

TRUMPETS, BUGLES AND HORNS IN NORTH AMERICA

1750 - 1815

by

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Armies have used signalling instruments like trumpets and bugles since the days of pharaoh's armies and Caesar's legions. The functions of these brass instruments remained constant over the ages: a means of producing a sound which could be used to direct movement on the field of battle. What did not remain constant, however, was the shape and the exact material used in the instrument. The Roman *lituus* does not look like today's cavalry trumpet, nor the *cornu* like the infantry bugle. A period in which significant change took place occurred in the years surrounding the American Revolution, a period in which the buglehorn was transformed into the bugle.

There can be no doubt that bugles and trumpets were used during the American Revolution. Joseph Reed penned the line to his wife: "the enemy appeared . . . and in the most insulting manner sounded their bugle horns as is usual after a fox chase,"¹ in reference to the battle of Harlem Heights. Banastre Tarleton referred to a bugler in his party when he captured General Charles Lee on 13 December 1776,² and Martin Hunter claimed a "bugle was sounded to retreat" at Germantown in 1777.³ All the above point to British use of bugles or bugleorns, and it is accepted that German jaegers used horns or bugles as well.

The question which remains after all this acknowledgement of the use of trumpets and bugles is what they looked like? What affected their shape, and what changes, if any, were wrought on the design of these instruments? It may be useful here to note that the period covered, 1759 to 1815, is a period of change in musical style. Styles developed from that of Handel, to the more classical sound of Haydn and Mozart, to the more dramatic and romantic style of Beethoven. Changes in musical style demand changes in the techniques used in playing instruments, and often demand changes in the instruments themselves, to their construction not least. The changes to orchestral instruments of this age are well-documented, and may have influenced some of their less-sophisticated military brethren.

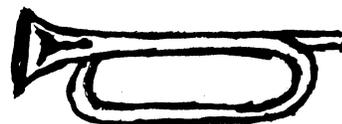


Figure 1.

This representation of the trumpet is fairly universal, from the Dennford powder horn (1759) to the Stubbs painting (1790) to the modern "duty bugle", which is really a field trumpet.

The trumpet did not change greatly in its external appearance. It remained basically a tube of brass, a cylinder for two-thirds of its length and flaring out to a "bell" in the final third. Sound was produced by the player buzzing his lips into a cup-shaped mouthpiece fitted into the instrument, which acted as an amplifier and modifier of the sound. The modern trumpet, stripped of its valves, still basically fits this definition.

An engraved powder horn dated 1759 on display at Fort Ontario State Historic Site in Oswego, New York, shows a trumpeter mounted on a horse, wearing a mirliton cap and sounding his trumpet.⁴ (It is possible that this particular figure was not observed in this continent, but copied from a drawing in print). Likewise, George Stubbs painted representatives of the 10th Light Dragoons in 1790, showing a portly trumpeter and his horn. The trumpets shown in both sources are close enough in appearance to be considered identical. This compares very favorably with the fact that the trumpet was reserved strictly for the cavalry, and had changed relatively little in 200 years even at that time. (Its orchestral counterpart differed little, mainly in added decoration; typical trumpet parts were flourishes and fanfares in both military and orchestral settings).

The association between trumpets and cavalry was ancient even in 1759, the year of the powder horn's date. The Royal Warrants of 1768 confirm this tradition,⁵ and an inspection of the 17th Light Dragoons in 1769 (before service in North America) showed six

trumpeters.⁶ Captain Robert Hinde, however, recommended that dragoons use a bugle of "antique design" to sound the rally, etc., in *Discipline of the Light Horse*.⁷ The traditional interpretation of this statement was that trumpeters mastered two instruments: the bugle for dismounted and detachment service, and the trumpet for mounted and troop maneuvers.

The difficulty in this sort of split in use of instruments is that the bugle, by its very definition, is a very different instrument. The bore of the bugle must be more or less cone-shaped, and the mouthpiece more like a funnel than a cup. The bugle is descended from the hunting horn, as is the modern French horn. The difference in physical structure between trumpets and bugles affects the tone of the sound radically. A trumpet's sound is usually described as strident, or bright and piercing, whereas the bugle's (or horn's) is described as mellower (although a horn can be made to bray stridently). The technique for making sound, buzzing the lips into a mouthpiece, is the same for both instruments; it was physically possible to master both instruments using *similar* musical techniques.

