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# Pageantry born on the battlefield



## Chapter 1 by Ronald Da Silva

When one sees a field performance by a modern drum and bugle corps, even a unit as military as the United States Marine Drum & Bugle Corps of Washington, D.C., it's hard to believe that the roots of these musical organizations are not in the world of music or entertainment, but in the world of organized violence called warfare.

Drum beats and trumpet calls fulfilled the military's need to communicate commands and keep order on noisy battlefields. These musicians, whether fifers, drummers,

trumpeteers or buglers, were never called bandsmen. They had the military rank, uniform and insignia of a fifer, a drummer, a trumpeteer or a bugler.

Collectively, they could be called the fifes & drums, the trumpets & drums, the drum & bugle corps, the corps of drums, the drum corps, or they could be referred to simply as the drums in regiments of foot or the trumpets in mounted units.

Since the 19th century, the United States military has termed these soldier musicians the "Field Music." This was to distinguish them from the non-combatant professional musicians of the Band of Music.

The Field Music's primary purpose was one of communication and command, whether on the battlefield, in camp, in garrison or on the march. To honor the combat importance of the Field Music, or drum corps, many armies would place their regimental insignia and battle honors on the drums, drum banners and sashes of their drum majors.

The roots of martial field music go back to ancient times. The Greeks were known to have used long, straight trumpets for calling commands (*Fig. 1*) and groups of flute players when marching into battle.

The Romans (*Fig. 2* -- note the soldier with cornu or buccina horn) used various metal horns for different commands and duties. These instruments could only produce the few tones used in military commands and civil announcements and were not known to have been used in music.

(Top) Copyright 1991, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, the Colonial Williamsburg Fife & Drum Corps; (left) a Civil War era drum, bugle and drummer's sward with a reproduction drummer's regulation uniform; (below) Copyright 1970 Paramount Pictures, a scene from the movie "Waterloo"; (photographs and illustrations in this chapter are from the personal collection of Ron Da Silva).





The Legions of Rome moved in formation, both in combat and on the march. They were drilled in two cadences; one was a short, clipped step called the "military pace," used when in tight combat formations called a phalanx.

The most famous phalanx formation used by the Romans was the turtle. It utilized the Legion's large interlocking shields, carried on the sides by the outer ranks and overhead by inside ranks.

The other step was a longer, more natural stride called the "full pace," used when marching longer periods or on the march.

While the Legions of Rome marched in cadence like the Greeks, they did so without the aid of drum beats. It seems the drum, as we know it, was unknown to the armies of ancient Greece and Rome.

The Romans also developed the use of standards to identify various military units. Each Legion had an "aguila" (Imperial Eagle -- Fig. 3), each cohort a "signum" (a distinctive device) and each detached unit a "vexillum," an early form of cloth flag.

These standards were honored as sacred objects and kept closely guarded. They were often decorated with awards and battle honors. The utmost disgrace was to lose your standard to the enemy. Loss of a standard

meant the loss of the unit.

This loss could also mean banishment or even death at the hands of your own army. The term "Death Before Dishonor" had real meaning to the soldiers of Rome.

This reverence and defense of military standards would later be carried over into Christian armies, who also consecrated their colors and standards. Many of these standards bore Christian symbols, most commonly the Cross of Christ. Many of these cross standards would become the first national flags of

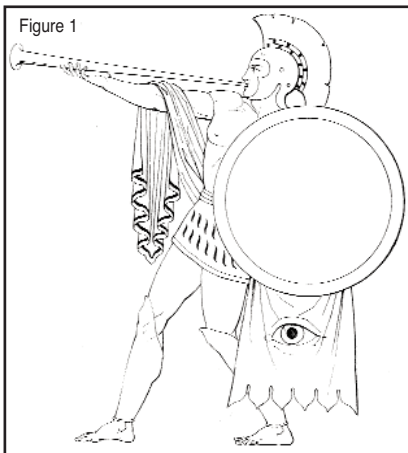


Figure 1



Figure 7

Europe.

During the Middle Ages, the defense of small kingdoms became the duty of heavily-armored mounted noblemen called knights, not large standing armies. Consequently, the use of trumpets and standards became common among the nobility, from whom the knights were drawn.

