



2025 MARCH MANIA

32 MARCHES. 4 WEEKS. 1 CHAMPION.

MUSIC NOTES

JOHN PHILIP SOUSA BIOGRAPHY

John Philip Sousa was born in 1854 in southeast Washington, D.C., near the Marine Barracks where his father Antonio played trombone in the Marine Band. Sousa studied piano and most orchestral instruments, excelling on the violin. When at age 13 young Sousa was almost persuaded to join a circus band, his father intervened, enlisting him as an apprentice musician in the Marine Band. Sousa remained in the band until he was 20, only to return five years later as the 17th Director. Sousa led “The President’s Own” from 1880 to 1892. Perhaps more than anyone else, Sousa is responsible for bringing the United States Marine Band to the level of excellence upheld today.



SEMPER FIDELIS

John Philip Sousa

It is unfortunate that President Chester A. Arthur, the man responsible for this march, did not live to hear it. In a conversation with Sousa, then leader of the U.S. Marine Band, he expressed his displeasure at the official use of the song “Hail to the Chief.” When Sousa stated that it was actually an old Scottish boating song, the President suggested that he compose more appropriate music. Sousa responded with two pieces, not one. First he composed “Presidential Polonaise” (1886). Then, two years after Arthur’s death, he wrote “Semper Fidelis.”

The march takes its title from the motto of the U.S. Marine Corps: “Semper Fidelis”—“Always Faithful.” The trio is an extension of an earlier Sousa composition, “With Steady Step,” one of eight brief trumpet and drum pieces he wrote for *The Trumpet and Drum* (1886). It was dedicated to those who inspired it—the officers and men of the U.S. Marine Corps. In Sousa’s own words: “I wrote ‘Semper Fidelis’ one night while in tears, after my comrades of the Marine Corps had sung their famous hymn at Quantico.”

For the first performance, Sousa demonstrated his flair for theatrics:

We were marching down Pennsylvania Avenue, and had turned the corner at the Treasury Building. On the reviewing stand were President Harrison, many members of the diplomatic corps, a large part of the House and Senate, and an immense number of invited guests besides. I had so timed our playing of the march that the “trumpet” theme would be heard for the first time, just as we got to the front of the reviewing stand. Suddenly ten extra trumpets were shot in the air, and the “theme” was pealed out in unison. Nothing like it had ever been heard there before—when the great throng on the stand had recovered its surprise, it rose in a body and led by the President himself, showed its pleasure in a mighty swell of applause. It was a proud moment for us all.

“Semper Fidelis” subsequently gained recognition as the official march of the U.S. Marine Corps. Sousa regarded it as his best march, musically speaking. It became one of his most popular marches, and he once stated that it was the favorite march of Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany—before World War I, of course. It was played by the Sousa Band in many foreign countries and always received acclaim as a well-known composition. Few knew that it had been sold outright to the publisher for the unbelievably low sum of \$35.

Paul E. Bierley, The Works of John Philip Sousa (Westerville, Ohio: Integrity Press, 1984), 83. Used by permission.

[Listen to the march](#)

[“Semper Fidelis” is part of The Complete Marches of John Philip Sousa: Volume 2](#)



GLOBE AND EAGLE

John Philip Sousa

This march takes its title from the emblem of the U.S. Marine Corps. It was one of several military-inspired titles curiously chosen by Sousa while he was an orchestra conductor in Philadelphia. He might possibly have been bidding for the position of leader of the Marine Band, knowing that the leader at that time was about to be replaced.

Paul E. Bierley, The Works of John Philip Sousa (Westerville, Ohio: Integrity Press, 1984), 80. Used by permission.

[Listen to the march](#)

["Globe and Eagle" is part of The Complete Marches of John Philip Sousa: Volume 1](#)



