



BUGLES

A bugle is a brass instrument with a conical shape and no valves or slides. It differs from a trumpet, which consists of a cylindrical tube for two-thirds of its length and a flared horn for the final third. Modern trumpets also possess valves that allow for a greater musical range. Natural bugles can only produce a limited number of notes found in the harmonic series of a fundamental tone. The length of the tubing determines this tone. The standard military bugle is a coiled "G" bugle.

Since their introduction, bugles have been used to communicate commands to groups of people spread over long distances. Bugles first appeared as hunting horns in Germany. The hunt master sounded different calls to change the direction of groups of hunters toward the game they were pursuing. The sound carried long distances so that hunters did not have to see the hunt master in order to understand where to go or what to do.

During the War for Independence, foreign forces occupying the colonies introduced the bugle to North America. One of the first uses of the bugle occurred at the Battle of Harlem heights in September, 1776. The British force of 5,000 men had the American force of 1,800 in full retreat when British buglers sounded the fox hunting call, "Gone Away." This was intended as an insult because playing "Gone Away" meant that the fox was in full flight from the pursuing hounds on its trail. "Gone Away" infuriated American troops who ended their retreat, stood their ground and defeated the British. Harlem Heights was General Washington's first battlefield victory of the war.

By the War of 1812, the bugle had been adopted as a standard method of communication for most modern armies. The American army incorporated the standard bugle calls of the French into the operations of both infantry and cavalry units. During the Civil War the change in tactics that called for extended lines of infantry in an assault made fifes and drums, the usual method of communication, less effective. Bugles, whose call could be heard over long distances, gradually replaced the fife and drum. The importance of the bugle during the Civil War is indicated in the fact that the Union infantry adopted the bugle as its symbol.

After the Civil War, many non-military groups used the bugle as a means of communication. Bugles were used to announce meal times on passenger ships. Bicycle clubs signaled directions to their member using bugle calls. Racetracks incorporated "First Call" and "Charge" into their operations. The invention and adoption of the radio ended the use of the bugle for other than ceremonial purposes. Today, drum and bugle corps carry on the bugle's rich tradition, while "Taps" provide an eloquent and emotional tribute at military funerals.