

The first indication that the infant Naval Committee considered Marines both a necessary and integral part of any naval force assembled by the Continental Congress.⁷ Following the resolves of 5 October, the movement toward a Continental Navy quickened. On 13th, Congress voted to fit out the two armed vessels and send them out to intercept British transports laden with military stores. To estimate the expenses involved, another three-man committee was appointed. Silas Deane and John Langdon were designated as members, but John Adams was replaced by Christopher Gadsden of South Carolina, an apparent attempt to gain southern support. With congressional action on the second committee's report two weeks later, Congress simultaneously authorized the purchase of two additional ships. At the time the objective was not limited to intercepting enemy shipping, but expanded to include the protection and defence of the united Colonies." In addition to finally committing itself to a navy, Congress reconstituted the committee. Instead of three, the committee's membership was expanded to five even by the addition of John Adams, Stephen Hopkins of Rhode Island, Joseph Hewes of North Carolina, and Richard Henry Lee of Virginia. The committee, which had previously operated under several titles, now became known as the Naval Committee.⁸ By the beginning of November, four vessels had been authorized and the American colonies commenced the acquisition of vessels from Britain and France.

Deane journeyed to New York and while John Adams wrote to James Elbridge Gerry in Massachusetts to inquire if ships might be purchased, hired, or chartered in the province. Adams also asked whether there were suitable officers and men who could be recruited in the navy and Marines. It is assumed that these inquiries were not only connected with the work on the Naval Committee, but also with the work on the Nova Scotia Committee. These contacts with the northern colonies, however, provided little assistance.¹⁰

In its search for suitable vessels, the committee had only to look as far as the Delaware Bay where four were located and purchased. The first vessel procured was the *Black Prince*, a relatively small merchantman owned by a group of Philadelphia businessmen. Shortly after purchase she was renamed the *Alfred*, in honor of the fourth son of the British Navy. Within weeks the *Alfred* was joined by three other ships: the *Columbus* (formerly the ship *Sally*); *Cabot* (formerly the brig *Sally*); and *Andrew Doria* (formerly the brig *Defiance*).

The *Alfred* and *Columbus* were large vessels in comparison with the *Cabot* and *Andrew Doria*. Since they were initially built to carry heavy guns, the ships required extensive internal bracing to support the burden of their armament. Of the four vessels, it is known about their dimensions and build only in the exception of the *Cabot*. Since she was built in 1777, she was the smallest of the four.

NMMC at Home

MARINES IN THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION CONTINENTAL BOOK CIPHER



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Continental Book Cipher

The materials included in this activity will supplement content for the NMMC at Home: Marines in the American Revolution program. Additional information is available on the NMMC website.

Table of Contents

ITEM	PAGE NUMBER
1. Objective and Instructions	3
2. Cipher Questions and Answer Sheet	4
3. <i>Marines in the Revolution</i> Chapter Cipher	5



Objective and Instructions

Age Range:

Our Continental Book Cipher activity is ideally suited for grades 6-8.

Objective:

During the American Revolution, spies for both the Continental and British forces used methods to protect messages in case they were intercepted by the enemy. Some methods, like a book cipher, used a numerical code from a written source, like a book, to pinpoint a specific word. These numbers represented page numbers, line numbers, and word numbers on a specific line. Once the “code” was deciphered, a set of words pulled from the text would reveal the true message.

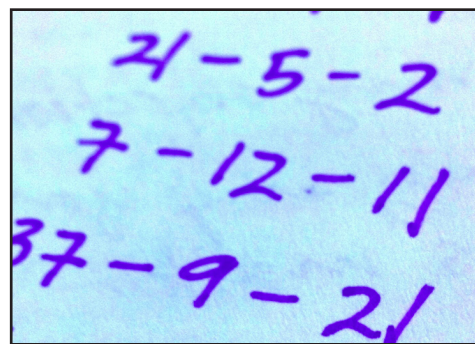
Your objective is twofold. You will first answer the questions about the American Revolution era to come up with the numerical code to plug into the cipher in the *Marines in the American Revolution* text.

Instructions:

1. Answer the questions about the Continental Marines and the American Revolution era. Each answer will have a numerical value.
2. There are letters under some of the numerical answers. These form the “key” you will need in order to solve the cipher. Write them down in the answer space provided. You should have a series of four numbers, all separated by a decimal. These numbers, in order, correspond to the designated page, paragraph, line, and word. For example, using *Marines in the Revolution* as the source, 8.1.1.7 translates to the eighth page, first paragraph, first line, and seventh word, which is “Marines.”
3. Use the pages from the first chapter of *Marines in the Revolution* to translate the code you found into the deciphered phrase. To help, we have already marked the paragraph numbers (¶) of each page for you. Write the final cipher in the space provided.

Materials:

- *Continental Book Cipher Packet*
- *Pen or Pencil*
- *Marines in the Revolution* chapter (with markings)



Cipher Questions and Answer Sheet

Questions:

What year was the Marine Corps founded?

What day in November is credited as the Marine Corps birthday?

