

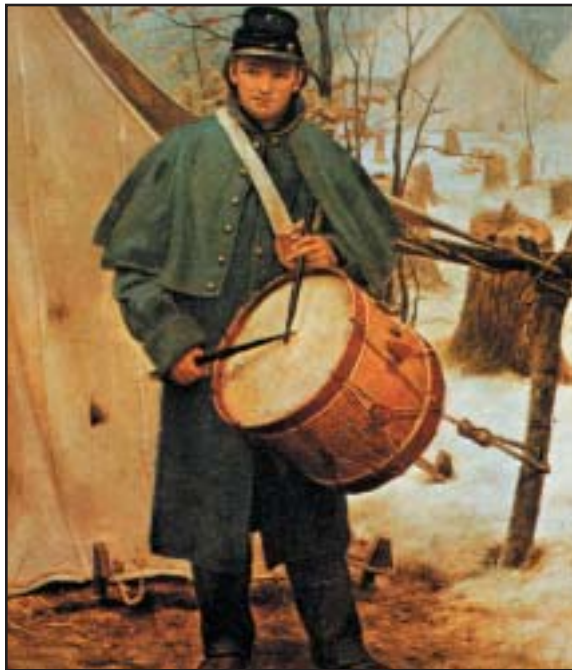
— DRUMMERS — FROM THE PAST

by Jack Lawton

Imagine what it would be like if Thomas Edison had given up on his attempts to invent a machine that could record sounds and then be able to play them back. I'm sure that someone else would have eventually developed the idea, but before the concept of recording sounds, particularly music, just think of all the brilliant performances that were only heard by the audience, never to be heard again and enjoyed by future generations. Today, we take for granted the ability to listen to our favorite drummers, over and over again, as they continue to inspire us with their recorded performances of the past. These great pioneers live on through their recordings and we can hear how they evolved modern drumming over the last century.

Prior to the time of Edison and his invention, we have no way of knowing how the drummers of that era sounded, as each performance was only heard once, never to be heard again. We can collect their drums, and we also know some of their names, as we have historical accounts of several of our drumming predecessors.

Many of these early drummers auditioned for a gig that paid thirteen dollars a month plus meals. They toured the country, playing mostly large, outdoor venues, for large crowds of thousands of screaming people. The worst part of the job however, was that it was not uncommon to be shot at some-



time during the performance. These drummers from the past weren't making the big bucks as entertainers, but as the mass communication specialists of their day. They were the drummer boys of the North and South during the American Civil War.

Thousands of these young, soon-to-be men, enlisted between the ages of fourteen and eighteen, with over three hundred being between ten and thirteen, and over twenty-five below the age of ten. These young drummers were required to learn a multitude of rudiments and drum calls, or signals, which were to be used in their daily camp life, as well as on the battlefield. Since they had no recordings to listen to, they had to learn either by rote or note. One of the more

widely used method books was *The Drummers' and Fifers' Guide*, by George B. Bruce and Dan D. Emmett. The book contained thirty-six rudi-

ments, including the long roll and eight other types of rolls, as well as drum signals needed for camp duty and battle. The camp duty calls included Reveille (Three Camps, or Points of War), The Assembly, Surgeon's Call, Breakfast Call, Adjutant's Call, Three Cheers, Dinner Call, Retreat (at sundown), and Tattoo (or bedtime). Signals required for battle included Recall Detachments, Double Quick Time, Commence Firing, Halt, Cease Firing, and March in Retreat. Drums were used for calls and signals since their sound could carry much further than a human voice. These calls and sig-



nals needed to be played with some degree of accuracy, so they could easily be recognized by his fellow soldiers. The drummer's day would begin at 6:00 AM with Reveille and end at 9:00 PM with Tattoo. During the day, in addition to practice time, the drummers would also have other jobs, such as barbers, cooks, horse groomers, food gatherers, medical assistants, and sometimes grave diggers.

Many drummer boys didn't live to see the end of the war. One such drummer was from my home town of Sunbury, Pennsylvania. John Boulton "Boltie" Young left his classmates and schoolmaster George Haupt at the end of the school year in 1861, at twelve years of age. By early Autumn, he enlisted as a drummer in Company C, 47th PA Volunteer Infantry, a company comprised of many local Sunbury residents. Boltie's brave and patriotic adventure only lasted six short weeks, as he died on Thursday, October 17, 1861 from "regular black confluent small pox." He received the small pox vaccine in Harrisburg, which they thought didn't take, and that he must have been exposed to the disease at one of the old Rebel camps they visited. Possibly though, the vaccine that was given to him was the same dose given to soldiers who were more than twice his size, which could result in him contracting the deadly disease. The grief-stricken soldiers of Company C provided funds for a monument to be erected at his grave in the City Cemetery. On the monument you can still see a faded drum with crossed sticks and the inscription: *He has beaten his last retreat, and will sleep peacefully until Reveille on Resurrection Morn.*

Another young soldier who enlisted as a drummer and managed to survive the war was nine year old John Joseph Klem, who later changed his name to John Lincoln Clem. John was a young, spunky lad who ran away from home to join the Union Army. He managed to tag along with the 22nd Michigan as they passed through his home town of Newark, Ohio in the Spring of 1861. He stayed with them as a mascot until he officially enlisted in May of 1863. He gained notoriety when, during the Battle of Shiloh, his drum was reportedly smashed by a piece of cannon shell while he was beating The Advance. After that, he was referred to as "Johnny Shiloh". Being without a drum, he was given a cut-down musket to carry for self-defense. During the fighting of the Battle of Chickamauga, Clem became separated from his outfit, and was approached by a Confederate colonel on horseback. The colonel yelled to the

young soldier "Surrender, you damn little Yankee", and with that, Johnny raised his gun and fired, and the colonel fell wounded from his horse. After that, his nick-name was "the drummer boy of Chickamauga". He was then promoted to the rank of Lance Sergeant, with his name being placed on the roll of honor by General Rosencrans, and was presented with a silver medal of honor. Later in 1863, he was captured by Confederate soldiers and held for two months, but was returned to the North in a prisoner exchange. Johnny Clem was discharged on September 19, 1864 at the ripe old age of thirteen. Johnny started his second army term in 1871 when President Grant made him a second lieutenant. He stayed in the army until his retirement in 1915, as a brigadier general. He was the last of the Civil War army veterans to retire. He died in 1937 at the age of 85 in San Antonio, Texas, and was buried at the Arlington National Cemetery.



Johnny Clem

History has preserved some basic information about these two young drummers, along with count-



less others who served their country, both North and South. We'll never have the opportunity to hear any of their performances from either times of war or peace. The notes they've played have been lost, along with them, in eternity, not to be heard again, until perhaps "Reveille on Resurrection Morn.