THE MARINES' HYMN

Jaques Offenbach

The Marines' Hymn is one of the most readily recognized songs in the world today and is the oldest of the service songs of our country. The history of the hymn has been clouded by the passing of time and confused by oral tradition. But there is no confusion on the part of the listener when The Marines' Hymn is heard. It is as easily identified with the Marine Corps as "The Star-Spangled Banner" is with our nation. To all Marines it has become a sacred symbol of the pride and professionalism of a Marine and you will find them standing straight and tall at the position of attention when it is performed. The music to the hymn is believed to have originated in the comic opera *Geneviève de Brabant*, composed by the French composer Jacques Offenbach. Originally written as a two-act opera in 1859, Offenbach revised the work, expanding it to three acts in 1867. This revised version included the song "Couplets des Deux Hommes d'Armes," the musical source of The Marines' Hymn. The author of the words to the hymn is unknown. One tradition suggested that an unknown Marine wrote the words in 1847. This would have been 20 years before the music was written by Offenbach and is not likely. The first two lines of the first verse were taken from words inscribed on the Colors of the Corps. After the war with the Barbary pirates in 1805, the Colors were inscribed with the words "To the Shores of Tripoli." After Marines participated in the capture of Mexico City and the Castle of Chapultepec (also known as the Halls of Montezuma) in 1847, the words on the Colors were changed to read "From the shores of Tripoli to the Halls of Montezuma." The unknown author of the first verse of the hymn reversed this order to read "From the halls of Montezuma to the shores of Tripoli." In 1929, the Commandant of the Marine Corps authorized the first official version of the The Marines' Hymn, in which the fourth line of the first verse originally read "On the land as on the sea." This was revised to its present version on Nov. 21, 1942, when the Commandant of the Marine Corps approved changing this line to "In the air, on land, and sea," acknowledging the important role of aviation within the Corps.

[Listen to the march](#)



SONG OF THE MARINES

Harry Warren - transcribed by Al Dubin

Harry Warren is one of the most prolific American songwriters and film composers, writing over 800 songs, with songs featured in over 300 films, and with eleven Academy Award nominations and three wins for Best Original Song. Warren's "The Song of the Marines" was first used in the Ray Enright and Busby Berkley 1937 musical film, "The Singing Marine" where it was sung by Dick Powell. The song continued to be used extensively in Warner Brothers cartoons through the 1950s, including in classic shorts like "Duck Amuck," making it instantly recognizable, if not known by name. The song has been an integral part of the Friday Evening Parade at Marine Barracks Washington since the 1960s and is known as the unofficial spirit song of Center House, Marine Barracks Washington's Commissioned Officer's Mess.

[Listen to the march](#)



COLONEL BOGEY

Kenneth J. Alford

Composed in 1913 and first published in 1914, “Colonel Bogey” was an instant hit, becoming a best-seller on the sheet music “charts” by selling more than a million copies by the early 1930s. Furthermore, the march gained worldwide exposure and popularity when it was featured as the musical theme for *The Bridge on the River Kwai*, an Oscar-winning film set during the Second World War.

Fittingly, the composer Kenneth J. Alford had an extensive military background. Alford was actually the nom de plume of Major F. J. Ricketts, Director of Music for the Royal Marines at Plymouth, United Kingdom. Fluent on the cornet, piano, and organ, he had also served as bandmaster at the Royal Military School of Music, and later led the band of the Second Battalion Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, an infantry regiment of the British Army. The inspiration for the march and its amusing title came from Alford’s experience of playing golf with an eccentric colonel who, instead of shouting the customary “Fore!” after an errant shot, would issue the warning by whistling.

Although “Colonel Bogey” proved to be his most famous composition, Alford also wrote and published hymns, fantasias, solos for xylophone and piano, and many classical and operatic arrangements under his mother’s maiden name. Ultimately, it was his gift for writing marches that earned him the nickname “The British March King.”

[Listen to the march](#)



THE BLACK HORSE TROOP

John Philip Sousa

Sousa’s love for horses is reflected in this march dedicated to the mounted troops of a Cleveland National Guard unit. Their exclusive use of black horses was the inspiration for the title. Troop A, once known as the First City Troop of Cleveland, was originally an independent militia group and has had a long, distinguished history since its formation in 1877. Sousa’s most noteworthy association with the troop came in 1898. The Sousa Band, having arrived in Cleveland just as the troop was preparing to leave for the Spanish-American War, marched in a parade escorting them from the Armory to the train depot. His first association was much earlier, however. As leader of the U.S. Marine Band in 1881, he marched with the organization in the funeral cortege of President James A. Garfield. At a dinner held in Sousa’s honor in November 1924, the march was requested by Captain Walker Nye of Troop A. The request was fulfilled promptly, and the march was presented in Cleveland on October 17, 1925, at a Sousa Band concert which also marked the forty-eighth anniversary of Troop A. For the occasion, the mounted troopers were dressed in the blue uniforms of 1877, complete with black fur busbies. Sousa presented a manuscript of the march to Captain Nye. Troop A reciprocated by presenting Sousa with a beautiful bronze statuette entitled “The Last Drop,” which depicted a trooper on horseback. Many of the former Sousa Band members expressed their fondness for this composition and commented on the descriptive character it assumed when performed by Sousa himself. Part of the effect was due to the 6/8 rhythm, which suggests the canter of horses. Also contributing to the effect was Sousa’s use of simulated hoofbeats.

