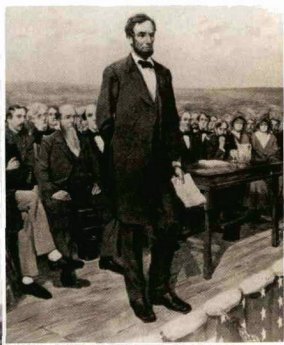


Lincoln and the Marines at *Gettysburg*

By Suzanne Pool-Camp and Dick Camp

Prologue

Four months after the three-day bloody clash at Gettysburg, where some 7,786 Union and Confederate soldiers were killed, President Abraham Lincoln was asked to attend the dedication of a national cemetery at the battle site. President Lincoln felt it was his duty to attend, even though he wasn't the main speaker.



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The principal organizer of the event, David Wills, wrote to the Secretary of the Navy requesting the presence of the Marine Band. A 21-year-old Marine second lieutenant, Henry C. Cochrane, accompanied the unit and sent an eyewitness account of the two-day event to his parents.

The Presence of the Marine Band Is Requested

Colonel John Harris, the sixth Commandant of the Marine Corps, carefully read the letter forwarded to him by Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles. He stroked his beard in thought as he considered the contents of the letter. David Wills, an agent for the governor of Pennsylvania, had requested the Marine Band to perform at the dedication of the national cemetery in Gettysburg on 19 Nov. 1863. Secretary Welles had written "No objection ... to this sacred purpose" on the letter and passed it to the Commandant for consideration. Col Harris took the request under advisement, but when he learned that President Abraham Lincoln was going to

attend, he quickly approved the request.

Orders were issued to Captain Alan Ramsay, the barracks commanding officer, and to Second Lieutenant Henry C. Cochrane, who would serve as an unofficial aide to the President. Just after "Reveille" was sounded on the morning of 18 Nov., members of the Marine Band formed ranks on the grass of the Marine Barracks Washington (D.C.) quadrangle.

Dressed in their red parade finery, they stood in stark contrast to the blue-coated officer who stood in front of them. The drum major, John Roach, called the men to attention and saluted the officer. Capt Ramsay put the men at ease and explained that they would march to the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad Station, where they would board a special train that would take them to Gettysburg, Pa., for the dedication of the national cemetery.

He proudly announced that the band specifically had been requested to play for President Lincoln at the dedication and that they would accompany him aboard the special train.

Inset: In this painting by Fletcher Ransom, President Lincoln delivers the Gettysburg Address.

Above: This earliest known photo of the Marine Band was taken in 1864 in front of the Home of the Commandants at MB Washington. (Library of Congress photo)

All Aboard

The band members settled into the first car of the four-car train, glad to be off their feet after the march to the train station. The "Leader of the Band," Francis M. Scala, fussed over them, painfully aware that the President was coming aboard. He wanted to make sure the band was presentable. John Roach, described as an "enormous man, tall, straight and very broad of shoulder" with a "long iron-grey mustache as thick as your wrist," busied himself, stowing instruments. Roach had served as drum major since 1855 and was no slouch at taking care of every detail.

The band counted among its members trombonist Antonio Sousa. One of his sons, John Philip Sousa, would become a world-famous march composer and the most well-known leader of the Marine Band.

Shortly before noon, President Lincoln arrived and made his way to the lavishly decorated second coach, where several members of his cabinet, two personal secretaries and several foreign-embassy representatives were gathered. Capt Ramsay and 2dLt Cochrane went to the last car and sat down. Sometime after pulling out of the station, the President came in and sat down next to Cochrane. "Ah, this is so much better," Cochrane recalled his saying, as if President Lincoln enjoyed escaping from the dignitaries.

