UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-EAU CLAIRE

REVEILLE TO RETREAT:
THE EVOLUTION OF FIELD MUSIC
IN THE UNITED STATES ARMY, 1775-1918

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

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Introduction

It was 5:45 p.m. on the first day of Basic Training at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, and the recruits were terrified. Immediately upon stepping from their cattle trucks, drill sergeants had verbally assaulted each and every new soldier. Now, standing in a small formation of twenty recruits, three more drill sergeants in “Smokey Bear” hats and screwed-up faces continued the harangue. None of these recruits even understood for what reason they were being victimized. Suddenly, the crisp, shrill notes of a bugle pumped over the loudspeaker. The drill sergeants stiffened. One of them took a deep breath and bellowed, “Platoon — Parade, Rest! Present, Arms!” Twenty awkward arms snapped in salute to an unseen flag in a ceremony few, if any, understood.

I was one of those recruits. No one ever told me the meaning or function of those bugle calls that I heard throughout my time in basic training. Seven years later, that was still the case. With the exception of the morning and evening flag ceremonies, the bugle calls heard on Fort Sill, Oklahoma and Fort McCoy, Wisconsin – while identical – still remain a mystery.

One aspect of warfare seldom touched upon in popular military histories is the transmission of orders to large bodies of infantry, cavalry, and artillery in both garrison and field environments. Bugle calls represent one method of completing that task. However, it is impossible to understand the meaning of those calls unless one understands their origin, separate from the military bands that coexisted throughout the period 1775 to 1918. Field music of the United States Army was an important aspect of military communication, acting as the commander’s mouthpiece, disseminating orders and delineating the duty day; to understand the modern bugle calls, we must understand the evolution of field music from the Revolution to the First World War.

In order to gain an appreciation of the evolution of field music, it is important to examine music resources available to the military throughout the period, beginning with British manuals.
available to the Continental Army and extending to Daniel D. Emmett’s instructional manual of 1865. There are many sources available, some more readily-accessible than others. Examples such as the *Entire New and Compleat Instructions for Fife* and the *Young Drummer’s Assistant*, both from 1780s London, are difficult to obtain. Other sources, such as David Hazeltine’s instruction of 1809, Ashford’s *A New, Useful, and Complete System of Drum Beating* of 1812, and Bruce and Emmett’s *Fife Instructor* of 1865 are more readily available. Furthermore, several infantry tactical manuals, featuring bugle calls used in the nineteenth-century and those still in the repertoire, were also examined.

Determining what references were available for musicians was not the only avenue to follow in this study. It was essential to determine what was required of field musicians during the period in question. These requirements can be found in the ever-changing Army regulations. Regulations authored by the likes of Baron von Steuben, Winfield Scott, and eventually, the War Department staff, proved invaluable in this respect. Tactical manuals added to this store of knowledge by labeling those calls that were actually practical for use by the military in garrison and the field, sometimes adding on signals far beyond what was required. In the early years, regulations served the secondary purpose of functioning tactical manuals as well, but later they evolved into the manual of Emory Upton, who drew upon his experience in the Civil War, as well as the Signal Corps manuals and their variants from the early twentieth-century.

Finally, it was not important solely to determine what was required by regulation, it was necessary to gain insight into how field music affected private soldiers. To this we look to service memoirs, beginning with the only work by an enlisted Continental soldier, that of Joseph Plumb Martin. This was then followed up with memoirs from the Mexican War, Civil War, frontier postings/campaigns, and the Spanish-American War.

The Army, ever an institution entrenched in tradition, retains the anachronistic bugle calls in an inadvertent nod to the past. A typical day in the Army begins with the first note of “Reveille”
and ends with the last note of “Retreat.” The daily schedule of bugle calls is rooted in traditions that can be traced back to 1775. What follows is a history of their evolution and importance to military history.

**A Revolutionary Start**

The Revolutionary army that appeared on June 15, 1775 bore a remarkable resemblance to that of its British opponent in both form and function. This comes as no surprise, considering the very concept of a militia was an institution transported from England during the early days of the American colonies.¹ Music was an integral component of those early militias, and it is easy to assume that field musicians of the colonial entities utilized British organization, training, and techniques. After all, they were British.

As early as 1633, the Virginia Colony was utilizing drummers for marching practice to accompany its citizen soldiers. More elite units became associated with bands, a trend which continued throughout the colonial period. The Regiment of Artillery Company of Pennsylvania, nearly 130 years later, was commanded by Benjamin Franklin, who paid band members out of his own pocket.² So, when the barely united colonies commenced fighting against their parent government, they marched with units based heavily on the model of their opponent, while still lacking a cohesive doctrinal standard that could be adopted by all states. One constant that was present was that of the field musicians. As historian Raoul F. Camus puts it, “There was no standardization of size among units, but all depended upon the drum for commands.”³

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² Ibid.

³ Ibid., 59.
The resolution of the Continental Congress for June 14, 1775 states, “Resolved, That six companies of expert riflemen [sic] be immediately raised in Pennsylvania, two in Maryland, and two in Virginia; that each Company consist of a captain, three lieutenants, four sergeants [sic], four corporals, a drummer or trumpeter, and sixty-eight privates.” Field musicians were there at the beginning of this new army to echo commands in the field and regulate the soldiers’ day. However, it appears that few musicians or private soldiers knew the rudiments of soldiering, as Joseph Plumb Martin of Connecticut relates: “I was called out every morning at reveille beating, which was at daybreak, to go to our regimental parade, in Broad-street [New York], and there practice the manual exercise, which was the most that was known in our new levies, if they knew even that.”

When George Washington assumed command of this rag-tag army, he led a corps of officers that understood the fundamental principles of British tactics, including the value of field music. While many of Washington’s officers had experience, the army was a raw outfit that proved little match for the British regulars. The campaign failures of 1776 showed the need for standardization. Worried about the quality of his field music, the General-in-Chief took steps to ensure that his fifers and drummers could properly direct troops on a turbulent battlefield. At that point there was no central direction for the training of fifers and drummers. Nearly one year after the Army was formalized, in June 1776, a Board of War was finally constructed. Besides “raising, fitting out, and dispatching all such land forces as may be ordered for the service of the United Colonies,” the Board filled several other administrative holes. Chief among these were the establishment of five

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6 Camus, Military Music, 59-61.
and drum majors that would be responsible for the regular training and performance of field musicians.\(^7\)

Establishment of the Board would have its greatest impact the following year. The army of 1776 was discharged and replaced with eighty-eight regiments enlisted for “three years, or during the war.”\(^8\) Washington was ultimately responsible for his field musicians when he “ordered the exact times and procedures for the daily camp duties, standardizing them at least for that portion of the army that was serving with him.”\(^9\) These regulations, solidified with two hours of daily practice, guided the troops on the field of battle and delineated the daily routine up through the historic encampment at Valley Forge, Pennsylvania during the winter of 1777-1778. Those soldiers who survived the winter bore witness to immense hardships that few who came after could or can now understand, and the stories have become legend. But the historical reality is more important than the myth could ever be.

As the world thawed that spring, the self-styled Prussian Baron, Friedrich von Steuben, started molding the Continentals into hardened soldiers. The troops were now “engaged in learning the Baron de Steuben’s [sic] new Prussian exercise.”\(^10\) Steuben led a core group of noncommissioned officers in a series of drill movements based on European standards and fitted to the unique, individual American style. These NCOs then returned to their respective units as drill cadre, or instructors, to train private soldiers to the new standards. The result was a professional army better able to stand up to the crack British redcoats.