What day was the Declaration of Independence ratified?

What year was the Declaration of Independence signed?

What year was the Boston Tea Party?

What year did the French and Indian War end?

How many original colonies were there?

When will the 250th anniversary (*sestercentennial*, or 250 years after 1776) of the start of the American Revolution be?

ANSWER KEY:

Word #1: $\frac{\quad}{A} \cdot \frac{\quad}{B} \cdot \frac{\quad}{C} \cdot \frac{\quad}{D}$

Word #2: 17 . $\frac{\quad}{E}$. $\frac{\quad}{E}$. 8

Word #3: $\frac{\quad}{F} \cdot \frac{\quad}{G} \cdot \frac{\quad}{H} \cdot \frac{\quad}{E}$

Word #4 $\frac{\quad}{A} \cdot \frac{\quad}{B} \cdot \frac{\quad}{A} \cdot \frac{\quad}{J}$

Word #5: 8 . 2 . $\frac{\quad}{I}$. $\frac{\quad}{K}$

Answers:

$\frac{\quad}{\quad} \frac{\quad}{\quad} \frac{\quad}{\quad} \frac{\quad}{B}$ (4 numbers)

$\frac{\quad}{A}$ November (1 number)

$\frac{\quad}{K}$ July (1 number)

$\frac{\quad}{\quad} \frac{\quad}{F} \frac{\quad}{\quad} \frac{\quad}{G}$ (4 numbers)

$\frac{\quad}{\quad} \frac{\quad}{\quad} \frac{\quad}{\quad} \frac{\quad}{I}$ (4 numbers)

$\frac{\quad}{\quad} \frac{\quad}{\quad} \frac{\quad}{D} \frac{\quad}{\quad}$ (4 numbers)

$\frac{\quad}{C}$ (1 number)

$\frac{\quad}{E} \frac{\quad}{\quad} \frac{\quad}{H} \frac{\quad}{J}$ (4 numbers)

CIPHER:

Word #1: _____

Word #2: _____

Word #3: _____

Word #4: _____

Word #5: _____

Where did Continental Marines Fight in the American Revolution: _____

CIPHER ANSWER

CHAPTER I

Birth of the Continental Marines

10 November 1775

→ ¶:1 On Friday, 10 November 1775, Colonel Benedict Arnold stood on the banks of the St. Lawrence River and looked in frustration across a mile of storm-whipped water at the grand objective—Quebec. He and a thousand Americans, now ragged, had made a tortuous march of 350 miles through the Maine wilderness to get there. Now he could do nothing but shake his head and pray that the weather would clear so he could make the crossing before British reinforcements, known to be on the way, arrived.

→ ¶:2 Outside Boston on that same day General George Washington and his army of 17,000 were encamped at Cambridge in reasonable comfort. True, there were shortages of blankets, clothing, and powder. True, also, that to the men the siege looked endless and amongst the officers there was dissatisfaction with the plan proposed to the Congress to reorganize the army. But on the whole the American position looked promising.

→ ¶:3 In Philadelphia that Friday morning when the delegates to the Second Continental Congress gathered in the Assembly Room of the State House, much of their talk was about the situation and supply of the army at Cambridge. At ten the President of Congress, John Hancock, pounded the gavel and the daily session began. The first major item of business concerned the purchase and shipment of medicine to Cambridge, but as the day wore on discussion moved to a subject that had been tabled late the previous afternoon—Nova Scotia.

→ A week before, the Continental Congress received a petition from the inhabitants of Passamaquoddy,

Nova Scotia, informing them that a Committee of Safety had been formed, and that they wished “to be admitted into the association of the North Americans, for the preservation of their rights and liberties.” Acting upon the petition, the delegates on 2 November resolved that a committee of five be appointed to consider the matter and report the steps which it thought proper to take. Of the delegates considered, the five members finally settled upon were: Silas Deane of Connecticut, John Jay of New York, Stephen Hopkins of Rhode Island, John Langdon of New Hampshire, and John Adams of Massachusetts.¹ As was the custom, the first named would have been the chairman.

← ¶:4 The committee began its work almost immediately. Often toiling late into the night, the five men debated possible courses of action and the reasons behind them. John Adams, though not a revolutionary expansionist, saw in the petition a chance not only to secure the liberties that would be won by the Americans for the Nova Scotians, but a chance to capture badly needed military stores and naval facilities for the American cause. Although of secondary importance when the discussions began, the prospects of taking the extensive British supplies and facilities in Nova Scotia, thus damaging ministerial naval designs in the Americas, became the major area of concern.

← ¶:5 Discussions continued into the first full week of November, and by mid-week the committee was ready to present its proposals to Congress. Simple in its detail, the proposed plan for a naval expedition to Nova Scotia would be an ambitious under-

taking. First, the scheme called for the creation of two battalions of Marines from the forces then under the command of General Washington. The two battalions, termed the First and Second Battalions of American Marines, would consist of one colonel, two lieutenant colonels, and two majors, with the remaining commissioned and non-commissioned officer corps structured along the lines of a Continental Army regiment. Excluding officers, each battalion would have 500 privates assigned to it. The two battalions would be further subdivided into ten companies of 50 privates plus officers. The reason given for this breakdown was "that in fitting out any ship of War one of these Companies would compleatly man a small Vessell and two of them make a large Proportion of Marines for the largest." An important requirement for both officers and men was that all should have served in the merchant service, or be acquainted with maritime affairs so as to be able to serve "to advantage by sea, when required."

