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The Fifer in the American Revolution

By David T. Crum

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The so-called "Betsy Ross Flag" conforming to the Flag Act of 1777. (*Pixaby Flag*)

The American Revolution watershed moment in American and world history. A largely unorganized army defeated one of the most impressive armies in the history of the world. From the leadership of George Washington, to "minutemen," and continental spies, interest in the Revolutionary War continues to this day. This conflict remains unique as a David vs. Goliath scenario took place.

In the history of warfare, studies often include research conducted on weaponry, tactics, military formations, and overall specifics of battles. This study will briefly interact with general information about the American Revolution, but it will specifically focus on the role of

fifers within the conflict.

While perhaps not as engaging as reviewing espionage accounts or military skirmishes in wooded battles, the life, duty, and role of the fifer remains important to study. Fifers were often young soldiers who were typically unarmed, yet they participated in battle just like their counterparts in the line.



Revolutionary War unit showing the fife and drum leading its men in parade. (The Fife Museum)

Before analyzing the role of the fifer, it is essential to study how deadly the American Revolution was. An “estimated 184,000 to 250,000” Americans served in the war.¹ The U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs lists casualties as “around 4,435 battle deaths and 6,188 non-mortal wounds.”² Specific to the Revolution, historian David Fischer shares, “In the past three centuries, a major change occurred in the pattern of war losses. During the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, for every soldier killed in battle, eight soldiers died of

other causes.”³ He adds, “This evidence strongly indicates that mortality from all causes in the American War of Independence was much larger than has been reckoned, even as combat deaths were much below those in later wars fought with more lethal weapons.”⁴ As such, of the number of soldiers engaged in conflict, the American Revolution was a deadly confrontation that impacted most colonists.

Wounded soldiers lay on the battlefields within each battle, “suffering and screaming for mercy.”⁵ Anesthesia had not yet been invented, and injuries were “treated on the severity of the stricken soldier.”⁶ Amputation occurred if a bullet “entered or shattered an arm or leg.”⁷ The general practice for recovery of the wounded soldiers consisted “of both the American and British soldiers and physicians collecting their wounded once the afternoon and evening hit.”⁸ This meant many soldiers bled to death or lay injured for hours with no medical attention.

One only needs to research the Battle of Bunker Hill to grasp the harsh reality of the cost of war. In this one battle that the “English technically won,” the British loss was incredible. “Twenty-five hundred British troops took part in the battle, which resulted in eleven hundred fifty either dead or wounded.”⁹



Battle of Bunker Hill used on a Grenadian Stamp based on a painting by John Trumbull. (Author's Collection)

These dead and wounded soldiers included fifers. The fifer was often a brave, fearless patriot who was motivated for the cause of Independence. Perhaps similar to today's chaplain, the fifer was usually unarmed, yet an important part of the army.

In order to appreciate the role of the fifer, one must determine what exactly a fife was in Revolutionary times. The fife was a wooden instrument similar to the modern-day flute. During the

war, fifes were either previously imported from “England and even Germany or made locally in the colonies.”¹⁰ In America, “turners constructed the fifes.” A turner was one who “worked in wood, metal, and ivory.”¹¹

The idea of having an organized military, including a drummer and fifer, was well-established years before the Revolutionary War. This was an ancient practice carried into European and American culture. Ed Olsen of the *The Company Fifers & Drummers* writes, “We do know that the drum came over to the areas of English Settlements with some of the very earliest colonists. Considered a most necessary adjunct to the art of war, the drum was also used for calling the people together for church services and town meetings.”¹² He adds of the fife, “The fife had fallen into disuse in the England of that period and consequently did not accompany the early drum migrants. In the 1740s, the Duke of Cumberland returned from the continent of Europe with musicians long absent from English shores — Fifers. Soon the fife was actively engaged with the military drum, and by the French and Indian war, known in Europe as the Seven Years War, we started hearing it in the Colonies.”¹³ Since then, the drum and fife continued to be used in military service and formation. This was of great importance for any organized European army. The colonists continued their European traditions and appreciated the makeup of their army, including each unit's synchronized organization.

