

A Chronicle of the Pre-World War II Cavalry Bands of the U.S. National Guard—with Recollections of Those Who Rode

Music and Horses

Trumpeters and drummers have provided communication and inspiration in battle and on the march as warrior-musicians for centuries. As well, horses have played prominent roles in warfare since prehistoric times, and coupling them with military music—initially with trumpets and drums, and later with fully instrumented bands— resulted in a tradition of horse-mounted military bands that spread throughout Europe, and followed British, Spanish, French, and Portuguese colonization to Africa, Australia, and South and North America.¹ In the U.S. alone there were more than thirty mounted military bands serving during the years between the Civil War and World War II, including those of the U.S. National Guard of the 1920s and '30s. The author offers this article based on information gathered from official documents of the period as well as from several men who rode in these Guard bands.

National Guard Bands

While musical elements were common in militia units since colonial times, it wasn't until the 1903 and 1908 Militia Acts that National Guard units, including bands, were required to conform to the same organization as Army units. These actions authorized (and standardized to an extent) bands across the country, with a few cavalry National Guard units establishing mounted bands around the time of World War I, but with most apparently being established during the 1920s.²

In *A Brief History of the Militia and National Guard*, Renee Hylton and Robert K. Wright, Jr. explain the legislation that set the stage for the federal organization of the National Guard, and in turn, its bands: “Known as the Dick Act for the Congressman and National Guard General from Ohio who had sponsored it [Charles W.F. Dick], the 1903 law opened the way for increased federal control over the Guard” mandating that states were subject to inspection by Regular Army officers, and that Guardsmen were to attend a specified number of drills and annual training. The Militia Act of 1908 further delineated organizational aspects, and the National Defense Act of 1916, which was enacted a year before the U.S. entered World War I and during the time of the Mexican Punitive Expedition, resulted in a unified structure and “guaranteed the state militias’ status as the Army’s primary reserve force, and it mandated the

¹ For additional articles on the mounted band tradition by Bruce Gleason see appendix.

² Major Les' Melnyk, Army National Guard Historian, National Guard Bureau, Arlington, Virginia, e-mail message to author, 20 May 2003; Colonel Leonid Kondratiuk, Director Historical Services of the Massachusetts National Guard states: “Prior to 1917 there were a number of cavalry regiments in the Guard. I do not know, nor does anyone else, how many had mounted bands. My guess is that there were very few,” e-mail message to author, 21 May 2003.

term ‘National Guard’ for that force.”³ This legislation also ensured that National Guard bands across the country were treated similarly in terms of instrumentation, funding, etc.

Spreading across the country from Brooklyn, New York (101st Cavalry) to Albuquerque, New Mexico (111th Cavalry), the War Department’s *Official National Guard Register for 1936*⁴ and the *Official National Guard Register for 1939*⁵ indicate that there were nineteen bands within National Guard cavalry units (see Table 1). Although all of these bands were authorized to be mounted, due to a lack of horses in general, and because some units weren’t allotted sufficient numbers of horses for their bands in peacetime, it is difficult to determine how many of them actually performed on horseback.⁶ Former Guardsman Bill Rankin comments:

...In September 1934 I, along with another clarinet player, lied about our age[s]...claiming to be 18 when we were actually 16...and enlisted in the Cavalry Band. The 116th Cavalry Band, Idaho National Guard was not a mounted band. However, the tympany supplied to the band had no legs and was designed to be mounted in hampers.⁷

Major Les’ Melnyk, Army National Guard Historian of the National Guard Bureau further clarifies:

I have no doubt that your veteran’s memory is correct, and he did indeed walk, but that doesn’t mean he was “supposed” to walk. His unit may simply have suffered from a lack of horses, or it is possible that the allotment of horses for the band was not authorized in peacetime—only in wartime. Guard units sometimes provided their own, privately purchased horses, just so they could train.⁸

Guard units were chronically short of horses and mules throughout the interwar period, and many of those animals which the Federal government did furnish were old or infirm castoffs from the Regular Army. On June 30, 1925 there were 10,259 horses and 23 mules in the Guard, of which 896 (8.7 percent) were State or privately owned.⁹ The

³ Renee Hylton and Robert K. Wright, Jr., Ph.D. *A Brief History of the Militia and National Guard* (Washington, D.C.: Departments of the Army and the Air Force, Historical Services Division, Office of Public Affairs, National Guard Bureau, August 1993), 20-21.

⁴ War Department, National Guard Bureau. *Official National Guard Register for 1936* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1936), 9-12.

⁵ War Department, National Guard Bureau. *Official National Guard Register for 1939* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1940), 12-16.

