staff of the Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe in Mons, Belgium, he transferred to the 2d Marine Division and given command of the legendary 6th Marine Regiment. He later served as the division's G-3. Selected for Brigadier General in March 2001, he was later assigned as the Deputy Commanding General for Operations, I Marine Expeditionary Force (Forward) during Operation Iraqi Freedom. Following his promotion to Major General, he assumed command of the 3d Marine Division in June 2007.

This year has been special for the Marine Corps University and History Division because both of them celebrated their anniversaries. The Marine Corps University celebrated its 20th and the History Division celebrated its 90th. This issue of *Fortitudine* includes a pictorial essay about the 90-year story of History Division. ❑1775❑

"At All Times Ready": Marines at John Brown's Raid

by Dr. Charles P. Neimeyer
Director

This year marks the sesquicentennial of John Brown's raid on the U.S. arsenal in Harpers Ferry, Virginia, during two bloody days in October 1859. Brown's raid was historically significant for several reasons: (1) it was one of the more significant domestic terrorism events to have taken place on U.S. soil; (2) it was one of the first times, but certainly not the last, when Marines would be asked to quickly respond in a national military emergency; (3) it firmly established a tradition in the minds of most Americans (and perhaps the Marines also) that Marines are shock troops who can be given tough assignments on short notice.

Going into harm's way for the 19th century Marine Corps was nothing new. Marines had long manned the frigates of the Navy and had previously fought in regional conflicts such as the Seminole War (1836) and the Mexican War (1846–48). However, in each instance, they had been given more time to equip and prepare for combat. Even so, Marine Commandant Archibald Henderson had been able to rapidly organize a 400-man battalion in just 10 days for the Seminole War. But the Marines going to Harpers Ferry in 1859 were not even afforded the luxury of a single day to get ready.

By 1859, Brown already had a national reputation. In the South, he was reviled as a terrorist and murderer. In northern abolitionist circles, he was hailed as a man of righteous action. An intensely religious man, Brown was a violent opponent of slavery and was convinced that he had been sent by God to do something about it. Brown got his opportunity to strike a blow against slavery when the territory of Kansas was in the throes of deciding whether it wanted to enter the Union as a slave or free state. In October 1855, following the sacking of Lawrence, Kansas, by proslavery Missouri "border ruffians," Brown and his men used broadswords to hack to death five proslavery men. Forced to flee Kansas, he ended up for a short time in Chatham, Canada, where he began planning yet another attack—this time against the sleepy mountain town of Harpers Ferry.

Department of Defense

Lt Israel C. Greene led the 12 Marines who broke into the engine house at Harpers Ferry and captured Brown. Greene used his sword to subdue Brown, but did not kill him. Greene resigned from the U.S. Marine Corps at the outset of the Civil War and joined the Confederate States Marine Corps, rising to the rank of major. This painting shows Greene in his Confederate States Marine Corps uniform.

Just after midnight on 17 October 1859, Brown and 18 men crossed the bridge spanning the Potomac River that led into town. However, it was not long before Brown was surprised by the approach of an eastbound train. Not anticipating this turn of events, he stopped the train. Heyward Shepherd, a free African American and railroad employee, went onto the bridge to investigate. Seeing armed men on the bridge, Shepherd fled toward the train and was mortally wounded by rifle fire. For reasons unknown, Brown allowed the stopped train to continue through Harpers Ferry, thereby sealing his own fate, for the train crew alerted local authorities in Frederick, Maryland, about the insurrection they had just encountered.

During the night, Brown sent raiders to round up local slave owners, including Lewis W. Washington, the great-grand nephew of George Washington, and liberated the few slaves they could find in the area. By 0400 on 17 October, Brown had herded about 40 hostages into the engine house and a nearby outbuilding on the arsenal grounds.

By daylight of 17 October, while Brown and his men traded shots with armed locals in and around the arsenal, Secretary of War John B. Floyd and Secretary of the Navy Isaac Toucey discussed the situation at Harpers Ferry. There were no Army troops within miles of the national capital. The closest were artillerymen at Fort Monroe in the far southeast corner of Virginia. However, Toucey knew that the Marines maintained a barracks at 8th and I Streets, Washington, D.C., and guarded the Washington Navy Yard. He immediately sent a clerk over to meet with Marine Commandant John Harris, who ordered Lieutenant Israel C. Greene to take 86 Marines to Harpers Ferry. Greene had his Marines ready to go within two hours, and they were on a train headed north by 1530.

