

Did You Know?

Band Leader and Composer

A famous band leader and composer was among the original Founder Life Members of the Army, Navy and Marine Corps Country Club.

John Philip Sousa, who led the Marine Corps Band from 1880-1892, was one of the original Founder Life Members of the Army, Navy and Marine Corps Country Club. As their leader, Sousa developed the Marine Corps Band into the foremost marching band in the world and its claim as the “President’s Own.” He was also a prolific composer of marches including “The Washington Post”, “Stars and Stripes Forever”, “The Thunderer” and “Semper Fidelis” and he was the developer of the sousaphone.

The third of ten children of a trombonist for the Marine Corps Band, he studied voice, violin, piano, flute, cornet, baritone horn, trombone, and alto horn. In 1868 his father enlisted him in the Marine Corps at age 13 as an apprentice musician to prevent him from joining a circus band.





Did You Know?



He remained in the Marine Corps until his discharge in 1875 at the age of 20. After several years in a theatrical orchestra, he returned to the Marine Corps Band in 1880 as its head. After departing from the Marine Corps Band in 1892, Sousa formed the Sousa Band which toured the world from 1892 through 1931, performing 15,623 concerts.

On May 31, 1917, shortly after the United States declared war on Germany and entered World War I, Sousa was commissioned as a lieutenant in the United States Naval Reserve. During the war Sousa led the Navy Band at the Great Lakes Naval Station. Being independently wealthy at this point in his life, he donated all of his naval salary, except a token \$1 per month, to the Sailors' and Marines' Relief Fund.

Sousa was discharged from active duty after the war's end in November 1918. He returned to conducting his own band but continued to wear his naval uniform for many of his concerts and other public appearances. In the early 1920s, he was promoted to the rank of lieutenant commander in the Naval Reserve but did not return to active duty.

John Philip Sousa passed away on March 6, 1932 at the age of 77.

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