

Silver bells of Christmastime



James H. Hillestad rings in the Christmas season by taking a look at The Salvation Army -- a popular subject for a number of toy soldier makers through the years

Text and Photos: James H. Hillestad

The Christmas song "Silver Bells," first sung by Bob Hope and Marilyn Maxwell in the 1951 movie "The Lemon Drop Kid," was inspired by the imagery of Salvation Army bell ringers standing outside department stores every Christmas season.

The title of the Beatles' song "Strawberry Fields Forever" was borrowed from The Salvation Army's Strawberry Field children's home in Woolton, a suburb of Liverpool, England.

The Salvation Army has been depicted by 54-mm toy soldier makers in many countries through the years.

FOUNDED IN ENGLAND

So, who or what is The Salvation Army?

The Salvation Army traces its roots to 1865, when former Methodist minister William Booth and his wife, Catherine, founded it as the East London Christian Mission. It

was one of hundreds of missions which arose during the course of the 19th century in England.

One of the few to survive and grow, today The Salvation Army

has its international headquarters on Queen Victoria Street in London.

LEFT & TOP:

Salvation Army soldiers armed with silver bells ring in the holiday season.



ABOVE: Trophy items portraying Salvation Army co-founder William Booth leading a rally procession.

ABOVE, RIGHT: SSTE/Pageantry Products figures portraying a Salvation Army contingent.

BOTTOM: Salvation Army stamp.

BELOW, RIGHT: Salvation Army poster from WWI.





It operates in 121 countries and is one of the world's largest providers of social aid. The Salvation Army's stated mission is to perform evangelical, social and charitable work.

The name "The Salvation Army" arose from an incident in May 1878. William Booth was dictating a letter to his secretary and said: "We are a volunteer army."



His son, Bramwell Booth, overheard him and said, "Volunteer? I'm no volunteer. I'm a regular!"

The secretary was instructed to cross out the word "volunteer" and substitute the word "salvation."

MODELED AFTER MILITARY

The Salvation Army was modeled after the military, with its own flag, ranks and music.

Its "soldiers" wear a uniform tailored to the country in which they work. Uniforms can be white, gray, navy or fawn, and are even styled like the Indian sari in some areas.

The wearing of uniforms originated with Elijah Cadman. At the "War Congress" in 1878, he said, "I would like to wear a suit of clothes that would let everyone know I meant war to the teeth and salvation for the world."

The Salvation Army's red, yellow and blue flag is a symbol of its war against sin and social evils. The star contains The Salvation Army's religious war cry, "Blood and Fire."

The familiar Red Shield serves as the organization's logo. It had its origins in The Salvation Army's work during the Second Anglo-Boer War in South Africa.

In World War I, The Salvation Army provided first aid stations, ambulances and refreshments to troops in the trenches. Noteworthy were its Doughnut Girls of WWI.

GROWS DESPITE OPPOSITION

The Salvation Army's growth did not come without controversy and opposition.

Because the organization chose as one of its main goals the conversion of alcoholics, it came into conflict with publicans who were losing business to The

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Salvation Army's campaign against alcohol use. Salvation Army meetings were disrupted by the throwing of rocks, bones,





ABOVE: "Hosanna" group of Sally Ann figures by Dorset Soldiers. (Photo Courtesy of Giles Brown, Dorset Soldiers)

LEFT: Salvation Army band by Blenheim.

LEFT, BELOW: Salvation Army band and escorts by Trophy.

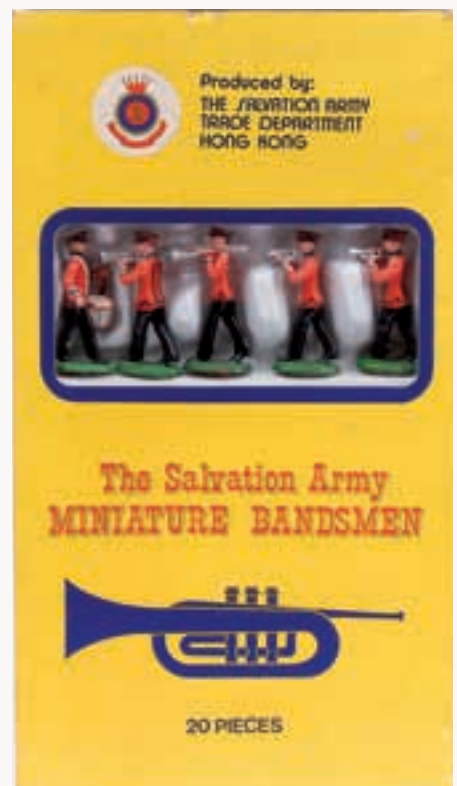
FACING PAGE, TOP RIGHT: Salvation Army poster art.