→ ¶:1 Once raised, the two battalions of Marines would march overland from Cambridge to either Newburyport, Massachusetts, or Portsmouth, New Hampshire, there to rendezvous on 1 December with sufficient ships capable of transporting them plus three months' provisions to Nova Scotia. Meanwhile, a number of men would be sent ahead to gain

information as to "the Temper and Disposition of the Inhabitants . . . with respect to the Present Struggle . . . and how far they may be willing and able to take an active Part in the present Dispute." Also two swift boats were to be sent to ply the waters of the Bay of Fundy specifically to learn of the British military posture in Halifax. After determining the situation, both throughout the province and in the town of Halifax, the Marines were to embark for Minas, located in the upper reaches of the bay.

Armed with flintlocks, long-handled hatchets, spears, and 32 rounds of ammunition per man, the Marines were to land on the western shore of the Nova Scotia peninsula. From there, they were then to "make a forced March [of about 40 miles] for Halifax and possess themselves of that Town and of the naval and other Stores there and if practicable of the Shipping." Once the town was taken, the Marines were to destroy the docks and yards and carry off the military stores in their retreat. But if the force was able to capture ships in the harbor, they were to remain until driven out by a superior British force, whenever it could be brought to bear on them.

→ ¶:3 Debate on the committee's proposed plan by Congress consumed several days. Although no transcript or memorandum remains of what transpired, it is known that the five-man committee came into Congress well-armed for a spirited defense of their proposal. Should a member have inquired as to the British military response to such a force, the committee was ready with an example. Several months before, Colonel Arnold's expedition was supposed by the British to be destined for Halifax. To counter it, General John Burgoyne had ships and troops sent, but as the committee pointed out "not enough to make Resistance to two such Battalions" as those which were then being considered. Still, the most effective argument for adopting the proposal was that of the damage which would be done to the British. "Should the Expedition succeed, the Consequences will be of the Utmost Importance, nothing less than the greatest Distress, if not the Utter Ruin of the ministerial Navy in America." But if Congress should, "by any Accident," find the proposed expedition impractical the committee was ready to recommend that the two Marine battalions be retained, since they would be of "Utmost service, being capable of serving either by sea or Land."²



Birth of the Continental Marines

159

American cause and the condition of the fortifications, docks, yards, the quantity of ordnance and warlike stores, and the number of soldiers, sailors & ships of war there and transmit the richest intelligence to General Washington.

Resolved, That General Washington be directed in case he should judge it practicable & expedient to send into that colony a sufficient force to take away the ordnance, warlike stores, and to destroy the docks, yards and magazines, also to take or destroy any ships of war to be transported there belonging to the enemy.

Resolved, That two Battalions of Marines be raised consisting of one Colonel two Lieutenant Colonels, two Major Officers as usual in other regiments, that they consist of an equal number of privates with other battalions, that particular care be taken that no persons be appointed to office or enlisted into the Battalions, but such as are good for men, or so acquainted with maritime affairs as to be able to serve to advantage by sea, when required. That they be enlisted and commissioned to be held for and during the present war between Great Britain and the colonies, until dissolved by order of Congress. That they be distinguished by the names of the first & second battalions of American Marines, and that they be considered as part of the number, which the Continental Army before Boston is ordered to consist of.

Resolved

Resolve of 10 November 1775

→ The committee, however, had little to worry about on that cold Friday afternoon, for the members of Congress voted to accept all the major items contained within its report. In addition to adopting the committee's recommendation for the sending of a number of persons to gather information, Congress resolved that the two battalions of Marines be created:

¶:1

Resolved, That two Battalions of marines be raised, consisting of one Colonel, two Lieutenant Colonels, two Majors, and other officers as usual in other regiments; and that they consist of an equal number of privates with other battalions; that particular care be taken, that no persons be appointed to office, or enlisted into said Bat-

talions, but such as are good seamen, or so acquainted with maritime affairs as to be able to serve to advantage by sea when required: that they be enlisted and commissioned to serve for and during the present war between Great Britain and the colonies, unless dismissed by order of Congress: that they be distinguished by the names of the first and second battalions of American Marines, and that they be considered as part of the number which the continental Army before Boston is ordered to consist of.