Paul E. Bierley, The Works of John Philip Sousa (Westerville, Ohio: Integrity Press, 1984), 42. Used by permission.

[Listen to the march](#)

[The Black Horse Troop is part of The Complete Marches of John Philip Sousa: Volume 6](#)



MARCH OF THE BELGIAN PARACHUTISTS

Pierre Leemans

Growing up, Pieter Leemans studied piano, harmony, and composition under several prominent Belgian musicians. He served for one year in the Belgian army in 1919 and, upon discharge from the army, continued his formal schooling and received a music degree. He accepted a post as pianist, conductor, and program director for the Belgian national broadcasting company in 1932. The March of the Belgian Parachutists grew out of an unfinished composition Leemans had begun during World War I, at the request of his regimental commander. Years later, while dining with a group of paratroopers at the end of World War II, Leemans was asked again to compose a march. Remembering his earlier composition, he resurrected its themes and the resulting work became the March of the Belgian Parachutists.

[Listen to the march](#)



MARCH OF THE LEATHERNECKS

Morton Gould - transcribed by Paul Lavender

Morton Gould was enjoying a highly successful career in New York City when World War II broke out. Two of his brothers were already serving in the Army and another was in the Coast Guard, and Gould hoped to join them. He contacted both the Army and the Navy about signing up. An enlistment physical uncovered a heart murmur and a double hernia, making it clear that Gould would have to serve as a civilian. He always regretted that he was not able to serve in uniform.

Gould contributed to the war effort by composing a number of energetic and inspirational patriotic numbers including "Buck Private," "American Legion Forever," and "American Youth." Additional works included "March for Yanks," "Bombs Away," and "Paratrooper." In 1942, Eugene Goosens, conductor of the Cincinnati Symphony, asked Gould and a number of other leading American composers including Leonard Bernstein, Howard Hanson, and Aaron Copland to write patriotic fanfares for brass and percussion. Gould responded with Fanfare for Freedom. In 1943, he wrote one of his most enduring works, "American Salute," a set of variations on the Civil War-era song "When Johnny Comes Marching Home." That same year Gould wrote a special tribute to Marines serving in the war and gave it the title "March of the Leathernecks." His friend Philip J. Lang reworked the composition for band, and it was published in 1944.

[Listen to the march](#)



H.M. JOLLIES

Kenneth J. Alford

Kenneth J. Alford was the pen name of Frederick Joseph Ricketts, who began his musical career at age fourteen as a "band boy" in the Royal Irish Regiment playing cornet, violin, and euphonium. He went on to become a respected bandmaster in the British army, rising to the rank of major. Early in his career, junior officers were discouraged from non-military pursuits, hence the use of a pseudonym for his published compositions. His march "H. M. Jollies" was written in 1929. The title refers to the nickname for the Royal Marines, to which Ricketts had recently transferred. By this time, "Alford" was world-famous as a march composer, and widely regarded as the British equivalent of John Philip Sousa. "H. M. Jollies" shows Alford at the peak of his mature style and is a beloved march.

[Listen to the march](#)



AMERICAN PATROL

Frank W. Meacham

Born in Buffalo, New York, Frank W. Meacham began his professional music career at age ten, with the publication of his first song. During Meacham's lifetime most of his original compositions failed to gain recognition, but he became known as one of the country's most skilled arrangers. However, he eventually achieved success as a composer of martial music, most notably with his famous march entitled "American Patrol," first copyrighted as a piano score in 1885 and subsequently arranged for band in 1891. As with many "patrol" marches of the era, this work imitates the sound of a military band approaching and then marching off into the distance. It begins softly with a snare drum cadence followed by a two-part theme in the upper winds, which constitutes Meacham's only original melodic contribution. The rest of the march is a medley of three popular patriotic songs: "Columbia, the Gem of the Ocean," "Dixie," and finally "Yankee Doodle." "American Patrol" remains a favorite in the concert band repertoire and has been recorded by numerous ensembles, including the Glenn Miller Band and the Sousa Band.