A natural animal horn or a metal version of it became the favored pattern for the mounted knight, since the long trumpet was difficult to play on horseback. These early horns were almost exclusively associated with the hunt and/or the military and would later evolve into the bugle.

The long trumpet and the banners attached to it

would become a symbol of the royal court and be played by the royal heralds for fanfares, religious and court music.

When the kings and knights of Europe went off to the Crusades, they found the Saracen armies' music terrifying. The Saracens grouped their martial musicians around their battle flags at the centers of advancing formations.

These bands were made up of both wind and percussion instruments and consisted of side drums, called tabors, small kettledrums in pairs, called nakers, flutes, oboes and horns. These Muslim musicians played continuously during a battle and, as long as a soldier could hear his unit's music, he fought on. If the music ceased, he would retreat.

To Islamic armies, the capture of the drums of an enemy was considered a special glory. Likewise, the loss of one's instruments was an everlasting disgrace.

When the Crusaders returned to Europe, they introduced the fife and tabor to the foot soldiers' march, while the kettledrums would

now accompany the trumpets of the court and royal mounted troops.

The Swiss infantry of the 14th century developed the practice of marching in step to the music of fifes and drums (Fig. 4). These Swiss foot soldiers marched in block formations similar to the phalanx of the ancient Romans and were effective against both mounted knights and foot soldiers.

Their large block formations contained hundreds of men; the outer ranks on all four sides were made up of pikemen carrying pikes up to 16 feet long. Behind them were the crossbowmen and the halbert (a hook and axe on a short pike).



Figure 4

In the center of these formations were the fifes, drums and colors, which were protected by a guard armed with large broadswords.

The Swiss developed a system of drum beatings and

fife tunes (marches) that were used to signal the movement, direction or shape of their tactical formations. The military precision and effectiveness of the Swiss foot soldier led

to them becoming the most sought after mercenaries in Renaissance Europe.

Many kings and princes would hire these Swiss soldiers as their personal body guards -- most noticeably, the kings of France and the Pope of Rome, who still has his company of Swiss Guards (Fig. 5 & 6).

In the next century the German "Landsknechte" (Fig. 7) mercenaries adopted these Swiss military techniques. The Landsknechte also used a system of flag signals by which the color bearer would twirl, flourish or high-toss his unit color to direct the fifes and drums on which march to play.

These marches were not the type of march we have today, but precise military commands which not only directed formation movement, but also synchronized the motions of weapons exercises or manual of arms.

A drummer's roll-off to signal horns-up is a carryover of this military usage.

These colors, called "Fahnlein," were usually six feet wide and up to 10 feet long, with a rounded end. The staff was normally slightly longer than the width of the color, with a knob or handle to facilitate the celebrated flag swinging.



Figure 3



It was not uncommon to find a color ensign in the thick of a fight defending his color to the death.

An Italian account tells of a dead German ensign found on the battlefield with both arms hacked to pieces, his standard clenched in his teeth.

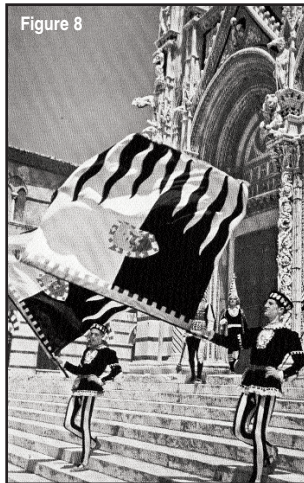


Figure 8

The art of Renaissance flag tossing to the beat of drums can still be seen at annual tournaments in the Northern Italian cities of Florence and Siena (Fig. 8).

with the cold steel of their bayonets.

Since these firearms were not very accurate at over a hundred yards, soldiers rarely took aim at individuals. Troops would line up as close as 50 yards from each other, then volley fire into each other's lines until one unit was weakened and disengaged.

In the mid-18th century, the infantry regiments of Prussia's



Figure 9. (Copyright 1970 Columbia Pictures)

Frederick the Great would depend on linear formations, three men deep, shoulder to shoulder, to achieve greater firepower. These tight formations,

It is also becoming a regular feature at Medieval and Renaissance festivals in the United States as well as in Europe.