The Marine battalions were authorized, but a third resolution passed that day left the fate of the Nova Scotia expedition in the hands of General Washington. Following the day's session, President Hancock transmitted the adopted resolves to Cambridge for Washington's information and comment.³

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The Naval Committee

→ Closely paralleling the work of the Committee on Nova Scotia was that of the Naval Committee. Since late October the committee had struggled to establish a Continental Navy. The first suggestions for an independent naval establishment came from New England, where problems of port and coastal defense were of prime importance. Although there were many casual advances for such a naval force, the first formal movement in behalf of a Continental Navy came on 26 August 1775. Voting on a number of recommendations, the Rhode Island Legislature instructed its congressional delegates to use their influence during the coming session "for building at the Continental expense a fleet of sufficient force, for the protection of these colonies, and for employing them in such manner and places as will most effectually annoy our enemies."⁴

¶:3

→ It was not until 3 October that the Rhode Island delegates presented their instructions to Congress. But debate on the proposals was postponed from time to time and it was several weeks before Congress took them under serious consideration. Final action on the Rhode Island plan for an American fleet would have to wait until mid-December when Congress ordered 13 frigates to be fitted out at Continental expense. Meanwhile, intelligence had arrived in Congress which indicated that two British brigs laden with arms and powder were on their way to Quebec. Realizing that the capture of the two vessels meant sorely needed arms and ammunition for the army at Cambridge, a motion was made

¶:4

that a committee of three be appointed to prepare a plan for intercepting the two ships.⁵

Opposition to the motion, according to John Adams, was "very loud and vehement." Delegates such as Edward Rutledge of South Carolina seemed to have realized that the motion would be the first step in the creation of the Continental Navy, a step which he and several other southern delegates were unwilling to take. Such an undertaking, Rutledge declared, was "the most wild, visionary, mad project that ever had been imagined. It was an infant taking a mad bull by his horns; and what was more profound and remote, . . . it would ruin the character and corrupt the morals of all our seamen." These arguments were answered by the motion's supporters who dwelt on "the great advantages of distressing the enemy, supplying ourselves, and beginning a system of maritime and naval operations"; all of which "were represented in colors as glowing and animating."⁶

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After a long and lively debate the motion was carried by a small majority and a committee composed of Silas Deane, John Langdon, and John Adams was appointed. Later the same day, the three men recommended, and Congress resolved, that General Washington be directed to secure from Massachusetts two armed ships, and that the governors of Connecticut and Rhode Island be requested to cooperate in the project. Also included in the resolve was the recommendation that commanders appointed to the vessels encourage the enlistment

¶:6

Birth of the Continental Marines

of seamen and Marines. This mention of Marines is the first indication that the infant Naval Committee considered Marines both a necessary and integral part of any naval force assembled by the Continental Congress.⁷

Following the resolves of 5 October, the movement toward a Continental Navy quickened. On the 13th, Congress voted to fit out the two armed vessels and send them out to intercept British transports laden with military stores. To estimate the expenses involved, another three-man committee was appointed. Silas Deane and John Langdon were again designated as members, but John Adams was replaced by Christopher Gadsden of South Carolina, an apparent attempt to gain southern support. With congressional action on the second committee's report two weeks later, Congress simultaneously authorized the purchase of two additional ships. This time the objective was not limited to intercepting enemy shipping, but expanded to include "the protection and defence of the united Colonies." In addition to finally committing itself to a navy, Congress reconstituted the committee. Instead of three, the committee's membership was expanded to seven by the addition of John Adams, Stephen Hopkins of Rhode Island, Joseph Hewes of North Carolina, and Richard Henry Lee of Virginia. The committee, which had previously operated under several titles, now became known as the Naval Committee.⁸

By the beginning of November, four vessels had been authorized and the American colonies committed to a policy of naval warfare. But naval legislation did not slow, it moved more rapidly.⁹ Under the able leadership of the aged ex-governor of Rhode Island, Stephen Hopkins, the committee set to work purchasing, equipping, and manning the

four Continental ships. In this connection Silas Deane journeyed to New York and Connecticut, while John Adams wrote to James Warren and Elbridge Gerry in Massachusetts to inquire whether ships might be purchased, hired, or built in the province. Adams also asked whether there were suitable officers and men who could be enlisted in the navy and Marines. It is assumed that Adams' inquiries were not only connected with his work on the Naval Committee, but also with his duties on the Nova Scotia Committee. These initial contacts with the northern colonies, however, produced little assistance.¹⁰

In its search for suitable vessels, the committee had only to look as far as the Delaware River where four were located and purchased. The first ship procured was the *Black Prince*, a relatively new 300-ton merchantman owned by a group of Philadelphia businessmen. Shortly after purchase she was rechristened the *Alfred*, in honor of the founder of the British Navy. Within weeks the *Alfred* was followed by three other ships: the *Columbus* (formerly the ship *Sally*); *Cabot* (formerly the brig *Sally*); and the *Andrew Doria* (formerly the brig *Defiance*).