[Listen to the march](#)



BULLETS AND BAYONETS

John Philip Sousa

In the summer of 1918, some of the most ferocious battles of the Great War were fought outside of Paris at Belleau Wood by the Marines and the U.S. Army 3rd Brigade. Held by the Germans, Belleau Wood could only be approached by advancing across an open meadow that was continuously strafed by machine gun and artillery fire. Over a period of 20 days, the woods were taken by the Americans a total of six times before the Germans retreated. Fighting off more than four divisions of German troops, the Americans often resorted to bayonets and hand-to-hand combat. These battles and others inspired John Philip Sousa to compose his march "Bullets and Bayonets" in 1918. The march, with a distinct military character, is peppered with gunshot effects and hints of fife and drum. In the trio, Sousa uses drumsticks on the rim of the drum to rattle out a staccato rhythm of machine gun fire. The march was dedicated "To the officers and men of the U.S. Infantry."

Paul E. Bierley, The Works of John Philip Sousa (Westerville, Ohio: Integrity Press, 1984), 44. Used by permission.

[Listen to the march](#)

["Bullets and Bayonets" is part of The Complete Marches of John Philip Sousa: Volume 5](#)



NATIONAL FENCIBLES

John Philip Sousa

Drill teams became popular after the Civil War, and competitions judging the precisely-coordinated movements of these exhibition marching teams thrived during John Philip Sousa's lifetime. A number of his marches were written for well-known drill teams, including the team at Washington High School in Washington, D.C., for which he wrote the march, "The High School Cadets." In 1888, while Sousa was Director of "The President's Own" United States Marine Band, a nationally-acclaimed drill team competition was won by The National Fencibles, a drill team group based in Sousa's hometown of Washington, D.C. In its honor, Sousa wrote his march, "National Fencibles," and invited the team to hear it performed at Marine Barracks, located in southeast Washington, D.C.

Paul E. Bierley, The Works of John Philip Sousa (Westerville, Ohio: Integrity Press, 1984), 45. Used by permission.

[Listen to the march](#)

["National Fencibles" is part of The Complete Marches of John Philip Sousa: Volume 2](#)



THE CHANTYMAN'S MARCH

John Philip Sousa

After enlisting in the U.S. Navy in 1917, Sousa made a study of sea chanteys and then wrote an article for The Great Lakes Recruit entitled "Songs of the Sea." He made further use of the study while on a brief leave from the navy the following spring by composing one of his medley-type marches and calling it The Chantyman's March. The march incorporates eight chanteys, in this order: "Knock a Man Down," "Away for Rio," "Haul the Bowline," "The Ballad of Billy Taylor," "It's Time for Us to Leave Her," "Put up Clearing Gear," "Hoodah Day," and "A-Roving."

Paul E. Bierley, The Works of John Philip Sousa (Westerville, Ohio: Integrity Press, 1984), 45. Used by permission.

[Listen to the march](#)

["The Chantyman's March" is part of The Complete Marches of John Philip Sousa: Volume 5](#)



JACK TAR

John Philip Sousa

John Philip Sousa was born in southeast Washington, D.C., near Marine Barracks Washington where his father Antonio was a musician in the Marine Band. Sousa studied piano and most orchestral instruments, but his first love was the violin. He became very proficient on the instrument, and at age thirteen was almost persuaded to join a circus band. His father intervened, however, and enlisted him as an apprentice musician in the Marine Band. Sousa remained in the band until he was twenty and later returned to become its seventeenth Director.

Written in 1903, "Jack Tar" is a tribute to the Royal British Navy. While most of the melodies in this march are borrowed from Sousa's own operetta *Chris and the Wonderful Lamp*, the break strain quotes the British sea shanty "The Sailor's Hornpipe." The naval feel of this march is reinforced by scoring that calls for ship's bell and whistle. The world première took place in London at the Royal Albert Hall in the presence of King Edward VII. That evening, Sousa and his band collaborated with the bands of the Scots Guard, the Irish Guards, the Coldstream Guards, the Himenoa Band of New Zealand, and the Queen's Hall Orchestra.