With the development of the musket, musketeers (Fig. 9) would replace the crossbowmen. Still, the long pike would remain a useful infantry weapon and the main defense against cavalry.

During the 17th century, the use of fifes, drums and colors would increase with the growth of large national armies. Many of the regimental and company flags of the period bore the crests of their commanders, while the liveries (uniform tops) (Fig. 10 & 11) were often that of their colonel's heraldic colors.

The use of contact clothing would lead to the development of proper uniforms. Thus, the colors of a unit's coats and flags not only would distinguish friend from foe, but also one regiment from another regiment.

The introduction of the bayonet on the musket put an end for the need of pikemen in infantry units. Foot soldiers could now lay down a wall of musket fire on enemy troops, then advance

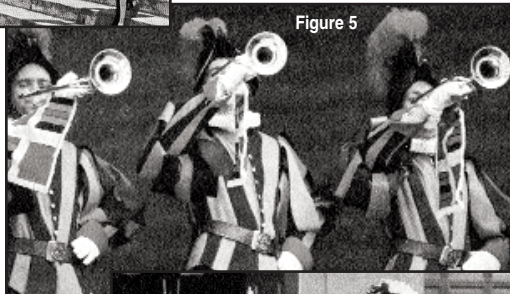


Figure 5



Figure 6

(Above) Figure 5 & 6 -- Swiss Guard of the Pope still exists today; (below) Figure 12 -- British infantry at re-enactment of Battle of White Plains, NY, October 1976. (Photo by Ron Da Silva)

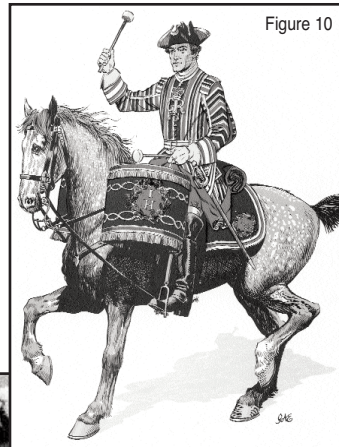


Figure 10



Figure 11

combined with quicker loading and firing procedures, proved

effective even against numerically larger forces.

However, they required precision drill and strict discipline, something the Prussian army would become noted for. These Prussian techniques would also be adopted by the British army (Fig. 12).

During our Revolutionary War, American militia could not stand up to the ranks of Britain's professional soldiers until a German general named Friedrich von Steuben taught George Washington's Continental Army a simplified and sharpened version of British and German drills and turned America's citizen soldiers into a professional fighting force.

Many of von Steuben's drill techniques would be in drill manuals for more than a century and would influence ceremonial and exhibition drills right into the 20th century.

Infantry regiments of the 18th century usually consisted of eight to 10 companies. Each company was to have at least one drummer and one fifer. They were under the command of a regimental fife major and regimental drum major who were responsible for the training and discipline of the fifes and drums.

When the regiment paraded,

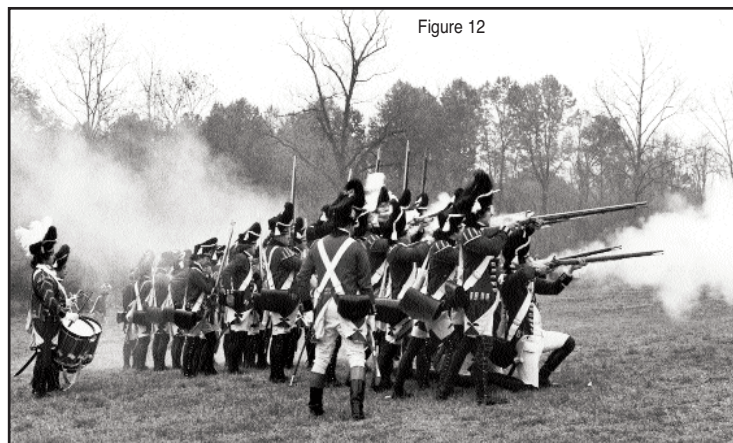


Figure 12





Figure 13

the company musicians were massed into a corps of fifes and drums and led on the march by the drum major. He carried a large walking stick or staff to set the cadence and direct the movements of the corps. In time, drum majors would flourish and twirl their staffs while executing their

commands to the drums.