Another Congressional reorganization of the Army on May 27, 1778 was an attempt to further address organization problems, including the pay of officers and men. Drummers and fifers


\(^8\) Martin, *A Narrative of a Revolutionary Soldier*, 76.


\(^10\) Martin, *A Narrative of a Revolutionary Soldier*, 103.
were authorized $7 1/3 each month, nearly $0.60 more than regular privates.\textsuperscript{11} Infantry regiments were also increased to nine companies, including a company of light infantry. This unique unit acted as skirmishers and would require an instrument more versatile than fife or drum to project commands. With the addition of extra companies, the size of each unit theoretically increased by nearly ninety soldiers: infantry battalions now numbered 582 with twenty musicians; artillery battalions would have approximately 829 soldiers with twenty-six musicians; cavalry battalions would have nearly 420 troopers with six trumpeters and one trumpet major. Even the provost guard was authorized two trumpeters.\textsuperscript{12}

Washington was so impressed with von Steuben’s work that he promoted the Baron to Inspector General of the army. His manual of drilling was approved by the Continental Congress for adoption by the entire army. It was subsequently published numerous times with no alterations, remaining in that original form until 1824. The \textit{Regulations for the Order and Discipline of the Troops of the United States}, known today as the “Blue Book,” laid the groundwork for Army field music, but it only mentions the names of prescribed tunes; there is no musical notation.\textsuperscript{13} Fife books at the time published statements to the effect that units should play songs popularized by elite units – or, in other words, what was fashionable.\textsuperscript{14} However, von Steuben considered standardization of military signals to be of tremendous import. Chapter twenty-one of his regulations deals entirely with the different beats of the drum, though he prescribed no specific manual from which to extract these beats.

\textsuperscript{11}Camus, \textit{Military Music}, 74.

\textsuperscript{12} United States Continental Congress, \textit{Journals, v.11 1778, May 2-September 1}, 538-543.

\textsuperscript{13} Baron Frederick William Von Steuben, \textit{Baron Von Steuben's Revolutionary War Drill Manual: A Facsimile Reprint of the 1794 Edition} (Reprint, New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1985), 89-91. For an example of what songs could have been played, see the Appendix, part I.

\textsuperscript{14} Camus, \textit{Military Music}, 82.
The Continental Army fifers and drummers acted as the commander’s mouthpiece. They regulated the daily activities of each unit, an important role that echoes in bugle calls of the modern military. As prescribed by von Steuben, the official calls were divided into two categories. Beats were calls directed toward an entire unit; signals were directed to a smaller section of the unit. Fifteen minutes before the first of these beats was sounded each morning, the “Drummer’s call” assembled the drummers in front of the adjutant’s [staff officer] tent in order to prepare for the ceremony to come. This was taken up by the drummers of the entire army in a rolling echo from the right flank to the left.15

Once assembled, the drummers and fifers began the series of music that regulated the soldier’s day. “The Reveille [von Steuben’s emphasis] is the beat at day-break, and is the signal for the soldiers to rise, and the centries [sic] to leave off challenging.”16 “The Troop” was another commonly heard beat. It was used as a means of assembling the troops for one of the numerous roll calls held throughout the day. “The Retreat” was occasionally used with the purpose that the title suggests, but its main purpose was as a sunset ceremony, “for calling the roll, warning the men for duty, and reading the orders of the day.”17 The final call heard during a normal duty day was “The Tattoo,” formerly known as “The Taptoo.” According to Raoul F. Camus, the name was derived from the Dutch phrase “doe den tap,” or shut off the taps, referring to the taverns located near European military barracks.18 “The Tattoo” was called for all “soldiers to repair to their tents, where they must remain till reveille next morning.” During winter months this final call occurred at 8:00 P.M. and during the summer two hours later. Other beats that were commonly heard include:

15 von Steuben, Drill Manual, 89.

16 Ibid. It should be noted that in cases where songs were directly quoted, their formatting will remain the same, such as von Steuben’s use of italics. In other cases, the songs will remain in quotation marks.

17 Ibid., 90.

18 Camus, Military Music, 94.
“The General;” sounded as a preparatory command before a march, allowing soldiers to strike their tents and conduct other necessary functions; “The Assembly,” sounded for a formation on the colors; “The March,” sounded to begin forward movement; “To Arms,” sounded to prepare the men “in case of alarm;” and “The Parley,” sounded when a meeting with the enemy was requested. 19

The other beats of the drum prescribed by von Steuben were the signals, general marching or facing commands used when voices were inaudible. Only twelve were listed in his manual, though other manuals added as many as twelve on top of that. 20 Unlike the beats, von Steuben named the song or sound to be used for each signal. Generally these were sounded by drum only.

Adjudant’s call – first part of the troop. [“The Troop”]
First Sergeant’s call – on roll and three flams.
All non-commissioned officers call – two rolls and five flams.
To go for wood – poing stroke and ten-stroke roll.
Water – two strokes and a flam.
Provisions – roast beef [a song common to the British navy]
Front to halt – two flams from right to left, and a full drag with the right, a left hand flam and a right hand full drag.
For the front to advance quicker – the long march.
To march slower – the taps.
For the drummers – the drummers call. [“Drummer’s call”]
For a fatigue party – the pioneers march. [“Pioneer’s march”]
For the church call – the parley.” 21 [“The Parley”]

During the Revolutionary era, musicians held other important roles besides regulating the daily routine. Von Steuben required a drummer to be assigned to every camp and quarter guard in order to sound alarms and participate in the elaborate ceremonies involved with mounting and


relieving the daily guard.\textsuperscript{22} There were also honors to be paid to officers from the rank of major up to the Commander-in-Chief.\textsuperscript{23}

One other common feature of von Steuben’s manual that trickled down through the years was a set of instructions to common soldiers just entering the service. Besides cautioning each man to learn proper marching, dressing in the night, and carrying “himself with a soldier-like air,” von Steuben warned that the new soldier must learn to follow orders. Included in that warning was the need to “acquaint himself with the usual beats and signals of the drum, and [to] instantly obey them.”\textsuperscript{24} Nearly 150 years later, soldiers entering service for World War II still received similar advice in regards to bugle calls.\textsuperscript{25}

One of the problems that arose during the war, and possibly from the lack of a standardized source for von Steuben’s calls, was that few of the fife and drum majors within the Continental Army were able to teach their recruits properly. On August 19, 1777, Lieutenant John Hiwell was appointed Inspector and Superintendent of Music in order to improve and standardize the quality of music and instruction within the army. Hiwell was tasked with organizing rehearsals, supervising fife and drum majors, supplying his charges, and setting the example for field musicians.\textsuperscript{26}

To this point only the garrison duties of musicians have been mentioned. Field music played an important role on the battlefield for both sides as well. Several reorganizations of the Army throughout the war resulted in a standardized musical complement of one fifer and one drummer per company within each regiment. Light companies replaced fifers with buglers, presumably for


\textsuperscript{23} Ibid., 112.


their longer effective range in a tactical environment. This may indicate a changing organizational structure based on instrument effectiveness. Musicians would frequently beat a march while advancing upon enemy positions and in turn would often be met with music from the opposition, both units playing to bolster the morale of their respective units. As William Moultrie describes during the siege of Savannah in 1779, British “General Huger made his attack…but had to wade through a rice field; he was received with music and a warm fire of cannon and musketry....”