[Listen to the march](#)

["Jack Tar" is part of The Complete Marches of John Philip Sousa: Volume 4](#)



ESPRIT DE CORPS

John Philip Sousa

Inspiration for this composition would be obvious had Sousa composed it while he was in service, but he was not. The march was not published for band until the year after he resigned from the U. S. Marine Corps. The dedication reads, "To my old friend Wilson J. Vance of Ohio." In addition to being Sousa's friend, Vance (1845-1911) was a Medal of Honor recipient who served with the 21st Ohio Infantry during the American Civil War. He was cited for voluntarily rescuing a wounded and helpless comrade while his command was falling back under heavy fire during the Battle of Stones River in Tennessee on December 31, 1862. Vance later became Captain, 14th U.S. Colored Troops, was the author of several books, and is buried at Arlington National Cemetery. The "Esprit de Corps" Sousa references in this march is the camaraderie, the bond of friendship that forms between those who serve together. The dedication's timing is not coincidental; the two were beginning to work together in 1878 on the operetta *The Smugglers*, for which Vance was the librettist.

Paul E. Bierley, The Works of John Philip Sousa (Westerville, Ohio: Integrity Press, 1984), 50. Used by permission.

[Listen to the march](#)

["Esprit de Corps" is part of The Complete Marches of John Philip Sousa: Volume 1](#)



NATIONAL EMBLEM

Edwin E. Bagley

Edwin E. Bagley is best known for the march “National Emblem,” which he began composing in 1902. The first rehearsal was believed to have taken place in the baggage car of a train en route from Bellows Falls, Vermont, to Greenfield, New Hampshire. The première was given in New Hampshire by the Keene City Band which Bagley directed from 1915 to 1917.

Bagley used “The Star-Spangled Banner” as inspiration for the melodic material in the first strain of the march, but it was the herds of buffalo he saw while crossing the western prairies in the late 1800s that inspired the heavy, repeated beats in the trio section. The march’s trio may sound very familiar because it has been used for many years to “advance and retire the colors” at military flag ceremonies. Conductor Frederick Fennell described “National Emblem” as being “as perfect as a march can be.”

[Listen to the march](#)



GUIDE RIGHT

John Philip Sousa

Sousa marches had a banner year in 1881. Sousa had just reached his stride as leader of the U. S. Marine Band and wrote six that year. Two of these, “Guide Right” and “Right Forward,” were written for parade use, and their names were derived from marching commands. Both were dedicated to a Captain R. S. Collum of the Marine Corps.

Paul E. Bierley, The Works of John Philip Sousa (Westerville, Ohio: Integrity Press, 1984), 59. Used by permission.

[Listen to the march](#)

[“Guide Right” is part of The Complete Marches of John Philip Sousa: Volume 1](#)



RIGHT-LEFT MARCH

John Philip Sousa

This unusual march calls for shouts of “Right! Left!” at regular intervals in the trio. Perhaps it was used in this manner by the Marine Band on the drill field.

Paul E. Bierley, The Works of John Philip Sousa (Westerville, Ohio: Integrity Press, 1984), 81. Used by permission.

[Listen to the march](#)

[“Right-Left March” is part of The Complete Marches of John Philip Sousa: Volume 2](#)



MARCH OF THE WOMEN MARINES

Louis Saverino

Louis Saverino was a talented instrumentalist and composer who also enjoyed a distinguished 25-year career as a member of “The President’s Own.” Born in 1915 in Windber, Pennsylvania, he was taught musical notation as a toddler by his father, which led to a lifelong ability to visualize and notate any music he heard. After winning a four-year scholarship to the Eastman School of Music at the University of Rochester in New York, Saverino flourished musically and obtained the school’s first tuba performance degree in 1938. A year later, he joined the Marine Band, performing primarily on tuba, string bass, and bass clarinet.

Much admired by his colleagues for his amazing and versatile instrumental skills, Saverino was also held in high regard by Marine Band Director William F. Santelmann for his composition and music-scoring abilities. After the establishment of the U.S. Marine Corps Women’s Reserve in 1943, a last-minute request for a parade march prompted Saverino to conceive and complete the march in one night. The march was so well received that it was designated as the official March of the Women Marines, and Saverino’s efforts were rewarded with a letter of commendation from Marine Headquarters.

[Listen to the march](#)



SONS OF UNCLE SAM

Earl E. McCoy

Born in Indianapolis, Earl E. McCoy spent most of his life in Texas before attending the University of Illinois to study music under its legendary director of bands, Albert Austin Harding. Shortly after, McCoy was offered the choice of a staff position with the university’s band or a national tour with a musical theater production. He chose to join the tour, and the majority of his career was spent touring with and conducting theater orchestras and traveling productions, including a ten-year engagement with the Majestic Theater Circuit. Toward the end of his life, McCoy co-founded the El Paso Symphony Orchestra, the Dallas Symphony Orchestra, and the Dallas Band.