Visibility on smoke-filled battlefields became a factor that could win or lose a battle. Large battle flags and distinctive



Figure 14

buttonholes, collars and cuffs. On drummers and trumpeteers, it also trimmed all seams of their regimental coats and formed rows of braid on the fronts of coats and rows of chevrons on the coat sleeves.

This system can still be seen on the drummers and drum majors of Britain's Brigade of Guards. The combination of both these systems produced some of the most elaborate and colorful drum corps uniforms ever worn on the battlefield or parade ground.

During the Seven Years War (1756-1763), known as the French and Indian War

in North America, the British army developed two new types of foot soldier to fight in the wilderness of Canada and America.

They were units of Provincial Rangers

drawn from the American colonists, who fought backwoods or Indian style, and the Light Infantry, who were volunteers from British line regiments, who were trained to act as dispersed or mobile companies ahead of, or on the flanks of, their line regiments.

They could also fight independently as rangers or skirmishers in rough terrain where normal infantry formations were not possible. With these tactical changes, it was found that the drum was not an effective means of

communication, since it was too cumbersome and the sound did not carry very far.

A better means of sounding commands was needed for these scattered and sometimes concealed soldiers. The Prussian army had already adopted units of skilled hunters called Jaegers, who were expert riflemen. They used a metal bugle (ox) horn as their signaling instrument.

During the American Revolution, both British and American light infantry companies would also adopt various types of bugle horns, hunt horns and even French horns as their signal horn.

By the turn of the century, elite corps of riflemen, dressed in dark green uniforms with black belts and equipment (an early form of camouflage), also adopted the bugle horn as their instrument.

The bugle horn or hunt horn was so identified with the light infantry and rifle regiments that it also became the distinctive badge or insignia in the armies of Europe and the Americas.

By the Napoleonic Wars (1804-1815), combat pageantry reached its greatest heights. It was the golden age of military uniforms. Troops marched into combat like toy soldiers in colorful uniforms and tall shakos with colors flying and drums beating.

Massive armies moved in precise echelons or stood steadfast in tight formations while under fire from cannon and musket, not to mention ferocious attacks by mounted cavalymen in all manner of exotic uniforms, armed with sword and lance, charging to the sound of trumpets.

It was this period of European warfare that saw the greatest use of martial field music and the first drum and bugle corps.

For the foot soldier, the sound of the fifes and drums was common. Fifes and drums were used in most foot regiments, including infantry of the line, foot guards, grenadier and fusilier regiments, as well as foot and garrison artillery.

One notable exception was Britain's Highland regiments, who would become famous for the sound of their native Scottish bagpipes.

These corps of drums could march at the common step, ranging from 60 to 80 steps per minute, or the quickstep, ranging 120 to 140 steps per minute. The light infantry would quickstep to the music of drums and bugles, while the newly-formed rifle regiments used only bugles at a quickstep, or even a jog, of 180 steps per minute.

The cavalry and horse artillery would continue to use their traditional trumpets and mounted kettledrums.

Surprisingly, none of these field music corps had bass drums, tenor drums or cymbals at this stage of their development. Hence, the inclusion of bass drums in present-day "Colonial"-era fife and drum corps is historically incorrect. Those percussion instruments did exist, but were part of the regimental Band of Music.

Since the early 18th century, regiments in European armies had bands of music made up of hired professional musicians. Their primary purpose was to entertain the gentlemen officers and their guests at concerts and balls.

Their cost was usually paid for by an officer's band fund. For grand reviews and ceremonies, they would be massed with the soldier fifers and drummers and led on parade by the drum major.

These early bands numbered only six to eight instrumentalists using trumpets, French horns, hautbois, clarinets and bassoons. When in concert or at balls, some of these musicians could double on strings. They had no percussion of their own.

During the later half of the 18th century, a new and exciting craze would affect both the sound and appearance of the military band of music. That was the introduction of Turkish or Janissary percussion to the band (Fig. 15).

