

## **March, “The Loyal Legion”**

John Philip Sousa

Following the assassination of President Abraham Lincoln in 1865, the Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States (MOLLUS) was formed to uphold the honor and integrity of the Union. From its three founding members, the order grew so rapidly that at its peak in the late 1800s membership included thousands of Civil War veterans. Among the members were Presidents Ulysses S. Grant, Benjamin Harris, William McKinley, and Rutherford B. Hayes.

After serving as President from 1877 to 1881, Hayes first served as commander-in-chief of MOLLUS in 1886 and then again from 1888 to 1893. It was during this second term that John Philip Sousa (1854–1932), seventeenth Director of “The President’s Own” United States Marine Band, composed “The Loyal Legion.” According to the inscription on the front cover of the sheet music, the march was “written expressly for the celebration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Order.” Still active today, MOLLUS holds an annual wreath-laying ceremony at the Lincoln Memorial to commemorate President Lincoln’s birthday.