⁶ Melnyk, Arlington, Virginia, e-mail message to author, 24 April 2003; photographs of bands and/or verbal accounts of musicians of the 101st, 102nd, 103rd, 104th, 106th, 107th, 110th, 113th, 121st, 123rd, and 124th cavalries of the U.S. National Guard of this period indicate that these bands were mounted, and are in the possession of the author.

⁷ Bill Rankin, Caldwell, Idaho, e-mail message to author, 14 April 2003.

⁸ Melnyk, Arlington, Virginia, e-mail message to author, 24 April 2003.

⁹ Melnyk citing *Chief of the Militia Bureau, Annual Report* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1925), 43.

average age of the animals, as reported in November 1927, was 19; units had, on average, 84 percent of the horses authorized for peacetime training.¹⁰

The following list, taken from the National Guard Registers for 1936 and 1939, indicates the nineteen cavalry bands of the U.S. National Guard in terms of unit, location, and dates of organization, with further dates given for bands whose organizations changed. As well, bandmaster information is given for dates of promotion, births, and college degrees. I have mainly retained the original abbreviations with designated explanations in footnotes where I thought they would be helpful. After some deliberation, to help further band and military historians, I have also retained organizational information, even with units like the 104th Pennsylvania, which has a longer and more involved lineage than the others. As I have gathered more information about some bands than others, I have included footnoted information for the same reason.

Table 1: National Guard Cavalry Bands

General Headquarters Reserve troops (GHQ)¹¹

111th Cavalry, New Mexico (1936 and 1939 in Albuquerque)
6 May 1929.¹² Carl L. Cramer (b. in Kansas 29 Oct 97)
Warrant Officer (WO) 1 Jun 36,¹³ NGUS 7 Aug 36¹⁴

112th Cavalry, Texas (1936 and 1939 in Dallas)
13 March 30. Lester E. Harris (b. in Texas 9 Apr 91)
WO 4 Dec 30, NGUS WO 4 Jun 34

124th Cavalry, Texas (1936 and 1939 in Mineral Wells)
2 Apr 23. David Burnswick (b. in Austria 28 Nov 98),
WO 2 Dec 23, NGUS WO 1 May 34

122^d Cavalry - not organized

¹⁰ Melnyk citing *Memorandum*, Executive Officer, Militia Bureau to Assistant Chief of Staff, G-4 (Logistics), Subj: Answers to Questionnaire for Chief of Staff, 22 November 1927, 6-7. RG168/344a/325.4 - Gen. - 27.

¹¹ The *GHQ reserve* is composed of units of the various arms and services that are not otherwise specifically assigned and which are held for use as reinforcements or for separate missions under GHQ.

¹² Indicates the date on which the unit met qualifications for Federal Recognition, determined for the Army by the National Guard Bureau (NGB).

¹³ Indicates the date that the officer received his state warrant officer commission.

¹⁴ NGUS stands for National Guard United States, and refers to the date when the officer received Federal recognition under the 1933 amendment to the National Defense Act. Until then, National Guard officers did not have Federal/Army commissions—only state commissions. From 1933 on, all Guard officers received Federal commissions.

21st Cavalry Division: Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York

- 101st Cavalry, New York (1936 and 1939 in Brooklyn)
 1 June 21. Harwood C. Simmons (b. in Kentucky 14 August 02; BA John Fletcher College, Iowa 25, MA Columbia University, New York 32),
 WO 23 March 36, NGUS WO 29 April 36
- 121st Cavalry, New York (1936 and 1939 Band in Rochester)
 15 February 28. Austin H. Truitt (b. in India 19 November 05; BA, BM Illinois Wesleyan University 28) WO 5 February 31, NGUS WO 4 June 34
 Royal A. Furness (b. in New York 7 April 06; BS Colgate University 28)
 WO 14 May 38
- 102^d Cavalry [Essex Troop], New Jersey (1936 and 1939 Band in Newark)
 17 August 21.¹⁵ Peter E. Rosenzweig (b. in Hungary 9 June 86),
 WO 8 July 31, NGUS WO 7 May 34
- 110th Cavalry, Massachusetts and Connecticut (1936 and 1939 in Allston)¹⁶
 30 November 21.¹⁷ Chester E. Whiting,¹⁸ (Born in Massachusetts 22 July 00),
 WO 7 January 24, NGUS WO 9 July 34

22nd Cavalry Division troops: Kentucky, Ohio, Pennsylvania

- 103^d Cavalry, Pennsylvania (1936 and 1939 in Northumberland)
 6 June 21. Edward S. Calhoun (b. Pennsylvania, 14 June 93),
 WO 21 May 29, NGUS WO 31 October 34
- 104th Cavalry, Pennsylvania (1936 Band in Elizabethville, 1939 Band in Harrisburg)
 1 Jun 21.¹⁹ Percy A. Swab²⁰ (b. Pennsylvania, 8 Nov 89),
 WO 30 Jul 26, NGUS WO 25 Apr 34
- 107th Cavalry, Ohio (1936 and 1939 in Akron)

¹⁵ Originally recognized as Band Sec Sup Tr 1 Cav 7 July 20.