These were ancient instruments used in the bands of the Sultan of Turkey's Janissary



Figure 15-- Corps drummer, drum major and bandsman, including two black percussionists with Turkish instruments and costume.

uniforms helped both commanders and soldiers alike in the smoke and confusion of battle.

Since oral commands were inaudible in the din of combat, officers had to find their field musicians quickly in order to sound a call or beat a command.

To help them, the fifes and drums, as well as mounted trumpeteers, were given very elaborate and showy uniforms so they would stand out among their own troops.

Two systems were commonly used. One was that of reversed colors. If a regiment had blue coats with red facings (collar, cuffs and lapels), the corps of drums would be dressed in red coats with blue facings (Fig. 13).

This practice can be seen today on the red-coated fife and drum corps of the U.S. Army's Old Guard and the red-coated drum and bugle corps of the U.S. Marine Corps, both based at our nation's capital.

The other system used drummer's lace (Fig. 14). This was the lace, or braid tape, that trimmed or re-enforced a soldier's



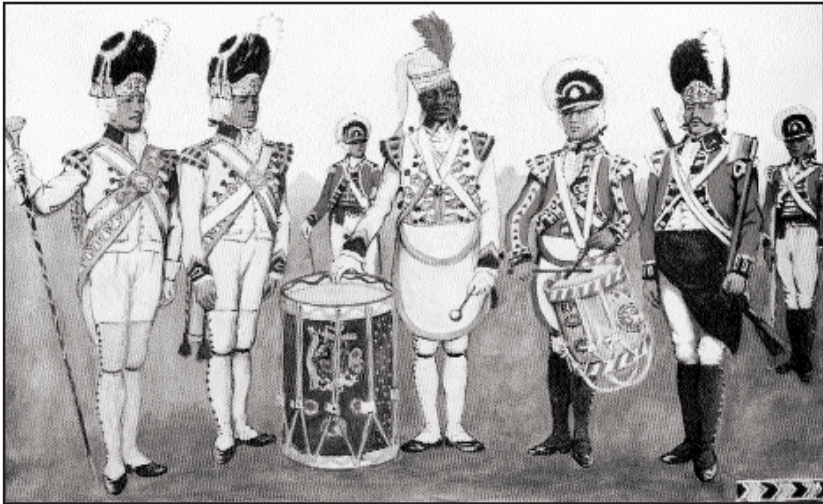


Figure 17-- Britain's Royal Fusiliers, circa 1789. (left to right) drum major, bandsman, Negro bass drummer of the band, drummer of the Corps of Drums and Pioneer.

regiments. They included the bass drum, a small kettledrum or tenor drum, cymbals, tambourine, triangle and a most outstanding instrument called a Turkish crescent or Jingling Johnny (Fig. 16). It consisted of a staff surmounted by a metal crescent, or lyre, to which were attached various small cymbals, bells or chimes.

Not only were these instruments exotic, but the musicians who played them were often black Africans dressed in fancy costumes featuring plumed turbans and fezzes, heavily braided Turkish or North African-style jackets, waistcoats and pantaloons, as well as tiger and leopard skins, were worn.

A well-to-do regiment could have a Band of Music dressed in officer-styled uniforms, with plumed cocked hats, a Turkish Music section in Middle-Eastern costumes and their regimental corps of drums in tall bearskin caps (Fig. 17).

This craze for Turkish percussion and exotic uniforms would last through the 1840s. The last vestige of this craze can be seen today in the animal skin aprons still worn by bass and tenor drummers of the British army, especially regiments that did long service in Africa or India (Fig. 18 on the next page).

Even in armies where the "look" never caught on, as in America, the instruments did. Thus, by the early 19th century, the bass drum and cymbals would become widely used by both bands and drum corps.

In the band, the bass drum could be the only drum, with one head being beaten with a mallet, the other head stroked with a brush. In drum corps, a wide bass drum was played with two mallets in a rudimental style. This

elite and well-off militia regiments in cities such as Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Charleston and Chicago. A regiment with money could hire the finest musicians of their city to play in their regimental band, as well as instruct their drum corps.

While the U.S. Army allocated eight men for a band of music, professional musicians in general had no desire for the riggers of a full-time military life. Army units based on the

frontier were especially hard-pressed for capable bandmen and often had the field music do extra duty as bandmen, especially for social events.

