ESSENTIAL CIVIL WAR CURRICULUM

Boys of the Civil War

By **Joel A. Moore**

Willie Lawn 10
Wounded and lost part of his right arm near Suffolk Virginia

David Wood 10
Aide to his father, Colonel 6th Missouri cavalry, created a sutler business and earned $2,000.

Johnny Clem 12
A runaway with the 22nd Michigan, shot an enemy colonel, sergeant with General Thomas' staff.

Willie Johnston 12
Drummer 3rd Vermont awarded the Medal of Honor Peninsula Campaign

Washington H. Potts 14
Highly talented drummer and bugler with Independent Battery I

Elisha Stockwell 15
Soldier from Alma Wisconsin, a run-away, lied to enlist and kept a diary.

Rashio Crane 15
Company D 7th Wisconsin, died in Andersonville Prison

Charles Bardeen 14
Fifer/Drummer 1st Massachusetts, published *A Little Fifer's War Diary*

Henry Messhage 12
1st Class Boy and powder monkey carried munitions on ships

Edwin Francis Jennison 15
2nd Louisiana Infantry killed at The Battle of Malvern Hill

Tad Lincoln 12
Commissioned 2nd Lieutenant , son of President Lincoln

Benjamin Knox 15
Company H 20th Ohio killed in the trenches at Atlanta

James Marten in his collection of essays about *Children and Youth During the Civil War Era* wrote that the question has been raised, "Have social historians lost the Civil War?" Civil War historians and historians of children and youth have generally ignored the children and youth who participated in the war. Some have begun to explore the topic in recent years. Emmy Werner shared the insights of Civil War children, particularly the combatants, in *Reluctant Witnesses*. Historians Jay S. Hoar, Dennis M. Keesee, and G. Clifton Wisler have explored the experiences of young participants within the armies of the war. The histories of these children are placed within the context of the conflict and the social environment of the times. Jim Murphy addresses the conditions faced by these young combatants from the event through which they became soldiers to the preparation for combat to their entry into battle. Bell Irvin Wiley shares his in-depth research as to who these individuals were, where they came from, and the attitudes and backgrounds they brought with them. Within their works

these historians explain how these boys entered the war, the evolution of attitudes and opinions both external and internal, and impact and conditions of war. Essays from Marten's work focus on the schools of thought of modern childhood, the impact of death on children and society, and the *Companion*, a periodical for children, and their impact on the children of the war and the war's impact on the times. Finally, within this narrative the shifting perspectives of the boys themselves reflect, from their own writings, the impact of the events of their historical time and place.

The American Civil War has sometimes been called the Boys' War because so many boys ages seventeen and under saw active service in the two armies. Many historians have estimated their number to be 250,000 or more. [1] How could this happen? How were they recruited? At the time of the war, the presence of young boys was an accepted practice. [2]

Dennis M. Keesee explained the rules at the time. Regulations over the years required soldiers to be at least eighteen years old, no younger than seventeen with written parental permission, pass a physical examination, and be at least five foot three inches tall. Musicians could be as young as twelve, were to pass a physical examination, but were excused from the height requirement. [3] Between the two armies, there was need for 60,000 musicians. [4]

Keesee went on to describe how recruitment worked. Companies and regiments were usually recruited from local communities by local businessmen, politicians, teachers, and ministers. Known and respected within their communities, they could easily gather enough recruits to fill the ranks and on that basis, were issued commissions as the commanding officers of the units they recruited. One of many ways in which boys entered the army was with their teachers or ministers. [5] Hoar added that many young teens were accepted by means of their own lies, by recruiters who looked the other way, by accompanying other family members, or by presenting themselves as orphans. The very young tended to be valets or servant to commissioned fathers, mascots, some musicians, and some who took the names of older family members or friends. [6] G.

[1] Emmy E. Werner, *Reluctant Witnesses, Children's Voices from the Civil War* (Boulder CO: Westview Press, 1998), 2.
[2] Jay S. Hoar, *Callow, Brave, and True, a Gospel of Civil War Youth* (Gettysburg, PA: Thomas Publications, 1999), xvii, xix. At the start of the Civil War, the presence of young boys in the ranks was taken pretty much for granted. Their presence extended historically to Old World tradition with many examples including fourteen-year-old Donald McCloud in 1702, eleven-year-old James Christian in 1703, twelve-year-old Marquis de Montcalm in 1724, and many others over the years. This trend continued throughout early American warfare. Examples included thirteen-year-old Eleazar Clay in the French and Indian War, fourteen-year-old Elijah Kellogg, Sr. in the American Revolution, eight-year-old Roswell Woolson in the War of 1812, and seven-year-old James Buckner in the Mexican War.
[3] Dennis M. Keesee, *Too Young to Die, Boy Soldiers of the Union Army 1861-1865* (Huntington, WV: Blue Acorn Press, 2001), 7-11.
[4] Jim Murphy, *The Boys' War* (New York: Clarion Books, 1990), 10.
[5] Keesee, *Too Young*, 25.
[6] Hoar, *Callow*, 222-3.

Clifton Wisler added that some enlisted in another community where they were not known and less likely to be questioned. And some declined pay and did not sign muster books so there was no record to check. [7] Finally, an unusual group of unassigned youth within the Confederate army were the drillmasters borrowed temporarily from Southern military schools to assist in the training of new recruits. Cadets thirteen years old and up were fully respected by older men as they drilled and trained them upon their entrance into the army. Some managed to join the units they trained and follow them into active service. [8]

There were other opinions and attitudes to overcome. In 1861, President Lincoln forbade the enlistment of soldiers under eighteen without written consent and a year later under any circumstances. President Davis, in one of his earliest speeches, argued against recruiting any under the age of eighteen. [9] Neither one had any influence over the entrance of young boys into the war. One group did have some effect.