Meanwhile, the governors of Virginia and Maryland (both slave states at the time) sent militia units toward Harpers Ferry. The first of these units arrived just before 1100. Concerned that there was no senior leadership above the rank of lieutenant to take charge of the situation at Harpers Ferry, Secretary Floyd requested the services of Colonel Robert E. Lee, U.S. Army, then on leave at his home in Arlington, Virginia. Secretary Floyd ordered Colonel Lee to proceed with all possible dispatch (Lieutenant James Ewell Brown "Jeb" Stuart, U.S. Army, accompanied him as his aide) to Harpers Ferry, take command of the Marines, and restore order as quickly as possi-

ble. As a further precautionary measure, Commandant Harris detailed Marine Corps Paymaster Major William W. Russell to accompany Lieutenant Greene. Since he was a staff officer, Russell was ineligible to command troops in the field, but Harris believed Russell's more judicious temperament might assist Greene in the crisis.

Because the Marines had moved out so quickly, their train was 30 minutes ahead of the one carrying Colonel Lee and Lieutenant Stuart. Secretary Floyd wired ahead and ordered Greene to wait for Lee, and Greene thus halted his train at Sandy Point, Maryland, just a few miles outside of Harpers Ferry. By the time Lee was able to link up with Greene, it was nearly 2300. Meanwhile, inside the town, a day-long firefight had taken place between Brown, now barricaded inside the engine house, and the local militia forces. A number of raiders and townsmen had been killed during the day, including the popular mayor, Fountaine Beckham. In response to Beckham's death, captured raider William Thompson was murdered by an enraged mob, which dumped his body into the Potomac.

Lee ordered the Marines to cross the Potomac River bridge at 2300 on 17 October and relieve the militia forces. However, what Greene found was chaos. Armed townspeople, some drunk, roamed about the arsenal grounds firing their weapons; nervous militiamen stood in formation just out of range of gun shots from the building; and curious spectators peeked around buildings to gawk at all the activity. Lee told the Marines to clear the area of the townspeople and ordered the militia to pull back from the engine house, replacing them with the more disciplined Marines.

As day broke on 18 October, Lee, not exactly sure who was inside the engine house, drafted an immediate surrender demand "to the person in charge of the insurgents." He ordered Stuart to deliver the ultimatum to the engine house door and to not negotiate with the insurgent leader. In the meantime, Lee ordered Greene to form a storming party to take the engine house by force, anticipating that his surrender demand would be rejected. Greene formed two squads of 12 Marines apiece. Each squad member was armed with the Model 1842 musket and a socket bayonet about 18 inches long. Greene ordered the Marines' weapons to remain unloaded out of fear of hitting hostages and decided to take the engine house in a bayonet assault. Greene selected three stout Marines and equipped them with sledgehammers to batter down the heavy wooden engine house doors.

As Lieutenant Stuart approached the engine house, Brown cracked the center door open and pointed a carbine at Stuart's chest. Stuart delivered the note and immediately recognized Brown. Stuart had previously served at Fort Riley, Kansas, and was well acquainted with Brown's activities there. As anticipated, Brown asked Stuart to agree to surrender terms, and after a short while, Stuart abruptly broke off the discussion and waved his cap—the signal for the Marines to begin their assault. Brown slammed and bolted the door. With a shout, the three hammer-wielding Marines began battering the center wooden door. To Greene's chagrin, the door proved impervious to the repeated blows, and after about three minutes, he ordered the Marines to stop. Spying a heavy ladder nearby, Greene instructed the first assault squad to use it as a battering ram, and on the second blow, the lower right hand panel on the door gave way. Greene, Russell, and several armed Marines of the first squad dove through the opening. Greene charged through the engine house armed only with a light military saber. (Contrary to popular belief, Greene's sword was not the mamaluke hilt dress sword that Marine officers have carried since the time of Archibald Henderson.)

Inside the engine house, it was pandemonium. Greene later reported that due to the gun smoke, cries of the hostages, and the shrieks of the wounded and dying, he had a hard time initially locating Brown until hostage Lewis Washington rushed up

The picture below shows the engine house where John Brown and his compatriots made their last stand against the Marines under the command of Lt Greene.