McCoy composed several marches during his career and was in the process of composing a symphony at the time of his death. He wrote the march “Sons of Uncle Sam” in 1917, the year that the United States joined World War I. The piece likely served as a patriotic composition to bolster the American spirit during that tumultuous period.

[Listen to the march](#)



”THE MARINES OF BELLEAU WOOD”

Taylor Branson - edited by Lt. Col. Ryan Nowlin

The Battle of *Bois de Belleau*, or Belleau Wood, exemplified the Marine Corps’ core values of honor, courage, and commitment. The battle commenced on June 6, 1918, and proved to be one of the most ferocious engagements fought by American troops during the First World War. The 5th and 6th Marine Regiments, under the command of the U.S. Army’s 2nd division, were tasked with capturing Belleau Wood and clearing it of German soldiers. Before launching their assault on the forest, the Marines first had to cross an open wheat field into oncoming machine gun fire, a weapon new to warfare. In the first day, more than 1,000 Marines died—more than the Corps had lost in its 143-year history to that point. After three weeks of tree-to-tree fighting, including multiple charges on German machine gun nests with fixed bayonets and hand-to-hand combat, the Marines cleared Belleau Wood of the German Army entirely on June 26. United States forces suffered 9,777 casualties, including 1,811 killed. Many of those who gave their lives are buried in the nearby Aisne-Marne American Cemetery. After the battle, the French renamed the wood *Bois de la Brigade de Marine* (Wood of the Marine Brigade) in honor of the Marines’ tenacity.

To commemorate the fifth anniversary of this historic battle, the United States Marine Band performed a new march, “The Marines of Belleau Wood,” on June 6, 1923. The piece was composed by Taylor Branson, William H. Santelmann’s assistant

director, who would go on to lead the Marine Band from 1927 to 1940. The march is dedicated to Army Major General James G. Harbord, commander of the 4th Marine Brigade. Branson pays musical tribute to Marines of Belleau Wood in many ways, including quoting the Marines' Hymn in the melody of the second strain. Most notably, however, is the composer's construction of the trio. The melody gradually increases in dynamic while restating a determined motive in different tonal centers, clearly representing the ceaseless nature of the Marines' assault. In France, the anniversary was marked in July 1923. At this time, Belleau Wood was officially dedicated as an American battle monument.

[Listen to the march](#)



THE GUADALCANAL MARCH

Richard Rodgers

Richard Rodgers was born in Queens, New York in 1902 to a theater-loving household: his parents attended Broadway shows, while his grandparents favored the opera. He learned to play the piano as a toddler and by age 15 had chosen musical theater as his profession, influenced primarily by the music of Jerome Kern. Rodgers would eventually go on to be one of the most prolific musical theater composers of his time. Through his famous collaboration with lyricist Lorenz Hart, he composed the music for standards such as "Blue Moon" (1934), "My Funny Valentine" (1937), "Isn't It Romantic?" (1932) and "Bewitched, Bothered and Bewildered" (1940). And when Hart eventually became too ill to work, he began a long collaboration with Oscar Hammerstein which produced Broadway classics such as *Oklahoma!* (1943), *Carousel* (1945), and *The Sound of Music* (1959). Drawing inspiration from the famous battle where a relative handful of Marines prevailed against all odds, this movement is a rousing call to arms.

[Listen to the march](#)



SOUND OFF

John Philip Sousa

During his twelve years as the seventeenth director of "The President's Own" (1880-92), John Philip Sousa composed nearly eighty works. Several were marches written specifically for the Marine Corps, as well as to celebrate the unique military environment and traditions at historic Marine Barracks Washington, D.C. "Sound Off" was composed in 1885 and was dedicated to a gentleman viewed by Sousa as a "stern but fair" officer named General George Porter Houston. General Houston was the commanding officer of Marine Barracks Washington from July 1883 to March 1888, and the march derives its title from a military command frequently heard during parades and formations there.

