

# Marine Barracks

Washington, D.C.

*"Oldest  
Post of  
the Corps"*

*Part I*



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**M**arine Barracks, Washington, D.C., is best known as the home of the United States Marine Band, the U. S. Marine Drum and Bugle Corps, the Silent Drill Team, and the Marine Corps Institute. But, it is also the oldest post of the Corps, the first boot camp for Marines, and the original headquarters of the Marine Corps. And there's a lot more that most folks don't know. . . .

## The History

Marine Barracks, Washington, D.C., was established in March 1801, when President Thomas Jefferson and then-Commandant Lieutenant Colonel William Burrows set out on horseback, searching for a suitable place to build a barracks for the Marines. A site near the Washington Navy Yard and within easy marching distance of the Capitol was selected. The barracks would be located in southeast Washington, between "G" and "I" Streets, and 8th and 9th Streets. The entrance would face the main intersection on the corner of 8th and "I".

A few days later, a Washington newspaper ran a notice offering "a premium of 100 dollars to any per-

son who will exhibit the best plan for a barracks for Marines, sufficient to hold 500 men, with their officers, and a house for the Commandant."

In 1814, the British attacked the city, and the Barracks was hit hard. Three sides of the quadrangle structure, which were used for offices, maintenance facilities and housing troops, took a tremendous pounding. However, the fourth side of the quadrangle—the large brick building at the north end of the parade ground—was left virtually untouched. The house, built in 1805, was the home of the Commandant. It has been the home of every Commandant to date (except for the first two who held the position before the house was constructed) and is reported to be the oldest continually

occupied public residence in Washington.

While the Barracks withstood the brutal attack, the resulting damage was severe enough, that by the turn of the century, major reconstruction was necessary. The massive project took seven years to complete. (The Barracks, including the Commandant's house, was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1976.)

The Barracks served as Marine Corps Headquarters until 1901. It also provided basic training for new officers and recruits throughout the 19th century.

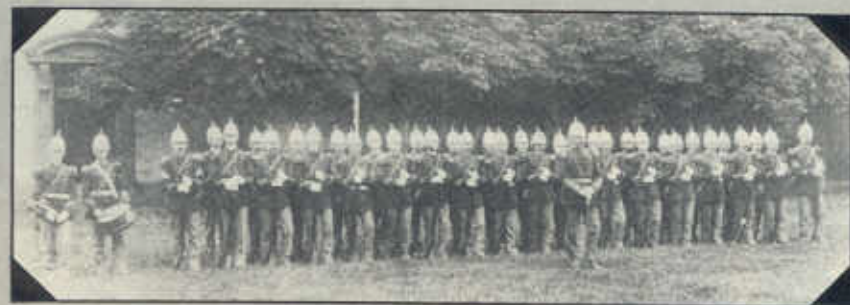
Barracks Marines served in the War of 1812, Second Seminole War (1835-42), the Mexican War (1846-47), Civil War and Spanish-American War (1898).

Perhaps two of the best known battle incidents involving Barracks Marines were those that happened (first) during the Seminole War, when Commandant Archibald Henderson allegedly packed up the Marines and headed south, simply leaving a note on his door that read: "Have gone to Florida to fight Indians. Will be back when the war is over." And (second) before the Civil War, in 1859, when a detachment of 86 Barracks Marines, under the overall command of an Army officer, Colonel Robert E. Lee, captured abolitionist John Brown at Harpers Ferry, W. Va.

Not battle related, but sharing historical significance, is the fact that the Barracks is the home of the United States Marine Band. The band has been at 8th and "I" since 1801, making it the longest-standing organization at the Barracks. The band is also the oldest continuously active unit in the Corps. Established by an act of Congress in July 1798, the Marine Band is also the oldest musical organization in the country.