Fifteen-year-old Elisha Stockwell explained in his memoirs that when he signed up, his father was there and crossed his name out. Five months later, he ran away with a friend whose captain got him in by lying a little. [10] Nine-year-old Johnny Clem ran away from home and was able to join up by starting out as a camp helper until he was older and mustered in as a drummer. [11] Ten-year-old David Wood was told in no uncertain terms by his father, a regimental cavalry commander, that he could not go with the regiment. He sneaked into the back of the column on a long march, was discovered by his father, then enlisted as an orderly when his father realized he would not stay at home. [12] Seventeen-year-old Aaron Stauffer was not only prohibited from joining the war by his mother, but also by his Mennonite church. He ran away and joined anyway, lying about his age. [13] Twelve-year-old Gustave Schurmann was an exceptionally talented musician. His father had taught him. His father had enlisted for the war, but his mother forbade his going. Finally, his parents decided that he might run away anyway and join up with strangers and decided they would rather he go with his father and be with family. [14]

[7] G. Clifton Wisler, *When Johnny Went Marching* (New York: Harper-Collins, 2001), viii.
[8] Bell Irvin Wiley, *The Life of Johnny Reb* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1943), 333. Foremost among these schools were the Virginia Military Institute in Lexington, Virginia, Hillsboro Military Academy in Hillsboro, North Carolina, and the Citadel in Charleston, South Carolina. Perhaps the youngest instructor to enter service in the Confederate army this way was eleven-year-old Charles Carter Hay. (Hoar, *Callow*, 52-55).
[9] Wisler. *When Johnny Went Marching*, viii.
[10] Elisha Stockwell, *Private Elisha Stockwell, Jr. Sees the Civil War*, Bryon R. Abenethy, ed. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1985), 5-6.
[11] Richard Bak, "Michigan's Little Drummer Boys of the Civil War," Hour Detroit, December 2011, 5, http://www.hourdetroit.com/Hour-Detroit/December-2011/Rhythm-Section-Civil-War-Sesquicentennial/ , accessed December 8, 2016.
[12] Hoar, *Callow*, 177-8.
[13] Gary Good, *Glaube, Hoffnung, und Liebe; Faith, Hope, and Love* (Morgantown, PA: Masthof Press, 1996), 72.

[14] William B. Styple, *The Little Bugler, The True Story of a Twelve-Year-Old Boy in the Civil War* (Kearny, NJ: Belle Grove Publishing, 1998), 16-18.

When Mancil Root, not yet nine, volunteered to help fill the quota for his county, everyone cheered, but his recently widowed mother objected. When she was assured that his unit would never leave the state and she would receive his $500.00 enlistment bonus, she consented. [15] Parent opinion was a major factor in boys joining the war. Some objected, some supported, some compromised, some were persuaded. In most cases, it didn't matter. The boy went anyway.

North or South, these boys were looking for adventure and a break from the boring life of farm or school. [16] A few, like fourteen-year-old John Wise, had mixed emotions. Though excited about war, as he watched the national flag lowered from the custom house in his home town and the stars and bars raised in its place, he suddenly realized that friends in the nearby Gasport Navy Yard who had always been welcome in their house, had suddenly become the enemy. [17]

For some, as described in the diary of fifteen-year-old William Bircher, the war experience began with weeks of drill, camp, marching and camping in fair weather and torrential rain, suffering boredom with sickness and poor food, and involvement in raids and small fights. The first encounter in battle was the arrival just after the battle, in time to see the wreckage and carnage that littered the field. For the first time the boy's excitement for adventure, having been passed to boredom, was changed to retched sickness and the sudden reality of the dreadful destruction, suffering, sorrow, and tears that were the real face of war. [18] For another, described in the memoir of fourteen-year-old Johnnie Wickersham, war exploded around him before his unit had left home. He described his first battle, "having come on like a flash of lightning," wherein he shot his first enemy and was so excited as to be oblivious to his surroundings. [19] Additionally, a number of boys, found themselves homesick, unable to cope with the rigors of military life, sick from related health problems, or simply unfit and incapable of carrying out the duties for which they had volunteered. [20] Many either had a change of heart or were too sick and were mustered out. [21] Others, like John Delhaney and Elisha Stockwell noted their feelings in their journals and soldiered on. [22] Boys attitudes changed dramatically from their initial sense and want of adventure, excitement, and glory as the reality of war set in.

Attitudes affecting policies during the war changed many times. One area had to do with the treatment of prisoners and within this, the effect young prisoners had on

[15] Hoar, *Callow*, 90-91.
[16] Emmy E. Werner, *Reluctant Witnesses, Children's Voices from the Civil War,* (Boulder CO: Westview Press, 1998), 9.
[17] Ibid., 8.
[18] William Bircher, *A Drummer Boy's Diary: Four Years of Service with the Second Regiment Minnesota Veteran Volunteers 1861 to 1865,* (St. Paul, MN: St. Paul Book and Stationery Company, 1889), 9-36.
[19] Johnnie Wickersham, *Boy Soldier of the Confederacy, The Memoir of Johnnie Wickersham*. Kathleen Gorman, ed. (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2006), 16-17.
[20] Murphy, *Boys' War*, 29.
[21] Keesee, *Too Young*, 11-12.
[22]Ibid., 29,30.