The *Alfred* and *Columbus* were large and clumsy in comparison with the *Cabot* and *Andrew Doria*. Since they were initially built to carry cargo, both ships required extensive internal bracing to bear the burden of their armament. Of the four ships, little is known about their dimensions and builders with the exception of the *Cabot*. Since she was captured in 1777 and taken into the Royal Navy, her dimensions have survived. British naval records show that the *Cabot* was a 14-gun brig with a deck length of 74'9½", keel length of 53'7", beam of 24'8", a hold depth of 11'4", and a displacement of 189 tons.¹¹ *

General Washington's Reply

As the Naval Committee proceeded with the outfitting of the four ships, the question of the Nova Scotia expedition and the raising of the two battalions of Marines again was considered. On 27 November, General Washington's thoughts concerning the resolves of 10 November were placed before Congress. Washington, although agreeing to send

two men to Nova Scotia to gain intelligence, thought the decision to raise the Marine battalions from within his army impractical. The Continental Army at the time, the general pointed out, was in a period of realignment. Since the reorganization involved

* For a detailed description of the four Continental ships after renovation, see Chapter III.

the reconciliation of many different interests and the judging of certain field officers on their merits, the same difficulties would again arise with the appointment of a colonel to command the two battalions. The greatest problem, as Washington saw it, would occur in the selection of junior officers and enlisted men. Because Congress had placed a requirement that all officers and men be acquainted with maritime affairs, "they must be picked out of the whole army, one from this Corps, one from another," thereby damaging the whole system. Thus, the raising of the two battalions would not only cost the army time, anxiety, and pain, but would also weaken it. Due to the difficulties that would arise, Washington suggested that the two battalions of Marines be raised in New York and Philadelphia; "where there must be now numbers of Sailors unemployed?"

Washington not only questioned the advisability of creating the battalions from the Continental Army, but the necessity of an expedition to Nova Scotia. His available forces were low, and he needed all that could be mustered. Noting information had been received indicating additional troops had arrived to reinforce the British garrisons in Boston, and that the enemy would probably take advantage of the first bad weather to break the siege, General Washington asked whether this was the time to weaken American lines by employing his forces "on any other Service." Notwithstanding, Washington

assured Congress he would "use every endeavour to comply with . . . [its] Resolve."¹²

On 28 November, Washington again wrote John Hancock. After making a number of inquiries amongst his officers, Washington informed the President that it would be impossible "to get the Men to inlist for the Continuance of the War, which will be an insuperable Obstruction to the formation of the two Battallions of Marines." Nevertheless, Washington said he would complete the reorganization of the army and then "enquire out such Officers & Men as are best qualified for that service, and endeavor to form these two Battallions out of the Whole."¹³ Among the officers contacted in this respect was Colonel John Glover of Marblehead who supplied Washington with a list of 17 men whom he thought qualified to serve as captains in the Marine battalions. None were ever appointed.¹⁴

Although Washington remained concerned about raising the two battalions until late January 1776, Congress, on 30 November, relieved him of the responsibility. That day it ordered Washington to suspend the raising of the Marine battalions and ordered that they be created independently of the army.¹⁵ Several days later Hancock informed Washington of the resolves and asked that he think of "proper Persons to command . . . [the] Corps, and give Orders for enlisting them wherever they may be found."¹⁶ At present, only one name is known to have been submitted by Washington for consideration; this he did in the spring of 1780.¹⁷

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Marine Officers Commissioned

The views expressed by Washington in his letter of 19 November seemed to have had the desired impression on Congress. For soon after, the idea of an expedition to Nova Scotia was abandoned and not heard again until late the following year. But Congress was not ready to abandon the two battalions of Marines. On 28 November it commissioned the first Marine officer—Samuel Nicholas.¹⁸

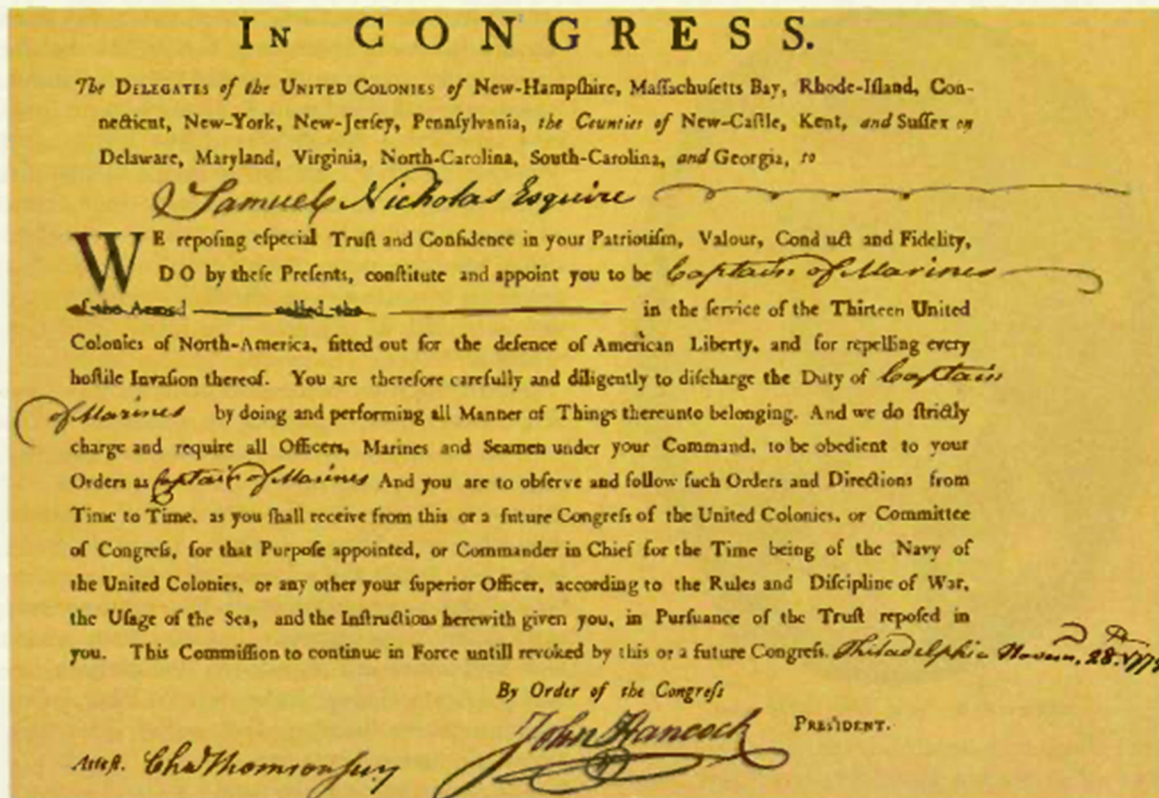
Little is known about this young Philadelphia Quaker prior to his appointment as captain of Marines. The only son of Mary (Shute) and Anthony Nicholas, a blacksmith, Samuel was born in 1744. Socially, Samuel Nicholas achieved early prom-

