

# THE DRUM RETURNS HOME

ALL DRUM PHOTOS BY AUTHOR WILLIAM RAWLINGS



The 59th Georgia Regiment's drum, remarkably well preserved for its age of more than 150 years, has now returned home to Washington County.

*After a Georgia soldier lost his handcrafted drum on a Virginia battlefield, it took a century and a half for the relic to make its way back home for good.*

WILLIAM RAWLINGS

**I**t drummed the Boys in Gray off to war, was lost on the battlefield, and barely survived a disastrous fire. Now, more than 150 years after its creation on a plantation in rural Georgia, the drum carried by Thomas H. Sparks, Company B, 59th Georgia Regiment, has returned home.

The story of this remarkable journey begins on a planta-

tion near the village of Warthen, Georgia, in 1861. In January of that year, Georgia became the fifth state to secede from the Union. In the months that followed, militia companies formed across the South in anticipation of the possibility of war with the North. Washington County, whose seat was Sandersville, raised several such units. In Warthen, a crossroads community in the northern part of the county, local men organized the Jackson Guards under the leadership of Captain William Warthen, for whose family the town had been named. The company began weekly drills in May 1861, marching to the cadence of a drum crafted on a local cotton plantation.

The Guards' drum was a work of art, made completely of local materials, painted and decorated by its maker, Jasper M.