¹⁶ Allston is a neighborhood of Boston, west of Kenmore Square, South of Cambridge, and north of Brookline. The Commonwealth Armory was adjacent to the site that is now Boston University's Nickerson Field.

¹⁷ Originally recognized as Band Sec Serv Tr Cav 17 November 20.

¹⁸ After leading the 110th Cavalry band for sixteen years from 1924 to 1940, Whiting commanded several U.S. Army bands, and concluded his career as the founding commander and conductor of the U.S. Army Field Band.

¹⁹ Organized originally as Band 8 Infantry 1 May 03

²⁰ Served in the 316th Infantry Band, 1917-1919.

21 Jul 27. Lawrence V Kelley (b. Texas, 12 Oct 96; BA Emanuel College, Michigan 22),
WO 19 May 36

123^d Cavalry, Kentucky (1936 and 1939 in Glasgow)
1 Apr 29. Wayne E. Tyree (b. Kentucky 5 May 94),
WO 22 May 33, NGUS WO 28 Aug 34

**23rd Cavalry Division troops: Alabama, Georgia, Illinois,
Louisiana, Michigan, Tennessee, Wisconsin**

105th Cavalry, Wisconsin (1936 and 1939 in Watertown)
1 Apr 21.²¹ Edwin J. Woelffer (b. Wisconsin 31 Jan 90),
WO 3 Apr 28, NGUS WO 11 May 34

106th Cavalry,²² Illinois and Michigan¹ (1936 and 1939 in Chicago)
12 July 29. Thomas J. Madden²³ (born in Illinois 5 June 05),
WO 28 April 36

108th Cavalry, Georgia and Louisiana (1936 Band in Jennings, Louisiana)
21 Mar 29. John A. Liesch (b. 29 Oct 88)
WO 6 May 29, NGUS WO 19 Sep 34
(1939 Band in Savannah, Georgia, and in New Orleans, Louisiana)²⁴

²¹ Originally recognized Band Section 1 Cav 1 Nov 20.

²² The Chicago unit of the 106th Cavalry was known as the *Chicago Black Horse Troop and Mounted Band*. There have been several Black Horse Troops within the U.S. military in general, and the National Guard in particular. Sousa's famous march, *The Black Horse Troop* was not written for the Chicago organization, but for Troop A of the 107th Cavalry Regiment of the Ohio National Guard in 1924, prior to the forming of this unit's mounted band. Paul E. Bierley. *The Works of John Philip Sousa*. (Columbus, OH: Integrity Press, 1984). 42-43. The 11th Cavalry of the U.S. Army was also known as the Blackhorse Troop, <http://www.11thcavnam.com/>, accessed 29 February 2004.

²³ Joining the band as a charter member in 1929, Madden is an example of a Guardsman-musician who rose through the ranks to become the commanding bandmaster. War Department, National Guard Bureau. *Official National Guard Register for 1936*. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1936), 255.

²⁴ The 1939 Register lists the 108th Cavalry Band at Savannah, Georgia in the Stations of Organization section (p.15), and at New Orleans, Louisiana in the state section (p. 503). Melnyk states: "As for the location of the 108th Cavalry band, it appears that one of the two entries is in error. I would guess that the listing on p. 15 is the mistake, and the state listing showing the band in New Orleans is correct. In part, I base this on the fact that the band does not show up under the state listing for Georgia, which helps confirm the fact that it was in New Orleans. It may have been that the band was initially allotted to Georgia but subsequently the allotment was transferred to Louisiana, thus accounting for the notation under the band heading in the state listing section where it shows the band was initially federally recognized, was disbanded in 1937,

Frank J. Rosata (Born in Louisiana 1 Feb 15), WO 4 Apr 37, NGUS WO 28 Jun 37

109th Cavalry, Tennessee (1936 and 1939 Band in Chattanooga)
9 May 23, John W. Washburn (b. in Tennessee 4 Mar 79),
WO 14 May 25, NGUS WO 18 May 34

