



IRISH BRIGADE MARINES SEMPER FIDELIS

*The United States Marine Corps traces its history
to an Act of the Second Continental Congress,
10th November 1775*

American Continental Marines fought in the American Revolution / War for Independence. The United States Marines fought in America's Second War for Independence (1812 – 1815). There were Marines on both sides of the American Civil War. **There has been no shortage of Irish names in the pantheon of American Marine heroes**, including: Captain John Welsh of the Continental Marines; Lieutenant Presley N. O'Bannon who led the United States Marines "*to the shores of Tripoli*;" aviator Pat Mulcahy in two World Wars; Ed Murphy on Iwo Jima; Ray Davis in World War II and Korea; Robert Emmett O'Malley and Paddy Collins in Viet Nam; Marine Corps Commandants Charles McCawley, P.X. Kelly, Al Gray and James Conway; and, Sergeant Major Dan Daly (two Medals of Honor, China, 1900 and Haiti, 1915) who, when leading an assault at Belleau Wood in the First World War, would coin the phrase,

"Come on, you SOBs! Do you want to live forever?"

The first "headquarters" of the Marines was at **Tun Tavern in Philadelphia**; among its first officers were Captain Robert Mullan (proprietor of Tun Tavern, who, in addition to recruiting and service at sea, would command a company of Marines in Washington's Trenton – Princeton campaign, 1776-1777) and Lieutenant Thomas Murphy -- but Philadelphia was not to be the only Irish source of Continental Marines during the American War for Independence.

The day the Irish, en masse, joined the Marines, is memorialized in House Joint Resolution 427 (introduced by Congressmen Ben Gilman, Tom Manton, Peter King, Bob Dornan, et al., and passed 31st March 1992) which commemorated the occasion

(recorded in the diary of John Adams, then American Commissioner to France) on 13th May 1779, when 137 men of the Regiment of Walsh (aka Infanterie Irlandaise Regiment de Walsh-Serrant) under Lieutenants Eugene MacCarthy, Edward Stack (who later served with Rochambeau in the Legion of Lauzun in the Yorktown campaign) and James O'Kelly (who would be killed in action) of the Irish Brigade in the service of France, en masse, joined the Marines **to serve as American Continental Marines with John Paul Jones on board the BONHOMME RICHARD** in what would prove one of the bloodiest and most famous naval engagements in American history.

Their induction, at An Oriant in Brittany, has been recorded in "JOHN ADAMS REVIEWS JONES' MARINES, 13 MAY 1779" by **Colonel of Marines Charles Waterhouse** (former Artist in Residence of the United States Marine Corps) which appears in the bi-centennial Marines of the Revolution: A History of the Continental Marines in the American Revolution 1775-1783 by Charles Richard Smith (Washington, D.C.: History and Museums Division, Headquarters, USMC, 1975). [See also: Charles Waterhouse. Marines and Others: The Paintings of Colonel Charles Waterhouse USMCR ret. (Edison, NJ: Sea Bag Productions, 1994); Tim McGrath. Give Me a Fast Ship: The Continental Navy and America's Revolution at Sea (New York: NAL Caliber, 2014); Edwin Howard Simmons. The United States Marines: A History, 3rd Edition. (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1998); Joseph Callo. John Paul Jones: America's First Sea Warrior (Annapolis, Maryland: Naval Institute Press, 2006).]

The Marines on the BONHOMME RICHARD carried the war to the enemy's shores and, in action against the HMS SERAPIS and HMS COUNTESS OF SCARBOROUGH off Flamborough Head (England) on **23rd September 1779**, distinguished themselves in battle, including the grenade by Sergeant William Hamilton, which rendered the HMS SERAPIS unable to continue the contest, one of the most desperate and bloody battles in American naval history.

Indeed did the **Irish Brigade** volunteers on the BONHOMME RICHARD prove themselves worthy of the tribute to the Irish Brigade as "**Semper et ubique Fidelis**" -- Always and everywhere Faithful, while, at the same time, earning their right to the motto

"SEMPER FIDELIS" as American Marines.



USS BONHOMME RICHARD vs HMS SERAPIS
23 September 1779



Ensign flown by BONHOMME RICHARD in defeating SERAPIS

According to Lieutenant Colonel Charles Neimeyer, USMC (then a professor at the US Naval War College, later Academic Dean – subsequently Director, History Division, Marine Corps University, Quantico, Virginia), a published military historian of the American War for Independence (*America Goes to War: A Social History of the Continental Army*, NYU Press, 1996; et al.) at a lecture sponsored by

the Irish Brigade Association at the State University of New York Maritime College - Fort Schuyler in 1994, **the uniform of the Continental Marines changed from green with white facings to green with red facings in late 1779 in tribute not only to the blood shed by the Marines of the BONHOMME RICHARD, but also in memory of the Irish Brigade uniforms of the Regiment of Walsh, worn by those Marines, scarlet with blue facings.**



John Adams Reviews Jones' Marines, 13 May 1779

Original Art by Colonel of Marines Charles Waterhouse

Professor Neimeyer also contends that the blue uniforms with red piping, which the United States Marine Corps inherited from Wayne's Legion in 1798 (and which colors continue today), were accepted as appropriate in that the colors were the same colors (only in reverse) as the colors of the uniforms of the American Continental Marines of the BONHOMME RICHARD in 1779, that is, the uniforms of the Regiment of Walsh of **The Irish Brigade.**†