Fifers and drummers would also be used in celebrations and recruiting drives.

As attrition took its toll during the war, regiments continued to decrease in size. By 1781, the Army needed all the soldiers it could get. This trend drastically affected the field musicians who, up to that point, had been composed mainly of young teenage boys. Beginning that year soldiers were drawn from the enlisted ranks, performing the standard duties of private soldiers. When the war finally ended following the Treaty of Paris on September 20, 1783, Congress directed General Washington to reduce his army, retaining only those troops he believed necessary for defense of the United States. Once the British left New York, he kept only one regiment of infantry and one battery of artillery to guard military stores at West Point, New York. The entire postwar Army totaled 600 men.

Fifes on the Frontier

Prospects of a peacetime army became a topic of steady debate in the Confederation Congress and later Constitutional government. Numerous times early in the government’s


existence, states were called on to provide troops for home defense or uprising, as in the cases of Shay’s Rebellion and the Whiskey Rebellion. When George Washington was elected the first President in 1789, little changed. “The military policies of the new nation evolved realistically in response to foreign and domestic developments.” 29 Nothing abated the distrust between states and toward the federal government. This, coupled with numerous financial difficulties and the extreme independence of American citizens, made it impossible for the government to raise the regular Army to its authorized strength. The new nation was being pulled into European affairs, with more and more of its young men impressed into the British navy after war between France and Britain broke out. 30

During this time of increased interest in European affairs, Americans were also becoming more involved with the development of military tactics in order to supplement von Steuben’s basic regulations, still in force since conception. In 1809, William Duane published a System of Discipline and Manoeuvres of Infantry [sic], translated from a French manual. He followed this with American Military Library; or Compendium of Modern Tactics. These followed von Steuben’s musical example. Though the names of these songs remained the same, the content of each was, in some cases, rapidly evolving. One of the reasons may have been the rise in publication of popular manuals of military music, meant for both professionals and students. Among the multitude were Samuel Holyoke’s Instrumental Assistant, Timothy Climstead’s Martial Music, and Charles Ashforth’s New, Useful, and Complete System of Drum Beating, published in 1812. 31

Changing conditions on the battlefield had military planners moving away from the traditional European rank and file tactics, leaning toward the use of light infantry, riflemen, and

29 Stewart, Military History, 116. For a description of the politics surrounding the peacetime Army, see 107-127.

30 Ibid., 116.

31 Camus, “The Military Band in the United States Army Prior to 1834,” 409-411. For an example of musical scores available to field musicians during the War of 1812, see Appendix, part II.
draconics, all varieties of soldier with a high level of mobility. It is interesting to note that writers of the popular military manuals seemed to be anticipating this. In his 1811 *Practical Instructions for Military Officers*, Epaphras Hoyt recommended that buglers in rifle companies would perform double duty. They should “be furnished with a bugle and fife, the former for signals [field calls], the latter for regulating the marching on parade and at reviews.”

Raoul F. Camus, in his doctoral dissertation on military bands prior to 1834, says that there is no historical justification for this mixing of instrumentation in the present-day U.S. Army Old Guard Fife and Drum Corps: no historical example exists to prove Hoyt’s recommendation. Though it seems to have been ignored for at least some period of time, Hoyt’s suggestion seems indicative of the trend toward reliance on bugles and the departure from fife and drum corps. Additionally, updated manuals included portions specific to the cavalry, which used primarily bugles.

By the outbreak of war in 1812, von Steuben’s regulations were still the centerpiece of Army doctrine, albeit outdated. Aside from updating the field music currently used, steps were taken to bring Army tactics into the modern era. In 1791 an updated French manual, *Reprèsent concernant l'exercICE et les manœuvres de l'infanterie*, represented the state-of-the-art in terms of tactics. A London translation became available in 1806, and William Duane included the same music in his works of 1807 and 1809. Other manuals also transcribed this French example, including Alexander Smyth’s *Regulations for the field exercise, manoeuvres, and conduct of the infantry of the United States*, dating from 1812. Interestingly enough, these manuals kept the structure of von Steuben’s signal system; whether his

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32 Epaphras Hoyt and Roger Stevenson, *Practical Instructions for Military Officers* (Greenfield, MA: Printed by John Denio), 166.


34 Ibid., 440.
signals were written into the French manuals or simply reused by each American author as a familiar base remains to be seen.\textsuperscript{35}

The War of 1812 was a conflict that relied heavily on inexperienced regular force and unorganized militia. Success varied from unit to unit. One thing had become painfully obvious: the need for drastic change in tactics and training was necessary to ensure adequate defense in the future. “For the thirty years after the War of 1812 to the beginning of the Mexican War, the Army of the United States would slowly and painfully evolve into a professional force with generally recognized standards of training, discipline, and doctrine.”\textsuperscript{36} As soon as peace was declared in 1815, Congress demobilized the Army to an effective strength of 10,000 men from only 30,000 during the war.

For three decades following the War of 1812, the United States Army pushed its area of operations ahead of a rapidly expanding settler population. When John C. Calhoun was chosen as Secretary of War in December 1817, a large portion of those troops would be shifted to the frontier regions of North America. During his term, construction on a series of forts was begun that stretched from Fort Jessup in present-day Louisiana to Fort Snelling at the falls of St. Anthony in present-day St. Paul, Minnesota. Fort Leavenworth, the centerpiece of this line, was completed in 1827 as the first permanent garrison west of the Missouri River. Legislators had, by that point, appointed General Winfield Scott to head a Congressional board to draft a new set of regulations that would be employed by the Regular Army in its increasingly diverse functions.\textsuperscript{37}

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid. and Alexander Smyth, Regulation for the field exercise, manoevres, and conduct of infantry in the United States, drawn up and adapted to the organization of militia and regular troops (Philadelphia: Anthony Finley, 1812), 204.

\textsuperscript{36} Stewart, Military History, 159. See also, Roger Lawrence Beck, “Military Music at Fort Snelling, Minnesota, from 1819 to 1858: An Archival Study” (PhD diss: University of Minnesota, 1987), 15 for a discussion of the increasing importance of the frontier to developments in the U.S. Army and its doctrine.

\textsuperscript{37} Stewart, Military History, 166-170.
Congress adopted the resulting *General Regulations for the Army, or Military Institutes* in 1824, at the same time it reorganized the regular Army. This new set of regulations widely expanded American military doctrine, substituting the early continental European influence on Baron von Steuben with a British style. As with the earlier manual, the daily activities of each service branch were punctuated by the calls of bugles or fifes.\(^{38}\) This manual was expanded in later editions.