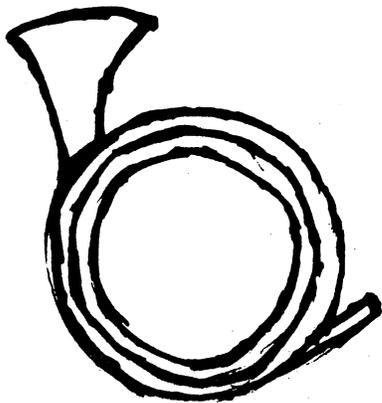


Figure 2.

The hunting horn shown on the Denndorf powder horn. Note the double coil in the main loop of the horn. This basic style seems to have been typical for buglehorns shown in other period representations to ca. 1790. (Adapted from original engraving. Courtesy Fort Ontario State Historic Site, Oswego, NY).

The standard lore of the bugle claims that the instrument used in the mid-to-late-18th century was of hunting horn shape. In fact, the bugle was the hunting horn, which except for minor variation in construction, was also the French horn. The confusion in terms was

endemic, and made worse by the use of different names in different countries for similar instruments.

The Denndorf powder horn mentioned above shows two buglers or hornists, both mounted. One plays what is clearly a French horn-style hunting horn, but the other plays a long, conical, horn-shaped instrument, reminiscent of the ancient hunting horn, which was made of animal horn or elephant ivory. The name "bugle" itself is derived from the French for a bullock's horn, but this hardly seems to have been a common military practice in the 18th century. The horn may or may not be a true representation of a folk instrument used for a military purpose.

The powder horn's depiction of any sort of hunting horn in a military context is amazing. Anthony Baines, in *The New Groves Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, claims that the Hanoverian force adopted the Prussian buglehorn only in 1758, and that the Light Dragoons adopted it in England in 1764. The 1st Foot Guards adopted bugles in 1772.⁸ There is an outside chance that bugles of some kind were in use before they were officially adopted and regulated by Royal Warrant. There is also the very real possibility, given the presence of the trumpeter on the horn, that the engraving on the powder horn is taken from pictures from European scenes.

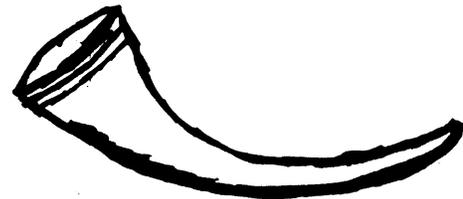


Figure 3.

The "buglehorn" or hunting horn shown on the Eliphalet Denndorf powder horn. It resembles the ancient hunting horns which gave rise to the heraldic blazon buglehorn. It appears from its scale in the engraving to have been over 40 inches long. Adapted original engraving. Courtesy Fort Ontario State Historic Site, Oswego, NY.)

Terminology of military instruments had progressed by 1781 to the point where lists of military stores surrendered by Cornwallis could distinguish bugles from French horns. The instruments surrendered at Yorktown included 1 trumpet, 28 bugle horns and 5 French horns,⁹ implying that there was a difference of some kind between bugles and French or hunting horns. (These French horns would be those used as

signalling instruments, since French horns used in the bands belonged to the regiment's officers and not the Crown).

R. Morley Pegge, an authority on the development of the French horn, claimed the 18th century bugle was a semi-circular shaped instrument, looking much like a half moon. Pegge even dubbed the instrument the "Hanoverian buglehorn",¹⁰ probably on the basis that the instrument was used in the Electorate of Hanover before its adoption by British forces. Hanover did adopt the Prussian buglehorn, as noted earlier, and the difference between a coiled French horn-style bugle and a half moon bugle could account for the distinction made at Yorktown in 1781.

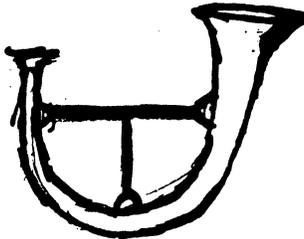


Figure 4.

The halfmoon, or "Hanoverian", buglehorn often had leather straps forming a "T" shape which made it possible to carry the instrument. This basic shape was used in the 1812 U. S. Rifle Regiment cap plate. (Adapted from illustration in Baines's article in *New Groves Dictionary*, and Baines, *Musical Instruments Through the Ages*).