**24th Cavalry Division troops: Colorado, Idaho,
Kansas, Washington, Wyoming**

113th Cavalry, Iowa (1936 and 1939 in Oskaloosa)
5 Jul 28. Lee R. Brissey (b. in Iowa 14 May 97),²⁵
WO 5 Sep 33, NGUS WO 28 Apr 34

114th Cavalry, Kansas (1936 and 1939 in Kansas City, Kansas)
3 Jul 24. Harry M. Swartz (b. Illinois 20 Nov 82)
NGUS WO 4 Jun 34
Charles M. Nixon (b. Kansas 1 Aug 94),
WO 1 Jan 39, NGUS WO 29 Mar 39

115th Cavalry, Wyoming (1936 and 1939 in Cheyenne/1939 Same)
26 Mar 26. Clyde G. Ross (b. in New Mexico 25 Feb 93),
WO 1 Feb 32, NGUS WO 13 Aug 34²⁶

116th Cavalry, Idaho (1936 and 1939 in Caldwell)
13 Oct 26. Earl H. Tunison (b. in Idaho 28 Dec 12),
WO 18 Sep 35, NGUS WO 4 Mar 36
Lorn E. Christensen (b. in South Dakota 21 Jul 09; BS South Dakota State College 31,
Mmus Eastman School of Music, New York 36), WO 15 Oct 37, NGUS WO 9 Feb 36

This information indicates that all of these National Guard cavalry bands were

then federally recognized again two months later. It must have moved to Louisiana in Feb-April 1937," Melnyk, Arlington, Virginia, e-mail message to author, 13 Oct 2005.

²⁵ Lee Roy Brissey was the final bandmaster of the 113th Cavalry band after several others, who included Roscoe V. Heringlake and Harry Peaslee, and the first of which was C.L. (Lloyd) Barnhouse Jr., of C.L. Barnhouse Publishing, who served from 1928 to 1931.

²⁶ Clyde Ross was a violinist, and is a good example of a cavalry musician who spent his life in various music circles. Providing music from their own library in 1935, Ross and his wife, Alice, who was also a musician (pianist), founded the Cheyenne Little Symphony, which was one of the predecessors of the present-day Cheyenne Symphony. Ross served as the first conductor of this group, and also led and played in local dance bands. The University of Wyoming School of Music continues to award the Clyde Ross Memorial Scholarship; Frank Hoadley, Grandson of Clyde G. Ross, Madison, Wisconsin, telephone interview by author, 26 May 2006; Chloe Illoway, Executive Director of the Cheyenne Symphony, Cheyenne, Wyoming, telephone interview by author, 9 June 2006.

established in the 1920s, except for the band of the 104th Cavalry in Pennsylvania, which began as an infantry band in 1903, although it didn't become part of a cavalry unit until 1921. Because many National Guard units were constituted from existing state militia and even private units, the actual history behind these regiments and bands is more complex. While several predecessor units hosted mounted bands, including the 1st Battalion of Cavalry of the Massachusetts Volunteer Militia²⁷ at the turn of the twentieth century (preceding the 110th Cavalry), this history is outside the parameters of the present study.

Duty

The duty of National Guard Cavalry bands consisted of various rehearsals, performances and military training. George L. Shaffer of Fairfax Station, Virginia served with the 103rd Cavalry Band in Northumberland, Pennsylvania as a tuba player (sousaphone when mounted) from 1940 to 1941 and recalls "...our duties consisted of playing local concerts, parades, dedications, etc., as well as two weeks of summer training comprised of maneuvers and musical performances with the regiment at Camp Drum New York."²⁸ Elwood Langdon of Ft. Pierce, Florida, who played trumpet with the 101st Cavalry Band of Brooklyn, New York from 1931 to 1938, adds to the picture:

The 101st was stationed at the armory on Bedford Avenue—just up the hill from Ebbets Field, home to the Brooklyn Dodgers. On Monday nights we had seated rehearsals, and had mounted rehearsals about twice a month. We played most all the Sousa marches for polo matches—some light concert pieces and cornet solos like Clarke's *Bride of the Waves* and *A Soldier's Dream*.²⁹

George Ramsden of Rockport, Massachusetts who rode with the 110th Cavalry Band of Boston (Allston), Massachusetts from 1934 to 1940 as a saxophonist recalls that "...we weren't the dressiest band, but one of the better concert bands—*1812 Overture*, we played at Revere Beach and all over—*Poet and Peasant Overture*, *Tiger Rag*."³⁰

²⁷ 1900 photograph of the mounted band of the 1st Battalion of Cavalry, Massachusetts Volunteer Militia is in the author's possession.

²⁸ George L. Shaffer, Fairfax Station, Virginia, telephone interview by author, 25 June 2001.