prison commanders. Early in the war, prisoners were exchanged shortly after a given battle, but Grant had stopped the practice in the summer of 1864. [23] Afterwards prisoners were sent to prison camps. Conditions were horrific. In May of 1864, Fifteen-year-old Rashio Crane was captured while trying to help a wounded comrade off the battlefield. Sent to Andersonville Prison, he died two months later from intense suffering and deprivation. [24] Eleven-year-old Brice E. Davis was captured at Shiloh in 1862 and sent to Libby Prison. Because of his small size and young age, he was allowed to play and run around outside the prison walls. He was exchanged a few months later. [25] In the fall of 1863, seventeen-year-old Michael Dougherty was captured and ended up by late spring at Andersonville Prison. He received no special treatment, but through his own determination managed to survive until released April 12, 1865. [26] Fourteen-year-old Ransom T. Powell was captured in the winter of 1864. He was taken to Belle Isle Prison where he and other young boys were treated very differently from the older prisoners. Given the privilege of running around the headquarters enclosure, they had free reign of the bake house and the cook house where they got plenty to eat and good times including sailing on the James River in small skiffs. Weeks later he was among the first groups to be shipped off to Andersonville Prison, where once again, he benefited from a different attitude toward younger prisoners, finding himself living outside the prison in the general's quarters serving as a house boy doing odd jobs. [27]

Who were these boys? In a war often referred to as brother against brother and American against American, that wasn't truly the case. A glance through the anthologies chronicling so many of these boys, it becomes obvious the many were foreign born. Wiley presents an in-depth study of the nature of the southern soldier versus that of the northern soldier in his companion books, *The Life of Johnny Reb* and *The Life of Billy Yank*.

In researching the manner of men who fought for the Confederacy, Wiley found that thousands were actually born in the northern states. The ages ranged from twelve to seventy-three. The boys in the ranks served well with many examples of significant bravery. A few left early when they found the reality of war was far from the adventure expected. Significant in the South was the number of military academies. Later in the war, their cadet corps were established as reserve units and some were actually called into service. Social class had a significant effect in the Confederacy. Plantation born soldiers were used to giving orders, not taking them. Many were unruly and when commanded by officers not of the upper class, were outright rebellious. [28] Young boys and youth were not always the most disciplined soldiers. They had romantic expectations

[23] Ibid., 149.
[24] Ibid., 148-149.
[25] Photos and information donated by Jody Clevenger a descendent of Brice E. Davis. https://www.flickr.com/photos/civilwar_veterans_tombstones/3208238232/ , accessed December 8, 2016.
[26] Michael Dougherty, *Prison Diary of Michael Dougherty* (Bristol, PA: Charles A. Dougherty, printer, 1908).
[27] Keesee, *Too Young*, 152-4.
[28] Wiley, *Johnny Reb*, 322-34.

of the war and weren't accustomed to taking orders from superiors. While they wanted to fight, they wanted to fight on their own terms. [29]

Wiley wrote of the great diversity of the Union army in nationality, race, creed, occupation, dress, habits, temperament, education, wealth, and social status. Most of the youngest boys were musicians, but they supplemented their position in a variety of ways —with barbering, carrying water for soldiers, sharpening surgical instruments, helping the wounded, burying the dead, drawing maps, selling food delicacies, and gambling. They were the pets and favorites of their units, some slept in the tents of their officers, and on a long march, when tired, rode a horse provided by an officer. As with the southern boys, a few left after their first experiences in battle, but most acquitted themselves very well. Many took up a rifle in combat, gallant and effective on the front line. Some took their place with the artillery. Some were recognized with the Medal of Honor. Some rose through the ranks as officers becoming colonels or lieutenant generals by age eighteen. And some gave their lives in the service of their country. [30]

The Civil War was unlike any previous war. It was the largest and bloodiest conflict ever fought on American soil with millions of soldiers and hundreds of thousands of boys within the two armies. [31] Emmy Werner in her work *Reluctant Witnesses* explains why there exists such a wealth of information left behind by the boys who fought in the war as well as other children affected by the war. The North had one of the highest literacy rates in the world by way of compulsory education and the regular attendance of children in school. The writings from the South were predominately from children of privileged families who sent their boys to private academies or educated them at home by way of private tutors. Late in the war the writings of emancipated slave children and contraband soldiers were made possible in narratives recorded by the Federal Writer's Project. [32]

At the time of the war, little attention had been given to children and youth—their insights into the war and their place in social history. [33] Emmy Werner in her work *Reluctant Witnesses* chronicled the insights of Civil War children, especially the combatants. Her primary resources were diaries, journals, letters, and reminiscences of the children and, when relevant, eyewitness accounts of family members. [34] An example given was from the siege of Vicksburg, from twelve-year-old Fred Grant.

[29] Brian Alligood, "Boys in Gray: The Role of Confederate Youth in the American Civil War," Honors Essay, Department of History, University of North Carolina (1989): 13-15.
[30] Bell Irvin Wiley, *The Life of Billy Yank*. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1952), 296-302.
[31] Werner, *Reluctant Witnesses*, 2.
[32] Ibid., 3.
[33] James Marten, ed., *Children and Youth during the Civil War*, (New York: New York University Press, 2012), 4.
[34] Werner, *Reluctant Witnesses*, 3.

Suddenly a small boy, no larger than himself, came running from the front, the blood streaming from a wound in his left side, crying: "General, our regiment is out of ammunition." Noted Fred: "The little fellow, becoming weak from the loss of blood looked up and said, "Caliber 68," and as he tottered he was seized by two soldiers and carried to the rear. I went up to my father…and found to my surprise that his eyes were suffused with tears of sympathy for the brave boy." [35]

Another was a series of examples to share the humanitarian attitude of boys during the war. At Gettysburg, hungry Confederate soldiers shared candies with children and helped their families to safety beyond the battle line. Under fire at Sharpsburg, fifteen-year-old Union soldier Thomas Galway shared the water from his canteen with a wounded southerner. At Mayre's Heights at Fredericksburg, teenage Confederate soldier Richard Kirkland stepped onto the open battlefield with a collection of canteens to share water with the wounded and dying Union soldiers on the field. [36] In a letter home, Union teenager James Newton describe how Confederate and Union soldiers would gather together under a flag of truce for a long talk and would agree among themselves that if the war were left to the enlisted men, they would soon go home. [37]

Most who read this had no idea that these boys served. For those who seek more knowledge, their history is out there, it begins with the boys themselves.

