

Getting the Band Back Together

the 26th North Carolina band

by Ken Osen



Not too long ago I was looking for some figures for a small display in the office and I ran across some old Confederate band figures made years ago by Britains under RC2. These were figures based on a period photograph of the band of the 26th North Carolina and were issued as a three piece set No.1 (17572) and a two piece set No.2 (17573). I always liked them but never really needed them for any projects, so there they sat, resting in a box for at least 13 years along with other older Civil War figures. That was until a couple of weeks ago.

Jim Hillestad recently acquired a nice model of the Cashtown Inn and wanted to use it in a story. He decided to write an article on Robert E. Lee's march to Gettysburg for his *Footnotes to History* column that would appear in the Winter issue of *The Standard*. Finally, I had a reason to use the old band figures so I dug them out of storage to send on to Jim for his photo vignette.

Upon closer examination I realized that the earlier figures made by RC2 had a rather different look than what we have been crafting for the last 12 years, and I wanted them to seamlessly blend into Jim's diorama. I happened to be right in the middle of converting some figures for the silent auction for our W.Britain Collectors' Club December evening event,

so I decided to do some conversion work on the band figures too. It seemed like it would be a pretty straight forward case of cutting the heads off and swapping them, but like many conversions I ended up doing a bit more than I originally planned. In the end, I not only changed heads but also redesigned the bases and totally repainted the figures. I faced some problems I hadn't dealt with before, but the challenge allowed me to experiment with some new techniques that worked pretty well. I thought that the process might be interesting to you as well so I took pictures

Whenever I finish projects like this I want to see them in an environment that puts them in context. Although I knew Jim [Hillestad] was going to use these, I wanted a preview so to speak, so I set them up on the diorama I built last year for the *Toy Soldier & Model Figure* subscription give away. I liked the way they looked enough that I will probably put a selection of new Confederate band members on the list for new development.

of the work at various points of the process to share. I was pretty happy with the end result, so much so that we may even put some new band figures on the to-do list for future release. ■



Original figures of the 26th North Carolina band (sets No17572 and No17573) as they were produced by RC2 in 2005



The first thing I usually do is cut the heads off the figures and grind away any of the old neck casting so I can pin the heads back on in a position that works. In this case I had a few heads left over from some earlier projects so I chose some different faces and headgear for interest.

After the heads and collars were cleaned up, I drilled small holes to accommodate the copper wire I use for pins. Copper wire is pliable and allows me to do slight adjustments. After that, I secure them in place with Super Glue.



Now the problem was texturing the base. This is where I had to get creative, as I had never faced that problem before. The answer was to brush a thin coat of medium viscosity Super Glue on the surface that needed texturing, and then sprinkle fine sand that I had already sifted onto the prepared surface. It worked really well, so the final touch was to use the 2-part epoxy putty to sculpt on some grassy patches.



Finished figure



The next step is to use the same 2-part epoxy putty I use for original sculpts to make any repair or revisions to the conversion. On a few of these figures I changed the cap contours and repaired other minor imperfections. The one thing I did not count on when I thought to use the old RC2 figures was the entirely different style of the figure's scenic base. The ones I have sculpted for the last 12 years have a tapered edge and simulated grass and soil. The solution was to grind the bases thinner on a disk sander and bevel the edges with a motor tool.



The next step was to repaint the figures. Confederates can be a bit more fun to paint if you go for a non-uniform look, which I did. Most of the band members were painted in frock coats in various shades of grey to warm butternut with variations of black tape trim. The trousers were painted various shades of slate blue and grey known to have been issued from the Richmond depot during the period.



The completed conversion