[Listen to the march](#)

["Sound Off" is part of The Complete Marches of John Philip Sousa: Volume 2](#)



"DEFENDERS OF FREEDOM"

Kenneth Douse

Kenneth Douse was born in England and joined the Marine Band Symphony Orchestra as violinist in 1926. He began taking saxophone lessons prior to joining the band, and he continued to teach himself the instrument, eventually becoming a solo saxophonist with the Marine Band. Douse held this prestigious position until 1950, performing many times as a featured soloist with the band on concerts, tours, and radio broadcasts. After he retired from the Marine Band, he joined the National Symphony Orchestra as both a violinist and a saxophonist, where he remained until 1968.

In addition to his active performing career, Douse was a composer and wrote several marches and saxophone solos during his time in the Marine Band. The march “Defenders of Freedom” was published in 1949, and its title symbolized the spirit of the Americans who fought to ensure the preservation of liberties during the Revolutionary War at battles such as Bunker Hill and Yorktown.

[Listen to the march](#)



“THEY ARE THERE!”

Charles Ives

Charles Ives is recognized as one of the greatest American composers of the twentieth century, but he did not receive such accolades during most of his lifetime. In fact, he made his living as a successful insurance salesman. When his unique and progressive music finally saw the light of day, however, he earned a Pulitzer Prize in 1947 for his Third Symphony. Ives was born in Danbury, Connecticut, where his father, George Ives, was a Civil War bandmaster and leader of the Danbury Cornet Band. Ives attended Yale University, studying organ and composition, but both his father’s influence and his own early musical experiences in Danbury had as much impact on his musical sensibilities as his formal education. The elder Ives was intrigued by unplanned musical moments, like two bands playing in unrelated keys as they marched down the street in a parade, and George would often encourage Charles to explore unconventional sounds, such as playing the accompaniment of a tune in one key on the piano while singing the melody in an unrelated key. In 1917, in honor of American soldiers headed into World War I, Ives composed a song with the title “He Is There!” He adapted the lyrics and added a coda in 1942, as more American soldiers were headed into World War II. The title was also tweaked slightly, to “They Are There!”

[Listen to the march](#)



OVER THERE

George M. Cohan

Songwriter, playwright, performer, theater owner, and producer George M. Cohan is credited with writing some of the quintessentially patriotic American songs for both the stage and screen. Recognizable songs by Cohan include “You’re a Grand Old Flag,” “Give My Regards to Broadway,” and “I’m A Yankee Doodle Dandy.” “Over There” was written on April 7, 1917, the day after the United States declared war on Germany and entered World War I. President Woodrow Wilson described the song as “a genuine inspiration to all American manhood.” The song was an immediate hit selling over two million copies of the sheet music before the end of the war and through a popular 78 rpm record.

[Listen to the march](#)



INVERCARGILL

Alex F. Lithgow

Alex Lithgow was born in Glasgow, Scotland, but grew up in Invercargill, New Zealand. He had a long career as a cornetist, violinist, composer and conductor, and earned the nickname “March King of the Antipodes”. This march named for his hometown was written originally, like all his marches, for the British-style brass band that was the norm in New Zealand. It became a worldwide success in the wind band arrangement of L. P. Laurendeau, but sadly, a lack of copyright protection kept Lithgow from enjoying the monetary reward commensurate with his success. The Invercargill March remains his most popular, and a standard of bands around the world.

[Listen to the march](#)



WALTZING MATILDA

Marie Cowan - lyrics by Banjo Paterson

“Waltzing Matilda” is known as the unofficial anthem of Australia, but also an iconic song for the Marine Corps. Its title is a bit confounding to an American audience, as it is not about a person named Matilda dancing the waltz. Rather, it is Australian slang for travelling on foot or “waltzing,” while carrying your belongings in a “matilda” or a portable shelter carried on your back. The song became associated with the Marine Corps in World War II. The 1st Marine Division fought in the Battle of Guadalcanal for four months in 1942, after which they rested and refitted in Melbourne, Australia. During a parade given on George Washington’s birthday on February 22, 1943, the 1st Marine Division Band played “Waltzing Matilda” to great acclaim from their Australian hosts. The 1st Marine Division still considers “Waltzing Matilda” to be their official song and march.

[Listen to the march](#)



MARCH FROM 1941

John Williams - transcribed by Paul Lavender

In Steven Spielberg’s 1979 comedic film *1941*, residents of Los Angeles, California, mistakenly believe they are under attack from the Japanese in the aftermath of the assault on Pearl Harbor. The late John Belushi plays “Wild” Bill Kelso, a somewhat unstable yet affable Air Force pilot at the center of the action. According to John Williams, Kelso’s antics “seemed to require a musical accompaniment that had humor and rhythmic vitality. As a result, I set myself the task of writing a zany patriotic march, that upon hearing, we might be moved to tap our feet to an imaginary parade going by, and have fun doing it.”