From 1861 to 1865 the historians of the Civil War were the participants, soldier or civilian. Their letters and journals, the photographs, sketches, newspaper articles and more form the primary sources of the era. In a war in which more than 250,000 boys age seventeen and under served in the opposing armies, their stories are a significant part of that history.

The history of the battlefields and military life of the Civil War is written in the journals and letters of Charles William Bardeen, William Bircher, Elisha Stockwell, Johnnie Wickersham, and others. Michael Dougherty recorded life in Andersonville Prison. Johnny Clem and Robert Hendershot became a part of history by deeds that were captured in newspaper articles. Newspapers also reported the sad fate of others as in the cases of Charlie King and Clarence McKenzie. Willie Johnston, John Cook, William Horsefall, and Orion Howe are a few of the boys who were awarded Congressional Medal of Honor, and the valor of other boys was recognized in the reports of their officers.

[35] *Ibid.,* 81.
[36] A statue depicting Sergeant Kirkland, known the Angel of Mayre's Heights, is in front of the Stone Wall at Mayre's Heights. Kirkland was later promoted to Second Lieutenant and was killed in September 1863 at the battle of Chickamauga.
[37] Ibid., 156, 84.

William Bircher was a fifteen-year-old drummer boy with the 2nd Regiment Minnesota Veteran Volunteers during the war. Bircher published his diary in 1889, explaining in his preface that he never intended to write a connected story, but to make available the contents of his diary, kept during the war, to his old comrades and their families. In appearance, the contents look like a narrative, but on close examination, while it opens with a narrative about the start of the war and the beginning of the regiment's history, it becomes a chronological stream of dated entries put down in paragraph format. [38]

Charles Bardeen was a fifteen-year-old drummer boy with the 1st Massachusetts. His ancestors were keepers of diaries and he started early to do the same. His mother kept a diary for him until he was eight years old, then he took over from that time and continued throughout his life. Like many, Charles kept his diary for himself; but years after the war, a friend, Columbia University president Nicholas Murray Butler, suggested that a soldier's genuine experiences would have value. The diary was published as a book in 1910 and included over two hundred and fifty illustrations, an introduction by Butler, and a preface by Bardeen explaining the content and the art. [39]

Johnnie Wickersham is representative of those who told their story throughout life, but as the end drew near, wrote their memoirs for the family in the hope of not being forgotten. Fifty years had passed and Johnnie's recollections, according to editor, Kathleen Gorman, were flawed. His memoir was written in narrative style by chapter and topic, referenced in the back by the editor with notes and a bibliography, and indexed. The work was written in 1915 and published in 1918. Johnnie died in 1916. [40]

The conditions in the prison camps of the Civil War have been researched and published in a number of books. They have also been described by sixteen-year-old, Irish immigrant, Union soldier, Michael Dougherty. In the fall of 1863 he was captured a second time and sent to Andersonville Prison, perhaps the most notorious prison camp of the war. He kept a diary of the months he spent there through to the end of the war when the prisoners were freed and thousands were sent north by riverboat. He was with those on the steamboat *Sultana* when it exploded, and that event was also recorded in his diary.

[38] William Bircher, *A Drummer Boy's Diary: Four Years of Service with the Second Regiment Minnesota Veteran Volunteers 1861 to 1865*, (St. Paul, Minnesota: St. Paul Book and Stationery Company, 1889), 5-6.
[39] Charles W. Bardeen, *A Little Fifer's War Diary* (Syracuse, New York: C. W. Bardeen, 1910), 5-9.
[40] Johnnie Wickersham, *Boy Soldier of the Confederacy, The Memoir of Johnnie Wickersham*, Kathleen Gorman, ed., (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1918).

Dougherty first published his diary in 1908 in diary format with dates and entries, exactly as it was written. [41]

How and where were the stories of the experiences of these boys in the Civil War reported? Over the years, interest in their stories has waxed and waned but it began during the war when many of the boys' stories were first shared with the public through newspaper articles. Johnny Clem became an instant hero when he shot a Confederate officer off his horse as the officer tried to capture him. [42] While this article tells the story of a boy soldier, it also is an example of how a story spreads. The article is attributed to a "Cincinnati paper" and also appears in exact copy in the *Albany Evening Journal* of December 19, 1863, but with a subtitle, "He receives from Gen. Rosecrans the Badge of the Roll of Honor," also attributed to a "Cincinnati paper."[43] Not all is without controversy or error. Sometimes the error is for a purpose. Sometimes it's purely accidental, but lives on as assumed fact. When a reporter rushes to get the story to press without checking out the facts, mistakes happen. There were mistakes in the Clem article. It reported that he shot the colonel dead out of the saddle. While there were questions about this at the time, it was later learned that the colonel was wounded and recovered from his wound. [44] Newspapers were anxious to get such heroic stories to cheer up a public having a hard time dealing with the losses faced by Lincoln's armies. That played a major part in the story about Robert Hendershot whose story was told about his entrance into the battle at Fredericksburg by clinging onto the side of a boat and swimming alongside, where he captured a Confederate prisoner and lost his drum when it was blown to pieces by an artillery shell. [45]

George W. Bungay was a newspaper reporter for Horace Greeley's The Tribune Association who wrote this article which appeared in the *New Hampshire Sentinel*, as it was told to him by the boy himself, fourteen-year-old Robert Hendershot. Of particular interest is the timing as well as the point of view. The initial incident referred to in the

[41] Michael Dougherty, *Prison Diary of Michael Dougherty* (Bristol, Pennsylvania.: Charles A. Dougherty, printer, 1908), from page 122 April 23rd,1865 – Vicksburg, Miss. Went aboard the boat called the "Sultana" to be taken to St. Louis, Mo. There are about 2,200 of us, mostly old prisoners from Andersonville, Ga. On the trip up the Mississippi, the "Sultana" met with a terrible disaster [its boilers exploded], causing complete destruction of the boat; and hundreds of men who had passed safely through many bloody battles and the horrible suffering of Southern prison life perished within but a few days' journey of home and friends.