The designated age for enlistment to the Continental Army was sixteen years old.¹⁴ The official orders placed the enlistment age from sixteen to fifty.¹⁵ However, it was widely known many “fourteen- and fifteen-year-olds were joining the cause for Independence.”¹⁶ Without the blessings of their parents or guardians, some soldiers ran off to join the army. This was the case of one young soldier named Joseph



Fifer and drummer of the American Revolution. They provided inspiration and directed movement through music. (Author's Collection)

Plumb Martin.¹⁷ Many young men found themselves in musical duty vocations. Others "joined in accompanying their fathers who were soldiers."¹⁸ Some joined with uncles. The older men were often ill-equipped for military engagements, while others were veterans of previous skirmishes or battles. The "average age of the Pennsylvania fifer was seventeen, while the New Jersey average was ten to twenty-one."¹⁹

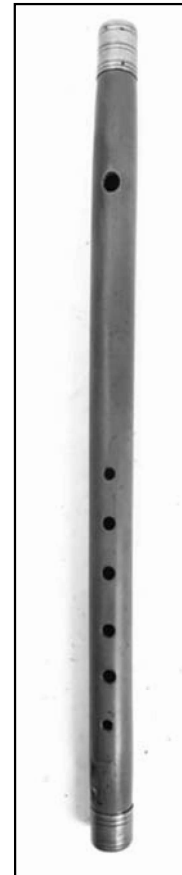
The musicians of the American Revolution consisted of two major categories: drummers and fifers. These young men are often referred to as "Boy Soldiers" of the Revolution. Ages varied, but some were as young as twelve

years old. Such was the case with one soldier named Augustus Meyers.²⁰ Meyers' preference was to be "a drummer boy."²¹ Due to his age and small stature, he was "made a fifer instead."²² Historian Caroline Fox notes:

Even drummer boys needed stamina. The new snare drum was light, only weighing about eight pounds, but it was awkward to carry. It was sixteen inches in diameter and eighteen inches deep, much deeper than those of today. The carrying sling was over the shoulders, and the drum rested against the thigh. This meant that walking and playing at the same time was a balancing act.²³

After reviewing a "drummer" practicing for a day, the young Meyers came to the realization that being a fifer was easier on him.²⁴ It must be emphasized that not all fifers were young; some were older and more experienced musicians. Nevertheless, young children made up a large part of the musical regiments of the Revolution. Perhaps one of the youngest musicians was "Fisk Durrand, who enlisted at the age of ten."²⁵ He enlisted for "two eight-month terms."²⁶

Another account shares a story of a fifer by the name of John Greenwood. Greenwood explained, "I learned to play several tunes upon it [fife] sufficiently well to be a fifer in the militia company of Captain Gay. This was before the war some years; I think I must have



An example of the Revolutionary war fife – wooden body with metal ends. (The Fife Museum)

been about nine or ten years old."²⁷ By "age 13, Greenwood was playing the fife for his uncle's company during the Revolution."²⁸

During the war years, the fifers maintained great responsibilities, lacked continuous education, and were typical kids. The young boys ran around camps and played just like any child.

The average company musicians consisted of one fifer and one drummer, though during the war it is noted some companies had two fifers and no drummer. The ideal organization for a company was, "one Captain, two Lieutenants, one Ensign, four Sergeants, four Corporals, one Clerk, one Drummer, one Fifer, and about sixty-eight privates."²⁹

The selection process typically focused on an individual with a musical background. Oftentimes, this meant much "older men."³⁰ Caroline Cox comments on that process:

Some officers may not have had their musical strength in mind at all. They may have been concerned with the beauty of a military line. Efficient commanders in the eighteenth century struggled to make uniforms practical but recognized the importance (to officers particularly but also to soldiers) of looking stylish according to the fashions of the day.³¹

Such logic is referred to as the "elegance of war or beauty of the line."³² Interestingly enough, officers often recruited drummers for their "physique."