The President exchanged a few pleasantries with the two Marine officers. Cochrane said that the President was "so genial and pleasant" that it was like talking with an old friend. During a lull in the conversation, Cochrane handed President Lincoln a copy of the *Washington Herald*. "He took it and thanked me, saying, 'I like to see what they are saying about us,' meaning himself and the generals. He read for a little while and then began to laugh at some wild guesses about pending [troop] movements ... it was pleasant to see his sad face lighted up. He was looking very badly at the time, being sallow, sunken-eyed, thin, care-worn and very quiet."

The train made a brief stop in Baltimore to change tracks. During that time-consuming process, the band entertained the passengers and the crowd that had gathered to catch a glimpse of the President. Just before the train's departure, Cochrane accompanied President Lincoln to the rear car where the President spoke to a crowd gathered on the platform. Cochrane was amused to see a young child hand President Lincoln a bouquet of flowers, whereupon the President scooped up the youngster and kissed her on the cheek.

During lunch, the Marine Band unlumbered their instruments and serenaded the President with a selection of his favorite

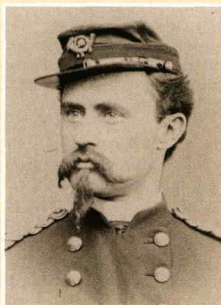
Henry C. Cochrane—Marine on the Scene

Henry C. Cochrane was commissioned as a Marine second lieutenant in March 1863 and was ordered to the Marine Barracks in Washington, D.C. His new quarters were at the Center House. "I have moved into a ... nicely furnished room on the second floor. In this, the ceiling is fourteen feet high, the walls nicely papered, the woodwork grained in imitation of oak, the floor covered with a very pretty Brussels carpet."

He also described his meals. "There are very few hotels in the United States that set a more lavish table, and ... we have to pay dearly for it." Cochrane spent most of his time drilling the troops, escorting foreign visitors and standing ceremonial duties, including funerals. In a letter to his mother, he recounted the first time he wore his dress uniform: "We had to march for six miles, then stand for an hour at the church and another hour at the grave—it was anything but fun."

After serving 42 years, Cochrane retired in 1905 as a colonel. In 1911, he was promoted to brigadier general on the retired list. During his years of service, Cochrane participated in the Civil War, Spanish-American War and the Boxer Rebellion. He commanded the First Marine Regiment in the China Relief Expedition. While at headquarters, his input contributed to the eagle, globe and anchor insignia becoming part of the Marine uniform. Cochrane died in 1913 at the age of 71.

—Suzanne Pool-Camp and Dick Camp



Henry C. Cochrane

GEN. ALFRED M. GRAY MARINE CORPS RESEARCH CENTER

Headquarters U.S.M.C.
Washington, D.C. 21. 1168.

Dear Parents,

A great event in my unusually quiet life has happened since I last wrote you. On Wednesday, I had the honor to attend the President of the United States, as one of his personal staff, to the battlefield of Gettysburg and to the solemn consecration of the National Soldiers Cemetery.

We left Washington in a special train about noon, and reached Gen. Lee's Rev. after a pleasant and rapid run. The telegraph had announced our coming, and Gen. Diller and Chief Marshal James had provided for the Presidential party the finest accommodation.

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tunes. Cochrane recalled that after returning to the President's car, President Lincoln "was very sociable, spoke of public affairs, his governors, and generals with little or no reserve. His story telling propensities could not be suppressed, and he had all hands in a roar of laughter. Many of his stories are more funny than chaste."

Shortly afterward, President Lincoln announced, "Gentlemen, this is all very pleasant, but the people will expect me to say something to them tomorrow and I must give the matter some thought." He then adjourned to a private compartment that had been built for him in the last car.

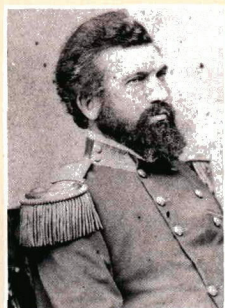
At about 1830, the train arrived in Gettysburg. President Lincoln immediately was taken to the Wills home, a spacious three-story, red-brick Georgian house in the center of town. He was given the master bedroom overlooking the main square. Cochrane wrote his parents that he and Capt Ramsay "were together, near the Eagle Hotel, in a private house and had good meals and quarters." However, the

Marine Band was not so fortunate; they marched to one of the Army's many encampments scattered throughout the area and spent the night in Sibley tents.