[42] Michael Dougherty, "The Youngest Soldier in the Army of the Cumberland," *National Aegis*, December 26, 1863, The Family Circle, 1.

[43] Michael Dougherty, The Youngest Soldier in the Army of the Cumberland," *Albany Evening Journal*, December 19, 1863, 2.

[44] Dennis M. Keesee, *Too Young to Die, Boy Soldiers of the Union Army 1861-1865* (Huntington, West Virginia: Blue Acorn Press, 2001), 231.

[45] George W. Bungay, "The Drummer Boy of the Rappahannock." *New Hampshire Sentinel*, November 19, 1863, 1.

article had taken place eleven months earlier and had already been reported by previous newspapers. This article included a history of the boy's service and the fact that the Tribune was presenting him with a brand-new drum. The boy had a habit of self-promotion and had been visiting many newspapers in the time since the original incident had made him a celebrity. What actually happened, explained Reverend George Taylor who had taken him into his care. is that he crossed the river by clinging to the stern of a boat, brought in a Confederate soldier who deserted and surrendered to Hendershot, and dropped a clock he had taken when a shell blew up nearby and surprised him.[46] Taylor went on to explained that Hendershot had given him this account of where he had been within the hearing of a number of persons including members of the press who in turn created an epic of heroism to divert the public's despondence from the devastation of the war.[47] A controversy arose after the war as some from his regiment, jealous of his fame and knowledgeable of the true facts, tried to discredit him.

Thirteen-year-old Charlie King's sad story was told in two articles; the first when he left for the war, a young patriot, [48] and the second when he returned, a victim, killed in action. [49] Another article told of the accidental death of twelve-year-old Clarence McKenzie, shot by his best friend, practicing with a gun he didn't know was loaded. [50]

Twelve-year-old Orion Howe was written up in the official records of the Medal of Honor when "…severely wounded and exposed to a heavy fire from the enemy, he persistently remained upon the field of battle until he had reported to General W. T. Sherman…" [51] A letter of recommendation from General Sherman describing that incident gained him entrance into the United States Naval Academy. [52] Willie Johnston age eleven, John Cook age fifteen, and William Horsefall age thirteen were all awarded the Medal of Honor.

The history of the boys in the Civil War was reported from the very beginning. But in the post war years, the major historical focus became the war, the generals, the places, the events, the politics. The written and photographic record about the boys gradually went into storage, becoming buried and forgotten over time.

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[46] Richard Bak, "Michigan's Little Drummer Boys of the Civil War," *Hour Detroit*, December 2011, http://www.hourdetroit.com/Hour-Detroit/December-2011/Rhythm-Section-Civil-War-Sesquicentennial/ accessed December 8, 2016.
[47] Anthony Patrick Glesner, *America's Civil War* 16 No. 6 (January 2004): 26.
[48] "Young Patriotism," *Village Record* (West Chester, Pennsylvania), December 31, 1861.
[49] "Obituary of Charles King," *Village Record* (West Chester, Pennsylvania), October 2, 1862.
[50] "The Death of Young McKenzie," *Brooklyn Eagle*, War Intelligence, June 13, 1861.
[51]United States Army Center of Military History Website/Medal of Honor/Civil War, http://www.history.army.mil/moh/civilwar_gl.html#top , accessed December 8, 2016.
[52] Frank Moore, *The Civil War in Song and Story 1860-1865* (New York: P. F. Collier, Publisher, 1889), 104

Many collections of letters, journals, and memoirs were published after the war, some shortly after and some many years later. Most were intended for family and friends, but in many cases found their way to the general public. As veterans' groups met over the years, many wanted to put together a written record of their history and of those who served. Regimental histories were written to tell how the units were formed and by whom and to tell the history of their service. One particularly interesting history tells of a boy company in the Confederate artillery of Lee's army. *Where Men Only Dare to Go* was written by Royal Figg, an original member, to be a brief history of the Parker Battery for its veterans. But Figg decided to write a book for the general public and in so doing introduced the public to the story of the boys of the Parker Battery, many of whom were so young, as young as twelve, as to require written permission from their parents to join.[53] Published in 1885, the history of the Parker Battery became one of the first histories of boy soldiers to be released.

As the 19th century drew to a close, the histories of the Civil War began to shift. More of the historians were removed from the war by a generation. Histories became secondary sources and those writing them had to depend on the record left by those who were there. They did, however, have one major advantage, they still had access to the living veterans. They could talk to the people who had been there and lived the events of the war. Civil War histories began to appear as compilations rather than histories of individuals. In *A Brief History of the United States* by Joel and Esther Steele, the Civil War was the fifth epoch and was covered chronologically in short sections listing events, dates, and generals.[54] *History of the United States of America; for the Use of Schools*, by Charles Goodrich, was divided into six periods. Period six was distinguished for the Great Rebellion. It was an abbreviated yet wide ranging accounting of who, what, where, and when with references to cause and effect.[55] *The Centennial History of the United States* by James D. McCabe was divided into forty-five chapters, each of the first thirty representing a historic period, beginning with primitive inhabitants, with the thirty-first being the adoption of the Constitution and Washington's administration. Each of the remaining fifteen were identified by presidential administrations, ending with President Grant. Chapters forty-one and forty-two covered the Civil War by way of the two terms of President Lincoln. It was much more detailed and covered many events and incidents not mentioned in either of the two previous histories. Whereas the previous histories

[53] Royall W. Figg, *"Where Men Only Dare to Go!" Or the Story of a Boy Company C.S.A., By an Ex-Boy* (Richmond, Virginia: Whittet & Shepperson, 1885), vii-viii.
[54] Joel Dorman Steele and Esther Baker Steele, *A Brief History of the United States* (New York: American Book Company, 1885), 214-80.
[55] Charles A. Goodrich, *History of the United States of America; for the Use of Schools* (Boston: Brewer and Tillston, 1876), 238-309.