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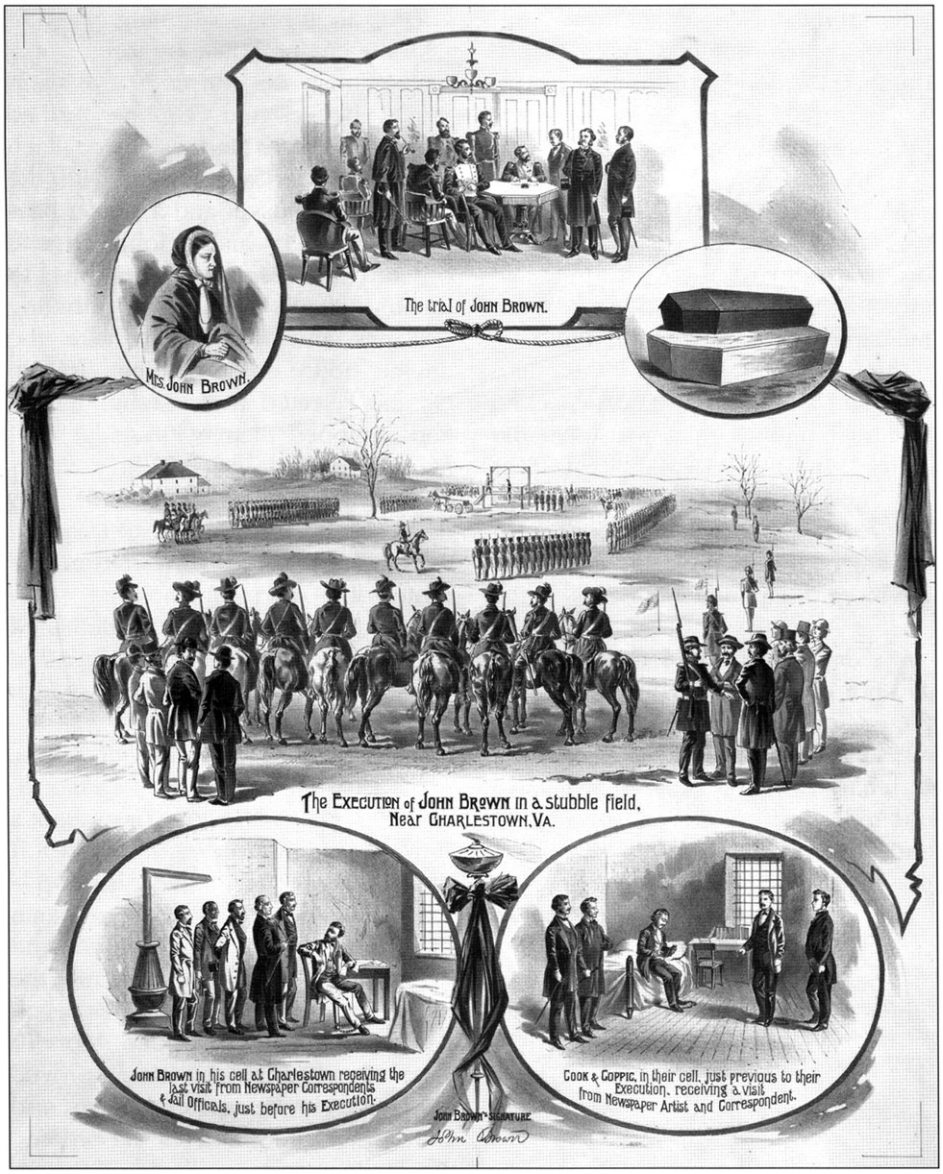


Library of Congress Photo

The above collage shows events surrounding John Brown's execution by hanging in Charlestown, Virginia (now West Virginia). The governor of Virginia had accepted the offer of assistance from the superintendent of the Virginia Military Institute, who provided a contingent of approximately 85 upperclassmen cadets for security. One of the officers present at the execution was Maj Thomas J. Jackson, later known as "Stonewall" Jackson of Civil War fame.

to him and pointed Brown out. Brown had reloaded his carbine and had just shot and mortally wounded Private Luke Quinn in the abdomen. Rushing Brown, Greene slashed at Brown's head with a glancing blow that cut into his neck. Brown fell on his side, and Greene attempted to run Brown through with the point of his saber. Catching the saber tip on Brown's leather cartridge belt, the sword bent in half. Not to be stopped, Greene then repeatedly bashed Brown's head with the hilt of his saber, knocking him unconscious. Greene reported that his Marines "came rushing in like tigers. They bayoneted one man skulking under the engine, and pinned another fellow up against the rear wall, both being killed instantly." Greene also noted that once he and his men had entered the engine house, only Brown showed any more fight. Once Brown was subdued, Greene ordered his Marines to "spill no more blood." Marine casualties for the entire assault were one man killed (Private Luke Quinn) and one man slightly wounded (Private Matthew Rupert). Private Quinn was later buried in the Catholic cemetery in Harpers Ferry. Thirteen hostages were released. In all, 17 people lost their lives during the course of the raid (two slaves, three townspeople, one slave owner, one Marine, and ten of Brown's insurgent party).