The Marine Band, as well as several other military and civilian bands and choral groups, serenaded the crowds. The small town had swollen to more than 15,000 people.

"These Dead Shall Not Have Died in Vain"

By midmorning the procession was assembled on the Baltimore Pike, the main road through the small town. So many people lined the street that the provost marshal had difficulty clearing a path. Finally at 1000, the parade was underway. An Army color guard, followed by the Marine Band, led the way. Mounted on a beautiful chestnut bay, President Lincoln appeared amidst an entourage of senior military officers and a cavalry squadron. He appeared unusually tall atop the large horse; his top hat was conspicuous above the rest of the assembly.



Francis M. Scala

Francis Maria Scala— "Leader of the Band"

Francis Scala enlisted in the Marine Corps in August 1842. "I secured a place in the Marine Band," he wrote. "It wasn't much of an organization then. Congress had made no provisions for the band so that the 10 or 12 members were enlisted as fifers and drummers." A year later he was promoted to fife major, a position that was eliminated by President Lincoln in the band's 1861 reorganization.

Scala initially enlisted in the U.S. Navy in 1841 as a musician third class on the frigate *Brandywine* anchored in the Naples, Italy, harbor. Although he spoke no English, the ship's executive officer spoke Italian fluently. Scala soon was playing the clarinet in the ship's band and quickly was appointed bandmaster. On the voyage back to Norfolk, Va., Scala fell prey to *mal de mer* (seasickness) and swore that he would never go to sea again.

In 1861, Scala became the first to hold the newly created position of "Leader of the Band." During the next 10 years, he not only provided excellent leadership for the band, but also composed and transcribed many marches, waltzes and other music from Italian opera, sometimes two or three arrangements a month. It is believed that while under Scala's leadership, the Marine Band first played the melody "Potpourri-Fantasia of Geneviève de Brabant," from Jacques Offenbach's opera "Geneviève de Brabant." This melody is now known as "The Marines' Hymn."

Scala formed friendships with several Presidents, including President Lincoln. "Lincoln I always remember with affection," he said. "He was so delightfully plain and honest. 'Old Abe' liked music and was my friend. I have many personal souvenirs of him."

Scala retired in 1871. He died in 1903 and was laid to rest with the soothing notes of his beloved band.

—Suzanne Pool-Camp and Dick Camp

Cochrane rode a black pony "one pace on the right of and three in the rear" of the President. Much to the lieutenant's chagrin, he had trouble controlling his horse, "as it wanted to browse on the tail of the President's horse." Next in the order of march came hundreds of Union soldiers. They carried rifles with fixed bayonets, and the morning light glinted off the polished metal. Three bands were spaced among the marching units.

The procession reached the newly constructed cemetery at the edge of town. Clumps of dirt still marked the location of the graves. President Lincoln dismounted, and several artillery batteries sounded a 34-gun salute as he took his place on the speaker's platform. The two Marines were seated near him.

"At the cemetery," Cochrane wrote, "I was again favored with a seat on the stand. I was totally enveloped by civil and military dignitaries." From his vantage point, he had a clear view of the battlefield: "Rifle pits, cut and scarred trees, broken fences, pieces of artillery wagons ... abandoned knapsacks, belts, cartridge boxes, shoes and caps ... on nearly every side." Some attendees recalled a slightly noxious smell of decaying flesh borne on the breeze.