The band moved its headquarters from Philadelphia to Washington in 1800 when the U.S. government relocated. The band made its White House debut when President John Adams and Vice President Thomas Jefferson requested it to perform at a New Year's celebration. Initially asked to play for Jefferson's inauguration, the Marine Band has played at every Presidential inauguration since. Jefferson is credited with giving the band its title "The President's Own."

The Barracks is also the place where band director John Philip Sousa wrote many of his immortal marches. Sousa was recruited by his



USMC photos

(ABOVE) Headquarters Detachment of Marine Barracks, Washington, D.C., posed in front of Center House in 1887.



(ABOVE AND RIGHT) These photos, taken in the early 1900s, show two Marines posing at the front gate, and rifle practice on the parade ground.



(ABOVE) A group of 8th and "I" officers posed with a Gatling gun in front of the Commandant's House in 1896. Lt Joseph H. Pendleton, for whom Camp Pendleton, Calif., was named is at the far right.



father, a trombonist in the band, to join the group as a musician apprentice at age 13. Sousa remained in the band until he was 20, then returned six years later when he was offered the top slot as the band's 17th director. He held the position from 1880 to 1892.

Today, the Marine Band teams up with other 8th and "I" units—the Marine Drum and Bugle Corps, the Silent Drill Team, the Color Guard of the Marine Corps and two companies of Marines—to accomplish the Barracks' most visible mission: "provide Marines for ceremonial functions as directed." And in doing so, depict the pride, professionalism, discipline and "esprit de corps" of the United States Marine Corps.

These Marines are the select few (about 1,100 total and they are screened to go to 8th and "I") who are charged with putting their best foot forward to represent the Corps. They do this with each and every performance.

Perhaps, the best known ceremonies are the Evening Parades held at the Barracks and the Sunset Parades at the Marine Corps War Memorial (Iwo Jima statue). Performances by the Marine Corps Battle Color Detachment (made up of the Silent Drill Team, Drum and Bugle Corps, and Color Guard) are also very popular. However, other ceremonies not as prominent in the public eye but of equal importance are: official White House functions; ceremonies of State; Armed Forces Full Honors Arrivals and Departures (for Heads of State and other visiting dignitaries); joint services events, such as street parades; military funerals; and wreath-laying ceremonies at Arlington National Cemetery.

Ceremonial support is the Barracks' most glamorous mission, but it is not the only one. 8th and "I" is also responsible for providing a light infantry battalion for operations as directed, special security for the President, and supplying an augmentation force for contingency missions at the White House and Capitol.

Barracks Marines may also be tasked with riot control in Washington, a mission that was first established in the 1800s and has continued throughout the decades, most notably during the late '60s and early '70s when widespread rioting broke out in D.C.

Marines from 8th and "I" also provide security for Camp David (the presidential retreat) and other



(ABOVE) Barracks Marines formed the 2d Civil Disturbance Regiment when riots broke out in D.C., and are shown here creating a protective walkway in 1971 for arrested demonstrators. (BELOW) Barracks Marines received riot control training during civil disturbance exercises held at Quantico's Combat Town.



special security details. There are also two programs where Marines are assigned to the White House for special duties. The first is the White House NCO (noncommissioned officer) Program. (These are the Marines sometimes seen on TV opening the White House doors or assisting the President or First Lady.) The second is the White House Social Aide Program in which officers serve as escorts at official functions held at the White House.

Another of the Barracks' responsibilities is to provide maintenance for the "hallowed grounds" of the Corps' oldest post... which is no easy task, especially during parade season. Such a seemingly insignificant responsibility is actually very important in accomplishing the Barracks' ceremonial mission.

For example, one of the frequently used terms at 8th and "I" is "parade atmosphere." Thousands of spectators (nearly 100,000) attend the Eve-

ning Parades at the Barracks each year. What they see is a perfect performance. Part of that perfection is an almost subconscious element of beauty in the parade ground itself. If the backdrop for the performance wasn't exactly right, there wouldn't be the same aura surrounding the parade. Thus, it is the job of the Barracks' Grounds Maintenance Section to set this perfect stage.