After securing the prisoners, around 1200 on 18 October, Lee sent Stuart along with a few Marines to the Kennedy farm in Maryland, the place from which Brown and his men had begun their raid. There Stuart found weapons and military supplies that Brown had intended to give to liberated slaves. Lee wrote up his official report on the incident and sent it back to Washington in the hands of Major Russell. The next day, Lee was informed by a local farmer of another insurrection in Pleasant Valley, Maryland, near the present-day location of Camp David. Lee, Stuart, Greene, and 25 Marines arrived there only to find it was a false alarm. On 20 October 1859, Greene and his Marines returned to their barracks at 8th and I Streets.

In his report to the Adjutant General's office, Colonel Lee wrote that "I must also ask to express . . . my entire commendation of the conduct of the detachment of Marines, who were at all times ready and prompt in the execution of any duty." It was a fitting tribute, and one that firmly established the Marine Corps as a national force in readiness—a mission that the Corps continues to carry on down to the present day.

Brown and a few of his surviving raiders were indicted on charges of treason and murder and hanged on 2 December 1859. Virginia Military Institute cadets under the command of Major Thomas J. Jackson witnessed his execution. It would not be long before Lee, Stuart, Jackson, and even the redoubtable Greene were fighting against the very federal government they had so recently sought to defend against the wrath of Brown. While John Brown remains a figure of controversy, it is clear that his raid at Harpers Ferry was part of the tinder that set off the most destructive war ever experienced on the continent of North America. ❑1775❑

Harpers Ferry: Last Action of "Henderson Era"

by Michael E. Krivdo

The Marines that stormed the engine house and killed or captured John Brown's raiders on the morning of 18 October 1859 were competent, well-trained, and disciplined, and they displayed a level of professionalism that had taken decades to achieve. When directed to provide forces to counter Brown's threat, the Marines quickly and efficiently organized and equipped a detachment and dispatched it within hours of notification. The detachment's commander, First Lieutenant Israel C. Greene, analyzed the incomplete intelligence on the threat and developed plans. For example, Greene brought two three-inch howitzers with his unit in the event that the enemy force proved larger than the sketchy information indicated. Greene also functioned well with the overall commander of the operation, Army Brevet Colonel Robert E. Lee. Greene organized his men for the mission, detailing specific tasks for them and supervising their preparations and rehearsals, and then led the assault into the engine house. As for the Marines, the fact that the assault element unflinchingly obeyed the order to breach Brown's "fort" without ammunition (to keep from hitting hostages) is proof enough of their courage, professionalism, and confidence in their leaders. These qualities did not come about overnight, but were the product of several decades of reforms and initiatives that slowly, yet firmly, shaped the Marine Corps into an organization that could capably meet challenges such as Harpers Ferry; and that Corps was very much the product of Archibald Henderson.

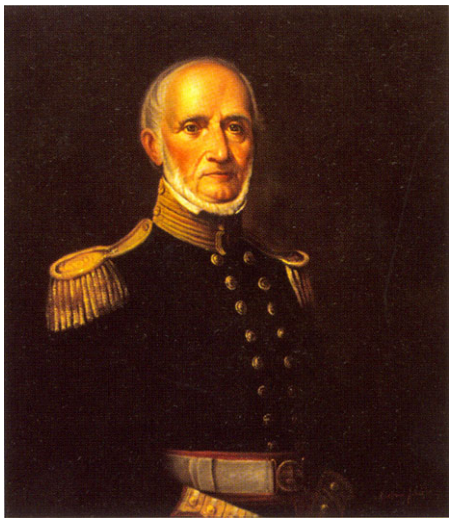
Although Archibald Henderson, fifth Commandant of the Marine Corps, had died in office nine months before the Harpers Ferry incident, he had laid the foundation for the Marines' involvement through initiatives first instituted by him over the preceding three decades. Without Henderson's insistent and tireless efforts to seek a larger, expanded role for the Marine Corps within the military establishment, it is unlikely that the Secretary of War or other command authority would have ever considered the Marines for such a complex and sensitive assignment. In the Marine Corps that Henderson inherited in 1821, such a mission would have been inconceivable.

Within days of assuming command over what many described as a weak, disorganized, and somewhat demoral-

John Brown, at the bottom right of painting, regained consciousness after a head wound inflicted by Lt Israel Greene, during the battle at the federal armory at Harpers Ferry, Virginia, in October 1859.