Roger Lawrence Beck studied the music of various regiments stationed at Fort Snelling from 1819 to the Civil War. As there were very few infantry units on the frontier, with a line stretching over 1,000 miles, entire regiments were seldom all in one place. Rather, two or three companies would be stationed at a main post, while others would rotate to auxiliary units, as seen with the Fort Snelling’s satellite Camp Ripley in present-day Minnesota. According to Beck, the independent assignments of many of these companies meant independent musicians. Conversely, when companies were consolidated, their respective musicians would act in concert, supervised by the drum and fife majors, to sound out their daily duties.\(^{39}\)

As outlined in Article 25 of Scott’s regulations, the daily routine would consist of five roll calls held by the first sergeants of each company. At dawn each day, a musician’s or “Drummer’s call” would assemble the musicians to the regimental parade ground, where they would promptly play the “Reveille” to signal the first roll call. Following this, a “General Fatigue” call would be used to begin guard mount and general policing of the garrison area. At 8:15 A.M. the “Surgeon’s Call” was sounded, assembling those seeking medical attention. A second roll call sounded at 9 A.M. and was followed by “Peas on a Trencher” to signal breakfast. The third roll call was sounded at 3 P.M. with the call of “Roast Beef,” signaling dinner. “At both meals, the roll of each company will be called, before commencing, by the first sergeant.” The fourth roll call, or dress parade, was sounded


thirty minutes before sunset each day. Ten minutes later the “Adjutant’s Call” was played, the signal for each company to march to the regimental parade and prepare for an inspection. “The Retreat” was played during the course of each evening parade followed, ten minutes later, by the “Tattoo,” signal for the final roll call. “Tattoo” symbolized the end of the typical duty day as well as the signal for lights out. These calls, while identical in name to those used by von Steuben, had developed in practice into much more elaborate affairs.

The Fifth U.S. Infantry, stationed at Fort Snelling beginning in 1819, generally followed the routine set forth by Winfield Scott in his regulations. Besides the five daily rolls and their required musical accompaniment, the Fifth participated in a series of monthly inspections, preceded by a review with fifes and drums beating. There were also opportunities for military and civilian funerals, as well as disciplinary actions, all acted out to appropriate field music.

Regimental bands were fairly common following the war, but for the most part their history is separate from this study. According to Beck, “Following traditions established during the late eighteenth century, bands were considered a necessary luxury at most regimental garrisons…. ” Their existence was recognized by the top brass, but bands were never regulated or included in military budgeting. Consequently, the expense was placed at the feet of commanding officers; in spite of this, from 1830 to 1860, the number of bands increased dramatically. While the function of bands was generally of a different purpose than field music, it is important to note that these bands did have a meaningful diplomatic role. Namely, the signing of treaties with American Indian groups was often accompanied by music and celebration. For example, when describing a post-

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40 Scott General Regulations for the Army, or Military Institutes, 38-43.

41 To see an example of the growth of these songs, see Appendix, part II.

42 For a description of the roll calls and inspections, see Beck, “Military Music,” 55. For a brief description of the other functions of field music, see Ibid., 70.

43 Quote from Ibid., 78. Everything else from Ibid., 124-125.
treaty signing following the so-called Black Hawk War, Winfield Scott mentioned, “A band [that] furnished the music and heightened the joy of all.”

These bands had a purpose completely separate from that of field music, but occasionally the lines blurred. As at all other such posts, Fort Snelling housed field musicians who delineated the duty day through the standard series of calls outlined by Winfield Scott. They also performed a variety of other duties, including the usual menial tasks associated with infantry soldiers, namely fatigue details. Frequently they intruded on the traditional territory of bands as well, such as performing in welcoming ceremonies for high ranking officers and prominent civilians such as Minnesota territorial Governor Alexander Ramsey. Another frequent occurrence was the drumming out of deserters and other law-breakers to the accompaniment of the “Rogue’s March.” Both bands and field musicians would branch out to civilian festivities, as well as the occasional contract job.

Eventually westward expansion led to conflict as Texas was declared an independent nation carved from Mexican territory, then finally annexed into the United States in 1845. President James K. Polk hoped to force a settlement with the Mexican Government that would allow Texas to freely enter the Union. In mid-summer, Brigadier General Zachary Taylor moved forces into position nearly 200 miles into Mexico to posture against military threat. After several months of posturing, war was declared on March 9, 1846. It was a frontier army, trained in the tactics set forth by Winfield Scott, that inherited this fight, and those musical traditions found in frontier posts such as Fort Snelling and Fort Leavenworth would make their way to the war in Mexico. Even in the field, as described by veteran B.F. Scribner, “We are aroused at daylight by the reveille, and have a


company or squad drill for two hours.” 47  This continued even in the midst of campaigning, to the point that Scribner was complaining to home of “that detested drum.” 48  Things deviated from the normal military routine, however: “At night music and dancing were the order of exercises until tattoo, after which I took the arm of a messmate and strolled out upon the bank of the river…” 49

Civil War

In 1857, a new set of Army Regulations was drafted and published. Just as in other manuals before this one, the 1857 Regulations relied heavily on the past for inspiration, while still dramatically changing portions of the rules by which the Army functioned. However, much of the musical duties and honors performed by field musicians remained the same throughout the years. In fact, the wording of these specific regulations was often transcribed word for word into editions:

237….The colors of a regiment passing a guard are to be saluted, the trumpets sounding, and the drums beating a march.
240….All guards are to be under arms when armed parties approach their posts; and to parties commanded by commissioned officers, they are to present their arms, drums beating a march, and officers saluting.
241….No compliments by guards or sentinels will be paid between retreat and reveille, except as prescribed by the grand rounds. 50

A variety of other duties was outlined in the regulations including funeral services, inspections by commanding officers, dress parades, reviews by dignitaries and officers, guard mounting, and picket duty. As prescribed by Baron von Steuben nearly eighty years previous, the field musicians served a

49 Ibid., 37.
valuable function on the march as well. Placed at the rear with a senior noncommissioned officer, infantry drummers and cavalry buglers would be in a position to warn or signal the front of a column.  

One important area not covered in the 1857 Regulations that was corrected four years later was the addition of the roll-calls and hours of service:

230…In garrison, *reveille* will be sounded immediately after day-break; and *retreat* at sunset; the *troop, surgeon's call, signals* for breakfast and dinner at the hours prescribed by the commanding officer, according to climate and season. In the cavalry, *stable-calls* immediately after reveille, and an hour and half before retreat; *water-calls* at the hours directed by the commanding officer.

231…In camp, the commanding officer prescribes the hours of reveille, reports, roll-calls, guard-mounting, meals, stable calls, issues, fatigues &c.  

With one exception, the signals outlined in the 1861 Regulations had been in use since von Steuben’s time, including “To go for fuel,” “To go for water,” “For fatigue party,” “Adjutant’s call,” “First sergeant’s call,” “Sergeant’s Call,” “For the drummers,” and the new addition “Corporal’s call.” Whether or not these calls were to be played on fifes or bugles is not specified.

Rising sectional tension over the issues of popular sovereignty, slavery, and the rights of individual states led to conflict in the spring of 1861. Five weeks after the inauguration of Abraham Lincoln as the sixteenth president, Southern soldiers fired on Fort Sumter in Charleston harbor, ushering in civil war. Following the conflict with Mexico, the Regular Army had been reduced to a fraction of its former size, flung to the far corners of the continent. President Lincoln urgently called for 75,000 volunteers for three-month enlistments; the demand for volunteers was repeated

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51 For funerals, inspections, dress parades, reviews, and guard mounting, see United States War Department, *Regulations for the Army of the United States, 1857*, 35-50. Picket duty and the changing of guards can be found on 78. The signals and functions of musicians on the march can be found on 89.

52 Ibid., 35-50.

53 United States War Department, *Regulations for the Army of the United States, 1861*, 39.
several months later. Following this call, the rapid influx of troops created a demand for band members as well, a situation that led to a consequent drop in professional quality.  