A common practice consisted of drummers conducting the "lashings or whippings" to soldiers in decisions handed down by the military court.³³

The concept of discipline was much different from today. Author Jack Coggins writes, "The force which bound these motley arrays together was discipline, spelled with a capital D. By our standards it was unbelievably harsh. But everywhere was hard in those days."³⁴ Given the drummers often handed down the discipline, they needed to be able to protect themselves from possible retaliation. Generally, these musicians were considered non-combatant soldiers of war, similar to chaplains and medical professionals. Major fifes serving as the "head fife," however,

often carried a single pistol.

Both the English and Americans regiments consisted of structure and discipline. The fifiers played a large role in organizing units with their musical direction. Fife tunes consisted of military duty music such as "drum calls and to the arms."³⁵ In addition, retreats such as *Lovely Nancy* and the *Pretty Cupid* played."³⁶ An interesting ceremony named the *Tattoo* "consisted of fifes and drummers playing in which they urged soldiers out of the taverns and to return to their tents."³⁷ The fifer was used to assist in forming a battalion. "Signals ranged from wake-up calls, fetching wood, or even to show up to the church."³⁸ Most importantly, the fifer and drummer ordered battle calls, along with calling for medical attention.³⁹ Regular tunes consisted of "alerts of incoming attacks and orders to proceed."⁴⁰ Of importance were the direct orders played by fifiers to order "fire ready, fire now, to enemy combatants." This also proved troublesome as they remained a target for enemy fire.

Worth noting is the difference between military technology of the past and today. Fifiers were often directly in the line of fire. Further, musket balls could land anywhere. This was apparent when the fifer John Greenwood saw such an attack hit the horse directly next to him. Though it was an accepted practice that the fifer should remain unharmed to the best of the ability of each opposing force, fifiers were expected to continue playing their tunes within the battle, despite these dangers.

Professor of Literature Rebecca Bechtold writes, "Music provided an apt soundscape for the war, raising spirits, emphasizing the need for independence, and reinforcing the ideals colonists hoped to embody once independent from Britain."⁴¹ Fifiers such as John Greenwood also "took turns shoveling and assisting in the creation of embankments."⁴² They also played individual music to soldiers completing such work to provide encouragement and leisure. Later in his service when promoted to Major Fifer, Greenwood even guarded prisoners of war. Recalling the duty of marching with a British deserter, he noted, "I never liked a deserter or a traitor, neither can be trusted."⁴³ While their job was mainly focused on their musical talent, it was not uncommon to perform other duties as directed by their superior officers.

George Washington commented on the importance of military signals, "Nothing is more agreeable and ornamental, than good music; every officer, for the credit of his corps, should take care to provide it."⁴⁴ He was also typically unhappy with the music capability of his men and commented, "The music is so poor that the drum and fife players must practice more or risk demotion."⁴⁵

Regardless of the quality, it was well-known that most soldiers appreciated the drummers and fifiers, especially on long marches. And of course, of note, was the fine tune "Yankee Doodle" played by many fifiers. This tradition continued well after the war. Years after the war, one former fifer heard "the music playing and recognized (Yankee Doodle) was from a fellow fifer named Thaddeus Ferry."⁴⁶

Still, not every commanding officer appreciated the musicians. Brig. Gen. Andrew Lewis was known to "think of the fifiers as careless, often disabling their fife and equipment."⁴⁷ In context, this was not surprising as many of the fifiers were young children. In reality, they held an enormous responsibility as they were held accountable for tasks such as "waking up the soldiers and placing them in formation."⁴⁸ Many fifiers also remained outsiders to the much older soldiers, and it often took months to gain their respect. Nonetheless, the fifer was required to be part of the standard military company.

