

TAPS

Taps is not a song but rather a bugle call -- a signal. The signal was also known as the *Drum Taps*, *The Taps* or, in soldiers' slang, *Taps*.

The official military *Taps* is played by the United States Armed Forces by a single bugle or trumpet at dusk, during flag ceremonies, and at military funerals. The duration is usually around 59 seconds but can vary at times.

While the Union Army recuperated at Harrison's Landing, Virginia, from its grueling withdrawal during the Seven Days Battles, General Daniel Butterfield experimented with bugle calls and is credited with the composition of *Taps*, to replace the customary firing of three rifle volleys at the end of burials during battle. *Taps* also replaced *Tattoo*, the French bugle call to signal "lights out". Butterfield's bugler was the first to sound the new call. Within months, "Taps" was played by buglers in both the Union and Confederate armies. This account has been disputed by some military and musical historians, who maintain Butterfield merely revised an earlier call known as the *Scott Tattoo* and did not compose an original work.

After the war, *Taps* became an official bugle call. Col. James A. Moss, in his Officer's Manual first published in 1911, gives an account of the initial use of *Taps* at a military funeral:

"During the Peninsular Campaign in 1862, a soldier of Tidball's Battery A of the 2nd Artillery was buried at a time when the battery occupied an advanced position concealed in the woods. It was unsafe to fire the customary three volleys over the grave on account of the proximity of the enemy, and it occurred to Capt. Tidball that the sounding of Taps would be the most appropriate ceremony that could be substituted."

There are no "official" words to *Taps* but the most popular lyrics are below:

*Day is done, gone the sun,
From the hills, from the lake, from the skies.
All is well, safely rest, God is nigh.*

*Go to sleep, peaceful sleep,
May the soldier or sailor, God keep.
On the land or the deep, safe in sleep.*

*Love, good night, must thou go,
When the day and the night need thee so?
All is well. Speedeth all to their rest.*

*Fades the light; and afar
Goeth day, and the stars shineth bright,
Fare thee well; Day has gone, night is on.*

*Thanks and praise, for our days,
'Neath the sun, 'neath the stars, 'neath the
sky,
As we go, this we know, God is nigh.*