Following the successes of Napoleon in the early nineteenth century, American military institutions parted ways with those of Britain and shifted toward the flamboyancy of French styles, even as Scott’s regulations standardized and simplified infantry, cavalry, and artillery tactics. The organized militia adopted these styles readily, and the most glaring examples were those of the zouave units. These organizations adopted the colorful French-Algerian uniforms of baggy, red pants and tight-fitting fatigue blouses, as well as mastered their drill tactics. Popular opinion of these professional drill teams brought about an enlistment craze.

Band growth was affected in a similar manner, as these bodies were “indispensable to the parade performances of these crack drill units.” This trend also gave birth to another – the recruitment of units from the same geographical locale – which would later affect recruitment efforts in those cities and towns. One such volunteer unit was the Twentieth Maine Volunteer Infantry Regiment, recruited in spring 1862. Theodore Gerrish, writing nearly twenty years after the war, explains how the inspiration of these crack drill teams did not necessarily translate into the actual practice of drill: “We had never been drilled, and we felt that our reputation was at stake. An untrained drum corps furnished us with music; each musician kept different time, and each man in the regiment took a different step.”

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56 Ibid., 17-29 and 57-59.

Soon nearly every regiment was funding a band for their personal enjoyment and recruiting efforts, all at the expense of the more functional field musicians. Costs were getting out of hand.

General Order 15, issued on May 4, 1861, declared that regiments would have two principle musicians in each company and twenty-four band members.\(^{58}\) By December 1861, it was clear that General Order 15 was not enough of a limit. Several recommendations were put forth to abolish bands as a cost-saving measure. Incompetent musicians were eventually weeded out and on July 29, 1862 all volunteer regimental bands were given one month to officially disband, though it is clear that this did not always occur as planned.\(^{59}\) Brigade bands were to be the norm from that point forward, and the musical focus of each regiment was once again turned back to the field musicians.

Despite these measures, historian Kenneth E. Olson, drawing upon *Dyer's Compendium* – a comprehensive history of all regiments serving in the Union army throughout the war – estimated that there were approximately 104,234 musicians within the Union army throughout the war.\(^{60}\)

In at least one example, Judson W. Bishop describes the dismissal and eventual reinstatement of a regimental band in the Second Minnesota Volunteer Infantry:

> At this camp our band was mustered out on the 24\(^{th}\) of April…and the men went home leaving most of their instruments in the woods…. They were good musicians, but did not take kindly to actual soldiering, and were no doubt quite willing to quit there.

> The 'company musicians,' who in the presence of the 'band' had been quite overlooked, if not forgotten, were now hunted up and investigated. Those who were not in fact *musicians* were exchanged in their companies for other men who were, or could become such…bugles and drums were supplied to them, and the same discipline applied to them that prevailed with the other men of the regiment…. The 'bugle band' of the 2\(^{nd}\) Minnesota received a good deal of attention and commendation from the other regiments.

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\(^{60}\) Olson, *Music and Musket*, 72-76.
Our bugle band had...so improved their time that we had become quite proud of them, and having some money in the regimental fund, a complete set of brass instruments was ordered....

This drastic transformation took place in a period spanning less than year, from April 1862 to February 1863. 61

At the outbreak of war, the popularity and prevalence of bands was used to great effect in the recruitment of volunteer enlistments. John D. Billings, writing one of the first reminiscences of a Civil War soldier, stated that “sometimes the patriotism of [recruiting drives or civilians] would be wrought up so intensely by waving banners, martial and vocal music, and burning eloquence, that town’s quota would be filled in less than an hour.” 62

Billings’s account, Hardtack and Coffee, was an incredibly detailed account of soldier life in the Army of the Potomac that had been missing from the record before its publication in 1889. Unlike other accounts from private soldiers, the veteran artilleryman attempted to detail the minutia of soldier life, including the important role of music in the garrison and field.

The militia craze had promoted the extension of bands at the expense of field musicians. By 1860, long before the first shots were fired, the shortage was so drastic that the militia units turned to boys as young as nine years of age for support. 63 Billings, in chapter nine of Hardtack and Coffee, makes no mention of this trend in his richly detailed history. He does, however, elaborate on the calls listed above. While he served in the artillery, Billings offered information regarding the other branches as well. In most cases, the terms for the bugle calls are similar or identical, but the tune itself was different. One thing that is obvious from the account is that fifes are not mentioned when


63 Olson, Music and Musket, 84.
discussing camp life. The impression is given that buglers or trumpeters and drummers were the main field musicians during the Civil War. However, given the number of fife manuals available from the period, this is not necessarily the case. Bands are given little mention throughout the book, other than to describe the recruiting activities listed previously.

At the beginning of each day, the “Assembly of the Buglers” was sounded, the call for gathering the musicians in front of the Adjutant’s tent. At some point this replaced the similar call for assembling the drummers used from the Revolution through the Mexican War. This was “the signal to the men to get out of their blankets and prepare for the morning roll-call, known as Reveille.”

As in the modern military, ill feeling surrounds the wake-up, and Civil War soldiers issued the typical grumbling of soldiers in any age. Billings describes words set to the tune of Reveille:

I can’t get ‘em up, I can’t get ‘em up,  
I can’t get ‘em up, I tell you.  
I can’t get ‘em up, I can’t get ‘em up,  
I can’t get ‘em up at all.  
The corporal’s worse than the private,  
The sergeant’s worse than the corporal,  
The lieutenant’s worse than the sergeant,  
But the captain’s worst of all.

I can’t get ‘em up, I can’t get ‘em up,  
I can’t get ‘em up, this morning;  
I can’t get ‘em up, I can’t get ‘em up,  
I can’t get ‘em up today.

Fifteen minutes after “Reveille” would sound “Assembly,” the signal for the troops to fall in for the first roll call of the day. “Assembly” could catch all off guard, including those in positions of authority. In his memoirs as a member of the Sixth Wisconsin Volunteer Infantry, Captain (later Brigadier General) Rufus Dawes recounts a letter from one Sergeant Upham, in which he says, “I

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64 Billings, Hardtack and Coffee, 171-176.

65 Ibid.
made out the roll of the company, took the muster roll to the Adjutant, prepared my own accoutrements, and was getting barbered when the drum beat. I left with my hair half combed and fell in with the company.” In the cavalry and artillery, both branches dependent upon horses, the following signal was “Stable Call,” which “summoned all the drivers in the company to assemble at the grain pile with their pair of canvas nose-bags…”

Following the roll-call and/or stable duties sounded the “Breakfast Call,” “when the men prepared and ate their breakfast….” This was interrupted most days by the “Sick Call,” described in the 1861 Regulations as “Surgeon’s Call.” According to Theodore Gerrish, this call was also known as “come and get your quinine.” Generally at around the same time, 8 A.M., the “Assembly of the Guard” was sounded for the infantry soldiers, followed by a brass band or fifers and drummers parading the guard to their posts. After the summoning of the sick and guard mount sounded another call unique to the cavalry and artillery, “Water-call,” when the soldiers would report to the picket ropes and guide their mounts to water.

In the infantry, “Fatigue Call” was the next heard, sending out men for details incumbent with camp life such as latrine digging or road clearing. In at least one regiment, “the whole camp [was] swept as clean as a floor.” Following the fatigue duty came “Drill Call,” when the soldiers would practice the arts of war; this was a task generally associated with the earlier years of the war and new recruits, but Billings described his final drilling experience taking place before the Battle of the Wilderness in May, 1864. In the artillery and cavalry, the song “Boots and Saddles” would

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67 Gerrish, Army Life, 65.

