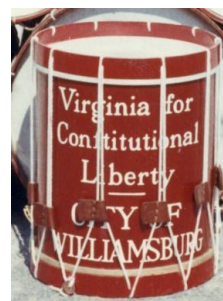


THE DRUMS OF THE COLONIAL WILLIAMSBURG FIFES AND DRUMS VISIBLE SYMBOLS OF THE CORPS' LEGACY

BY: BILL CASTERLINE, JANUARY 21, 2012



FIRST DRUMS 1958 AND 1959



LEFT: Rehearsal inside the Powder Magazine just prior to the first performance on July 4, 1958, playing drums [1] borrowed from James Blair High School, and close up of one of the drums.

MIDDLE LEFT: British Army drums in 1959

photo. The flag carrier on right is William "Bill" Geiger, Director of the Craft Shops and supervisor of the Militia and CWF&D.



BELOW LEFT: One of three British Army drums purchased in 1959, with added "VA REGT" painted on the shell. The "worm" design on counter hoops is typical of British drums. One of the original British Army drums will return permanently to the CWF&D in 2012.

BELOW RIGHT: 1959 Christmas Guns ceremony on Merchants Square, with Captain Nick Payne in uniform of the Virginia Regiment, during which ceremony original Brown Bess muskets were fired by the Militia.





Soistman

Drums

1960

LEFT: 1958 visit of the Lanecraft Fife and Drum Corps (New Haven, Conn.) provided example of top rate unit and demonstrated viability of a fife and drum corps for Colonial Williamsburg. Lanecraft

brought its "Grand Republic" drums (close up at left) built by Gus Moeller [2] that provided an example for Colonial Williamsburg of the authenticity and sound produced by such drums that CW was seeking since 1953 [3].



LEFT: July, 1960, training by SP5 George Carroll and Old Guard F&D musicians using a "shield" drum loaned to the Old Guard by Buck Soistman [4] and a Moeller drum from The U.S. Army Band (second drum from left played by George Carroll) further demonstrated the need to obtain authentic drums.

BELOW LtoR: CWF&D in November of 1960, playing two just acquired custom built

Soistman "GR" cipher drums and two shield drums on loan from Soistman, which shield drums had just

previously been loaned to the Old Guard F&D.