The German word for bugle is indeed "halfmoon", or *halbmond*. The translator of Captain Johann Ewald's journals (written while he served in America as a jaeger officer) translates the word literally as halfmoon, without reference to a bugle or horn. The problem with accepting the translation at face value and Pegge's thesis without further proof is that there are few period pictures which show a halfmoon bugle in use. A watercolor in the Anne S. K. Brown Collection shows a jaeger bugler or hornist, and he clearly carries a hunting horn, not a halfmoon. The *halbmond* may have referred to the instrument, but not its shape, just as today we say reveille is played on a "bugle", even though the instrument is properly a "field trumpet".

Other illustrations tend to support the argument that the bugles of the American Revolution were really hunting horns. Gatta's depiction of Germantown neatly bears out Martin Hunter's statement about the presence of the buglehorn in the battle, and the horn portrayed is *not* the halfmoon, but the hunting horn type.

Eric Manders, in a modern illustration of the light company of the 4th Foot, shows a bugler with a coiled horn, representative of the unit's German posthorn.¹² The choice of this style horn was very wise, since German posthorns did not always bear the name *halbmond*, and were indeed smaller versions of the hunting horn.¹³

The status of the American buglehorn is more mysterious than that of the British, with its confused terms and beguiling traditions. There is little hard proof in pictures showing American dragoons or light infantry using horns of any kind. The late Company Founder and Fellow, Harold Peterson, presented a picture of a mounted horn player engraved on a powder horn in *The Book of the Continental Soldier*. The hornist's clothing does look very military, but the rest of the engraving appears to conjure scenes of the hunt.¹⁴ This does not mean hunting horns were not used by American dragoons or light infantry, but it is not sufficient proof by itself. The Continental army may have followed British precedent, and it may even be a safe assumption to make.

After the war ended, the trumpet retained its old, folded over shape — itself a relic of 200 years of history. The buglehorn, however, changed dramatically from a hunting horn to a bugle shaped similar to the trumpet. The British Army formally adopted this pattern in 1812, but it had already been available since 1800.¹⁵ The bore shape, that of a cone, remained constant in spite of the external change, for a change in these internal dimensions would alter both the sound and nature of the instrument. The late date of formal recognition for the new pattern bugle should not be accepted as the date before which this new bugle was uncommon; in many cases such acceptance was made after the item in use had already become prevalent.

A hint as to this new bugle's popularity comes from an instrument devised in 1811 which used the bugle as a basis. Joseph Halliday created the Kent or keyed bugle using the trumpet-shaped bugle, and drilling holes in the tubing which were covered with keys (as on a woodwind instrument). The idea was hardly new in 1811; Haydn wrote his Trumpet Concerto in 1796 (which required a solo keyed trumpet), and the *amor-schall*, a keyed French horn had been tried. The significance of Halliday's "invention" was the principle of the use of holes and keys applied to a bugle, an unabashedly military instrument. Part of the keyed bugle's ultimate success derived from its shape, which placed the keys within the player's reach with little difficulty.

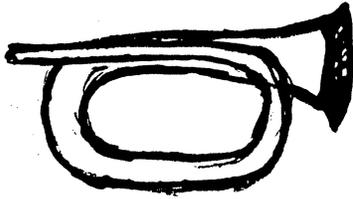


Figure 5.

The duty bugle in its current shape, first officially adopted by the British Army in 1812. Note the continuous expansion of the tubing which is characteristic of bugles.

The War of 1812 might be considered as the first war in North America in which the bugle played an important role. The use of the bugle during the Revolution contains more an air of curiosity than the officially recognized use of the bugle in 1812. Furthermore, twice the British forces in Canada tried to put the bugle to tactical use beyond the standard use of signalling. Colonel Charles De Salaberry sent out his buglers during the battle of Chateaugay (26 October 1813) to sound calls from the woods. The *advance* was heard by American troops, and assumed to be true, even though De Salaberry did not have the numbers of men to back up his "boast." The stratagem worked quite well. It did not work quite as well in the battle of the Longwoods (4 March 1814) in which buglers were posted in three different directions in order to mask the direction of the actual British assault.

The United States Army during the War of 1812 had only one regiment which was allowed to use the bugle instead of the fife and drum, not counting the militia of the states with their own regulations governing organization. The U. S. Rifle Regiment was the sole light infantry corps within the federal force, as compared with a plethora of British light companies and Canadian Voltigeurs, Glengarry Light Infantry and militia light companies. The Rifle Regiment in 1809 even had permission to use a fife and drum at Fort Columbus,¹⁶ but by and large the bugle was recognized, and even formed a part of the image of the riflemen.