68 Billings, Hardtack and Coffee, 179-184.

69 Dawes, Sixth Wisconsin, 31-32.
immediately follow “Drill Call,” signaling “a bit of entertainment for man and beast.” It later became known as a warning for those two branches that danger was approaching.\textsuperscript{70}

Noon was the time for “Dinner Call” to sound. As the name implies, this was the time for soldiers to begin their noon meal, but it was also the proper time to feed the animals once more, as “Water Call” and “Stable Call” once again followed immediately thereafter. Around 5:45 P.M., “Attention” was sounded, followed by “Assembly” and “Retreat.” According to Billings, this corresponded with the “Dress Parade” held by the infantry. Another roll call was held at this formation before dismissal. Nearly three hours later, both “Attention” and “Assembly” were once again sounded, this time followed by “Tattoo,” signaling the final formation and roll call for each day. Once this roll call was complete, soldiers had approximately half an hour to prepare for bed before the sounding of “Taps” at 9:00 P.M. The score Billings included in his book is the traditional score used today, a version that only came into use during the Civil War. No mention is made of the ceremony used previously. Times for “Taps” more than likely varied from camp to camp.

Dawes mentions “Tattoo” sounding at 9:00 P.M. and “Taps” one hour later for the Sixth Wisconsin.\textsuperscript{71}

“Taps” is arguably the most well-known bugle call from the Civil War, or any period in military history. Recognizable as the tune played at military funerals, “Taps” is also played every night as the final call on military installations throughout the country. However, this song has not always been used by the Army; it was during the Civil War that Brigadier General Daniel Butterfield composed the piece. As Twentieth Maine historian John J. Pullen relates:

Butterfield was a composer of bugle calls. Bedding down with the brigade each night the Maine men heard a sad, strangely haunting call that seemed to say, ‘Go to sleep…all is

\textsuperscript{70} Billings, \textit{Hardtack and Coffee}, 179-194.

\textsuperscript{71} Ibid., 198-209 and Dawes, \textit{Sixth Wisconsin}, 31-32.
well…all is well…” and they felt as though the army had taken them among its own…. The regulation Lights Out call had displeased Butterfield. It was too official-sounding. He wanted something that would convey the mood of putting out the lights and lying down to rest in the silence of the night…. Other buglers heard the call and eventually it spread throughout the entire army. Today it is the official Taps.  

Music featured prominently in all parts of soldier life during the Civil War. Billings described in detail the role signaling played in camp and garrison. He also went into some detail about preparing for marches. At the breaking of each day, “all were summoned forth at the call of the bugle or the drum, and at a time agreed upon The General was sounded.” Every tent was struck and preparations were made for conducting a march to whatever ordered objective. As the flag of each corps commander entered the road, the bugler played “Attention,” when the men formed column and assumed their place in the march. This was quickly followed by “Forward,” instructing the men to begin marching.  

It is clear from the music and descriptions found in Hardtack and Coffee that Billings referred to buglers as the principle musicians within army units. However, it was likely that fifers and drummers were just as common. Kenneth Olson outlined a list of calls more reminiscent of the elaborate signal ceremonies of the early nineteenth-century. Most of the functions of these calls are the same, with the standard “Drummers call,” “Reveille,” “Assembly,” “Surgeon’s call,” et cetera. In the fife ceremonies though, “Reveille” actually consisted of six tunes and “Tattoo” was not an established song, but rather fourteen songs that could take approximately twenty minutes.  

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73 Billings, Hardtack and Coffee, 375-378.  
74 Olson, Music and Musket, 88-92.
“Boots and Saddles”

One can surmise from the multitude of bugle calls for all branches and the seeming lack of standardization between different tactical manuals that there may have been a great deal of confusion when it came to interpreting those calls. General Daniel Butterfield made a step toward simplifying the process by creating a brigade call to be played before each specific signal. This was a variation on the “preparatory command” and “command of execution” sequence that is still used in modern military drill and ceremonies. However effective this call may have been, it was only one man acting for one brigade. Something else was needed.

The answer came in the form of Colonel (later Brevet Major General) Emory Upton, a bright Union Army officer who had gained fame for leading “lightning forays” on the Mule Shoe at Spotsylvania Court House during the campaigns of 1864. His daring plan to assault the breastworks resulted in a field promotion to Brigadier General. An 1860 graduate of West Point, Upton represented a new style of military planning. “After the close of the civil war, he addressed himself to the task of interpreting the lessons of the war to his countrymen for the improvement of our military system. Of his own motion he devised a new system of tactics, which being capable of adoption by a simple military order, was adopted, and revolutionized the tactics of the Army.”

At long last, this meant a standardization of the calls used by all branches, including “Reveille,” “Assembly,” “Retreat,” “Tattoo,” “Mess,” “Sick,” “Extinguish Lights,” and other traditional calls, some written in three parts. Other branch-specific calls were outlined, such as “Boots and Saddles” for the cavalry and a number of tactical signals used by skirmishers during combat, such as “Attention,” “Forward,” “Halt,” “Quick Time,” “Double Time,” the recognizable

75 Pullen, The Twentieth Maine, 21.

76 Gordon C. Rhea, The Battles for Spotsylvania Court House and the Road to Yellow Tavern May 7-12, 1864 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1997), 161-177.

“Charge,” and other more obscure directives. Upton specified no less than fifty calls for bugles, as well as an additional twenty-nine for fifes and drums based on traditional calls – “The General,” “The Assembly,” “To the Color,” “The Reveille,” “The Troop,” and “The Tattoo.” These songs followed the pattern used since the early 1800s, including six songs from the traditional “Reveille” ceremony. His transcriptions, however, use the symbols “&c.” along with incomplete transcriptions, suggesting that readers would have already been familiar with the song sequence. These reforms, along with the Army reorganizations in the late 1860s that reduced infantry bands and eliminated those of the cavalry altogether, promised to put the power back into the functional music branch – field musicians.

This does not seem to be the case, however. Though bands were officially reduced, civilians were drawn to local military musicians, and they were consequently seen as excellent public relations. Additional effort was expended to recruit band members, particularly those of foreign birth, who were seen as of better musical background. Official regulations recognized the desire for units to possess bands and allowed them under the condition that the regiments would fund the bands themselves. The members would consequently “be dropped from company muster-rolls, but…will still be instructed as soldiers, and [be] liable to serve in the ranks on any occasion.” Lowly field musicians were not granted such a privilege to opt out of those duties.

As was the case many times before, the roles of field musicians and bands blurred on many occasions. Following guidance from Civil War-era regulations, field musicians were not simply

78 To see transcriptions of Upton’s signals, see the Appendix, part III.


musicians. While band members were excepted from fulfilling their duties as soldiers, their
maligned cousins took part in various fatigue duties, both as regular soldiers and as attached
musicians. Two of these duties included police guard and picket detail, in which drummers were
attached in order to sound alarms. Some of these daily duties required the presence of bands to
perform – guard mount, retreat, dress parades, and official reviews. Some of these functions were
once performed by field musicians and “if no bands were available, music was then furnished by the
trumpets and drums.”82 In many other respects, tradition remained unchanged since 1857, such as
the directive that an infantry trumpeter or drummer and a cavalry trumpeter would stay in the rear
with their respective Sergeant Major in order to alter movements of a marching column.83

In many respects frontier garrison life was identical to post life prior to the Civil War,
including a drastically under-strength Regular Army, although with drastically improved interior
communication lines.84 Many of the experiences of these frontier soldiers were similar, and many
common threads are found, with a different environment and opponent to offer variety. Emory
Upton’s tactics were drafted with an eye toward the American landscape, and as The War
Department had officially adopted their use by the Army, all U.S. soldiers were well-versed in these
methods.