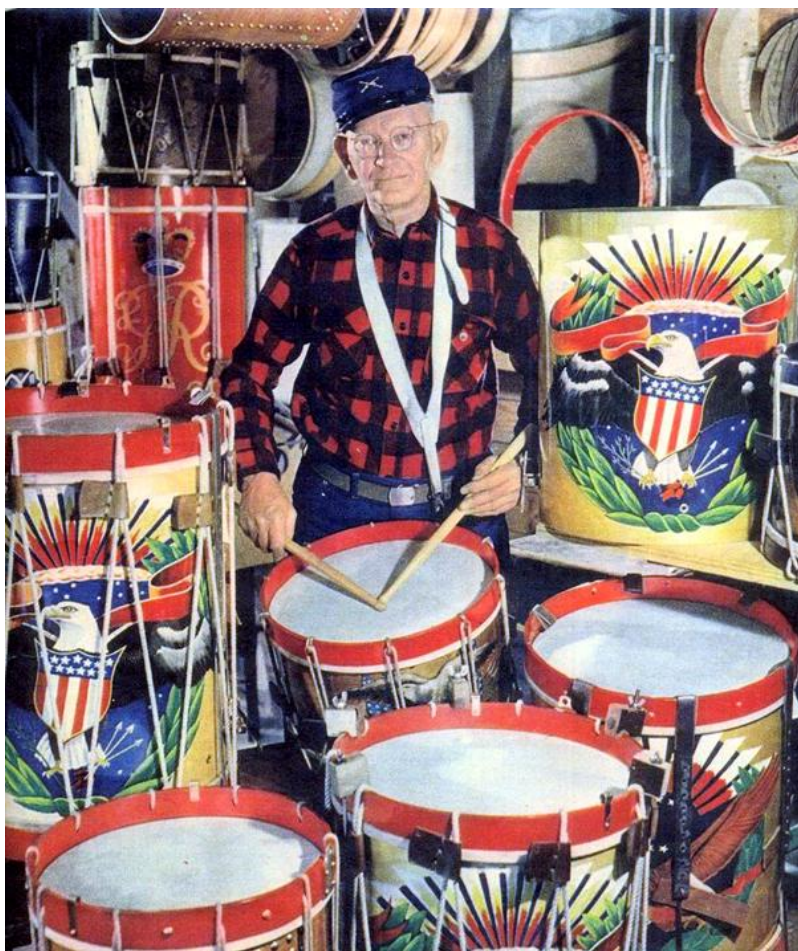




SOISTMAN SNARE DRUMS

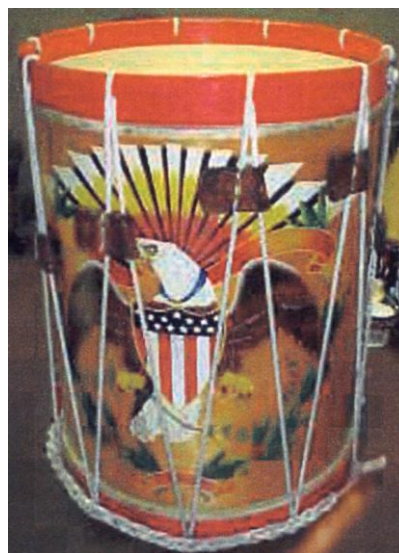
TOP: 1961 photo of CWF&D drumline. L to R: Soistman drum owned by George Carroll bearing the “Moeller Eagle” design.[5] This drum was played frequently by Senior Corps drummers and it shows up in numerous photographs from 1960 to 1971. Next are the four Soistman drums custom made for the CWF&D bearing the “GR” cypher to represent the Virginia Regiment, and three original bass drums from the CW Collection.

BELOW LEFT: Charles “Buck” Soistman in a well known and often used photograph taken in 1960. Note the



CWF&D “GR” drum next to his right shoulder. Partially visible in the upper left corner is a drum shell with what appears to be Soistman’s iconic tack design, suggesting he was producing it as early as 1960.

BELOW: George Carroll’s Soistman drum [6] in 2008 and Carroll playing the drum circa 1962.



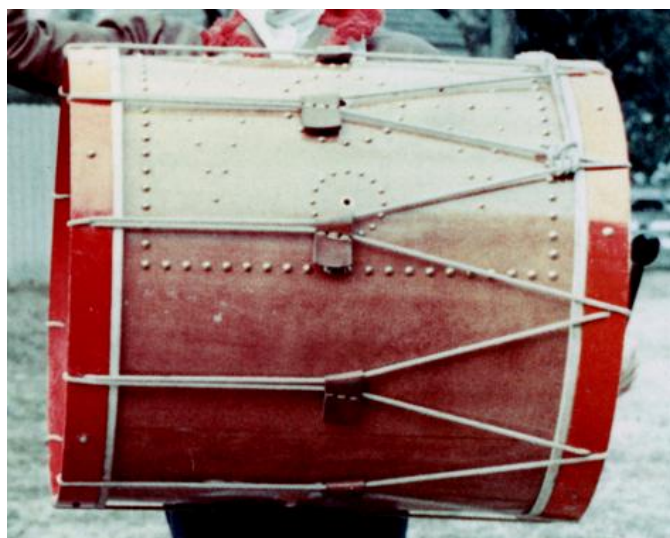
EARLY BASS DRUMS



LEFT: L to R: Original bass drums [7] from the CW Collection in 1961 photo. On the left is the 1840's drum with a flower design, thus referred to as the "flower drum." This drum was played up to 1972. It appears in the 1968 color photo on the left below. The middle drum is an original barrel drum, also shown in the middle photo below. This drum was made from staves like a barrel. Early drums often were made by coopers. On the right in the photo is Talmadge Alphin [8] with the first drum from the CW Collection played by the CWF&D, also shown in the color photo on the right below. The middle and right drums were replaced by Soistman bass drums acquired circa 1964-1965.

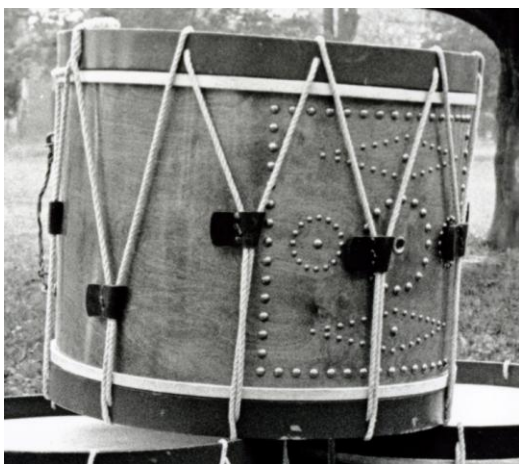


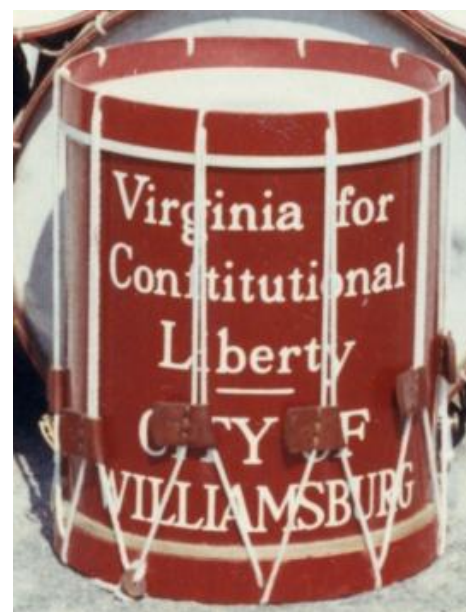
BELOW LEFT: One of three Soistman bass drums purchased in 1964 with iconic Soistman tack design later repeated on the 1973 set made by Soistman and on the 1995 supplemental set made by William "Bill" Reamer.