The March from *1941* is indeed a fun-filled romp from beginning to end and is most certainly among Williams’ best efforts in the genre of martial music. The première performance of this concert band transcription was given by the Marine Band in 2003, conducted by the composer.

[Listen to the march](#)



MIDWAY MARCH

John Williams

The 1976 feature film *Midway* chronicles the incredible Battle of Midway, which was a turning point in the Pacific during World War II. Until this critical stand and victory, the Imperial Japanese Navy had been undefeated in battle for nearly eighty years. The film highlighted the remarkable American strategy and success against all odds with an all-star cast including Charlton Heston, James Coburn, and Henry Fonda, who played the part of legendary Admiral Chester Nimitz.

Several scenes in the film were shot using the USS Lexington, the last Essex-class aircraft carrier from World War II in service at the time of production. The movie also employed a special sound mix called Sensurround. This early technique of enveloping the audience in the sonic action of the movie was used in only four films of the era and required special speakers to be installed in theaters where they were shown.

John Williams provided the dramatic and visceral musical score for the movie. Williams had recently won his first Academy Award for his score to *Jaws* in 1974 and was quickly becoming one of the most sought after composers in Hollywood at the time of *Midway*'s release. Right after his work on this film, he composed the now-iconic music to the first installment of *Star Wars*.

[Listen to the march](#)



CENTURY OF SERVICE

Lt. Col. Ryan Nowlin

On August 13, 1918, in Washington, D.C., forty-year-old Opha May Johnson was the first of about 300 women who initially enlisted in the Marine Corps Reserve for service during World War I. They served in clerical and administrative positions and marched in parades. "After the Armistice the women were released from active duty by mid-1919 and transferred to the inactive reserve for the duration of their enlistment. One platoon of women Marines was called back to active duty for one day on Nov. 11, 1921, to escort the Body of the Unknown Soldier to his final resting place in Arlington National Cemetery," said Nancy Wilt, the national historian of the Women Marines Association and Director/Curator of the Women of the Corps Collection. "I have tremendous respect for the women of WWI who, by the thousands, lined up across the country to become members of the Marine Corps and serve a country that had not given them the right to vote," Wilt continued. "It is amazing the service of the Salvation Army, the American Red Cross, the military women of WWI, and the thousands of other woman volunteers who harvested crops, rolled bandages, and knitted cold weather sweaters and mittens for units."

Wilt wrote a letter to then-Marine Band Director Col. Jason K. Fettig to ask the Marine Band to honor the centennial with a march since the nearly 24,000 women Marines of World War II marched to Louis Saverino and Emil Grasser's "March of the Women Marines," and the 1970s women Marines danced to Saverino's "Women Marine Waltz." Fettig agreed and selected then Assistant Director Lt. Col. Ryan Nowlin to musically mark the occasion. "I spent an hour and a half on the phone with her to get my musical ideas, all of which are inspired by the story of these first women Marines answering the nation's call in 1918," Nowlin said. "I wrote these melodies constantly rising in pitch to symbolize that always reaching, always growing, that determined spirit of these women who volunteered in 1918. It is truly an honor to write the march in recognition of the century of service of women in the United States Marine Corps."

[Listen to the march](#)



MARINE CORPS INSTITUTE

Taylor Branson

Born and raised in Washington, D.C., Taylor Branson was the twentieth Leader of the United States Marine Band. He enlisted in the band at age 17 and was appointed Leader in 1927, after having served as Second Leader under his former violin teacher William H. Santelmann since 1921. Branson pioneered the use of radio broadcasting as a means of spreading the music of the Marine Band to the public. He led regular orchestral programs that broadcasted from Station NOF at Naval Air Station Anacostia in Washington, D.C. In 1931, he introduced the “The Dream Hour” radio program, which was designed to bring the music of the Marine Band to shut-ins at home.

Branson composed several marches, including “Tell it to the Marines,” “Eagle, Globe, and Anchor,” and “The Marines of Belleau Wood.” Many of his marches were intended to commemorate special events, institutions, or people, and “Marine Corps Institute” is no exception. This march paid tribute to the Marine Corps Institute, an organization that provided ongoing professional education to Marines.

[Listen to the march](#)