inence. In 1760 he was admitted to the Schuylkill Fishing Company which, despite its commercial name, was an exclusive gentlemen's club devoted to the rod-and-reel and pleasures of the table. Six years later, he became one of the founders of the Gloucester Fox Hunting Club, whose membership was drawn from the leading families of Philadelphia as well as from the country gentry of Gloucester County, New Jersey. Through his association with these two clubs he became acquainted with such prominent Philadelphia gentlemen as John Cadwalader, Thomas and James Wharton, Robert and Samuel Morris, John Nixon, Clement Biddle, and Thomas

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Birth of the Continental Marines



Samuel Nicholas' Commission as Captain of Marines.

Willing—all of whom later played leading roles in the Revolution. The vocation he followed in the years before the Revolution is not definitely known, although there are unsubstantiated indications that he was an innkeeper and served in the colonial merchant service. A position in the latter, or an acquaintance with maritime affairs would certainly have qualified him for an appointment in the Marines. If, on the other hand, he had no experience in such affairs, he could possibly have achieved his appointment through a recommendation by one or more of his many prominent acquaintances.²⁰

no maritime experience, he joined the Marines in late November 1775 as its oldest lieutenant.²⁰ In December, Captain Shoemaker and Lieutenant Craig were joined by Captain John Welsh, and Lieutenants John Fitzpatrick, Robert Cummings, John Hood Wilson, Henry Dayton, Matthew Parke, and a Lieutenant Miller.^{21*}

Virtually nothing is known about the background of the one captain and six lieutenants appointed in December with the exception of Matthew Parke. Lieutenant Parke was born to well-to-do parents in 1746 near Ipswich, England. Early in life he accompanied his paternal grandfather, who had been an aide to the Duke of Marlborough during the Battle of Blenheim and later governor of the Windward Islands, to Virginia. After several years in the southern colony, Colonel Parke returned to England leaving his grandson to make his way in the new coun-

* Lieutenant Miller either failed to accept his commission or resigned from the service before the fleet sailed, since he is not included on the Muster Roll of the Columbus.

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44

Marines in the Revolution



Matthew Parke, by an unidentified artist.

try. As the revolution began Parke journeyed to Philadelphia where he later received an appointment as lieutenant of Marines.²²

Recruitment of men was carried out by the three captains (Nicholas, Shoemaker, and Welsh), and the two ranking lieutenants (Craig and Wilson). Rendezvous were established early in December, probably in a number of Philadelphia public houses, and drummers with highly decorated drums paraded the streets to attract recruits. One such drum, upon which was painted a coiled rattlesnake about to strike, bore the motto "Don't Tread on Me." This design, as one observer noted, was probably the device intended to decorate the arms of North America.²³ *

One of the most successful recruiters was Lieutenant Isaac Craig. Beginning his efforts on 9 December, he succeeded in signing nine men the first day, four the second, and by 22 December he had enlisted more than 40 men. Of the men recruited only eight were born in America; a majority being from Great Britain and Ireland with a few from Germany, Switzerland, and Holland. They came not only from differing backgrounds, but also from widely separated trades and professions. The company included a doctor, jeweler, baker, wool comber, miller, breeches maker, butcher, and several carpenters. Statistically, the average age of Craig's recruit was 25.5 years, and the average height, 5 feet 5 inches.²⁴ This is in contrast with the present-day Marine recruit who is 18 years old and four inches taller than his Revolutionary War counterpart.²⁵

Naval Regulations Adopted

As the five Marine Officers recruited their men, the Naval Committee of Congress worked diligently on legislation necessary for the organization of the Navy. On the same day that Samuel Nicholas received his appointment as captain of Marines, Congress adopted the "Rules for the Regulation of the Navy of the United Colonies." Formulated by John Adams and based upon British naval regulations, these brief rules dealt chiefly with discipline, pay, and rations, and were to apply to all men serving on board a Continental vessel.