²⁹ Elwood Langdon, Ft. Pierce, Florida, letters to author, 9 April 2003 and 5 May 2003.

³⁰ George Ramsden, Rockport, Massachusetts, telephone interview by author, 14 March 2004.



**102nd Cavalry (Essex Troop) Mounted Band
Sea Girt, New Jersey (c. mid-1930s)**

*Photo Courtesy of Ronald Da Silva, Nutley, New Jersey from
the collection of former 102nd clarinetist, Joseph Torre*

National Guard mounted bands were geared toward the particular populace that they served. Some bands like the 124th in Mineral Wells, Texas served a small town-rural population. Other bands were organized as highly visible organizations in major urban centers, and served as military escorts and ceremonial troops, who, in addition to their federal khaki uniforms, were often attired in specially designed dress uniforms.³¹ In the case of the *Chicago Black Horse Troop and Mounted Band* of the 106th Cavalry in Chicago, one hundred matched black horses were required to fully equip a troop and band of this character, whose members were attired in dress uniforms patterned after U.S. dragoons of the War of 1812. Dr. Francis Mayer of St. Paul, who rode with the 106th as a clarinet player from 1929 to 1933 recalls:

The whole idea was for public relations. We would ride from our headquarters at the Chicago Riding Club on East Erie Street to the LaSalle Street or Dearborn station, and escort dignitaries through the streets to their hotels, or we'd take someone through the fairgrounds through the World's Fair [Century of Progress, 1933-1934]. And remember it wasn't just the mounted band—it was also seventy additional troopers on horseback. Of

³¹ *1940 National Guard of the U.S. Naval Militia State of Illinois*, 431, 106th Cavalry Collection, Chicago Historical Society, accessed 18 December 2002; *Black Horse Troop at War*, Chicago: Chicago Black Horse Troop Association, Bulletin No. 1, (May 1945), 7. By the 1920s, the idea of a local military unit serving in these capacities was of course centuries old, but is usually associated more with European courts. However, militia units serving as horse-mounted ceremonial units were also known in North America. The Governor General's Body Guard of Toronto, Ontario maintained a similar unit with a band in the 1930s, as did the 104th Cavalry of Pennsylvania, of which the First Troop Philadelphia City Cavalry of Philadelphia (formed in 1774 and serving as an escort for George Washington) continues to host a horse-mounted ceremonial unit (sans mounted band) attired in eighteenth-century-style uniforms.

course we'd create quite a sensation. It was an expensive ordeal, so subscriptions were enlisted from Chicago corporate and political leaders to add to the government funds.³²



Chicago Black Horse Troop and Mounted Band of the 106th Cavalry in First Public Appearance, Memorial Day Parade, Michigan Avenue, Chicago, 30 May 1930.

Photo Courtesy of the U.S. Cavalry Association, Ft. Riley, Kansas

Motivations for Joining

³² Dr. Francis N. Mayer, St. Paul, Minnesota, telephone interview by author, 25 November 2002; Audio-taped interview at Dr. Mayer's home, 2 December 2002; Video-taped interview with Dr. Francis Mayer at his home, 9 December 2002. Included in the list of escorted guests from 1929 to 1940 were Franklin Roosevelt, Herbert Hoover, Amelia Earhart, United States Army Chief of Staff General Charles P. Summerall, Attorney General Homer Cummings, Prince Tokagawa of Japan, General Italo Balbo of Italy, and Crown Prince Frederick and Crown Princess Ingrid of Denmark, *Armory Dedication Program*, Chicago, Illinois, Armory for the Fifth-Eighth Field Artillery Brigade Headquarters, One Hundred Twenty-Second Field Artillery, and the Second Squadron, One Hundred Sixth Cavalry, Illinois National Guard (17 February 1940): 14. Accessed from the 106th Cavalry Collection, Chicago Historical Society 18 December 2002.

Reasons for musicians joining mounted bands in the 1920s and '30s were similar to those of today's military musicians. Until the late 1930s, a world at war was far from the public's mind, and men who played instruments in amateur as well as professional settings found steady work in the Guard. Several joined because of their high school band experiences, including Mayer who joined because Albert Cook, his band director at Chicago's De La Salle High School, was also the director of the 106th mounted band. George Ramsden recalls similarly:

Warrant Officer Bandmaster Chester Whiting of the 110th Cavalry Band, who was also the music supervisor of Everett High School where I attended, asked me to be his orderly. I walked his horse and took care of his uniform, and played saxophone in the rehearsals. He gave me the equivalent of a buck private's pay out of his own pocket, as well as candy bars and tonic. I finally joined the band myself when I was eighteen.³³