TRANSITION DRUMS 1962 TO 1965

TOP LEFT: One of two Soistman snare drums purchased circa 1962-1964 showing Soistman tack design. CWF&D also purchased assorted other snare drums from Soistman with and without this tack design from 1962 to 1970, primarily for the Junior Corps, sometimes referred to as “dark” and “light” shelled drums. TOP MIDDLE: Detail of the Soistman tack design on a smaller bass drum purchased in 1965 primarily for use by the Junior Corps. BELOW LEFT: British Army drum on top of a Soistman 16 inch drum with “GR” cipher. BELOW MIDDLE: Close up of a second 16 inch Soistman “GR” cipher drum. RIGHT: 1964 photo shows mix of drums, front to back: Soistman 16 inch “GR” cipher, Soistman tack design, unknown, original Soistman twenty-one inch “GR” cipher and George Carroll’s Soistman Eagle drum (identifiable upon enlargement).





1965 REPAINTED SOISTMAN "GR" DRUMS, AND 1972 EAMES DRUMS

ABOVE LEFT AND RIGHT: In 1965 the 1960 and 1961 Soistman "GR" cipher drums were repainted to the "Constitutional Liberty" drums and the Corps' first regimentals representing the Second Virginia Regiment were introduced.



MIDDLE LEFT AND RIGHT: 1972 Eames drums [9], snare and bass, in 1976 photos, later repainted in the 1990's and refurbished in 1995. These drums are still being played by the CWF&D in 2012.

BELOW RIGHT: Variety of drums in 1972 showing two Soistman Constitutional Liberty drums [10], two Soistman tack design drums and a Soistman dark shell drum.





1973 SOISTMAN AND 1973 ROSE MORRIS

ABOVE LEFT AND RIGHT: Several Soistman drums were purchased in 1973 to match other Soistman tack drums acquired at different times beginning circa 1962 and thus make a complete set. Drum Major John Moon can be seen in upper right photo circa 1975. The drummers are wearing regimentals of the Virginia State Garrison Regiment, which were adopted by the CWF&D in 1974.

BELOW LEFT: 1973 Rose Morris drums in 1975 showing rolled drum covers [11] introduced by John Moon and original white ears. These drums were

acquired from the Henry Potter and Company in London, England, which led to the name "London Drums." These drums are still being played by the CWF&D in 2012.



ABOVE RIGHT: 1973 Rose Morris drum in photo circa late 1980's with replaced ears.

BELOW RIGHT: One of the Rose Morris drums with unique painted shell initially used by single drummer to accompany Powder Magazine staff representing the State Garrison Regiment, but also played by the Corps.



COOPERMAN 1980 JUNIOR CORPS AND 1972 EAMES REFURBISHED CIRCA 1995

RIGHT: Pat Cooperman [12], supplier to the CWF&D of drumsticks since 1960, fifes since 1963, and drums since 1976. He founded Cooperman Fife & Drum Co. in 1975, now known as The Cooperman Company.

BELOW LEFT: Cooperman 1980 Junior Corps, the first set of drums built by Cooperman for the CWF&D.

BOTTOM LEFT: 1972 Eames as refurbished in 1995.

BOTTOM RIGHT: Cooperman 1980 Junior Corps and 1972 Eames, in photo circa 1980's.





1981 Reamer and 1987 Cooperman

ABOVE: Bill Reamer [13] in left photo and Bill White in middle photo posing with the State Garrison Regiment ("SGR") drums (above right) with tack design by Bill White.

LEFT: Snare strainer designed by Bill White for SGR drums, later used on the 1973 Rose Morris drums.

RIGHT: SGR drums at beginning of October 19, 1981, Yorktown Day march to Yorktown, Virginia, believed to be the Corps' longest march. Rolled drum covers can be seen on two of the drums.

BELOW LEFT AND RIGHT: Cooperman 1987 drum, and as seen in 2006 photo.



ROSE MORRIS WITH REPAINTED HOOPS CIRCA 1990'S AND 1995 REAMER DRUMS TO SUPPLEMENT SOISTMAN TACK DESIGN AND "SGR" SETS

BELOW LEFT: 1973 Rose Morris drum in 2008. Visible on the drum is a replacement snare strainer installed in the 1980's and based on the design by Bill White for 1981 Reamer "SGR" drum set.