### Behind The Scenes

On Friday mornings at 5 o'clock, Grounds Maintenance Marines start preparing for that evening's performance (which, by the way, doesn't start until 8:45 p.m.). They set up and tear down all the ground equipment (except walkways) twice—once for the rehearsals and again for the actual performance. The equipment can't remain set up throughout the day or it will ruin the meticulously kept Kentucky bluegrass.



Setting up the equipment involves laying three dozen 9-by-5-foot plywood boards in front of the bleachers and throughout the parade deck to create walkways. These are then covered with black mats, anchored down so they won't slip off the boards.

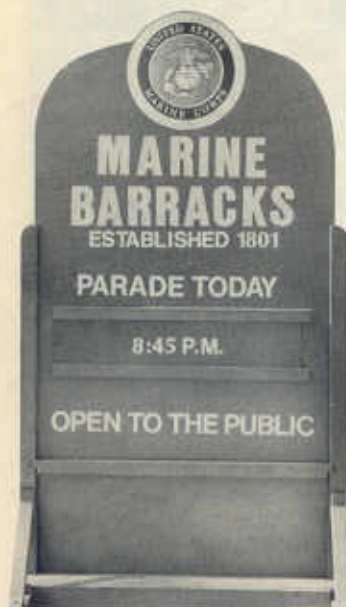
For the evening performance, additional bleachers are set up (total seating for 4,000), and all are hand-washed with paper towels and cleaner. The mats are washed down, sidewalks scrubbed, curbs painted, and the street is washed down with high pressure hoses.

After the rehearsals in the morning, the rest of the day is spent "manicuring" the grounds. The grass is cut on a diagonal to make it appear longer and wider. (It is kept at the regulation 3 inches high.) The sidewalks are edged and weeds pulled. The oak, maple and hemlock trees that surround the parade ground are pruned to precision. Every bush is trimmed to a "T".

All of this is done (often in 100-degree heat and humidity so thick you can cut it with a knife) to create the "parade atmosphere"—the perfect backdrop for the performance. And when it's over, usually between 10:30 and 11 p.m., everything is torn down, which takes another few hours. The next morning at 7 o'clock sharp, Grounds Maintenance is back out there, cleaning and picking up programs and trash left behind.

The parade itself is a highly orchestrated, carefully choreographed production—the ultimate in showmanship. For example, the timing of lighting sequences is as complicated as the timing of parade sequences. Having the right light, in the right

Even though Friday Evening Parades start at 8:45 p.m., Barracks Marines begin preparations at 5 a.m. This includes setting up bleachers, then cleaning them by hand, laying down wooden walkways, polishing brass railings, painting curbs and washing down the streets. For every Marine who marches in the parade, there is another Marine "backstage" helping the show to go on.



place, at the right time is critical to creating the proper parade atmosphere.

The Friday Evening Parade, which made its debut in 1934, has evolved over the years and has been modified, modernized and refined to its present state, which has been referred to as the best military performance of its kind in the country, and possibly even the world.

To give you an idea of how seriously these Marines take their performance, consider the following. All Marines (from private to field grade officer) who are affiliated in some way with the parade (from performers to parking lot attendants) wear the ceremonial blue/white uniform. Most of the Marines, particularly the marchers, are known to don their dress in a unique "ritual" common only to the Barracks Marines.

Imagine this. . . Their socks and shoes go on *first* (the shoes have metal cleats on the heel and toe to enhance the sound of marching), followed by the immaculately pressed white poly/cotton trousers. (The Barracks has two press shops which

press about 1,500 uniforms per week.) The order of dress is such (shoes before trousers) so that the Marines don't have to bend over. In fact, they *cannot* bend over, or sit down, until the parade is over, to prevent wrinkling their trousers. And some of them are on their feet for eight hours!