Others joined to supplement their income, or to avoid other military duty. John Dittmer of Menlo Park, California, who rode with the 101st Cavalry Band (NY) from 1936 to 1940 as a trombone and euphonium player, and from 1940 to 1942 as the bandmaster, relates several memories about joining and recruiting:

I had just finished my bachelor's degree in music education at Morningside College in Iowa and had come east to Columbia University for graduate work. Since the band was located in New York, we recruited at universities and the musicians' union, and we would tell the musicians, "You guys are going to get drafted if you don't do something about it. You're going to be firing a machine gun, driving a truck, etc. You'd be better off in one of the bands. Come to rehearsals on Monday nights and talk with our recruiter." Musicians who played every possible instrument from mandolin to Jew's harp would show up...³⁴

And, as Elwood Langdon (101st NY) recalls, one of the oldest reasons for joining any kind of military organization is because friends are joining:

I played with the drum and bugle corps—and later, the band of Boy Scout Troop 159 in Brooklyn. I played in a brass quartet within this band, comprised of my brother, Art and me on trumpet, Jack Wyrzten on trombone, and George Schilling on euphonium. We all later joined the 101st band, which Art ended up leading for a while.³⁵

Like their enlisted counterparts, cavalry bandleaders within this period of the National Guard probably joined to supplement their incomes, as well as to gain further leadership and conducting experience. Apart from their work in the Guard, some had non-musical civilian professions like Lee Roy Brissey of the 113th Cavalry who worked in a factory in Oskaloosa,

³³ George Ramsden, Rockport, Massachusetts, telephone interview by author, 14 March 2004.

³⁴ Colonel John S. Dittmer (Retd.), Menlo Park, California, telephone interview by author, 25 June 2003.

³⁵ Elwood Langdon, Ft. Pierce, Florida, letter to author, 9 April 2003.

Iowa.³⁶ Others were professional musicians in civilian life like Carl L. Cramer of the 111th Cavalry who was the principal trumpeter of the New Mexico Symphony Orchestra, and Albert Cook of the 106th Cavalry, who, in addition to being the band director at De La Salle High School was the leader of the Chicago Police Band, the Elks Prize Band, and the Kilties Band, and a private teacher at his studio in the Chicago Auditorium Building. Others taught as well, like Chester Whiting of the 110th Cavalry who was a school band director in Malden and Everett, Massachusetts; Austin Truitt³⁷ of the 121st Cavalry who was the head of the music department at Brighton High School in Rochester, New York; and Harwood Simmons of the 101st Cavalry who was the conductor of the Columbia University orchestra and the founder of the Columbia University Concert Band. Table 1 shows that the educational level of the bandmasters varied as well, with several having undergraduate degrees, and others like Lorn E. Christensen of the 116th Cavalry in Idaho, and Harwood C. Simmons of the 101st Cavalry in New York holding graduate degrees in music by the time they were cavalry bandmasters.

Summer Training

Summer Guard training was also a prevalent part of the picture with annual two-week camps consisting of mounted and concert rehearsals and performances, as well as military drills and ceremonies. Dittmer (101st NY) recalls:

In summer camp and active duty we did ceremonies called guard mounts, which took place every day—three out of seven days mounted in which the band would play. We took the horse cavalry regiment to North Carolina in 1941, with the horse vans carrying the horses over the road.

C. Arthur Fear of Evanston, Illinois rode with the 113th Cavalry Band in Oskaloosa, Iowa as a trombonist from 1926 to 1930, and recalls summer training reviews:

We rode out on to the field at a walk while playing, and made three left-hand turns, and we would end up in the front of the reviewing stand facing the general. The rest of the troops rode out and rode around the field three times, first at a walk, then at a trot and then at a gallop. We played marches for the first two rounds, and then for the gallop we played *The Campbells are Coming*. At the conclusion of the review, we did a counter-march and marched off the field.³⁸

³⁶ C. Arthur Fear, Evanston, Illinois, telephone interviews by author, 1 November 2001, 29 March 2003.

³⁷ Truitt went on to earn a Ph.D. in music education at the University of Rochester in 1953.

³⁸ C. Arthur Fear, Evanston, Illinois, telephone interviews by author, 1 November 2001, 29 March 2003.