BELOW MIDDLE: 1973 Rose Morris drum showing hoops repainted blue circa 1990's.

BELOW RIGHT: 1973 Rose Morris drums in photo of Junior Corps circa 2002.

BOTTOM LEFT AND RIGHT: Bill Reamer delivering 1995 supplemental drums to Lance Pedigo.



2002 COOPERMAN JUNIOR CORPS AND 2008 50TH ANNIVERSARY SETS

TOP AND MIDDLE LEFT: Cooperman 2002 Junior Corps drums.



MIDDLE AND BOTTOM RIGHT: Cooperman 50th anniversary drums modeled after original drum in the CW Collection, with hoop colors matched to colors on the regimental coats.

BOTTOM LEFT: Cooperman crew in 2008 with just finished 50th Anniversary drums.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

Special thanks are given to Lance Pedigo and Bill White for help with verifying dates and identifying drums shown in the photos, and to Bill White for some new details and stories about the CWF&D history during his career in the Corps.

ENDNOTES:

[1] From 1955 to 1957 single high school students in costume, and using borrowed high school drums, were hired to provide a cadence for the Colonial Williamsburg Militia. The borrowed high school drums were modern rod tensioned drums and thus unauthentic, as were the drum beatings. However, at a time when the viability of a fife and drum corps was not yet established, the presence of young drummers was authentic and they added to the excitement of the early Militia performances. They also began the process of demonstrating the need for a Colonial Williamsburg fife and drum corps.

[2] Sanford A. “Gus” Moeller was a famed drummer and passionate advocate of the open style of rudimental drumming, which dates at least to the time of the American Revolution. During the 1920’s, Moeller interviewed many Civil War drummers. He observed how they held their drumsticks and the motions and techniques they were using. Moeller also was influenced by George B. Bruce’s drumming techniques set forth in The Drummers and Fifers Guide published in 1862. Moeller incorporated these observations into his teaching and in 1925 he compiled and wrote The Moeller Book: The Art of Snare Drumming. His instruction became known as the “Moeller Method,” which remains today one of the premier instruction methods for rudimental drumming. Moeller once marched while drumming 245 miles from Madison Square Garden in New York City to Boston to demonstrate the open rudimental drumming style.

Moeller also was a master craftsman of authentic wood, rope tensioned drums. He called his drums “Grand Republic” drums, a term still used today. These drums typically were 17 inches at the head and 21 or 22 inches long. These drums, also known as “long” or “field” drums, produce a deep drum beat that can be heard for miles, a necessity on 18th and 19th Century battlefields because the drums were used to convey commands to the troops. Moeller died in 1960 and his drums have become collector items. Many of his drums are still being played today. Moeller’s tradition of making superior drums was carried on by Charles “Buck” Soistman, William Reamer and Patrick Cooperman.

In 1959, Gus Moeller had begun to build a set of Grand Republic drums for The U.S. Army Band but he became ill and Buck Soistman was asked to complete the set. George Carroll, then a member of The U.S. Army Band, remembers traveling to Soistman’s shop in Baltimore to pick up the drums. In a 1996 article in Percussive Notes, Carroll recalls:

Eventually, Mr. Moeller came down to see the Army Band and we were using a couple of his snare drums that we had gotten earlier. They were his Grand Republic model, which was 17 inches by 21- or 22-inches deep. We also

had a couple of rope-tensioned bass drums. He eventually made a whole new set of drums for the band. Unfortunately, they were made right at the end of his construction career, after he'd had a stroke or two, so he was never able to finish them. Consequently, he had to turn them over to Buck Soistman, who finished making them.

On a winter day, I drove to Baltimore and picked these drums up for the Army Band, and photographed them before the band started to use them. Mr. Moeller talked to us and gave kind of a lecture, or master class, on the care and feeding of rope drums as well as how to play the double-stick bass drum. He was a very dedicated teacher with high standards. Of course, he was completely in love with the idea of the old drumming. He was a very respectable person. He never drank or smoked and was a member of the Polar Bear Club; he used to go swimming in the wintertime, breaking the ice up there in New York. He also marched from New York to Boston playing a rope-tensioned drum to draw attention to that kind of playing. As you well know, he was the teacher of a lot of good percussionists like Gene Krupa and Jim Chapin.

[3] The origins of the CWF&D actually began in the early 1950's when Colonial Williamsburg began plans for a colonial militia, described in early memoranda as a "Military Drill Company," but upon its creation and thereafter it was referred to as the "Militia." The need was recognized for a unit composed of Colonial Williamsburg employees that could learn the colonial commands and drills and be available for special events and regular performances, which became known as "Militia Musters."