Next comes the T-shirt, which is secured to the trousers by wrapping masking tape around the waist. This keeps the shirt and trousers together and, at the same time, keeps the hem of the trousers at the correct height by eliminating sagging. Some Marines claim this "bandage of tape" provides additional support for the back, which is probably a good idea considering the length of time they have to stand.

The dress blue jacket (known as a "blouse" in Marine terminology) follows and, of course, is lint-free from a good going over with more masking tape. The white barracks hat is placed on the head, completing the ceremonial dress.

Marchers carry the Garand M-1 rifle—with wooden stock, metal butt plate and chromed bayonet which reflect the lights. The M-1 is heavier than the standard M-16 rifle used throughout the Corps and is a much better piece for drill.

Because a picture's worth a thousand words, there's one thing you won't find in the picture-perfect performance at 8th and "I"—glasses.

Marching Marines (excluding bandsmen) cannot wear eyeglasses during parades and; therefore, are issued contact lenses.

What about the Marines the public doesn't see, the ones behind the scenes? These "unsung heroes" deserve their own round of applause. The part they play in making this production a reality is almost as impressive as the parade itself.

Consider this. . . For every marching Marine, there is at least one support Marine "backstage" helping the show to go on. These men and women work their normal job, then secure in the afternoon on the days of the parade, to assume additional responsibilities. They become parking lot attendants, traffic directors, escorts, hosts and hostesses (every non-marching Marine attends "hosting" classes to learn how to properly greet and escort guests), and lighting and audio-visual technicians.

Barracks personnel also serve as security guards at the gates, operating the magnetometers which detect metal, and as bus drivers (motor-T provides transportation from the parking areas at the Navy Yard).

Marines also print up the parade programs, stuffing them into brochures and passing them out at the parades. (Interestingly, the brochures for the Evening Parades are stuffed by the Marine Color Guard Section, while those for the Sunset Parade are stuffed by the Body Bearers Section.)

Even the cooks at the messhall do their part to create the "parade atmosphere." Every Friday, they serve an appetizing dinner of steamship round (carved right there on the serving line), and every table has a tablecloth, candles and centerpiece. Families are invited to Friday's candlelight dinner.



(ABOVE) Magnetometers are set up at the entrances to detect metal. (RIGHT) Creating the perfect "parade atmosphere" begins with setting the "stage"—the parade ground. For example, the lawn is mowed on a diagonal to make it appear longer. Any mower tracks left on the sidewalks are promptly scrubbed off.



(ABOVE) The Barracks has two press shops that press about 1,500 uniforms per week.



Two very unusual responsibilities are those of dog handler (walks the mascot) and time orderly (strikes the ship's bell). These are additional duties, like hosts and escorts. But, unlike the others, Marines have to try out for the positions. Hopeful dog handlers and time orderlies are instructed by the Marines who previously held the positions. Competitions are held, and those auditioning are judged on such things as sharpness of movement, recovery from error, etc. Two Marines (one as an alternate) are picked for each position.

Every position on the parade staff requires a try-out. The parade staff commander, flanking officer, parade adjutant and two flanking SNCOs must audition and compete for their positions. Special classes are held to train the prospective Marines for these ceremonial slots.

Ceremonial drill school is also re-

quired for all incoming officers and staff noncommissioned officers.

The marching Marines are screened at the School of Infantry before being selected for duty at 8th and "I". Once they get there, they attend specialized ceremonial training, which turns practice into perfection... a trademark these performing Marines have become famous for.

### Ceremonial Vs. Military Training

Nearly 100,000 spectators each year view performances by 8th and "I" Marines. Thus, ceremonial training must receive high priority. However, because the Marines are also tasked with infantry missions, special security missions and contingency missions, it is essential for them to maintain military skills.