The majority of the 44 articles concern conduct and are little more than a penal code. Should a sailor or Marine be caught swearing, he was to be punished by the wearing of a wooden collar, "or

some other shameful badge of distinction." For drunkenness, an enlisted man would be put in irons, while an officer guilty of the same offense forfeited two days pay. The maximum punishment an officer might inflict on a seamen or Marine for a minor offense was "twelve lashes upon his bare back, with a cat of nine tails." For the crimes of quarreling, embezzlement, robbery, falling asleep on duty, mutiny, and desertion, which deserved greater punishment, a court-martial would be convened. All court-martials for capital offenses were to consist of 12

* The drum design was probably taken from the rattlesnake flag designed by Christopher Gadsden, and used as Esek Hopkins' personal flag as commander of the Continental Fleet.

Birth of the Continental Marines

officers; "at least three Captains and three first lieutenants, with three Captains and three first lieutenants of Marines." The sentence of such a court-martial could not be executed without the review and confirmation of the fleet's commander. An automatic death sentence was only to be imposed for murder and severe cases of cowardice in battle.

→ The regulations also fixed rations for those on board Continental ships for each day of the week. On Saturday, for example, the regulations called for one pound of bread, one pound of pork, one-half pint of peas, and four ounces of cheese to be issued each man. Variety was achieved by substituting potatoes, turnips, rice, pudding, and butter for the main staples. Each man was also given a half pint of rum per day, and a "discretionary allowance on extra duty, and in time of engagement."

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→ In addition to establishing a penal code and determining the daily issuance of provisions, the rules prescribed the following monthly pay scale for Marines and Marine officers: captain, 26 $\frac{2}{3}$ dollars; lieutenant, 18 dollars; sergeant, 8 dollars; corporal, 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ dollars; fifer, 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ dollars; drummer, 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ dollars; and private, 6 $\frac{2}{3}$ dollars. The regulations also established 18 naval ranks and their monthly payrate; the highest being that of captain, 32 dollars, and the lowest, able seaman, 6 $\frac{2}{3}$ dollars.

¶:2



← Appended to the naval rules was a contract of enlistment which was to be read and signed by each member of the crew. According to the articles a bounty was to be deducted from the proceeds of prizes and paid to those men, or their heirs, who died, lost a limb, or were incapacitated in an engagement. The ship commander was to receive \$400, captain of Marines \$300, and inferior officers, seamen, and Marines, \$200. In addition, the man who first sighted a ship which was later captured was to receive a double share of prize money, while the person who first boarded a prize was to receive three shares. The articles also prescribed that 10 prize shares were to be set aside for "such inferior officers, seamen and marines, as shall be adjudged best to deserve them by the superior officers."³⁶ The contract, however, failed to specify the normal distribution of prize shares. This would have to wait until early January the following year when Congress determined that proceeds from the sale of a prize would be divided into twentieths. A captain of Marines would share equally in three twentieths with naval lieutenants and masters, while a lieutenant of Marines would divide two and one half twentieths with the surgeon, chaplain, purser, boat-swains, gunners, carpenters, master's mates, and the fleet's secretary. A sergeant of Marines would share

¶:3



three twentieths with the remaining noncommissioned officers, and privates (seamen included) would divide eight and one half twentieths. The lion's share of the prize money, of course, went to the fleet commander and ship captain.²⁷*

→ ¶:1 As well as enacting rules regulating shipboard life and the distribution of prize money, Congress established the term of enlistment for seamen and Marines. On 5 December it resolved that they would

be engaged for one year, ending 1 January 1777, "unless sooner discharged by Congress." This change, particularly in reference to Marines, was precipitated possibly by Washington's comment that few men in his army would consider serving in the Marines for the duration of the war. The change also brought the term of service into line with the customary length prescribed for Continental and state troops.²⁸**

Naval Officers Appointed

→ ¶:2 Regulations of the Navy consumed only a portion of the Naval Committee's time, the remainder was spent equipping and officering the four Continental ships. To add to the Committee's work, Congress on 2 December authorized the purchase of two additional vessels and the renting of a third. The Rhode Island sloop *Katy*, later renamed the *Providence*, was leased on her arrival in Philadelphia, while two other vessels, the *Hornet* and *Wasp*, were purchased and outfitted in Baltimore, Maryland. Also on 2 December, Congress directed the Naval Committee to prepare commissions for the officers who would command the seven ships. Once these were prepared, the process of appointing suitable officers began.²⁹

→ ¶:3 A measure of nepotism was obvious when, on 22 December, the Naval Committee laid before Congress for confirmation a "list of officers by them appointed." Heading the list was the 57-year-old Rhode Islander, Esek Hopkins, the brother of Stephen Hopkins, a member of the Naval Committee. Esek was designated Commander-in-Chief of the Fleet—a rank equal in status to that held by General Washington. He was, as General Henry Knox later observed, "antiquated in figure," but "shrewd and sensible," whom "I . . . should have taken . . . for an angel only he swore now and then." The choice of Hopkins was a promising one, for his background included privateer service during the

French and Indian War. Two other Rhode Island men joined the Commodore on the list: his son John Burroughs Hopkins, who was given command of the *Cabot*, and a good friend, Abraham Whipple, who got the *Columbus*.³⁰



Samuel Nicholas, by an unidentified artist.