used headings or numerical divisions, McCabe wrote in a narrative style. [56] Cause and effect were noted and the text was enriched with photographic drawings of a woodcut style. Nowhere in either of these histories was there any mention of the boys in the war. For example, only three sentences were allotted to the Battle of New Market in Virginia on May 15, 1864, where the Virginia Military Institute cadets fought, with the barest of information in McCabe's history.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, there was a lull in historical interest in the Civil War. Fewer regimental histories were published. The Robert Hendershot controversy came to a close, and the last veteran of the Civil War retired from active duty. Robert Hendershot was confirmed to be the drummer boy of the Rappahannock with full honors restored. [57] Susan R. Hull published her collection, *Boy Soldiers of the Confederacy*, the first collection of biographical information about boys from the war. And Johnny Clem retired as a Brigadier General after serving thirty-four years in the U.S. Army.

Susan Hull's attention was first drawn to the boys when, in 1863, Major General John Ellis Wool, commanding in Baltimore, spoke to her about revoking an order to draft all boys sixteen or older. [58] From that point on, she began collecting cuttings from newspapers with the intent to share their stories just as she received them. Her primary focus would be the stories of boys eighteen and younger. During the years following the war, Hull gathered her stories, many through correspondence to gather first-hand accounts. Her work was published in 1905. There is reference in her work of a similar effort that had already been published on behalf of Union boys, but it has not yet been located.

One of the best-known Union boys from the Civil War was John Joseph Klem who changed his name at the beginning of the war to John Lincoln Clem in honor of the president. He was nine years old when he ran away from home to join the army, twelve when he shot an enemy officer and became an instant celebrity and sergeant on Major General George Henry Thomas's staff and sixty-four when he retired a Brigadier General. He died in 1937 at age eighty-five. [59]

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[56] James D. McCabe, *The Centennial History of the United States, From the Discovery of the American Continent to the Close of the First Century of American Independence* (Philadelphia: The National Publishing Company, 1874), 779-864.
[57] Anthony Patrick Glesner, "The Drummer Boy of the Rappahannock," *America's Civil War*, January 2004. http://www.historynet.com/americas-civil-war-drummer-boy-of-the-rappahannock.htm, accessed December 8, 2016.
[58] Susan R. Hull, collated by, *Boy Soldiers of the Confederacy*, 1998 Eakin Press ed. (New York: Neale Publishing Company, 1905), 13-14.
[59] "John Clem." Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia.

In the middle of the twentieth century the focus began to shift again and interest in the stories of the common soldier, and boy soldiers began to grow. In 1943 Bell Irvin Wiley's book *The Life of Johnny Reb* was published. [60] Most books, other than regimental histories and narratives, published up to that time rarely mentioned the common soldier. The men and boys who comprised the rank and file were known only through their diaries, journals, and letters where they could be found, and few were looking. But Wiley did. Up to that point it was the biographies and histories of the generals and the events of the war that were known to most people. The common soldier came to be known -- life in camp, interests, experiences, values, heartache, and the trauma of the battlefield -- all came out from letters, diaries, and journals. Wiley read them. Then he used the words of the writers to tell their story with their own words. [61] He followed up with *The Life of Billy Yank* in 1952.

About mid-century the Civil War began to reemerge into the public awareness as an increasing number of historians began to publish their work and historic documents became available and the centenary approached. Robert Underwood Johnson and Clarence Clough Buel worked together on the *Century Magazine* beginning in 1883 to edit the reports of the officers of the Union and Confederate Armies, which originally ran in a magazine series for three years. The accounts and official reports of the battles and actions of the war, some written at the time of the war and many written after the war specifically for the series, were gathered together in a 4-volumn set, *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War*, published first by the Century Magazine in 1887 and 1888. In 1956 Thomas Yoseloff republished *Battles and Leaders* and filled it with detailed reports, maps, photographs, drawings, sketches and other art, as well as statistics covering numbers, and casualties. [62] Bruce Catton came on the scene in 1960 as senior editor for American Heritage magazine of history with *The American Heritage Picture History of the Civil War* and other works from American Heritage. [63] More Civil War diaries were published beginning in the 1950s and continuing to this day. Following are some examples.

Elisha Stockwell entered the war as a soldier at the age of fifteen. He lied a little saying he didn't know his age exactly but thought he was eighteen. Throughout the war he sent some letters home to his mother, but never kept a diary or journal. After the death

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Clem, accessed December 8, 2016.

[60] Bell Irvin Wiley, *The Life of Johnny Reb* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1943).

[61] C. E. Dornbusch, comp., *Military Bibliography of the Civil War*, 4 vols. (New York: The New York Public Library, 1972), 3:127.

[62] Robert Underwood Johnson and Clarence Clough Buel, eds., "The Century Magazine," *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War*, 4 vols. (New York: Century Company, 1887-1888).