National Museum of the Marine Corps

ized organization, Henderson placed into action reforms designed to counter critics and to reshape the Marine Corps into a valued military organization. Previous commandants had exercised limited control over their Marines; the day-to-day decision-making resided either in the hands of the secretary of the navy or rested in the authority of ships' captains and navy yard commanders. Rarely did Marine commandants dare to "rock the boat" by challenging that arrangement. Henderson countered this trend, first by daring to select his own officers to fill critical staff billets that gave him the means to exert tighter control over the organization. Second, he issued orders and guidance to the commanders of Marine detachments and barracks to report directly to him and to discontinue the previous practice of reporting to the secretary or through the Navy chain-of-command. Third, Henderson reached out to Navy commanders and solicited their advice regarding the importance of Marines within the Navy mission. Fourth, he enhanced training for new Marines and instituted reforms to improve their quality of life. Through each of these actions Henderson gained the ammunition to diplomatically and intelligently fight opponents of the Corps and new insights to increase the overall effectiveness of the organization.



National Museum of the Marine Corps

Brevet BGen Archibald Henderson, fifth commandant of the Marine Corps.

Henderson understood that the roles and missions of the Marine Corps extended beyond the basic tasks of helping impose order and discipline on board ships and guarding Navy yards. A devout believer that the Marine Corps served as the "military arm of the Navy," he remained keenly interested in increasing the value and relevance of Marines in what were termed "landing party operations," which became increasingly important and more frequently executed during his tenure. Henderson seized every opportunity to strengthen the Marine Corps' position in these early amphibious operations, eventually gaining an organic artillery capability that drastically increased the shore-based firepower of Marines fighting as part of a naval operation.

Henderson sought out increased opportunities to serve with the Army in operations ashore, something that no previous commandant had envisioned or desired. Henderson's intent was twofold: to make the Corps more valuable as a force in readiness for budget-conscious political leaders and to expand opportunities for both training and employing Marines outside of their traditional naval roles. Henderson succeeded in this effort and gained a great dividend by making the Marine Corps more relevant and valuable to the nation. Importantly, Henderson's volunteering the Marine Corps to serve with the Army during the Creek and Second Seminole Wars helped to convert President Andrew Jackson, the former Army general who in 1829 argued before Congress to merge the Corps with the Army, into a supporter of the Marines. Moreover, Henderson's volunteering a Marine battalion in 1836 for service with the Army, fighting Indians in the South, yielded another benefit that has not frequently been discussed. Faced with an acute shortage of officers, many Marine officers gained the rare opportunity to either command regular Army units in combat or serve as high-level staff officers. As a consequence, the Marine officer corps gained invaluable experience and skills that would not have been possible without the service with the Army of the South. Henderson himself served as a commander of an Army brigade in what historian John Mahon has called "the most active zone of combat" in the war. These operations also yielded an important second benefit: They formed the foundation for a rich and colorful common history that helped promote a sense of *esprit de corps* in the ranks.

The Marine Corps' timely and successful service in the Second Seminole War opened the door for similar operations in the future. It also

Marines, patrolling the swamps of Florida, sought Seminole Indians who were resisting relocation to the west of the Mississippi River by fighting a guerrilla war.

National Museum of the Marine Corps

justified Henderson's long-standing (and frequently criticized) practice of maintaining a few officers and enlisted men in Washington, D.C., to serve as headquarters staff for forming a battalion in contingencies. This staff produced other important benefits by educating and evaluating all new Marine officers in the military arts before shipping them off to their distant posts. The headquarters staff served two functions: It trained officers for the rigors of duty at sea and afforded Henderson and his trusted officers the opportunity to get to know each and every officer in the Marine Corps despite its decentralized employment scheme. Through this common training, the headquarters staff managed to instill common Marine Corps' customs and traditions into new officers who only months before had been civilians with little knowledge of military life.

National Museum of the Marine Corps

On 6 December 1846, Capt Gillespie, with 39 men and a four-pounder cannon, joined Gen Kearny's forces to engage the Californians. Gillespie, Kearny, and 18 men were wounded and nine were killed before the Californians withdrew.

During the Mexican War, Henderson gained a significant increase in the manpower of the Corps and again formed a battalion for service in the invasion of Mexico. Because the Mexican navy was weak and the possibility of engagements at sea unlikely, Henderson reallocated Marines from shore duty to fill the new battalion. Unfortunately, the battalion did not arrive in Mexico until three months following the Army's amphibious landing at Veracruz, but the battalion subsequently participated with General Winfield Scott's forces as it fought into "the Halls of Montezuma" in Mexico City. In the Pacific, Marines, serving as the nucleus of landing parties, seized several major cities up and down the coast, helping to gain control of California for the United States. Significantly, Marines, from ships stationed off San Diego, participated in the rescue of Army Brigadier General Stephen W. Kearny's overland force and later formed another *ad hoc* battalion under Lieutenant Jacob A. Zeilin (the future seventh commandant) that seized Los Angeles. Henderson's Marines were proving themselves adept at operating amphibiously.

