

## **“The Meaning of a Charter”**

**MARINES:** Some of you know that I own and operate an antique mall in my hometown. Over the years, I have grown to appreciate history and the little things that were not a part of my formal education. One such topic—surprisingly absent from my schooling—was the significance of the charters that England granted to the original American colonies and the ramifications of living under the rules imposed by those charters. I recently came across a brief explanation of them in a “Big Little Book” published in 1939, and it sparked an interest. It occurred to me that it might be worthwhile, and even enlightening, to compare those early colonial charters to the charters that the Marine Corps League grants to qualified Detachments and Departments today.

Throughout American history, the word *charter* has carried tremendous weight. The early American colonies were founded under royal charters—formal documents issued by the British Crown granting authority to establish settlements, organize governance, and pursue defined purposes in the New World. These charters outlined rights and responsibilities, set boundaries, and provided the legal foundation for communities struggling to survive and eventually thrive. They represented far more than administrative documentation; they embodied the seeds of self-governance, civic responsibility, and unity that would ultimately shape the birth of our nation.

In a parallel way, the Marine Corps League continues this legacy of authorized purpose through the charters issued to its Detachments. When a Detachment receives its charter, it becomes an officially recognized body of Marines, FMF Corpsmen, and Chaplains joined by a common mission: to preserve the traditions and spirit of the Marine Corps, to support Marines and their families, and to contribute to the welfare of their communities.

Just as colonial charters empowered groups of settlers to build organized societies grounded in shared values, a Marine Corps League charter empowers local members to create a unit that reflects the Marine ethos of honor, courage, and commitment. These charters establish legitimacy, define expectations, and serve as a constant reminder that membership carries both privilege and responsibility.

Colonial charters helped shape the democratic framework of the United States. Likewise, Marine Corps League charters ensure that our organization remains strong, accountable, and faithful to its founding principles. Both stand as symbols of unity, purpose, and dedication—threads that connect our nation’s early beginnings with the ongoing service of Marines across the country.

Semper Fi,

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