[63] Richard M. Ketchum, ed. in charge and Bruce Catton, narrative, *The American Heritage Picture History of the Civil War*, (New York: American Heritage Publishing Company, 1960).

of his wife in 1927 he was persuaded to try and tell the story of his war experiences for his family. At the age of eighty-one, suffering from cataracts so that he couldn't see the lines on the paper, using a piece of wood to guide his hand, Stockwell wrote his memoirs from memory. There were no chapters, few paragraphs, and little punctuation, yet the manuscript was surprisingly legible. Stockwell's daughter passed the manuscript to historian Byron Abernethy to put into readable form. Using the original manuscript, Abernathy added sentencing, paragraphing, and chapter organization to create an easy to read narrative and published Stockwell's memoirs in 1958.[64]

Val C. Giles served four years with Hood's Brigade, 4th Texas Infantry and his memoirs were published in 1961.[65] Fifteen-year-old Alfred Bellard entered the Civil War with the 5th New Jersey Infantry. His memoirs were illustrated by his own art. It was found in an attic in Pennsylvania in 1963 and published in 1975.[66] Rice C. Bull was a sergeant in the 123rd New York Volunteer Infantry. His diary described training, daily routine, and combat in the life of a soldier, and was published in 1977.[67] James M. Williams had moved south from Ohio three years before the war. When the war broke out, he joined the 21st Alabama Volunteers. Editor John Kent learned of a collection of his letters from a young university student in one of his classes and produced the surprisingly observant collection, written from a unique point of view, that of a "Northern Rebel," and published in 1981.[68] As the 20th century neared its end, the lives of the common soldier were becoming available for any who cared to look.

In 1949 *Life* magazine ran an article which pictured sixty-eight living veterans of the Civil War. Sixteen-year-old Jay S. Hoar of Rangeley, Maine, determined to meet the one who lived closest to him. On June 22, 1949, Jay took his first train and bus trip and traveled to Groff Falls, New Hampshire, where he met and visited with James M. Lurvey, a one hundred and one-year-old veteran who entered the war with his father as a fourteen-year-old drummer boy.

Lurvey recalled Gettysburg: "I never fired a shot. I was still a drummer boy[;] during much of that battle I served in the Medical Corps. Shot and shell and the screams of dying men and boys filled the humid air. A non-com told me to put away my drum.

[64] Elisha Stockwell, *Private Elisha Stockwell, Jr. Sees the Civil War*, Bryon R. Abernethy, ed. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1985), ix-xii.
[65] Val C. Giles, *Rags and Hope, The Recollections of Val C. Giles* (New York: Coward-McCann, 1961).
[66] Alfred Bellard, *Gone for a Soldier: The Civil War Memoirs of Private Alfred Bellard*, David Herbert Donald, ed. (Boston: Little, Brown, 1975).
[67] Rice C. Bull, *Soldiering - The Civil War Diary of Rice C. Bull*, K. Jack Bauer, ed. (San Rafael, CA: Presidia Press, 1977).
[68] James M. Williams, *From that Terrible Field, Civil War Letters of James M. Williams*, John Kent Folmar, ed. (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1981).

He tied a red rag around my left arm and told me I was now in the Medical Corp. I told him I was not big enough to lift my end of a stretcher, so he assigned me to a field tent. It was stifling inside. I thought I'd keel over when they told me my assignment. Wish then I could have hefted a stretcher. I was to stand by and carry out the soldiers' arms and legs as the doctor amputated them. I guess that was the day I grew up and left boyhood forever. And I wasn't yet sixteen." [69]

For Hoar, that was the day he began his life's work. In the years ahead, he juggled this work with a teaching career as he began an effort that would last over forty years to make sure that these veterans and the boys they were would not be forgotten. Correspondence, visits, travel, research led to a series of the most definitive books about the oldest veterans and the youngest to serve. *New England's Last Civil War Veterans* was published in 1976. *Callow Brave and True: A Gospel of Civil War Youth* published in 1999 was a biographical collection of the youngest, with some in the home guard as young as six and a half. *Our Eldest and Last Civil War Nurses* in 2001 was followed by *Our Youngest Blue and Gray* in 2005. A trilogy entitled *Sunset and Dusk of the Blue and the Gray* followed with volume one in 2006, two in 2008, and three in 2010. [70]

In 1989, a history honors student at the University of North Carolina, Brian Alligood, chose to investigate the youth in the war. While the vast majority of historians continued to focus on battles, campaigns, and general officers in their research and writing, and more began to be written about the common soldier participants of the war, this was a beginning of a renewed interest in the youngest soldiers. [71]

One particular event of the war was notable for the significant number of student cadets who were involved. At the Battle of New Market 250 cadets from the Virginia Military Institute fought as a unit. An exceptional collection of letters, artifacts, and biographical accounts has been gathered in the Archives of the VMI and its Hall of Valor Museum and preserved battlefield park. [72] Ten cadets lost their lives in that battle. The first to fall was seventeen-year-old William Hugh McDowell. The facts of his life and of

[69] Clayton, John, at large, "New Hampshire's Last Boy in Blue Lives on in Legend," *New Hampshire Union Leader* (Manchester, New Hampshire: Joseph McQuaid, July 3, 1998),16.
[70] Jay S. Hoar, *New England's Last Civil War Veterans* (Arlington, VA: Seacliff Press, 1976): Jay S. Hoar, *Callow, Brave, and True: A Gospel of Civil War Youth* (Gettysburg, PA: Thomas Publications, 1999); Jay S. Hoar, *Our Eldest and Last Civil War Nurses* (Temple, MN: Bo-ink-um Press, 2001); Jay S. Hoar, *Our Youngest Blue and Gray, Callow Brave and True* (Salem, MA: Higginson Book Company, 2005); Jay S. Hoar *Sunset and Dusk of the Blue and the Gray: Last Living Chapter of the American Civil War. An Epic Prose Elegy,* 3 vols. (Salem, MA: Higginson Book Company, 2006, 2007, 2010).
[71] Brian Alligood, "Boys in Gray: The Role of Confederate Youth in the American Civil War," Honors essay: Department of History, University of North Carolina, 1989.
[72] Archives of the Virginia Military Academy, http://www.vmi.edu/archives/home/, accessed December 8, 2016.

the events of that day were skillfully woven into a remarkable book, *Ghost Cadet* by Elaine Marie Alphin. [73]

Over the next few years transitioning from the 20th into the 21st centuries two kinds of writings about boys in the Civil War were published. Anthologies with photographs, citations, quotations from original diaries and journals were published, bringing to their readers a researched collection of information about the real boys from the war. Other historians researched their subjects, then turned their stories into narrative novel format without citations, designed for younger readers to learn about the war through the eyes of their peers. As the 21st century began, more of these works became available.