William D. (Bill) Geiger, Director of Craft Shops, was assigned responsibility to prepare detailed plans for the Militia that included fifers and drummers. Geiger's background in military history started in high school and continued through the College of William and Mary where he received a degree in history, and the University of Chicago, where he received his Masters in British Military History. Under Geiger's direction, the Craft Shops grew to become a significant part of Colonial Williamsburg's presentation to visitors, and they remain so to this day. He also was an avid military historian and determined to create a colonial militia and fife and drum corps for Colonial Williamsburg. In a series of 1953 memoranda, Geiger developed plans for the Militia. Each memorandum included six drummers and three fifers. The need for military music for the Militia was recognized from the beginning.

During the mid-1950's Colonial Williamsburg officials communicated with leaders in the Ancient fife and drum community, primarily centered in Connecticut and neighboring states. In American fife and drumming community, the term "Ancient" refers to individuals and corps that fife and drum music, dress and drill authentic to the American colonial period until shortly after the War of 1812, but the Civil War period also has become part of a broader, more inclusive definition. Included in the various contacts was the renowned drum instructor and drum maker Gus Moeller. In a February 12, 1959, letter to Bob Reveille, Geiger's assistant, Moeller refers to "our visit next Wednesday" in Mount Vernon, New York, at his shop "where Grand Republic Drums are created." The CWF&D did not purchase drums from Moeller because he became ill

and he died 1960. However, in 1960, the CWF&D purchased its first authentic field drums from Buck Soistman.

Colonial Williamsburg officials also obtained advice from Ed Olsen, then the historian and secretary of the N.Y. State Fife and Drum Corps Association. In a July 19, 1953, letter to John Goodbody, Vice President and Director of Presentation of Colonial Williamsburg, Olsen advises “the Ancient Fife and Drum Corps is indeed one of the most unique specimens of ‘Early Americana’ extant. I would say there are no more than seventy-five of these units in the country today, however, the movement is currently experiencing a resurgence of interest and new units are springing up all over.” Olsen, who was a fifer since his youth, is recognized by The Company of Fifers & Drummers as the foremost historian on the development of traditional American fifeing and drumming. He was co-founder of the organization, a Trustee-for-Life and was appointed Archivist -for-Life. He was named Curator of The Museum of Fife & Drum in 1986. Olsen died in 2009 at the age of 84.

The prominence of the Lancraft Fife and Drum Corps also became known to Geiger and Colonial Williamsburg. Lancraft is one of the oldest fife and drum corps in the country, dating to 1888. In 1958, Lancraft was invited by Colonial Williamsburg to perform at the Prelude to Independence ceremonies in May. At the time, Lancraft was playing Grand Republic drums built by Gus Moeller and two-piece Penzell-Mueller fifes, recognizable by long silver ferrules and a silver band where the head joint connects to the body of the fife. This model fife was chosen for the first fifes acquired by the CWF&D (see photo on page 1 of rehearsal prior to first performance). Undoubtedly, Geiger’s choice for the first fifes for the CWF&D was influenced by Lancraft’s use of the fife, but also on the likely recommendation of Ed Olsen who, at the time, also was playing the same model.

[4] Charles “Buck” Soistman was a famed fifer, drummer, drum maker and musician from Middle River, a suburb of Baltimore, Maryland. He was a true icon in and promoter of the Ancient style. Soistman was known to Colonial Williamsburg as early as 1953 when he was recommended by Ed Olsen. He died in 1977 at the age of 93. The following are excerpts from an article in the Baltimore Sun published in 1963, reprinted in the Drummers Assistant, Vol. II, Winter, 1963, Number 4:

Mr. Soistman was a professional drummer since he was 15 years old and he is the fourth generation of his family to work on the instruments. His great-grandfather made drums for the Union Army in the Civil War, his grandfather made them for other organizations, and his father repaired them.

Mr. Soistman’s interest in Colonial drums was aroused in 1946, when he went to a convention with fellow members of the 5th Regiment Veterans Corps. There he met men of the Noah Webster Ancient Fife and Drum Corps of West Hartford, Connecticut, who used rebuilt drums. “That was all it took to get me started.”

Before he could equip his own first corps with drums of antique types, however, he had to learn the details of both their construction and their use, and this turned out to be a five-year task. Every two weeks or so during this time [late 1940’s] he went to New York to see Sanford A. (Gus) Moeller, another maker of such reproductions.

Old music that was needed, and other items of interest, was found on trips to the Library of Congress. By 1951 Mr. Soistman had turned out his first drums, and formed the Monumental City Ancient Fife and Drum Corps, which marched in Colonial costume in many Baltimore parades...

About the time this corps took its first steps at a Colonial cadence, more than twenty steps a minute slower than the present-day rule, Mr. Soistman received his first outside order, from the 2nd Army Pipe Band. Its leader asked Mr. Soistman to make a set according to the old design.