Regardless of whether one was a fifer or a drummer, their job was dangerous. The opposing forces had little concern for the age of an enemy combatant. And as such, fifiers and drummers were often in enemy range. It is worth noting that "patriot forces contained far more younger soldiers, including boys, than the seasoned English army."⁴⁹ Such statistics solidified the logic that the growing resistance came in large numbers from all ages and walks of life. At the Battle of King's Mountain, for example, "2.2 percent of the American forces were under the age of 16."⁵⁰

Much like any other position, advertisements were often made in the local paper that read something like, "Wanted. A Drummer and Fifer for the Light-Infantry Company of the Third Battalion."⁵¹ Another ad read, "Wanted: A Drummer, and Fifer, who can teach others the duty, to act as a drum and fife majors."⁵² Fifiers, just like other soldiers, had the opportunity to rise in rank. They were evaluated on their ability to perform their job and contractual obligations.

In December 1775, this was published regarding pay: "A drummer three shillings, a fifer three shillings. The Drummer Major and Fifer Major of every battalion shall receive each a sum not exceeding fifteen shillings per week and be continued in pay as long as the Colonels of the several battalions shall think necessary."⁵³ Several fifiers complained about their earnings during the war, some even leaving their units. Several newspaper publications noticed this, explaining their wages needed to be respectable due to the importance of their work. Important to note is that the company fifer made the same amount as the corporal, which was more than the private soldiers. Major fifiers made even more.

The fifer was much like any other soldier. Most were young and



Fife from 1770 that was used through the 1830s. The dates of use are carved into it. (Worthy Auctions)

committed to the cause of Independence. Following the history of European military formation, the musicians of the Revolution played a vital role in military elegance and discipline. Thankfully, through writings and historical records, one can study firsthand accounts of the combat service and actions during battles where the fifers served.

One tragic account comes from Giles Gibbs, Jr., who served from 1777 to 1780. His father Giles, Sr., and mother, Rachel Davis Gibbs, had “eleven children of which five were killed in enemy action or in service to their country.”⁵⁴ Giles, Jr., a fifer, was captured by enemy forces and killed. In her book, *Fife Tunes from the American Revolution*, author Kate Van Winkle Keller comments, “Why they were killed is not told in the narratives of this action.”⁵⁵ What is known, is “about thirty men and boys were captured.”⁵⁶ Their captives led them north, tying the prisoners, and eventually killed them.”⁵⁷

Gibbs was a talented fifer who left records of the “tunes he played for his fellow soldiers.” His journal accounted for over fifty-nine tunes.⁵⁸ Of his records, Keller continues, “when compared note by note to the same tune in other manuscripts, most of his versions are complete – the notes are all there, even though they are not written out with correct time values.”⁵⁹ One must appreciate the detailed

records of Gibbs in the context of the day in which he lived. To maintain, study, and recite fifty-nine tunes is remarkable in today’s society and even more admirable in his time. Just the records themselves affirm that the position of a fifer was difficult and to be taken very seriously.

Another fifer of Maryland, Walter Maddox, was killed in “action at Monmouth on 28 June 1778.”⁶⁰ Not much is known of his official death, except that he died in battle while serving with the 7th Maryland Regiment.⁶¹ Luther Blanchard was an eighteen-year-old “fifer who was one of the first wounded members of his unit at a skirmish known as North Bridge.”⁶² Ezra Ripley wrote, “In a minute or two, the Americans being in quick motion, and within ten or fifteen rods of the bridge, a single gun was fired by a British soldier, which marked its way, passing under Col. [John] Robinson’s arm, slightly wounding the side of Luther Blanchard, a fifer in the Acton company. This gun was instantly followed by a volley, which killed Capt. [Isaac] Davis and Mr. [Abner] Hosmer, both of the same company.”⁶³ It is reported that “Blanchard died years later from complications from his original wound.”⁶⁴