Reluctant Witnesses by Emmy Werner recorded the war from Sumter to Appomattox through the words of the children who lived it – civilian and soldier, boy and girl, free and slave – gathered from diaries and journals and letters, and published in 1998. *Too Young to Die, Boy Soldiers of the Union Army 1861-1865* and *When Johnny Went Marching*, published in 2001, contained historic background and the photographs and stories of hundreds of boys from the war. *Beyond Their Years, Stories of Sixteen Civil War Children* in 2003 contained biographical information about boys and girls, black and white, civilian and soldier. [74]

Jim Murphy's *The Boys' War*, published in 1990, tells the story of the war in a narrative style comprised of the words of the boys who were there, taken from their journals, diaries, and letters. [75] It is not a record of battles and chronologies, but of the first-hand experiences of the participants. His approach to the history is unique and personal, a style of historical writing built on primary sources. After an introduction "The War Begins," the book continues to present the war by topics such as "So I Became a Soldier" and "A Long and Hungry War.". While gathering the research for *When Johnny Went Marching*, Wisler used his researched materials to write the stories of Medal of Honor winners Willie Johnston and Orion Howe, and wrote the most accurate historic fiction possible to bring to life the biographic accounts of these two boys. Willie's story,

[73] Elaine Marie Alphin, *Ghost Cadet* (Princeton, Illinois: Hither Page Press, 1991).
[74] Emmy E. Werner, *Reluctant Witnesses, Children's Voices from the Civil War* (Boulder CO: Westview Press, 1998); Dennis M. Keesee, *Too Young to Die, Boy Soldiers of the Union Army 1861-1865* (Huntington, WV: Blue Acorn Press, 2001); G. Clifton Wisler, *When Johnny Went Marching* (New York: Harper Collins, 2001); Scott Cohn, *Beyond Their Years, Stories of Sixteen Civil War Children* (Guilford, CT: The Globe Pequot Press, 2003).
[75] Jim Murphy, *The Boys' War* (New York: Clarion Books, 1990).

Mr. Lincoln's Drummer was published in 1995 and Orion's, *The Drummer Boy of Vicksburg*, in 1997.[76]

In the introduction to his book, *The Little Bugler, the True Story of a Twelve-year-old Boy in the Civil War*, published in 1998, William Styple explains his painstaking research and effort to make Gus's story as historically accurate as possible.[77] At first, he planned to write a researched account with footnotes and documentation, but he decided instead to write a narrative account in novel format so that today's youth could follow the life of Gustav Schurmann, regimental bugler to four generals and friend of Tad Lincoln. His research bibliography, acknowledgements, and picture credits are in the back of the book.

Romaine Stauffer is not a historian. She was asked by a friend to write Aaron Stauffer's story and was helped by many along the way. Aaron Stauffer was an ancestor, a boy of sixteen who went against his family and his church's Mennonite teachings and ran away to the war.[78] His story has been carefully researched through the family and the work of historian, Gary Good, in whose book *Faith, Hope, and Love* can be found Aaron's Civil War records and those of others with whom he ran away. *Aaron's Civil War* was published in 2011 in the form of a novel with a research bibliography in the back.[79]

Over one hundred and fifty years have passed and the tens of thousands of boys and youth who once trod the field of battle are long gone. Their record remains. Like all of history, it's there for all to see if we choose to look. They were their own historians as they shared their wartime experiences, their thoughts and hopes and dreams and fears in their journals, their diaries, their letters. Their deeds were recorded in the newspapers of the day, in citations in dusty archives, in the records of their lives written by those who knew them, or friends, or family. As the years passed on, the writing of their story changed. Others recorded what they remembered. In later years, the boys grown up forgot the details or embellished their part in what happened. Historians of later generations have tried to gather the events and the details to record that which in some cases had only been told to family but never written down. In some cases, there is a treasure trove of information, carefully preserved and recorded. Probably the largest collection of documents about the boys of the Civil War is the archive collection at the

[76] G. Clifton Wisler, *Mr. Lincoln's Drummer* (New York: Dutton Children's Books, 1995); G. Clifton Wisler, *The Drummer Boy of Vicksburg* (New York: Lodestar Books, 1997).
[77] William B. Styple, *The Little Bugler, The True Story of a Twelve-Year-Old Boy in the Civil War*, (Kearny, New Jersey: Belle Grove Publishing Company, 1998).
[78] Romaine Stauffer, *Aaron's Civil War* (Harrisonburg, VA: Christian Light Publications, 2011);
[79] Gary Good, *Glaube, Hoffnung, und Liebe; Faith, Hope, and Love* (Morgantown, Pennsylvania: Masthof Press, 1996).

Virginia Military Institute. In 1991, Susan Provost Beller published her book, *Cadets at War, The True Story of Teenage Heroism at the Battle of New Market*, telling the story of what happened that day and the days that followed, and of many of the individual cadets who took part in the battle.[80] It was based on the primary sources in the library at VMI including maps, photographs, and written accounts and reports. In other cases, historians such as Susan R. Hull, Jay Hoar, Scotti Cohn, Jim Murphy, Clifton Wisler, and Dennis Keesee have made it their mission to gather the stories into collections for others to read and remember that Johnny, Robert, William, Orion, and Willie and all the rest, did pass this way and are a part of our history.

This is a history of the history of the boys of the Civil War. It began with them and has evolved over the years. Along the way, many have helped to share their stories and keep their memory alive. In recent years, several historians have continued to work to research, preserve, and share their history, including the last historian to have had personal contact with the last surviving boy soldiers.

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[80] Susan Provost Beller, *Cadets at War: The True Story of Teenage Heroism at the Battle of New Market*, (Lincoln, NE: iUniverse.com, 2000).