His Colonial snare drums are about 21" deep and 17" across the head – about 9" deeper and 3" wider than modern drums. Another obvious difference is the system of cords and leather "ears" around the sides. Their function, to keep proper tension of the drumheads, is now generally performed by metal rods. The snare, snubbed tight across the bottom by brass fitting, is heavier on the old drums, too.

Mr. Soistman makes only one concession to the development of modern materials; he uses birch plywood in place of solid ash for the drum's midsection. Bent in a machine that melts the glue between the layers of wood and then allows it to dry again, the plywood has fewer tendencies to crack than do solid boards.

Mr. Soistman hand-paints the decorations on the drums, - eagles, bands of royal red and blue, regimental insignia complete with battle decorations. Sometimes he paints the owner's name in a decorative scroll on the portion of the drum that will hang next to the body.

The old-style drums have a deeper, heavier sound than most of those made today, Mr. Soistman says, due in part to their size and in part to the heavier snares. They also require a different playing technique – a movement of the whole arm rather than a flick of the wrist.

The following is taken from an article written by Charles Kramer that appears on the U.S.A.R.D. website.

Soistman was a premier drummer, drum instructor and the 4th generation of drum makers in his family, which had made drums and drumsticks for the Union Army in the Civil War. He was the son of a professional drummer. He began playing drums at the age of five years. He joined the 5th Regiment National Guard Band and the local Musicians Union at the age of fifteen.

As a member of the Musicians Union, he made his first professional appearance at Baltimore's famous Gayety Theater on "the Block" where he took over the drums after his father had a heart attack and passed away in the theater pit. Over the years many of his students traveled to the Gayety Theater to observe his drumming techniques.

Soistman performed in the Baltimore Municipal Band, Baltimore City Park Band, and the renowned Baltimore Symphony Orchestra. His career with the 5th Regiment Band began with his father installing him as the Band Mascot and he rose to the position of Drum Major. He was promoted to Warrant Officer and assigned as the Director of the Band.

When his enlistment ended, he began to pursue his real interests in rudimental drumming and the making of colonial era rope drums. At a veteran's convention in 1946, he witnessed a performance by the Noah Webster Fife and Drum Corps of West Hartford, Ct. and he became totally inspired with this style of drumming.

After several years of study, he opened his famous "The Rolling Drum Shop" and began to manufacture rope drums. He became known nationwide for his quality and workmanship. The best ancient drum corps in the country respected him and his drums. He traveled to musters in New England and played as an accomplished rudimental drummer. As a result of these travels, he formed his own ancient fife and drum corps known as the Monumental City Ancient Fife and Drum Corps in Baltimore, Maryland. This corps became so successful that they found it difficult to fulfill the many requests for their appearance in local and national events.

Soistman loved his trade and instructing young men and women in the art of rudimental drumming. He taught many local nationally ranked junior and senior drum & bugle corps a modern style of rudimental drumming, and he taught fife & drum corps both the modern and ancient styles of drumming. Because of his knowledge of drumming, he found it quite easy to arrange and teach the drum parts to a wide variety of music. As a result, his students loved him and his style of teaching.

In 1959, Gus Moeller had begun to build a set of Grand Republic drums for The U.S. Army Band but he became ill and Soistman was asked to complete the set. George Carroll, then a member of The U.S. Army Band, remembers traveling to Baltimore to pick up the drums.

In 1960, Soistman made a set of 22 drums for the just activated U. S. Army Old Guard Fife and Drum Corps, its first set. While these drums were being built, Soistman loaned drums to the Old Guard. At least two of these loaned drums, bearing a painted shield on the shell, were loaned to the CWF&D sometime in the fall of 1960 until 1961, together with a third drum bearing an eagle in flight painted on the shell.

Also in 1960, Soistman made two Grand Republic drums for the CWF&D, bearing a "GR" cipher on a bright red shell. Two more of these drums were built for the CWF&D in 1961, at which time the borrowed drums were returned to Soistman.

[5] The "Moeller Eagle" describes a variety of similar designs based on Moeller's original renditions. The variations have occurred to reflect designs requested by customers and the different interpretations of various artists over the years.

[6] Soistman made Carroll's "Eagle" drum that appears in many photographs of the Corps. Its color often is described as "yellowish" but Carroll explains that the shell is made of maple with a varnish that darkened to the color and that it is not painted. Carroll played the drum in President John F. Kennedy's inauguration parade. The eagle on Carroll's drum actually was painted by

Melvin R. Doxin, an organizer, with Soistman, of the Monumental City Ancient Fife and Drum Corps of Baltimore, Maryland, formed in 1950 and one of the earliest post-WWII corps promoting the Ancient style. According to Carroll, Doxin painted a lot of Soistman's drums and he also became a master drum maker.