The fifer held a dangerous position, just like any other soldier. In his doctoral dissertation, *Disabled Revolutionary War Veterans and the Construction of Disability in the Early United States*, author Daniel Blackie shared the wounds of Levi Chubbuck.⁶⁵ Chubbuck of Massachusetts enlisted “in 1776 at the age of 15.”⁶⁶ He enlisted for a year as a fifer, followed by another three-year term. Blackie writes, “Levi Chubbuck, for instance, was wounded in 1777 by a musket ball in his left knee at the Battle of Throg’s Point, New York.”⁶⁷ Military records note, “Chubbuck was hit in the left knee serving as a fifer in Captain Seth Drew’s company.”⁶⁸ “In all, he served in two major battles, at Stillwater and Monmouth.”⁶⁹ He was discharged in 1780.⁷⁰ Eventually, Chubbuck received a pension after many denials. Between 1789-1796, due to revisions of the pension act, Chubbuck received disability around 1818.⁷¹ After the war, he married, settled down in New Hampshire, and he and his wife had twelve children.

Similar to Chubbuck was “Richard Frost who enlisted at age eleven as a drummer.”⁷² Frost “was injured at the Battle of Yorktown when a musket ball passed through his arm, in which he lost the arm for the rest of his life.”⁷³ Moses King of Massachusetts “was a thirteen-year-old fifer who re-enlisted at age fifteen.”⁷⁴ Like so many others, King lost his right arm in action.⁷⁵ Boys made a particularly easy target for the more aged English soldiers. This was known to be a fear of the American leadership. Cox comments, “Despite the many contributions, boys lack of physical strength limited their capacity.”⁷⁶

It is important to note that many of these injured young fifers were denied disability pensions. If they did receive benefits at all, it often followed a hard-fought battle that took years and several attempts to gain their much-deserved pensions.

Newspaper updates on the war often described the casualties of the various battles. It was common to read of the deaths of fifers, "November 28, 1777, Col. Green's regiment has two sergeants, 1 fifer, and 4 privates killed."⁷⁷ Other accounts reported the injuries of the wounded soldiers and fifers. Major Fifer John Greenwood recalled serving in the field when "smallpox hit over 2,000 soldiers and malaria fell upon another 1,500."⁷⁸ In such circumstances, death was rampant, and food supplies were scarce. Further from his personal journal, he shared what it was like living amongst the forest, "covered with thick woods, and being also very rocky, filled with snakes of every description, though mostly black and rattlesnakes."⁷⁹ Greenwood detailed the horrendous weather conditions he and his fellow soldiers endured night after night. This often included "soaking wet clothes, cold snow, mud and a lack of food."⁸⁰ As Greenwood experienced firsthand, disease ran rampant and took the lives of many of his fellow service members.

On military engagement, Greenwood wrote of one account in which his unit was at battle with the Hessian troops:

The first intimation of our going to fight was the firing of a 6-pound cannon at us, the ball from which struck the fore horse that was dragging our only piece of artillery, a 3-pounder. The animal, which was near me as I was in the second division on the left, was struck in its belly and kicked over on its back. While it laying there kicking, the cannon was stopped and I did not see it again after we passed on.⁸¹

This battle proved to be the last for Greenwood as his company, encouraged by General Washington, proceeded to attack and surround the Hessians, which resulted in victory. Greenwood armed himself and partook in charge of success. Greenwood recalled the attack:

I passed two of the cannon, brass 6-pounders, by the side of which lay seven dead Hessians and a brass drum. This latter article was, I remember, a great curiosity to me and I stopped to look at it. But it was quickly taken possession of by one of our drummers who threw away his own instrument. At the same time, I obtained a sword from one of the bodies and we then ran on to join the Regiment, which was marching down the main street toward the market. Just before we reached this building,

however, General Washington, on horseback and alone, came to our major and said, March on, my brave fellows, after me! And rode off.⁸²