FACING PAGE, TOP LEFT: Salvation Army Doughnut Girls during WWI by D&J Miniatures.

FACING PAGE, MIDDLE: Salvation Army bell ringers by the Toy Soldier Centre.

FACING PAGE, BOTTOM LEFT: "Keep the Kettle Full" set by Trophy.

BELOW: Salvation Army band set made in Hong Kong. (Photo Courtesy of Vectis Auctions Ltd.)





ABOVE: Red Shield logo of The Salvation Army.

ABOVE, LEFT: Salvation Army women by Alexanders Toy Soldiers. (Photo Courtesy of Nikola Biberovic, Alexanders Toy Soldiers)



LEFT: Drum, tambourine and Bible-thumping Salvation Army figures made in England by Alexanders Toy Soldiers. (Photo Courtesy of Nikola Biberovic, Alexanders Toy Soldiers)

BELOW: Salvation Army band and escorts by Charles Hall.





rats and tar. Members were physically assaulted. Nevertheless, the organization grew and flourished.

In the United States, The Salvation Army's reputation was enhanced by its charitable relief efforts following the Galveston Hurricane of 1900 in Texas and the 1906 San Francisco Earthquake in California.

Nicknames for the organization include "Sally Ann" in Canada and "Sally Army" or "Sally Bash" in the United Kingdom.

Australians rarely use the full name, with the slang abridgement "The Salvos" even being displayed on shop fronts. The organization is known as "The Sallies" in New Zealand.

BELL RINGERS & BANDS

Every Christmas season fund-raising bell ringers and their Red Kettles are a visible confirmation of the organization's outreach efforts in communities around the globe. The Salvation Army deploys more than 25,000 holiday bell ringers in the United States alone.

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Few can think of The Salvation Army and not hear its music. In the early days in London, when Salvation Army members were sometimes confronted by unruly people, a family of musicians (the Frys, from Alderbury, Wiltshire) began working as their bodyguards and played tunes to distract the crowds.

The tradition of incorporating musicians into Salvation Army ministry work evolved into formation of brass bands. They perform in the organization's campaigns as well as parades, festivals and Christmas season activities.

The Salvation Army also has choral groups known as Songster Brigades.

Not to be overlooked is the playing of tambourines with colored ribbons representing the colors of The Salvation Army flag.

COLLECTING MINIATURES

For the 54-mm, painted metal toy soldier collector, Salvation Army figures can make a charming display just by themselves or when incorporated into dio-

ramas depicting scenarios such as a day in a park or holiday festivities.

Among those who have made Salvation Army figures through the years are Alexanders Toy Soldiers, Britains, Dorset Soldiers, STE/Pageantry Products, Trophy Miniatures of Wales Ltd., Charles Hall of Scotland, Blenheim Military Models, the Toy Soldier Centre, and D&J Miniatures. ♦

TOP: Sally Army band by Dorset Soldiers. (Photo Courtesy of Giles Brown, Dorset Soldiers)

ABOVE, LEFT: A standard-bearer and a bandmaster in a blue tunic were included in the rare old Britains set No. 1317 -- Salvation Army Band. (Photo Courtesy of Vectis Auctions Ltd.)

ABOVE, RIGHT: The Salvation Army band's blue uniforms rank this old Britains set No. 1316 from the collection of Philip Dean as being very rare. (Photo Courtesy of Christie's)

about the writer

James H. Hillestad is the proprietor of The Toy Soldier Museum and shop in Cresco, Pa., USA.