[7] In June of 1959 the CWF&D began playing one of the original bass drums that had been on display in the Powder Magazine. In August or September of 1960, Carroll (while training the CWF&D but still a member of The U.S. Army Band) replaced the heads on this drum. Later, in November, Geiger requested permission from the curator to use a second original drum on display at the Powder Magazine. This second bass drum was made with staves, like a barrel. New heads were put on this drum by Carroll at that time. According to Carroll "it weighed a ton." This drum, with the staves visible, shows up in many early photos of the CWF&D. Both of these original drums remained in service until 1964, when new bass drums were purchased from Soistman. Sometime in 1961, a third bass drum was borrowed from the CW collection. This drum had a flower painted in its shell and was referred to as the "flower drum." It was played by the CWF&D into 1972.

[8] The Talmadge Alphin Award within the CWF&D is named after Alphin, one of the first bass drummers in the Corps. The award is given to the senior drummer whose essay best describes how being a member of the CWF&D has prepared the person for life. The award itself is a beautiful silver model of a bass drum and it resides permanently in the lobby of the Fife and drum Building, the headquarters of the CWF&D.

Alphin joined the CWF&D in 1959 as a bass drummer. He graduated from James Blair High School in 1961. After two years of college, he enlisted in the U.S. Army Reserves in 1963 and in 1965 he transferred to the Regular Army and volunteered for the Special Forces, where he earned the Parachute Badge and the Green Beret.

Alphin arrived in Vietnam in November of 1967, and was assigned to the 5th Special Forces Group. In May of 1968, he was transferred to the Forward Operating Base (FOB-4) in Da Nang that housed the top secret Military Assistance Command Vietnam – Studies and Observations Group, also known as MACV-SOG. He was promoted to Staff Sergeant (E-6).

MACV-SOG was the joint service unconventional warfare task force engaged in highly classified clandestine operations throughout Southeast Asia. It was given the title "Studies & Observation Group" as a cover. The group allegedly was performing an analysis of the lessons learned to that point in the Vietnam War, but it actually was a top secret special operations group. As men arrived at the CCN they signed formal agreements, with threatened jail time and fines for any breach, stating that they would not write or speak about their top secret operations for 20 years.

The all-volunteer MACV-SOG (most were U.S. Army Special Forces Green Berets) carried out some of the most dangerous and challenging special operations of the Vietnam War. Whenever the NVA tangled with a MACV-SOG team they suffered heavy casualties. Thus, the NVA wanted to hurt these elite teams, and hitting them at their base camp would be hitting them where it hurt.

On August 23, 1968, Alphin was killed in a night attack on his base by three North Vietnamese Army sapper companies. The Green Berets were hit hard losing 17 killed in action, the most Green Berets killed in a single day during the entire Vietnam War.

According to the National Archives and Records Administration, Alphin received the following decorations and awards:

Expert Badge w/Rifle Bar, Sharpshooter Badge w/Auto rifle Bar, Parachute Badge, National Defense Service Medal, Vietnam Service Medal, Combat Infantryman Badge, Bronze Star Medal, Good Conduct Medal, Republic of Vietnam Gallantry Cross Unit Citation w/ Palm

[9] The Eames drums were made by the Eames Drum Company in Wakefield, Massachusetts, that had been making a variety of drums since 1950. Its founder was Ralph G. Eames, a noted rudimental drummer, drum instructor and drum maker. In 1961, Eames organized the Linn Village Drum Band to perpetuate the ancient rudimental system of snare and bass drumming. A unique feature of the unit was that it played only drums and no fifes, thus the reference to “Drum Band” in its name. In addition, in the beginning the band was limited to 13 members, intended to represent the 13 colonies.

It appears the Eames drums were ordered in 1971 as kits but without snares and strainers, perhaps due to an effort to reduce the costs. At that time the cost of a snare drum kit without snares and a strainer was \$86.40 and a bass drum kit was \$104.00. The drums actually were assembled in 1972 by John Moon and Bill White using snares and strainers purchased from Buck Soistman.

[10] This photo is one of the last that shows the original Soistman drums (starting out as the “GR” cipher drums that were repainted to the Constitutional Liberty drums) being played. In 1973 three of these original drums were cut down to 16 inches at the shell. They also were stripped of the Constitutional Liberty design and stained to match the new 1973 drums purchased from Soistman. The fourth original Soistman drum was retired with its Constitutional Liberty design on the shell, and this drum later became the Richard Carter award drum that resides in the lobby of the Fife and Drum Building.

[11] The drum covers were based on the British Army practice. Bill White reports that his wife, Carol, made the drum covers. In 1981 His Royal Highness Prince Charles visited Williamsburg. After a performance by the CWF&D, Prince Charles approached John Moon and said “You must have been a drum major in the British Army.” Moon replied “Yes sir! And I used to work for your mother, what made you ask?” Prince Charles replied “I recognized the drum covers being rolled properly.” Prince Charles then asked if Moon had a “Warrant” and Moon replied that he did. In 1953 Moon had received a Warrant appointing him as a “Drummer to the Royal Household,” which is an appointment for life. “He [Prince Charles] was quite pleased” recalled Moon in a 2008 interview.