There are few, if any, illustrations from the time of the War of 1812 to help prove which pattern bugle was used in the Rifle Regiment. The cap plates used in this regiment did feature the buglehorn prominently, but there were two patterns of cap plate, and two different buglehorns shown. The 1812 cap plate shows a halfmoon bugle suspended from a flag staff, and the 1814 cap plate shows a hunting horn surrounded by stars.¹⁷ Which, if either, was used?

Documentary evidence from the period may be of slightly more help. The band of the United States Marine Corps ordered several instruments in 1812, including a "bugle if (sic) trumpet kind."¹⁸ The Marine Band already had two French horns, part of its orchestration since its founding, and therefore did not really need hunting horns similar to those they already had. The specific request for "trumpet kind" shows the reason for the purchase: this bugle differed in shape and probably sound or pitch. The Marine Corps was proud of its band, but did not waste money on unnecessary duplications.¹⁹

The Rifle Regiment was expanded to four regiments in 1814, each assuming the use of the bugle. The 1st Rifle Regiment, however, received a "trumpet" on 19 August 1814 to use in its recruiting drive.²⁰ It is possible a true trumpet, of cylindrical bore, was issued; it is also possible that the clerk issuing the instrument named it by its shape, and not the bore design. The conical shape of the bore would matter only to a musician in the case of a bugle in the folded, trumpet shape.

A final point in the case for accepting the British or trumpet-shaped bugle is that the Army Band, at West Point, counted two keyed buglers in its organization in 1816, and one of these two was the leader or principal musician.²¹ An example from after the war does not prove any point, except that the instrument was known and considered desirable. Musical ideas did not take a long time to travel the Atlantic from Europe to America, and the keyed bugle is an example of this speed in music. The instrument, with its trumpet shape, was accepted in this country within five years of its development; the idea must not have been too alien for Americans to accept.

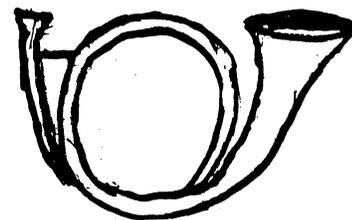


Figure 6.

*The bugle horn device shown on the 1814 U. S. Rifle Regiment cap plate. This very realistic design includes the brace between the mouthpiece and the main loop of the horn. It resembles very closely the illustrations of buglehorns dating from the era of American Revolution. (Adapted from: *American Military Insignia, 1800-1851*).*



Figure 7.

The "Thames bugle" was made of two pieces of cedar shaped to a cone, and held together by four wood bands covered with bone, near the mouthpiece, and six iron straps riveted together. It is similar in style to the horn shown on the Dennford powder horn.

There is a contradiction which must be brought into this discussion, namely a surviving instrument alleged to have been used during the war. The "Thames bugle" in the Kentucky Military History Museum is purported to be a relic of the Battle of the Thames (5 October 1813), however, its facts can not be absolutely verified. It is a cone-shaped tube of wood, reinforced with iron bands, in total about 51 inches long.²² It bears much resemblance to the horn shown on the 1759 powder horn at Fort Ontario, and can be honestly called a bugle by reason of its conical bore. The instrument derives more from a folk tradition than established military tradition, but that does not detract from its value in this discussion.

The use of the bugle as military symbol must be allowed into this discussion. The two cap plates contradict the assumption that the trumpet-shaped bugle was predominate. Unfortunately, both cap plates present different designs, so that one does not know which to accept at face value. The 1812 cap plate may draw upon heraldic tradition, since the blazon "buglehorn" is an ornamented bullock's horn suspended from a cord or ribbon, and is roughly halfmoon in shape. There is little hard proof to show that the halfmoon bugle was actually used in this continent during the 18th and 19th centuries. But, the symbol of the buglehorn is still used in Great Britain as a device for the Royal Green Jackets, and was adopted in 1814 as the symbol for all light infantry.. Such a symbolic view for the horn on the 1812 cap plate is not hard to assume.

The hunting horn used on the 1814 cap plate could also be accepted in purely symbolic terms, although there is the possibility it might have been used. (The case for the hunting horn's use during the American Revolution is clear). As a symbol, the hunting horn was used in the United States as an insignia up to and after the Civil War, yet no one would claim that the particular instrument was used as a signalling device in the 1860's. The hunting horn is still a relatively

common military insignia in Great Britain and Europe, as is the buglehorn. These are symbols which evoke military tradition and heritage in marvellous ways, and are valuable for that alone. They should not, however, be the deciding factor for assuming which of three available patterns of bugle the Rifle Regiment used in 1812.