Horse Handling

Horse handling was a primary consideration for members of mounted bands, and depending on the instrument, riders guided their horses in different ways. With some instruments, players guided horses with their knees, and with others, like trumpets, players often held the reins in their left hands, while they played with the right. Mayer recalls, “The horses were typically trained well enough to follow the horse in front of them. It was the front rank that had to worry about maneuvering, and I think that the outriders did more guiding than playing. Horses learned to be eventually impervious to the sounds.”³⁹

Part of the trick of playing an instrument on horseback of course has to do with the personality of the horse. Some bands made a conscious effort for musicians to ride the same horse each time—others didn’t. Roy Woodward of Ft. Worth, Texas joined the 124th Cavalry Band of Mineral Wells, Texas as a trumpeter and snare drummer at the age of 15 in 1931 under someone else’s name, and the next year under his own name—but lying about his age (his father, W.W. Woodward was the bandmaster). He recalls:

We didn’t have the same horse each time. “Here’s your horse.” We would get our horses from the stable sergeants. Sometimes they would like to play tricks on us by giving us horses that were ringers—that were excitable, and they would prance and buck when we started playing. We looked for the meekest, docile horses that weren’t afraid of trumpets and cymbals and the other instruments.⁴⁰

While some mounted musicians enjoyed mounted duty, others felt otherwise. Mayer (106th Illinois) recalls, “I never particularly enjoyed riding a horse. I endured it though...you couldn’t put a rein over your wrist because the horse would jerk its head and you’d get the clarinet bumped into your teeth.” Langdon (101st New York) recalls “for mounted band use our harness included a ‘martingale’—an extra strap that restricted the horse from throwing his head to prevent injury to the musician rider.” George L. Shaffer (103rd Pennsylvania) hadn’t ridden before joining the guard, and recalls that training consisted of “here’s your horse, get on it.” “I still don’t like the thought of a McClellan saddle—like sitting on the top rail of a fence.”⁴¹

Instrumentation

While the official number of musicians for each National Guard mounted cavalry band, like cavalry bands in the Army, was twenty-eight,⁴² most bands supplemented this—sometimes numbering up to forty for special occasions. Depending on the band, a full complement of instruments consisted of various combinations of woodwinds, brass and percussion. George Ish served in the 106th (Illinois) from 1936 to 1941 and recalls:

³⁹ Dr. Francis N. Mayer, St. Paul, Minnesota, telephone interview by author, 25 November 2002.

⁴⁰ Roy Woodward, Ft. Worth Texas, telephone interview by author, 8 July 1998.

⁴¹ Elwood Langdon, Ft. Pierce, Florida, letter to author, 9 April 2003.

⁴² U.S. Army Bands in History, “The Army Regains its Bands.”
<http://bands.army.mil/history/default.asp?chapter=16>, accessed 13 June 2006.

We had complete instrumentation of a 28-piece army band, which was the same for the 106th Cavalry Band when mounted or dismounted: 1 piccolo, 2 clarinets, 3 alto saxophones, 2 tenor saxophones, 6 trumpets, 5 trombones, and 1 tuba. The percussion consisted of 2 snare drums, 1 bass drum, 1 pair of cymbals, 1 glockenspiel, and 1 pair of kettledrums at the front of the band [although common in European and British mounted bands, kettledrums were rare in U.S. mounted bands].⁴³ In addition, the table of organization called for 1 Warrant Officer (bandmaster), and 1 drum major for a total of 28. The bandmaster conducted rehearsals and concerts, and at reviews would step in front of the band and use a baton. A commissioned officer from the line troop performed administrative duties and bandsmen field and weapons training. I can remember in the field maneuvers of 1936, I was designated as the Lieutenant's horse holder and aide.⁴⁴

⁴³ Kettledrums in U.S. mounted bands were rare. Conversely, in the United Kingdom and on the Continent, the only time mounted musicians would have been paired with drums other than kettledrums was with Dragoon units when hautbois were paired with side drums—in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Drum type was probably a result of expense and tradition. Kettledrums were expensive, and New World mounted bands worked with what they had and could afford. Additionally, mounted musicians on the Continent and in the United Kingdom were influenced for several centuries by the Trumpeters' and Kettledrummers' Guild, and the centrality of the kettledrum. By the time of the advent of mounted musical units in the former colonies, the guild had disappeared and new bands weren't influenced as strongly by this heritage since they were one step away from it historically.

⁴⁴ Lt. Colonel George Ish (Retd.), Yuma, Arizona, e-mail message to author, 26 June 2001.