Although peacetime meant shrinking to its prewar manpower limits, the Marine Corps now possessed a wealth of institutional knowledge and experience in both landing party operations and in fighting ashore as part of larger combat formations. And in the 1850s, the Marines were called on more frequently to put their new skills to the test. In addition to being tasked on at least five occasions to quell domestic civil disturbances (another new mission not undertaken until Henderson's tenure), Marines also exercised their new skills and weaponry in a dozen instances that involved the employment of landing parties on foreign shores. Although some of the situations required nothing more than a show of force to resolve the situation, others required combat action. In addition to at least nine armed landings throughout Central or South American countries, Marines also participated in two punitive landings in Fiji and two more prolonged engagements in China (1854 and 1856).

The 1856 operation in China is indicative of just how far Marine participation in landing operations had advanced in the "Henderson Era." As part of the escalation of violence in Canton that accompanied what came to be known as the Taiping Rebellion, the American consul requested security support from the Navy's East India Squadron. On 14 November, Marine Brevet Captain John D. Simms commanded a landing party of approximately 60 Marines and 60 sailors, the first recorded instance of a Marine being placed in charge of such an unit. After landing, the Chinese granted a cease-fire, but soon violated it by firing several times on U.S. naval ships from a series of forts that guarded the approach to Canton. Angered by the cease-fire violations, the commodore of the squadron, Captain James F. Armstrong, launched an attack on the forts. On 20 November, with naval gunfire from the USS *Portsmouth* and USS *Levant* firing over their heads, a sizeable landing party of about 300 sailors and Marines rowed ashore and attacked each fort sequentially from the relatively unprotected landward side. Simms led an assault party of approximately 50 Marines and sailors and overran the Chinese on the first fort, forcing some to swim their way to safety. When the Chinese regrouped and tried to retake the fort by massed counterattack, their human waves were scattered by the combination of a determined defense by the Marines and the firepower of two howitzers that the landing party had brought from the ships for just that purpose. Henderson's long push for artillery training for Marines and organic artillery pieces for landing parties had borne fruit.

Simms successfully repeated the procedure the next day on the second fort and then seized the third by that

same evening. On the morning of 22 November, the Americans placed all of the captured enemy cannon and the two howitzers into action, firing against the last Chinese fort while Simms' assault party moved to take it. On arriving at the fort, the Americans found the position booby-trapped but abandoned. In three days of action, the naval force had seized four granite fortresses and killed over 500 Chinese troops and suffered 10 killed and 32 wounded. After the Marines and sailors demolished the forts with explosives, the Chinese government issued an apology for provoking the incident in the first place.

The 1856 operation validated Henderson's earlier insistence on providing Marines with adequate training in artillery tactics and acquisition of organic artillery to support the landing party ashore. Furthermore, contrary to Millett's assertion that "Commandant Henderson made no great issue of the [1856 Barrier Fort operation]," Henderson specifically cited the operation as a rationale to support his argument for the authority to send Marine officers to the U.S. Military Academy's course of instruction for light and heavy artillery. His argument proved persuasive because in 1857, Lieutenant Israel Greene, the same officer who would soon command the Harpers Ferry response force, became the first Marine to attend that course.

Although the actual number of Marines involved in the battalion deployments was relatively small, their performance and achievements helped capture the imagination of the public and military alike, and some leaders began to honestly consider the potential for the future of the Corps. Slowly, but with increasing frequency, senior Navy leaders became more receptive to Henderson's concepts and ideas, and some even began corresponding with him regarding their thoughts on the place of Marines in modern naval warfare. For example, Navy Captain David G. Farragut wrote Henderson in 1852, stating that Marines were needed afloat not only to maintain discipline on ship, but "for the important duty of landing to act against the enemy, when they become the *nucleus* and in fact, the chief reliance of the Commanding Officer for the formation of landing forces." In a remarkable turnaround, the Board of Navy Commissioners, a group whose majority argued in 1830 "that Marines are not a necessary component part of the crews of our vessels-of-war," by 1842 would help argue before Congress that "on board ship they [Marines] are absolutely indispensable." Such a sea change in the opinion of the naval establishment is remarkable, and the credit properly rested on Henderson's shoulders.

