

THE DRUMMER BOY WAS A GIRL

Annie Hunley Glud

By Michael Radice

Annie Glud (1853-1929) served in the Civil War as a Union drummer boy. This curly-haired, dark-eyed, eight-year-old child was the only girl to serve and the youngest to enlist. She spent four years with the Army of the Cumberland (AofC), signaling reveille, roll call, company drill and taps, and relaying commands. Most women served as nurses or vivandieres, or on rarer occasions, cross-dressed and fought alongside men, but never as drummer boys. That was reserved for Annie. She became a drummer because her father was forced to make a quick decision: after facing homelessness, due to the torching of their farm by a group of pillaging soldiers, he enlisted the family in a passing Union troop.

We learn about Annie through a play she wrote: Tom Hundley, the Drummer Boy (1899). She used the play, and an accompanying autobiography, to recount her difficult war service and to describe her

struggles with poverty. Annie wrote as a hobby and penned only one other play, Negro Wedding in Time of Slavery (1901), believed lost. We know nothing more about her writing.

But we do know that she became a celebrity later in life, thanks to her war service and her commitment to caring for orphaned children. She has been forgotten until now.

Before the war, Annie had bucolic life. She played with her cats in an "old Kentucky home," and lived surrounded by a loving family of four brothers, her father Jeremiah, and a stepmother. But this loveliness lasted only until 1861, when her brothers enlisted in the war on both sides. Some left without saying goodbye. Then, her stepmother left the family for good. And finally, a group of Union soldiers barged in and burned down the farm.

With their life in pieces, Annie's father enlisted with a troop. It needed a drummer boy and a scout. To fill the first, he offered Annie, now disguised as a boy, and she passed the audition. Jeremiah offered himself as a scout; he had knowledge of the mountains.

Annie, now "Tom," remained at her father's side for the next four years, serving as the Union troop's announcer. She made a dashing sight with her fatigue cap, crimson sash and drum. But these didn't cover the troubles ahead.

The AofC couldn't exempt her from the horrors of war. The front line was especially rough on drummers: They led with the flag bearers, and were frequently killed in action. Annie replaced a drummer boy who had met this fate. Now, it was her turn to face the front.

She experienced the shouts of guns, moans of the wounded, and a growling stomach. The worst, however, were the deaths. Although mid-nineteenth century children saw death more frequently than

children today, the mix of death and violence was still horrifying. In the fog of war, nobody could protect her completely. Lieutenant Devoe, a character in the play, described her experience: "After the fight was over, many of our men lay around dead and dying. We hastily dug a trench, buried our dead...we missed our little drummer boy...we soon found him, sitting as if dazed, with a dead man's head in his lap, still holding the flask to his lips. 'Tom, Tom,' we called, and looking up, Tom laid the dead man's head gently down, saying, 'He groaned and begged for water, and I ran to get him some. He choked and died.'"

Despite the horror and discomfort, Annie found joy where she could. She drew pictures to pass the time, and discovered how satisfying food could be after having eaten none for several days. That late-arriving bacon, hard-tack and coffee hit the spot. "Papa, this tastes better than honey and buttermilk biscuits," she said. These words weren't lost on the

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Annie Hunley Glud (cont.)

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soldiers, who were bewildered at her courage and her appreciation for the cuisine.

The war eventually ended, and with it came poverty and its entourage. Annie and her father moved in with Joe Dalton on his canal boat docked on the Ohio River. Joe was a friend of Annie's father. Canal boats had become, for many poor Americans, a new housing option thanks to a glut of boats made available by the dominance of the railroad.

With Annie and her father aboard, the boat exploded, nearly killing everyone. Jeremiah's injuries were serious. Annie's were minor, but the accident created a new problem: Annie was separated from her father. Worried that he might die, Jeremiah gave Annie, now thirteen, to Joe for marriage. Annie complained, but the decision was final.

The marriage between Annie and Joe was difficult. Joe was abusive and an alcoholic, and he made Annie the sole breadwinner. Living with Joe worsened over the years. Finally, she had had enough.

It was the winter of 1869. Annie was sixteen years old, and had returned from work to their small, poorly furnished apartment in a Cincinnati suburb. Their son Charles was crying, the place was dirty, and Joe was demanding her wages. She reported having none, which enraged him. He first threw Charles against the wall to stop his crying, then he attacked Annie. He sharpened his razor, held her head back, and threatened to cut her throat. Annie screamed just as a police officer passed by. The officer rescued her and took Joe to jail, but suggested she flee immediately — he couldn't keep Joe in jail for long. Annie picked up Charles and ran across the street to their neighbor's, Mrs. Myers, who hid them in her garret.

Joe did get out of jail and began hunting Annie. To get them to safety, Mrs.

Myers disguised them and provided train fare to Cincinnati. Mother and son escaped, but Joe picked up the trail. While in pursuit, he was hit by a train and killed. The marriage and terror were over.

But Cincinnati wasn't paradise either. Despite its prosperity, there were two Cincinnati: one filled with the captains of industry, and the other with those in great poverty. Tens of thousands of people were trapped in fetid alleys spread with household and manufacturing waste. Housing was dirty and crumbling. This was Annie's world. She managed it long enough to save money, and, in 1870, to marry Paul Glud (1852-1931). Paul was a literate immigrant from Denmark.

Money, marriage, and time made a timely combination. Annie looked to Oakland, California to start over. Oakland was a growing town with many opportunities. In just ten years, it had grown from 1,543 to 10,500 residents, thanks to a natural seaport and access to rail lines going north, south and west.

Getting to Oakland wasn't going to be easy. There were only two real options in 1873: rail and wagon train. Rail was cheaper, only \$50 per person, compared to \$1,000 for the wagon train, but the wagon won.

The trip was an adventure and brought back many memories of the late war. Annie had "enlisted" for a six-month journey with others, all led by a military captain. She woke every morning to the sound of a bugle, and endured food and water shortages. She also encountered war-like horrors: Indians threatened, robbers thieved, and fast rivers broke up the wagons. One out of ten people died en route, all buried where they fell.

Annie also experienced fun. Evenings included singing around a fire and making new friends. Day times involved exploring new towns, topographies and animals. And by October, she was in Oakland.

The 1900 census provides our first glimpse of her life in Oakland. Annie was a homemaker; Paul a ship captain. They owned a home at 134 Franklin Street near the port, and cared for four unrelated children. These children were just a sample of the many orphans for whom Annie cared. In 1906, she took in twenty-five left homeless by the San Francisco earthquake. She cared for the children to ensure that they would never suffer as she did.

Her home may have been crowded, but the extra work didn't slow her pace. Annie held memberships in veteran auxiliary groups, and established a public war memorial in town. Her work also made her a celebrity: she was featured in parades and festivities.

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An older Annie Hunley Glud
Photo courtesy of Michael Radice