123rd Cavalry Band, Kentucky, 1930s
Compliments of Kentucky Military History Museum

Demise of the Tradition

The National Guard mounted band tradition ended essentially at the beginning of World War II, when, between September 1940 and October 1941, over 300,000 Guardsmen in 18 divisions, 28 separate regiments, and 29 observation squadrons were inducted into Federal service, doubling the size of the Army. At the same time, the U.S. military was becoming mechanized, and cavalry and artillery units were supplanting horses with motorized vehicles resulting in the dismounting of Army and National Guard cavalry troops. These advances, further combined with societal changes and the expensive nature of supporting and supplying mounted bands, eventually concluded all U.S. mounted bands (Army and National Guard), most of which were dismounted at the outbreak of the war, with none remaining by the war's finale. Many heretofore-mounted musicians were transferred to other bands or to other units, and some mounted bands were reorganized as other bands—issuing the close of a grand piece of American military music history.⁴⁵

⁴⁵Hylton and Wright, *A Brief History of the Militia and National Guard*, 28; Colonel Leonid E. Kondratiuk, Worcester, Massachusetts, e-mail message to author, 10 April 2003.

Appendix I: Troop

George L. Shaffer (1923-) retired from playing tuba in the U.S. Army Band at Ft. Meade, Maryland in 1965, and then spent ten years as an engineer. He spent another decade as a high school band and choir director in Maine, Pennsylvania, and New Hampshire.

Dr. Francis N. Mayer (1912-) went on to study conducting with Glenn Cliffe Bainum at Northwestern University, and completed a Ph.D. in music at the University of Minnesota in 1957. He retired in 1982 as the director of bands and chair of the department of music at the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul, Minnesota.

George A. Ramsden (1915-) retired in 1988 from a career spanning oil refining, cold storage, and restaurant hosting. He is still gigging on saxophone at the time of this writing.

Elwood F. Langdon (1913-) retired in 1977 from a career in research and development with Pratt & Whitney Aircraft.

Lt. Col. George D. Ish (1919-2003) served for 25 years with the U.S. Army military police corps, concluding his military career as an Assistant Professor of Military Science at UCLA from 1957 to 1961, and as Provost Marshal with the First Cavalry Division in Korea, 1960-61. He retired as an executive with the Oasis Oil Co. of Libya Inc. in 1969, and as a private oil consultant in 1986.

Col. John S. Dittmer (1908-) retired in 1968 at the Presidio in San Francisco after a thirty-year career as a U.S. Army cavalry officer (combat in the Philippines, Japan and Korea), after which, he returned to a part-time career as a municipal band and orchestra conductor.

C. Arthur Fear (1910-2004) served with the federalized 113th Cavalry Band, which was redesignated as the 66th Army Ground Forces Band in World War II, serving primarily in Holland and Belgium. Returning to civilian life, he made his living as a sign painter, decalcomania and silkscreen artist, and leather embosser in Chicago, retiring in 1987.

Roy F. Woodward (1915-) retired in 1976 as a full-time repair technician for the Texas National Guard. As a life member of Musicians Union Local 72, Fort Worth, he played drums in his own and other dance bands.

Appendix II: Related publications by Bruce Gleason

Gleason, Bruce P. "A History of the Royal Artillery Mounted Band, 1878-1939." M.A. Thesis, University of Minnesota, 1988.

Gleason, Bruce P. "A History of the Royal Artillery Mounted Band, 1878-1939." *Journal of Band Research*, 27, no. 1 (1991): 16-29.

- Gleason, Bruce P. "Music on Horseback." *St. Thomas Magazine* (Fall 2002): 30-33.
- Gleason, Bruce P. "Military Musicians, A Gift from the East." *Renaissance*, 8, no. 4, Issue 32 (2003): 47-50.
- Gleason, Bruce P. "Horse-Mounted Military Musicians: An Overview." *Journal of Band Research*. 39, no. 1 (2003): 1-34.
- Gleason, Bruce P. "Mounted Musicians," *National Guard Magazine*, 58, no. 2 (February 2004): 26-29.
- Gleason, Bruce P. "Pipe Band of the 1st Canadian Mounted Rifles." *Military Collector & Historian, Journal of the Company of Military Historians*, 56, no. 4 (Winter 2004): 279-282.
- Gleason, Bruce P. "Dr. Bruce Gleason, Military Music." *The Company of Military Historians*, Interviewed by James Ronan II, <http://military-historians.org/horse/gleason.htm>, (October, 2005).
- Gleason, Bruce P. "Horse-Mounted Military Musicians in Battle and on Parade." *MHQ: The Quarterly Journal of Military History* (Winter, 2005): 80-83.
- Gleason, Bruce P. "The Mounted Bands of the North-West Mounted Police." *Band International, Journal of the International Military Music Society* 27, no. 3 (December 2005): 99-103, 120.
- Gleason, Bruce P. "U.S. Mounted Bands and Cavalry Field Musicians in the Union Army during the Civil War--Background, Duties, and Training." *Journal of Historical Research in Music Education*, 27, no. 2 (April 2006): 102-119.