In light of this growing support for Henderson's ideas on deploying units of Marines trained for combat ashore, it is not surprising that when President James Buchanan dispatched a force to Paraguay in 1858 to demand a "redress for an insult to our flag and for injuries to our citizens," a Marine battalion trained in "drill both for the use of the musket and of light and heavy artillery" accompanied the naval force. Being composed of "19 vessels, carrying 200 guns and 2,500 men, well supplied with ammunition, small arms, and whatever was necessary to its success," the naval force represented the largest deployment of American military power since the Mexican War and was truly expeditionary in every sense of the word. On its arrival in Paraguay, the force simply overwhelmed the nation and brought about a quick resolution to the crisis, a testament to the principle of naval presence. Unfortunately, Archibald Henderson did not live to see the fruits of that labor; the "grand old man of the Marine Corps" died while taking his afternoon nap on his sofa in the commandant's quarters in Washington.

Nonetheless, "Henderson's Era" continued for some time past his death, sustained through the spirit and actions of the men he had helped train. The Marines, who fought John Brown's raiders nine months after their commandant's death, owed their training, discipline, traditions, and proficiency to the systems, procedures, and infrastructure placed in service by Henderson. The fifth commandant was also responsible for establishing the early precedents for working alongside the Army, and this cooperation fostered the atmosphere of professionalism and mutual respect that gave Colonel Robert E. Lee, as senior commander, the confidence to employ the Marines in that difficult and politically sensitive operation. Tellingly, militia units from both Virginia and Maryland, although first on the scene at Harpers Ferry, deferred to the Marines the complex tasks of recovering the hostages and capturing Brown's raiders. Equally important, Greene personally expressed great confidence in his men's ability to successfully accomplish the mission and was not disappointed.

At the highest levels of the Corps, though, some indicators arose that suggested the new Commandant, Colonel John Harris, did not embrace these nontraditional operations as enthusiastically as Henderson did. Although outwardly Henderson's initiatives remained in effect, Harris had already begun to relax command pressure to maintain the momentum that Henderson had established. As Allan R. Millett describes the situation, "Henderson's death removed an important force for efficiency in the officer corps." Harris proved to be timid in his dealings with both higher and subordinate commanders, and he expressed interest in returning to more traditional roles for Marines despite growing evidence that changes in naval technologies and tactics made some of those duties obsolete. When the call came down from the War Department for Marines to respond to the Harpers Ferry situation, Harris' contribution was minor.

Harris' own official correspondence provides the most convincing evidence that he was not keen about pursuing some of Henderson's initiatives. Interestingly, in his first annual report to the Navy secretary, written only three weeks after the successful conclusion of the events of Harpers Ferry, Harris includes *not one word* about the action at Harpers Ferry. Where Henderson would have used the success as a springboard to gain some improvement or initiative to better the Corps, Harris instead moves on to another point that gives insight into

his concerns. After a discussion on the state of the various barracks, he states that "from want of accommodations and of numbers we find it impossible to instruct the men as infantry and as light and heavy artillery." Henderson had consistently placed his centralized training effort above everything else, even if it meant temporarily shorting detachments on board ship. Harris, it seemed, had different priorities for his Marine Corps.

These differences continued to grow and became even more apparent with the outbreak of the Civil War. Whereas previous examples suggested that Henderson would have relished the chance to pursue the opportunities brought about by the war, Harris seemed to shrink from the challenges. Rather than seek chances to increase Marine Corps participation in the amphibious operations undertaken during the war, Harris instead felt more comfortable with fielding small detachments for service on board the new ships of the Navy, seemingly ignoring the fact that steam-powered ironclad ships, armed with long-range naval artillery, had little use (or room) for Marine marksmen in the rigging. Finally, in the wake of the Marine Corps' disappointing experiences at the First Battle of Bull Run in July 1861, Harris asked the secretary of the Navy to see if he could help divorce the Marine Corps from further service with the Army altogether. The "Henderson Era" was truly over.

In any event, the evidence supports the hypothesis that the Marines at Harpers Ferry in October 1859 owed their training, weaponry, armaments, equipment, and proficiency to the efforts of Commandant Henderson. Under his tutelage, Greene became the first Marine officer to attend a formal course of instruction at West Point, and he also became Henderson's Instructor of Artillery at Headquarters, responsible for the training of new officers and men in tactics and skills they needed for duties both afloat and as members of landing parties. Through that experience, Greene and his noncommissioned officers had been infused not only with the skills to fight, but also with a sense of *esprit de corps* and a shared history of tradition and customs born in the "Henderson Era." Greene and his men also understood that the continued good reputation of their Corps, a standing that had been meticulously built up over the years under the careful tutelage of their long-standing commandant, rested in their hands. Finally, the Harpers Ferry mission itself seems lifted from the Henderson playbook; it involved a nontraditional, high-profile assignment with the Army, yet the Marine Corps would bear the brunt of the fight. Henderson had long seized on every opportunity to showcase the capabilities of his Marines, and he would certainly have been proud of their performance in this action. ❑1775❑