An old Army adage used to define nearly every aspect of its operational activities is the
standard “hurry up and wait.” This has been true throughout U.S. military history – brief moments
of intense combat are punctuated by protracted periods of boredom. John G. Bourke, describing
his role in the Apache campaigns, demonstrated the continuity of this principle through a bit of
circular reasoning: “As it presents itself to my recollection now, our life wasn’t so very monotonous;

82 United States War Department, Regulations of the Army…1881, 114-116. Railback and Langellier, The Drums Would
Roll, 17.

83 United States War Department, Regulations of the Army…, 141.

there was always something going on to interest and instruct, even if it didn’t amuse or enliven.”

Bourke’s unit seemed capable of finding meaningful tasks to employ its soldiers, and “there was considerable to be done in the ordinary troop duties, which began at reveille with the ‘stables,’ lasting half an hour…” As always, the music regulated the day.

Furthermore, there would always be guard mounts, drilling, retreat ceremonies, various courts martial, “and then general ennui, unless the individual possessed enough force to make work for himself.” Though it does not seem as though there was anything remarkable to describe in his daily experiences, it is interesting to note that Bourke frequently punctuated his writing of the daily routine with the standard musical/ceremonial functions of the Army. Charles F. Gauvreau, writing of his time in the combat and occupation of the Philippines in 1898, spoke of winter drills held in company quarters: “Once a week we had a musical drill at the drill hall, the regimental band furnishing music for the purpose.”

Civilians would also occupy these military establishments, and the eyes of the outsider lend a different perspective to frontier soldiering. Elizabeth Custer, married to the famed cavalryman George A. Custer, did not have the same traditional routine to regulate the day, and she noted the general monotony of post life. It seems that there were very few diversions to ease the boredom: “The music of the band, the sun lighting up the polished steel of the arms and equipments, the hundreds of spirited horses going through the variety of evolutions which belong to a mounted

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86 Ibid., 11-12.

87 Ibid.

regiment, made a memorable scene for these isolated people.” Elizabeth Custer seems to have received her entertainment through the exertions of others.

Elizabeth Custer also seems to have been a bit of a romantic. The very name of her memoir, “Boots and Saddles,” stems from a bugle call of the same name used to signal troopers to mount up for movement, and the musical references sound romantic through her pen: “The mellow air brought us sounds that had become dear by long and happy association – the low notes of the bugle in the hands of the musician practicing the calls…” That alone is testimony enough to see how important music was in her life on a frontier post.

What had become a scattered frontier Army would soon become a major power throughout the world. While many of the troops shipping off to the Philippines were serenaded by old fife and drum corps consisting of Civil War veterans, this simply represents an anachronism – military doctrine was changing.

The soldiers who fought in the Spanish-American War inherited a refined service signal system “in accordance with authorized drill regulations.” During the frontier era, units had moved decidedly toward using the bugle for field signals. At the turn-of-the-century, new manuals were emphasizing a shift from bugle signals to a more practical whistle system that would become prominent during World War I. However, just as in all previous wars, field musicians were found performing their duty on the front lines in the Philippines and in Cuba. One musician,

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89 Elizabeth B. Custer, “Boots and Saddles” or Life in Dakota with General Custer (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1885), 33.
90 Ibid., 44.
91 Gauvreau, Reminiscences, 72.
Herman Pfisterer, won the Congressional Medal of Honor for his actions at the Battle of San Juan Hill.  

During the First World War, the United States remained isolated – a carefully independent power that finally entered the fighting on the side of the Entente Powers in 1917. By this point the use of bugles as signaling instruments on the battlefield was almost at a close. Communication was still of paramount importance, as shown in the Military Signal Corps Manual: “The certain transmission of information and orders from commanding officers to their subordinates and information from subordinates to commanding officers, regardless of conditions or terrain...is the ultimate object of all training.” However, this same manual recommends that bugle calls only be used in formation to supplement verbal commands; the blast of a whistle or the wave of an arm was now a better tool for combat or marches.  

By 1918, bugle calls fell into one of five classifications. The first category was warning calls. Included in these were “First Call” (formerly “Assembly of the Trumpeters or Buglers”), “Guard Mounting,” and “Call to Quarters.” A second category was that of formations calls, including “Assembly,” “Adjutant’s Call,” and “To the Standard” (now known as “To the Colors”). Alarm calls made up the third category, including “Fire Call” and “To Arms.” Traditional service calls made up the final category, to include “Tattoo,” “Taps,” “Sick Call,” “Church Call,” “Recall,” “Officer’s Call,” “Captain’s Call,” “First Sergeant’s Call,” “Fatigue,” “School,” and “The General.”  

With the exception of the latter five, all of the above songs make up the standard daily sequence on modern military posts.

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96 Ibid., 32.
It is possible that the preservation of these calls in the *Military Signal Corps Manual* was simply a cry for tradition. Other manuals of the day, including the National Service Library’s *Rudiments of Drill for Mobile Army Troops*, do not even mention service calls. This manual recommends twelve calls, seven of which were to be used “off the battle field, when not likely to convey information to the enemy.” They include “Attention;” “Attention to Orders;” “Forward, march;” “Double time, march;” “To the rear, march;” “Halt;” and “Assemble, march.” Another five could be used in front of the enemy: “Fix bayonets;” “Charge;” “Assemble, march;” “Commence firing;” and “Cease Firing.”

None of these calls remains in the modern repertoire, and it remains to be discovered how frequently they were used during combat operations of the First World War.

**Conclusion**

By the time World War I hit home, field music in the United States Army had been pushed to the background, a relic of garrison life to be revisited during the daily sequence of bugle calls at military establishments across the country. With few exceptions, the bugler of earlier times was replaced by the whistle, and later by field telephones and radios, to be used only in the fashion of a clock tower, sounding off the important points of the day. Traditions die hard – bugle call recognition were still found in manuals distributed to soldiers entering the Second World War; even today soldiers are expected to render proper honors to the flag during the performance “Retreat” and “To the Colors.”

For the most part these calls are drawn note for note from Emory Upton’s *Infantry Tactics*. These in turn can trace most of their origins to before the Civil War.

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98 Kenderdine, 25-29.
99 To see the list of bugle calls currently used on military installations, see Appendix, part IV.
Popular recordings of bugle calls and the fife and drum ceremonies of the Revolution and Civil War can be found in the catalogs of large booksellers. Marching songs and service calls live on in the performances of The United States Army Band, The United States Army Field Band, The United States Army Old Guard Fife and Drum Corps, The Colonial Williamsburg Fife and Drums, and reenacting groups around the country. Bugle Calls, and the fife and drum calls that preceded them, were the commander’s voice on the battlefield and in the garrison. In some respects the seventeen bugle calls fill that role today. As always, the duty day begins with the first note of “Reveille,” ends with the last note of “Retreat,” and is put to rest with the sounding of “Taps.”

