

## John Philip Sousa



John Philip Sousa was born in 1854 in Washington, D.C. His father was a part-time carpenter for the U.S. Navy and also played the trombone in the U.S. Marine Band. John Philip's early interest in music led to music lessons when he was seven years old. He learned to play the violin, cornet and trombone. When he was 14, he became an apprentice in the U.S. Marine Band. Yes, fourteen. Jacques Offenbach, a famous French composer, toured the United States with his orchestra and invited John Philip to play the violin with his orchestra. The U.S. Marine Band generously allowed John Philip to go and play.

In 1880, John Philip was asked to take over as the conductor of the U.S. Marine Band. He accepted this honor, and for the next twelve years, the U.S. Marine Band reached a new standard of excellence in performance, technique, and repertoire. He composed many marches for this band. "Semper Fidelis," (always faithful) became the official march of the U.S. Marine Band. Some of his most famous marches are "El Capitan," "The

Thunderer," "The Washington Post March," "King Cotton," and "The Stars and Stripes Forever." He wrote operettas and musicals; however, his marches reached everyone's hearts. An English band magazine called him "*The March King*"; truly he is. His lively marches are full of catchy melodies, vigor and dash. The use of syncopation (accent on the offbeat) added to the rhythmic excitement; he was one of the first composers to use this type of rhythm in marches.



During the years he was director of the U.S. Marine Band, it performed at most of the official functions at the White House and many of the parties. These were the men who were President during his conductorship: Rutherford B. Hayes, James Garfield, Chester Arthur, Grover Cleveland, and Benjamin Harrison.

He always wore a new pair of white kid gloves for every performance. He toured the world with his own band and received many, many honors. He died on in 1932 in Reading, Pennsylvania.

Questions:

(answer in complete sentences)

1. Who was John Philip Sousa?
2. What is an apprentice?
3. For what job is he most famous?
4. What was his nickname?
5. His white gloves were a good symbol of his character and work. Describe.