National Museum of the Marine Corps

Colonel Archibald Henderson's Presentation Sword

by Beth L. Crumley
Assistant Ordnance Curator

One of the most intriguing items, held in the edged weapons collection of the National Museum of the Marine Corps, is a presentation sword made by the Ames Sword Company and given by the State of Virginia to Colonel Archibald Henderson in 1841. While Henderson's legacy as Commandant of the Marine Corps, a position he held for 38 years (1820–1859), is well known, details of his early service are sometimes forgotten. As a captain of Marines aboard the USS *Constitution*, Henderson distinguished himself during the battle with HMS *Cyane* and HMS *Levant* and received the sword for his actions.

A native of Dumfries, Virginia, Henderson was appointed a second lieutenant on 4 June 1806. In less than a year, he commanded the Marine detachment aboard USS *Wasp*. By December 1807, he had transferred to the USS *Constitution*. Assignments ashore followed, including billets at the Marine Barracks, New York, and Charleston, South Carolina, where his Marines were assigned to gunboats then engaging pirates along the U.S. coast. Appointed to the rank of captain in 1811, Henderson spent the first fifteen months of the War of 1812 ashore, commanding the Marine Barracks at Charlestown, Massachusetts.

Henderson's frustration at not being more directly in the fight was mounting. He had already approached the Army regarding an interservice transfer, an effort for which he had been rebuked by Paul Hamilton, Secretary of the Navy. A letter, written in May 1813 to his brother John, clearly showed Henderson's dissatisfaction with his assignment and his intent to resign his commission at the end of the war if he was not promoted. In June, fate intervened and Henderson was ordered to return to sea and command the Marine detachment aboard *Constitution*.

By the time Henderson reported for duty on 9 September 1813, the exploits of the *Constitution* were already the stuff of legend. In August 1812, in a 30-minute engagement, the crew of the *Constitution* shattered HMS *Guerriere* and was given a heroes' welcome upon their return to Boston. Four months later, the frigate HMS *Java* was captured and burned off the coast of Brazil. Henderson feared he had already missed much of the action.

The eighteenth of December 1813 dawned fair and clear. The *Constitution*, under the able command of Captain Charles Stewart, sailed from Boston Harbor for the West Indies. There she preyed on British vessels, capturing the *Lovely Ann*, *Phoenix*, and *Catherine* and burned the schooner HMS *Pictou*. In March 1814, a cracked mainmast and an appearance of scurvy among the crew forced

Stewart to sail for Boston. Spotted and pursued by the British frigates HMS *Junon* and *Tenedos*, Stewart managed to evade the British ships by ordering stores and provisions thrown overboard. On 17 April, the *Constitution* anchored in Boston Harbor to the cheers of thousands. Although orders were issued in May for Stewart to sail, a British blockade prevented *Constitution's* departure until 17 December 1814. Once again, Henderson feared that in his time ashore he had missed the action.

On 20 February 1815, *Constitution* sailed near the Portuguese island of Madeira in the mid-Atlantic, steering southwest with a light breeze. It was a quiet morning until shortly after noon when the lookout atop the frigate's main masthead spotted a sail off the starboard bow. Another sail was reported off the port bow. The first ship changed course and was heading directly toward *Constitution*. The ship's log recorded the event:

> At 1 discovered a sail two points on the larboard bow-hauled up and made sail in chace-at ½ past 1 made the sail to be a ship's at ¾ past 1 discovered another sail ahead-made them out at 2 p.m. to be both ships, standing close-hauled, with their starboard tacks on board.

The vessel approaching from the starboard flew signal flags, which could not be answered. Realizing *Constitution* was not friendly, the unknown ship turned westward, sailing away.

The chaplain on board the USS *Constitution*, Asshelon Y. Humphreys, wrote the following passage in his journal: "As we were now in direct track for craft bound from the Mediterranean to Madeira and felt assured that none but men of war would manoeuver in this way and were not mistaken." The ships were, indeed, men of war: the HMS *Cyane* and HMS *Levant*.

Stewart ordered all sails hoisted and the bow guns to fire, hoping to bring the ships to battle. With the chase on, the main royal mast of *Constitution* snapped, forcing Stewart to slow his pursuit and make repairs. Within an hour, the mast was repaired, a testament to the skill of the men on board the *Constitution*. Stewart's after-action report stated that as the distance closed between *Constitution*

Capt Henderson's Marines provided "lively and well-directed fire" during Constitution's *battle with* Cyane *and* Levant.
Navy Art Collection