[12] Patrick H. “Pat” Cooperman (1928-1995) was a snare drummer from Mt. Vernon, New York, also the home of Gus Moeller. Cooperman served in the U.S. Navy on an aircraft carrier during World War II, and joined his hometown VFW Post 596 when he returned from the service. Post 596 had a fife and drum corps, the Colonial Greens Fife and Drum Corps, and Pat joined in as a rudimental snare drummer.

Cooperman was a fireman, but also a woodworker and furniture maker, and he began to make his own drumsticks. Soon other corps members were asking for drumsticks. Cooperman’s father-in-law was a fifer in the Post 596 corps and he and the other fifers encouraged Pat to experiment with fifes as well. By the late 1950’s Cooperman was making and selling handmade drumsticks and individual fifes throughout the New York and Connecticut area. George Carroll recalls meeting Cooperman in 1959 at a New England muster and purchasing drumsticks for the Continental Boys Fife and Drum Corps, which Carroll had just started in Arlington, Virginia. In 1960, as a member of the Colonial Greens, Cooperman attended the Southeastern States Ancient Muster, which was the first muster attended by the CWF&D.

As the years went on, an increasing number of drumstick models and fife designs were introduced. In 1963, the CWF&D needed to find a new fife model to replace a mix of fifes that had been acquired up to that point. George Carroll approached Cooperman about making a matched set of fifes for the CWF&D and Cooperman undertook the project. He made his first set of b-flat straight cylindrical wood fifes (most likely rosewood, but possibly cocobolo) and delivered them to the CWF&D in the spring of 1963. In 1964 Carroll again approached Cooperman about replicating an original colonial fife in the Colonial Williamsburg Collection. This fife had a swell at the mouth hole (embouchure hole to purists) and it tapered to the end of the fife. It also had brass ferrules about an inch long, and the finger holes were slightly countersunk. Cooperman travelled to Williamsburg to measure the fife and he produced the prototype in October of 1964, which was accepted as the model for all future CWF&D fifes.

Because the distance on the original fife from the mouth hole to the first finger hole was slightly shorter than traditional b-flat fifes, the fife plays slightly sharper than traditional b-flat fifes. As a result, this model has become known as the “old pitch” model and it is still used by the CWF&D today. The Cooperman website describes the old pitch fifes as follows:

The Old Pitch Model fife is the Traditional Model fife pitched to match an instrument in collection at Colonial Williamsburg, and was originally designed so that the Fifes & Drums there could sound, as well as appear, authentic. It is an interesting instrument with a great high register and is suitable for anyone who wishes to experience the time when pitch was not yet standardized, but it will not play well with other fifes (including other Cooperman fifes) and so should be chosen judiciously.

Cooperman also began taking in repair work on drums and developed ideas how rope drums could be improved. In 1975 Cooperman began making drums and he delivered his first drum, a single bass drum, to the CWF&D in 1976. In 1980 he delivered his first set of drums to the CWF&D. Cooperman continued to work on new designs and improvements for his instruments until he passed away in 1995.

In 2008, to commemorate its 50th anniversary, the CWF&D purchased a full set of drums from the Cooperman Fife and Drum Company. The snare drums are 16" X 16" at the shell. The red and blue colors of the hoops of the snare and bass drums were matched specifically to the red and blue colors of the CWF&D regimentals. Just like the old pitch fife in 1964, the 50th Anniversary Drums were modeled after an original 18th Century instrument in the Colonial Williamsburg Collection.

[13] William H. "Bill" Reamer, also known affectionately as "Big," was a well-known National Snare Drum Champion, instructor, drum competition judge, and drum and drumstick-maker. Reamer started drumming in 1933 with a Boy Scout drum and bugle corps. During his Army years, 1942-46 (where he served in New Guinea, the Philippines and Japan), he played with the Army Field Forces band and later went on to coach several national champion individual competitors.

Reamer often visited Buck Soistman at his "Rolling Drum Shop" in Baltimore. In 1975 upon the passing of Soistman, his widow, Marie, passed the Soistman family business and equipment directly to Reamer, to fulfill her late husband's wishes. With the volunteer help from many of Reamer's faithful drum students, the "shop" was transported from Soistman's location in Baltimore to the Reamer residence in Broomall, PA, where he established the "Drummer's Service."

In 1981, Reamer made the "SGR" set of drums for the CWF&D, using a distinctive tack design and snare strainer designed by William "Bill" White. In 1995, Reamer built additional drums for the CWF&D to increase existing sets: one "SGR" snare drum; four Soistman tack design snare drums; and one Soistman tack design bass drum.