Barracks Marines do, indeed, get field training, and they get it regularly. They receive civil disturbance training, Essential Subjects Training (EST), rifle and pistol qualification and gas chamber training. In addition, they conduct field training exercises at Quantico, Va., Fort A. P. Hill, Va., and Camp Lejeune, N.C., where they run the stamina, circuit, confidence and reaction courses and hold conditioning marches. Weapons firing and small unit tactics are included.

"When 'A' and 'B' Company Marines first get here, they receive immediate and intense ceremonial training for three weeks. Then they train as infantrymen, in individual, fire team, squad and platoon tactics," explained Colonel Peter Pace, commanding officer of the Barracks. "They arrive here in the September-October time-frame, and by March-April, they have been through all the tactics up to platoon. Even during parade season, which starts in May, they get sustainment training several times a month.

"The training time in summer is precious," Pace continued. "Tuesdays and Fridays are parades. Monday is admin day. That leaves only Wednesday and Thursday, and that's only if ceremonial commitments allow. Only one company goes for field training at a time—they rotate—because one company has to remain to take care of Barracks' commitments. This continues through September, until parade season is over. But in October, the entire battalion (Barracks) goes to the field for about two weeks."



On Fridays, non-marching Marines perform their regular duties during the day, then in the afternoon assume additional responsibilities as parking lot attendants, traffic directors, escorts, hosts and hostesses.





(ABOVE) Barracks Marines cleaned their weapons after field training at Quantico, Va. (RIGHT) Providing ceremonial support is an important mission of the Barracks. . .but it is not the only one. (LEFT) Col Peter Pace, the Barracks' commanding officer, explained that the primary mission is to provide a light infantry battalion for operations as directed.

Col Pace emphasized the importance of maintaining field training, even while (no, *especially* while) the Marines are stationed far from the Fleet Marine Force in downtown D.C. "Each Marine will go through two complete yearly training cycles. Therefore, he will be fully capable of joining a rifle company.

"I'm very proud of our whole training cycle," he continued. "It allows us to fulfill our ceremonial commitments, while at the same time is preparing each of our Marines to serve in a rifle squad in combat—the mission of every Marine, that of a basic rifleman."

Maintaining a balanced training program is important in accomplishing the multitude of missions assigned to the Barracks. Marines must train and practice continually to achieve proficiency in both their military and ceremonial skills.

Ceremonial training is conducted throughout the year. However, the tempo picks up in January in preparation for the new year and new parade season. Marching Marines conduct squad-level drill, while officers

and SNCOs receive ceremonial drill refresher courses.

In February, try-outs for parade staff positions are held. Meanwhile, the ceremonial rifle companies begin platoon-level drill. Also in February, the Silent Drill Team and Drum and Bugle Corps leave for their annual three-week training trip to Corpus Christi, Texas. When that's completed, they conduct their annual West Coast tour, which includes the major Marine bases. The tour lasts three weeks, and at its conclusion, the two units return to the Barracks and resume the ceremonial training schedule with the other marching groups. A similar East Coast tour takes place in September.

In March, progressive company-level drill is in full swing. By April, "parade fever" sweeps through the Barracks, and the parade practice routine begins to quicken. Battalion (Barracks) level drill takes place, and for the first time in the new season, the two companies conduct joint practice sessions. By mid-April, Phase I and II rehearsals begin.

Phase I is an abbreviated version

of the Evening Parade, concentrating on the parade sequences that involve maneuvers and executions of the Marines in parade formations. Phase II rehearsal is a complete practice of the entire parade. The rehearsals are conducted at first during the day, then at night under the lights.

As April draws to a close, the first nighttime Phase II rehearsal is conducted in full ceremonial dress—the blue/whites of the marchers and red/whites of the Drum and Bugle Corps and Marine Band. May marks the "real thing," as parade season officially begins.

*(Part II of "Marine Barracks, Washington, D.C." will continue next month with the Friday Evening and Tuesday Sunset Parades. Marching Marines of "A" and "B" Companies, the Silent Drill Team and Marine Corps Color Guard.)*