There is no doubt that bugles changed in shape between 1759 and 1815, being transformed from hunting horns and buglehorns to bugles as we would recognize them today. Trumpets remained static in shape because of their strict association with cavalry and their limitation to fanfare type music in the orchestra. Old associations also stayed true for the bugle family, with the jaeger and light infantry tradition being carried on to the light infantry in Canada and the riflemen in the United States during the War of 1812.

As the bugle changed in form, it also became more regulated, and its calls were systemized. William Duane's *Hand Book for Riflemen* (printed in 1814) contains a table of bugle calls that could be used by any rifle company's bugler. That Duane included the calls shows that the instrument was not exceedingly rare among American troops, and that a system was very necessary to make calls understandable to a variety of commanders. The process of evolution for the bugle completed itself by the mid-19th century. The nation no longer sounded the "clarion's call" to call men to the standard; men answered the "bugle's call" when they left home. The clarion or trumpet was overshadowed by the infantry, even as a metaphor.

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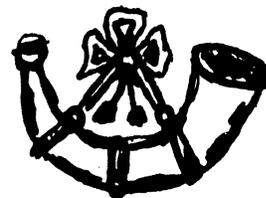


Figure 8.

The heraldic device buglehorn is a representation of an animal's horn used as a hunting horn. It has long been used as a symbol for light infantry units.

NOTES

1. *Annual Report of the Adjutant General of the State of Connecticut to the Commander in Chief for the Year 1880*, (New Haven, Tuttle, Morehouse & Company, 1881), page 24.
2. Record Book of Company C, 5th Battalion, 20, November 1879, R.G. 13, Box 218, Connecticut State Library, New Hartford, Connecticut; op. cit. *Adj. General's Report, 1880*, page 22.
3. "An Act Concerning the National Guard," approved 21, March 1879, *Annual Report of the Adjutant General of the State of Connecticut*, (Hartford: Wiley, Waterman & Eaton, Hartford, 1880), page 79, & 377 to 378; op. cit. *Adj. General's Report, 1880*, page 5.
4. op. cit. Record Book of Company C.
5. *Annual Report of the Adjutant General of the State of Connecticut for the Year 1882*, (Hartford: N.H. Tuttle, 1883), page 24.
6. Supplied from Colonel F.P. Todd's manuscripts of American Military Equipage, Volume III.
7. op. cit., *Adj. General's Report, 1879*, page 79 & 377 to 378; General Order #2, 26 February 1880, *Adjutant General's Report State of Connecticut for the Year 1880*, (Hartford: N.H. Tuttle, Printer, New Hartford, 1881), page 82.
8. *Regulations & Notes for the Uniform of the Army of the United States, 1872*, J.H. Jacobsen, ed., (Staten Island: Manor Publishing, 1972), p. 10.
9. op. cit., Record Book of Company C.

TOMB OF THE UNKNOWNNS OR TOMB OF THE UNKNOWN SOLDIER?

by Rick Ugino

The burial of the Vietnam-era Unknown on 28 May 1984 brought to the fore discussion of the proper name of this most hallowed of American shrines. According to a recent article *Army Times* both "Tomb of the Unknowns" and "Tomb of the Unknown Soldier" have been used to identify the tomb with exclusive use by Defense Department officials and Military District of Washington (MDW) personnel of the title "Tomb of the Unknowns." The reason was to honor soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines because the Vietnam-era unknown could have been a member of any of the services. Earlier this year, according to the *Times'* article, Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger used this title in a memo to service secretaries and the Joint Chiefs of Staff.¹

Center of Military History officials refer to their publication *Civil and Military Funerals 1921-1969* which calls the memorial the "Tomb of the Unknown Soldier" and is considered a definitive work while the Arlington National

Cemetery Historian, Mr. Benjamin M. Davis, said: "There isn't an approved name . . . it's never been officially named."²

Legislation to give the Tomb a formal name has been proposed but never passed. The current dual terminology might prompt follow-up action by Congress. In the meantime, no matter what name is used, Americans will continue to honor and respect their fallen countrymen, known "but to God" at that most uncommon of places, the Tomb in Arlington.

NOTES

1. *Army Times*, Vol. 44, No. 44 (June, 1984), p. 38.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 38.

(The author wishes to thank CSM Frederick R. Young for assistance in the preparation of this article.)