



Kalamazoo Gals: A Story of Extraordinary Women & Gibson's 'Banner' Guitars of WWII

John Thomas

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An excerpt from Jonathan Kellerman's foreword:

"When it comes to music, the human factor is all. Yet so many books on musical instruments obsess on the fine points of construction while neglecting the talented people who began the process: transforming planks and slabs and slivers into masterpieces of sonic beauty. That's understandable; many players and collectors live and breathe trivia. But it's an approach that misses the point. In 'Kalamazoo Gals,' John Thomas has chosen to rise above that, fleshing out the most human of stories without neglecting the techno-stats that guitar geeks crave.

The goal John set for himself was monumental: illuminating the elusive history of a legendary group of WWII-era Gibson guitars known in the vintage trade as 'Banners' because of the decal affixed to their headstocks. Now recognized, nearly three quarters of a century after their manufacture, as among the finest acoustic guitars ever produced, over 9000 Banners were built during a period when, according to 'official' accounts, no Gibson instruments were produced because the company had shifted to churning out war goods. Even more remarkable, much of the work that went into Banners was performed by a group of young Michigan women with no prior training in musical instrument construction!

The contributions of Rosie the Riveter and her cohorts to the survival of American manufacturing during the 'Good War,' are well known and beyond profound. But until now the contributions of a band of intrepid, unpretentious, stunningly skillful, thoroughly American women to both the war effort and to the endurance of one of the greatest musical instrument manufacturers ever known, has gone unheralded.

Kudos to John Thomas for telling their story."

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