The study of field music is far from complete. To date, the majority of studies on military music focus on bands throughout the existence of the United States. Only narrowly do these focus on field musicians. Missing are detailed, note-for-note analyses of the changes in field music; hard evidence about which instructions would have been used by the military; how and when these manuals were updated and switched out; or a study in the various uniforms and supply issues of field musicians. “Reveille to Retreat” is simply a place to start.
Appendix A

Part I: Von Steuben’s Beats and Signals

The following descriptions are taken from Von Steuben’s drill manual. Accompanying transcriptions were taken from fife and drum manuals available at that time.

“The different beats and signals are to be as follows:

*The General* is to be beat only when the whole are to march, and is the signal to strike the tents, and prepare for the march.”

Figure 1:

“*The Assembly* is the signal to repair to the colours.”

Figure 2:

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100 Von Steuben, 89-91. Songs transcribed from *Entire New and Compleat Instructions for the Fife Containing the Best and Easiest Directions to Learn That Instrument, with a Collection of the Most Celebrated Marches, Airs & C Perform’d by the Guards & Other Regiments* (London: Longman and Broderip, 1780), *New and Complete Instructions for Fife Containing the Best and Easiest Directions to Learn That Instrument, with a Collection of the Most Celebrated Marches, Airs & C Perform’d in the Guards & Other Regiments* (London: G. Goulding, 1787), and *The Complet Tutor for the Fife: containing easy rules for learners after a new method: with a choice collection of all the celebrated marches that are perform’d upon that instrument* (London: David Rutherford, 1756).
“The March for the whole to move.”

“The Reveille is beat at day-break, and is the signal for the soldiers to rise, and the centries to leave off challenging.”

Figure 3.


“The Troop assembles the soldiers together, for the purpose of calling the roll and inspecting the men for duty.”

Figure 4.


“The Retreat is beat a sun-set, for calling the roll, warning the men for duty, and reading the orders of the day.”

Figure 5.


“The Tattoo is for the soldiers to repair to their tents, where they must remain till reveille beating next morning.”

“To Arms is the signal for getting under arms in case of alarm.”

Figure 6.


“The Parley is to desire a conference with the enemy.”

“The Signals.”

“Adjutant’s call – first part of the troop.”

“First Serjeant’s call – one roll and three flames.” [Drum only]

“All non-commissioned officers call – two rolls and five flames.” [Drum only]

“To go for wood – poing stroke and ten-stroke roll.” [Drum only]

:Water – two strokes and a flam.” [Drum only]

“Provisions – roast beef.”

“Front to halt – two flames from right to left, and a full drag with the right, a left hand flam and a right hand full drag.” [Drum only]

“For the front to advance quicker – the long march.” [Drum only]

“To march slower – the taps.” [Drum only]

“For the drummers – the drummers call.”

Figure 7.

“For a fatigue party- the pioneers march.”

Figure 8.

*Figure 8. Pioneer’s March*

For the church call – *the parley.*

**Part II: Evolution of Reveille in the Nineteenth-Century**

Here are examples of “Reveille” from 1812 to 1865, showing the evolution the ceremony.

**Figure 9. 1812**

*Figure 9.*
Figure 10. 1865
Part III: Upton’s Reorganization

Fifes and Drum Calls

“The General” – drum only

“The Assembly” – drum only

“To the Color”

Figure 11.

Emory Upton, *Infantry Tactics*, 1975

“The Long Roll” – drum only

“The Reveille”

Figure 12.

Emory Upton, *Infantry Tactics*, 1875
“The Troop”

Figure 13.

Emory Upton, *Infantry Tactics*, 1875

“The Retreat”

Figure 14.

Emory Upton, *Infantry Tactics*, 1875

“The Tattoo”

Figure 15.

Emory Upton, *Infantry Tactics*, 1875

“To Recall Detachments” – drum only

“Drummer’s Call” – drum only
“Come for order” – drum only

First Sergeant

Sergeant

Corporal

“Cease firing” – drum only

**Bugle Calls**

“Assembly of Trumpeters – The signal for the trumpeters to assemble”

**Figure 16.**

![Image of Bugle Call 1](image1)

Emory Upton, *Infantry Tactics*, 1875

“Assembly – the signal for forming the company in ranks"

**Figure 17.**

![Image of Bugle Call 2](image2)

Emory Upton, *Infantry Tactics*, 1875

“Reveille”

**Figure 18.**

![Image of Bugle Call 3](image3)

Emory Upton, *Infantry Tactics*, 1875
“Retreat”

Figure 19.

Emory Upton, *Infantry Tactics*, 1875

“Tattoo”

Figure 20.
“Extinguish Lights”

Figure 21.

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Emory Upton, Infantry Tactics, 1875
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“Mess”

Figure 22.

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Emory Upton, Infantry Tactics, 1875
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“Sick”

Figure 23.

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Emory Upton, Infantry Tactics, 1875
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“School”

Figure 24.

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Emory Upton, Infantry Tactics, 1875.
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“Church”

Figure 25.

Emory Upton, *Infantry Tactics*, 1875

“Drill”

Figure 26.

Emory Upton, *Infantry Tactics*, 1875

“Fatigue”

Figure 27.

Emory Upton, *Infantry Tactics*, 1875

“Recall”

Figure 28.

Emory Upton, *Infantry Tactics*, 1875
“Assembly of Guard Details – the signal for the details to form in ranks”

Figure 29.

“Dress Parade or Dress Guard Mounting”

Figure 30.

“Adjutant’s Call – the signal for companies and guard details to assemble on…parade-ground”

Figure 31.

“Officer’s Call”

Figure 32.
“First Sergeant’s Call”

Figure 33.

![Musical notation]

Emory Upton, *Infantry Tactics, 1875*

“The General – the signal for packing up effects”

Figure 34.

![Musical notation]

Emory Upton, *Infantry Tactics, 1875*

“Fire Alarm”

Figure 35.

![Musical notation]

Emory Upton, *Infantry Tactics, 1875*
“Rogue’s March”

**Figure 36.**

![MIDI notation image](image)

Emory Upton, *Infantry Tactics*, 1875

“To Arms – the signal for men to turn out under arm”

**Figure 37.**

![MIDI notation image](image)

Emory Upton, *Infantry Tactics*, 1875

**Signals for Skirmishers**

**Attention**

**Figure 38.**

![MIDI notation image](image)

Emory Upton, *Infantry Tactics*, 1875

**Forward**

**Figure 39.**

![MIDI notation image](image)

Emory Upton, *Infantry Tactics*, 1875

**Quicktime**

**Figure 40**

![MIDI notation image](image)

Emory Upton, *Infantry Tactics*, 1875

**Figure 41.**

![MIDI notation image](image)

Emory Upton, *Infantry Tactics*, 1875

**Halt**

**Figure 42**

![MIDI notation image](image)
Part IV: Modern Bugle Calls

1. First Call
2. Reveille
3. Assembly
4. Mess Call (morning)
5. Sick Call
6. Drill Call
7. Assembly
8. First Sergeant’s Call
9. Officer’s Call
10. Recall
11. Mail Call
12. Mess Call (noon)
13. Drill Call
14. Assembly
15. Recall
16. First Call
17. Guard Mounting
18. Assembly
19. Adjutant’s Call
20. Retreat
21. To the Color
22. Mess Call (evening)
23. Tattoo
24. Call to Quarters
25. Taps

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