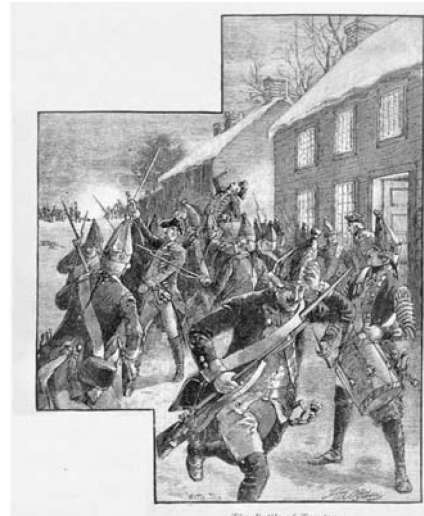
Author Jack Coggins writes, "John's time had been up the day before this battle. On December 27, 1776, the day after the battle, he received three months' back pay. Although he was offered a promotion and to ensign, he was tired and ill and wanted to go home."⁸³ He served his country honorably. He later became a well-known dentist, creating the dentures for President George Washington.

Eli Skinner, age 14, "enlisted after seeing the Red Coats march through the towns of Lexington and Concord."⁸⁴ His initial enlistment was an eight-month contract, and he re-enlisted from 1776 to 1777. He engaged in conflicts throughout Massachusetts and Fort Ticonderoga. This soldier was fortunate to survive and lived until the age of ninety, finally receiving a pension in 1832.⁸⁵ John Snyder of Maryland served as a "fifer in the "Eighth Company of the First Maryland Regiment, eventually earning the rank of fife major."⁸⁶ His unit faced the British "in the Battle of Brooklyn," escaping before major casualties took place.⁸⁷ Further battles consisted of the Battles of White Plains, Trenton, and Princeton.⁸⁸ Serving out his time as fife major, he elected not to re-enlist, later changing his mind and joining the naval fleet as a "privateer."⁸⁹

One fifer, John Piatt, "accompanied his officer father in service."⁹⁰

At one point, he was sent home after being hit by a horse in the face.⁹¹ He re-enlisted, however, eventually partaking in battle. Caroline Cox expands, "Piatt fought in the battle, and although it was a patriot victory, he and some others were taken prisoner. Fortunately for the boy, he was released shortly afterwards, being a youth, and he made his way home for good."⁹² Thankfully, his ending was different than the murdered Giles Gibbs, Jr.

As with other soldiers, there were accounts of fifers deserting. One newspaper clip reported,



The Battle of Trenton, showing Hessian troops called to arms. (Pixabay)

Henry Wilson, a fifer, 14 years of age, fair complexion, light-colored hair, putted with the smallpox and had on a red jacket. Whoever takes up the said deserter and secures them in any of the goals of the United States or marches them to the Regiment now at Quibble-Town, shall receive the above reward, or eight dollars for each, and all reasonable charges from James Wilson.⁹³

Another five-dollar reward was made for "James Poore, fifer, 18 years old, short hair and fond of liquor."⁹⁴ An additional account read:

Kenneth McLean a Fifer belonging to the Marines serving on Board the Janus a Young lad about 4 Feet 5 Inches who deserted the night of the 19th Instant was seen in Town dress'd in Regimentals, the party who have enlisted him, are ordered to give him up immediately.⁹⁵

As is the case with any conflict, desertion was common. There was no unusual amount of fifers deserting; it was an occurrence among all ranks and positions of the army. While some fifers left, other people, including slaves, sought to join the companies. One advertisement read, "Ran away this morning, a Negro fellow named Tom, about twenty years of age. It is supposed he will make towards the British, or perhaps to our army, pass as a free man, and endeavor to get employed as a fifer, he being a tolerable good one."⁹⁶ Another ad read, "Runaway slave, barber by trade, age 22 or 23, will pass as a fifer or drummer, will offer himself to some militia company as a fifer or drummer."⁹⁷ While the records are scarce, it is known that African Americans did serve as fifers in the war. Interestingly, they were integrated with whites, a practice "that would be outlawed until the start of the Cold War."⁹⁸ Before the war broke out, an "African American fifer called town meetings in Philadelphia."⁹⁹ While African Americans were permitted to serve, their rank was typically drummer, fifer, or private soldier. Some of the African American fifers included "Richard Cozzens, Barzillai Lew, Cyrus Tiffany,¹⁰⁰ and Josiah Combess."¹⁰¹