A little before noon, a band played a funeral dirge. The Reverend Thomas H. Stockton, U.S. Senate chaplain, followed with a prayer. The Marine Band then played "Old Hundred," a popular religious hymn known by many in the crowd. Next, the key speaker, the renowned orator and scholar Edward Everett, delivered a lofty two-hour recitation of the history of the battle, comparing it to the battles of the ancient Greeks. He finished to an enthusiastic reception.

After a brief interlude, Ward Lamon, who acted as marshal at the cemetery's dedication, announced his friend, "The President of the United States." Second Lt Cochrane watched closely as President Lincoln stepped to the lectern, slowly adjusted his glasses and began to speak. "He was dressed as usual in a black frock coat with turned down shirt collar," Cochrane wrote. "He held in his hand only two or three sheets of paper. He began in a slow, solemn and deliberate manner, emphasizing nearly every word, and in two minutes sat down."

Many in the audience missed the President's words because he spoke so briefly. Some journalists called his speech "silly, flat and dish-waterly utterances." Cochrane later recalled, "It was not for weeks afterward that it began to dawn in the minds of his countrymen that in his simple wisdom and eloquence, something had been said which would last forever."

This 19 Nov. 1863 view of Gettysburg, credited to the Tyson brothers, shows the Baltimore Pike, where the parade assembled and marched to the new cemetery.
(Boston Public Library photo)



GEN ALFRED M. GRAY MARINE CORPS RESEARCH CENTER

Henry C. Cochrane's collection of letters, housed in the Gen Alfred M. Gray Marine Corps Research Center at Marine Corps Base Quantico, Va., provides invaluable insights into life in the Corps for almost half a century.

At the end of the ceremony, the Marine Band escorted President Lincoln back to town. He had dinner at the Wills' home and then walked to the Presbyterian church for a service. At 1830, he boarded the train, along with the two Marine officers and the Marine Band.

Two days after returning from Gettysburg, Cochrane wrote his parents. "Dear Parents, A great event in my usually quiet life has happened since I last wrote you.

The History of the Band to the End of the Civil War

The United States Marine Band was established by an act of Congress on 11 July 1798, and is the oldest of all military bands and also the oldest professional musical organization in America. It is known as "The President's Own," because of its history of service to all Presidents since 1 Jan. 1801, when President John Adams requested that the band perform at the Executive Mansion.

President Lincoln signed an Act of Congress on 25 July 1861 to reorganize the Marine Band. The act created the positions of "Leader of the Band" and drum major and authorized 30 musicians. The band played at many benefit concerts, ceremonies and funerals during the Civil War. It also performed weekly for crowds that gathered on the White House lawn.

At one of the concerts, President Lincoln appeared on the portico of the White House. The crowd immediately started to applaud and call to him. President Lincoln bowed and, just as quickly, retreated inside, saying with a sigh, "I wish they would let me sit out there quietly and enjoy the music."

At President Lincoln's funeral on 19 April 1865, the Marine Band played a funeral dirge composed for the occasion. The Commandant, Col Jacob Zeilin, led a battalion of Marines in the procession. Major Thomas Y. Field escorted President Lincoln's remains on the train ride to Springfield, Ill.

—Suzanne Pool-Camp and Dick Camp

On Wednesday, I had the honor to attend the President of the United States as one of his temporary staff to the battlefield of Gettysburg and to the solemn consecration of the National Soldier's Cemetery."

Authors' note: Some historians claim that President Lincoln wrote his Gettysburg Address while on the train, but the preponderance of evidence suggests that he wrote most of it before boarding the train.

At the dedication of the cemetery, some remains still lay on the battlefield or in

shallow, hastily dug graves. It took a few more months before all the fallen were buried properly.

Editor's note: Suzanne Pool-Camp has contributed previous articles to Leatherneck. She and her husband, retired Col Dick Camp, live in Fredericksburg, Va.

Col Camp is the director of operations for the National Museum of the Marine Corps and a frequent contributor to Leatherneck. His latest book, "Battle for the City of the Dead, Under the Golden Dome," is due out this spring.

