

No More The Bugle Calls

by Lynne Belluscio

The Historical Society offers a wide variety of hands-on-history programs for the students at the Wolcott Street School and this next year, we hope to expand some of the programs.

One of the programs is based on the Civil War and we hope to offer the students a brief look at what it was like when 240 men from LeRoy were gone to fight what was known as the "War of the Rebellion." Every family was touched by what was going on. Women and children were scrapping lint and rolling bandages. Others were packing small boxes of food and clothing to send to the soldiers while others were writing letters.

Myron Pierson's sisters sewed a flag that they flew at their house, while other women sewed a flag that was carried into battle. Soldiers were billeted in the buildings at the end of Church Street and they drilled and marched in preparation for being called to duty. They also walked into town and serenaded the young girls at Ingham University and attended services at the Presbyterian Church.

News from the front was reported in the *LeRoy Gazette* and families waited for lists of wounded and fatalities. We will have each student write the name of one soldier on a ribbon and tie it to a flag. Then the flags will be displayed around the Soldier's Monument at Trigon Park as they go back to school as a reminder of the sacrifices that this community made to preserve the union and to guarantee freedom for all people.

In the meantime, I have learned that both my grandsons are participating in the music program at school. One is playing the trumpet and the other the drums. A hundred and fifty years ago, they would have been learning the bugle music and the cadences to send soldiers into battle, and boys just a few years older would have lied about their age and enlisted as musicians.

It's a sobering thought. The importance of the musicians might be overlooked today, but in the 1860s, the need for communication to the thousands

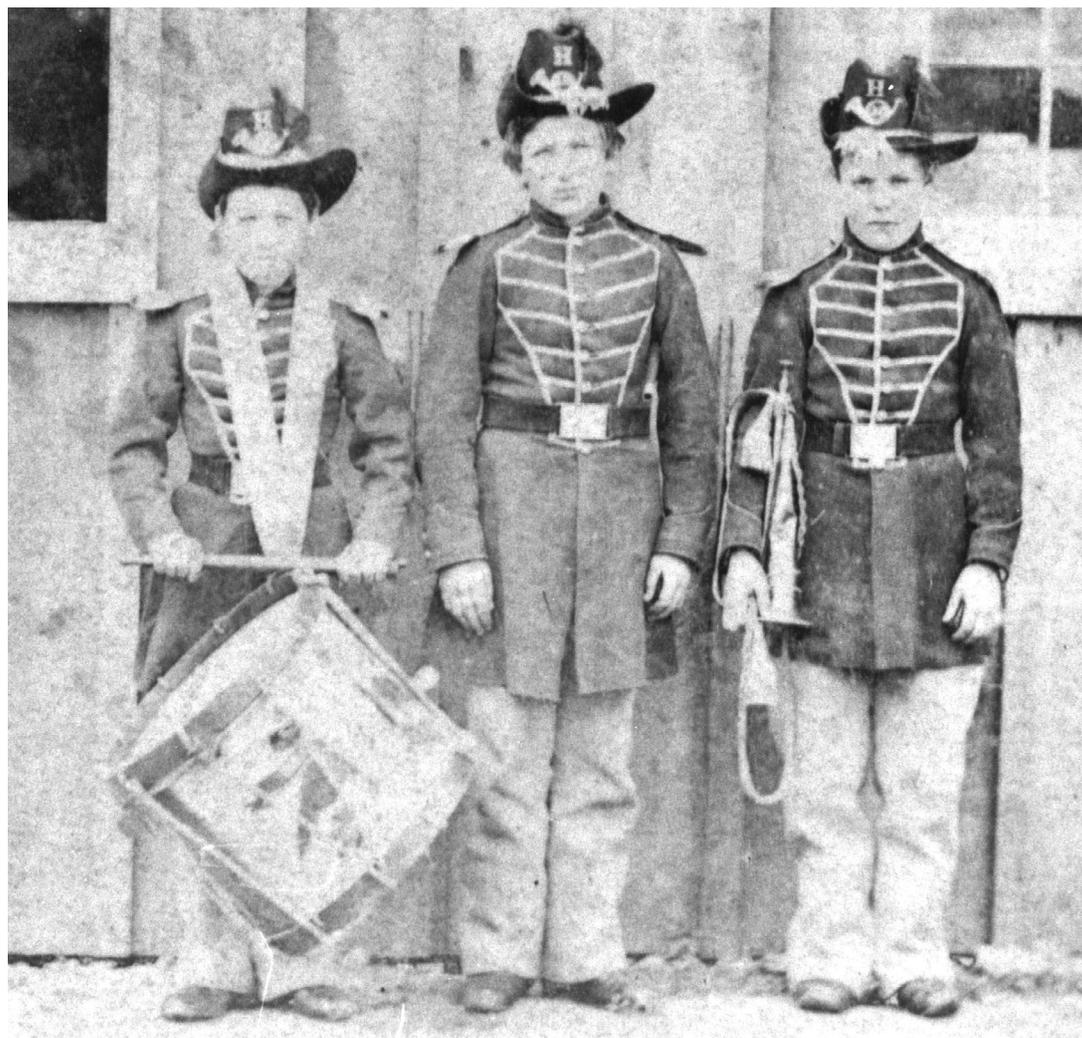


Photo courtesy of Tapbugler.com

of men on the battlefield was with the young buglers. The drums were fine for setting the cadence for marching, but once the battle broke out, only the bugle could be heard above the din. And it was the bugle that regulated army life in camp. There were 49 different signals for getting up; for assembly; for sick call; for lights out and for end of day as well as all the battle formations.

It was during the Civil War that what we know as "Taps" was rewritten and became a part of military music. It is also curious to note that Confederate units had to have different bugle signals so they would not be confused with the Union bugles. It was because of experiences during the Civil War that General Emory Upton (from Batavia – whose statue stands on the monument in front of the Court House) proposed a complete revision of the tactics of the United States Army.

His revisions included standardized bugle calls. A recent article in the *Western New York*

Heritage Magazine by David Neth, gives a good glimpse of the life and times of Gen. Upton, who is considered a military mastermind.

Military musicians also included military bands. In 1861, each regiment was allowed to have a band of twenty four musicians. Calvary units were allowed to have 16 musicians in their units. The mission was to provide uplifting, patriotic music for the soldiers. One account mentions that returning soldiers from a disastrous defeat were met with the hymn "Nearer My God to Thee." And General Lee said that the war could not have been fought without music. For the Union, the "Battle Hymn of the Republic" and the "Battle Cry

of Freedom" rallied soldiers and citizens to the cause.

In nearby Caledonia, John McNaughton wrote a poem that was set to music. *The Faded Coat of Blue* told the sad story of a Union soldier who died in a southern prison. (Perhaps you have noticed the historic marker in front of his house on your way to Avon. I noticed last week that the house is for sale.)

From the second verse of
Faded Coat of Blue:

*No more the bugle calls the weary one,
Rest, noble spirit, in thy grave unknown
I'll find you, and know you among the good and true
When a robe of white is giv'en for the faded coat of blue*



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