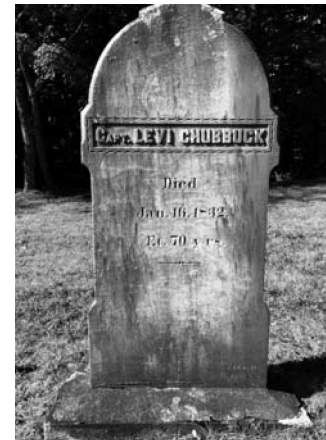
Some fifers guarded prisoners. James Holcomb of Massachusetts was a twelve-year-old fifer who served under his uncle.¹⁰² On one occasion, Holcomb recalled his "uncle's unit winning a decisive battle in which about seven hundred Hessian prisoners were taken."¹⁰³ Later, he would watch over the prisoners outside of his musical duties. Like so many other young boys, he switched his enlistment to a soldier after years of service.

With European traditions continuing to the colonists within the American Revolution, the war musicians left an impressive legacy. The drummers and fifers, often young boys, risked their lives for their

hometown. The fifers served honorably, from playing tunes of encouragement to alerting their brothers of incoming attacks.

Some joined the ranks as young children and were promoted to major. Others joined the army without the blessings of their caretakers. Many accompanied their fathers or uncles. Most had in common that they sought independence as other colonists did. The Revolution was a deadly conflict that impacted every colonial citizen. The battlefield was no different from today. It was gruesome and fatal. For such young men, their experiences had a lasting impact.

It often took years for wounded soldiers, if successful, to gain pensions. When service is required, the armed forces of America have always responded. This was the case with fifer Levi Chubbuck, my great (x5) grandfather who served his nation at a mere fifteen years of age, serving in two battles, being wounded, and losing the use of one leg. Studying the fifers' role in the nation's quest for independence keeps such veterans' legacies alive and relevant.



Gravestone of Levi Chubbuck, the author's ancestor and fifer in the American Revolution. (Author's collection)

Perhaps the motivation for entrance into the army was different for each person. Some entered for the cause of independence or simply followed family members into war. Others fled slavery. All of them, however, risked their lives for the good of their country. The fifers motivated and served honorably. They held great responsibility. The formation of units was often centered on their ability to play marching tunes. They helped when they could and often re-enlisted as regular soldiers. Their legacy continues today within each military branch of the United States.

Many young boys became men and paid the ultimate sacrifice to enable people today to be called Americans.

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Nisei Replacement Training at Camp Blanding

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During the Second World War Japanese Americans, Nisei, were inducted into the U.S. Army as both linguists and infantry soldiers and required basic training. Camp Blanding's Infantry Replacement Training Center was assigned the mission of providing this training. Nisei were initially trained in segregated units but beginning in late 1944 Nisei soldiers were placed in Camp Blanding's general training units. This paper will discuss the development of the training program for Nisei soldiers and its implementation at Camp Blanding.

The 442d Regiment, comprised mostly of Japanese American men, was among the most highly decorated U.S. Army combat units; their World War II medal awards include 7 Presidential Unit Citation awards, 21 Medals of Honor, 29 Distinguished Service Crosses, 560 Silver Stars, 22 Legion of Merits, over 4,000 Bronze Stars, and 4,000 Purple Heart awards. Because of the high number of casualties suffered by the men of the Regiment during World War II, the 442d became known as the "Purple Heart Regiment."¹ The Regiment was deployed and fought in both the Mediterranean and European combat theaters.

Contrary to the popular slogan – "The War to End All Wars" – the armistice that halted conflict in the Great War failed to end all wars. In spite of strong opposition to U.S. participation in another major war, by the late 1930s, there was increasing recognition that another world war was looming. Beginning in 1940, the U.S. Army, the world's 17th largest army in 1939, began a rapid expansion. National