* The regulations adopted by Congress on 28 November remained in force throughout the Revolution.

** According to the resolve of 10 November Marines were to be enlisted "for and during the present war between Great Britain and the colonies, unless dismissed by order of Congress."

Birth of the Continental Marines

Heading the short captain's list was Dudley Saltonstall of Connecticut who was to command the *Alfred*. "A Sensible indefatigable Morose Man," Saltonstall owed his appointment to his brother-in-law Silas Deane, of the Naval Committee. Unlike Saltonstall, of the other two captains appointed, Nicholas Biddle seems to have achieved the command of the *Andrew Doria* by merit alone. Biddle, a Philadelphian, had an impressive naval background. Only 25 years old in 1775, he had seen service in the Royal Navy with the future Lord Nelson. When the war began he quickly joined the Pennsylvania State Navy and was appointed captain of the *Franklin* row-galley. But the duty was monotonous, and he resigned his commission in hope of getting a more substantial command in the infant Continental Navy.³¹

Alfred from a merchant ship to a ship of war. It was Jones who, in the presence of the fleet's new Commander-in-Chief on 3 December, is said to have raised the Grand Union Flag to the top of the *Alfred's* jackstaff. Four days later he received his commission as lieutenant and acting captain of the *Alfred* through his good friend Joseph Hewes, after refusing the command of the *Providence* which soon after went to Captain John Hazard. He later regretted this action, since it meant a loss of seniority and a lieutenantcy under a man whom he disliked. Also included on the lieutenant's list was Hoysteed Hacker who was subsequently given the command of the *Fly*.³²

Two captains not on the 22 December list were those appointed later to command the two ships fitting out in Baltimore. They were Captain William Stone who previously commanded the *Hornet* and was to continue as such, and Captain William Hallock who was appointed to the schooner *Wasp*.

The Marines Prepare for Action

By late December the five companies of Marines had been recruited and each man paid a month's advance. The only thing that remained was to outfit them. Unfortunately, the Naval Committee of Congress did not have the means, and therefore the main burden of equipping the Marine companies fell to the Pennsylvania Committee of Safety. On 27 December Samuel Nicholas received from Robert Towers, the Committee's commissary agent, 100 provincial muskets, 100 bayonets and scabbards, and 12 iron ramrods.³³ But this was not enough to fulfill his requirements. Therefore, on 30 December an urgent plea from the Pennsylvania Council of Safety went out to the county committees for additional arms:

The great demand for fire arms, in order to equip the Boats and Vessels employ'd in defence of the River Delaware, and to supply the Marines on Board the Continental Arm'd Vessels now ready to sail, has occasion'd the necessity of our collecting all the Arms belonging to the publick in every part of the Province. The Associations in this City have already deliver'd up all that were in their hands, and we hope those in the Country will cheerfully comply and deliver up all that

are in their Custody. We hope before the Country can be exposed to danger, a sufficient number of Arms will be procured to furnish those who cannot supply themselves, and in the mean time most earnestly request you would exert yourselves to procure as fast as possible and send down to this Commee all the publick Arms that are in your County, to be employ'd in immediate Service.³⁴

This appeal was partially answered two days later when Towers delivered 50 stands of arms to the Marines then quartered in the Philadelphia barracks.* Three days later, on 3 January 1776, another 86 muskets were ordered for delivery to Captain Nicholas' men. Still, the deliveries did not meet the number of arms required to fully equip the five companies of Marines. It was mid-January before this was accomplished.³⁵

If the Marines were in need of arms, they were also in need of a uniform. But one was not forthcoming. At this time the army at Cambridge was the major recipient of all uniforms produced in the colonies or purchased in Europe. Therefore, Marines,

* A stand of arms was one musket, one bayonet, and, in some cases, a cartridge box and belt.

18

Marines in the Revolution

in most cases, wore the clothing they were enlisted in, or clothes they purchased with the pay they received. It was only later the following year that the Naval Committee prescribed a uniform, and even then it was difficult to procure.



As Marines in the five companies received their weapons they were sent to the Willing, Morris, and

Cuthbert wharves. There they relieved details of the First Pennsylvania Battalion who since 2 December had stood guard over the six Continental ships and the piled military stores on board. On 3 January 1776, the Marines in turn were relieved of the responsibility as they boarded the ships they had guarded and set out for an unknown destination.²⁶

¶:1