At the beginning of the Civil War (1861-1865), both

style is still used in today's ancient fife and drum corps.

In America of the mid-19th century, the finest military music was not found in the regular U.S. Army, but in the many socially

concert brass bands and brass and woodwind bands were gaining wide popularity.

Therefore, in both the North and South, many volunteer regiments went off to war with both a brass band and a fife and drum corps. By the second summer of the war, the U.S. War Department issued General Order No. 91, directing all regimental bands to be mustered out of the service.

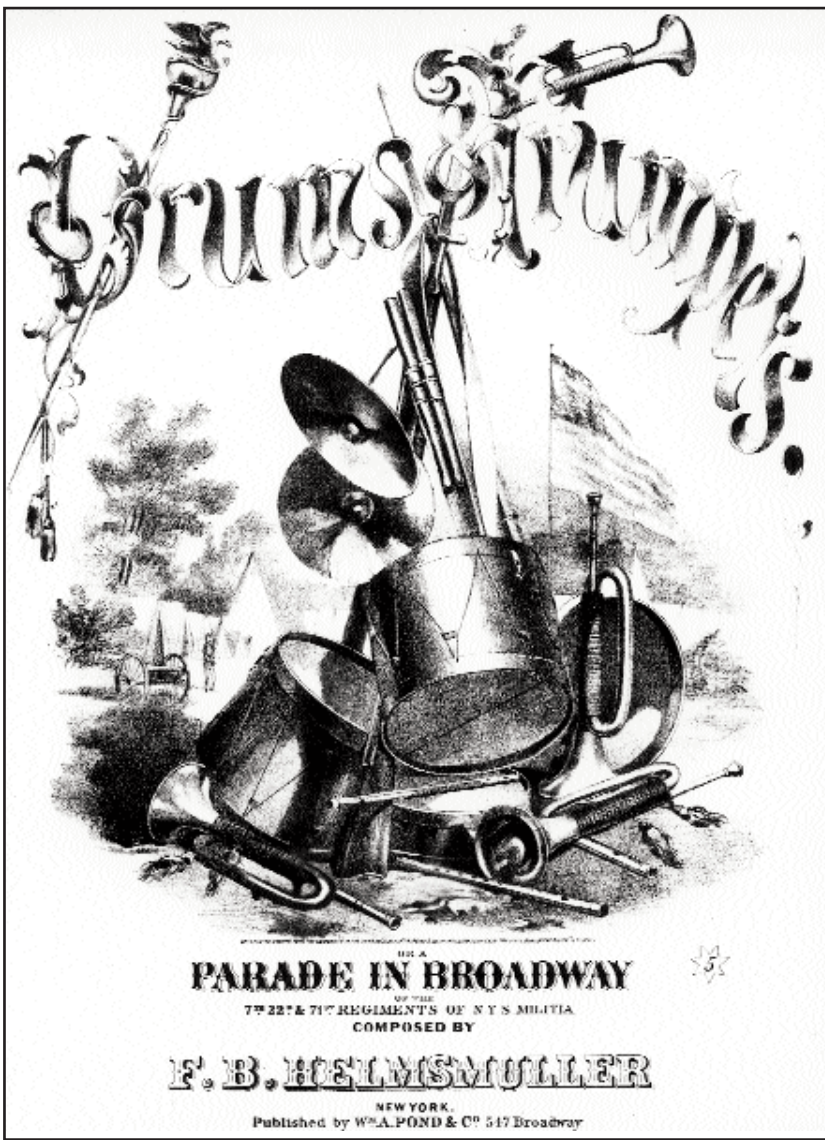
Some bandmen and bands would be transferred to brigades containing three or more regiments, thereby reducing federally-funded army bands by 70 percent or more. When in combat, bandmen would now act as stretcher bearers, aiding the wounded and burying the dead.

The regimental drum corps and company bugler would remain intact, since they were necessary for the sounding of commands and camp duties.

Often boys as young as 12 were taken into regiments to be trained as field musicians. One of the youngest to enlist was 10-year-old Johnny Clem of the 2nd Michigan Infantry. He had his drum smashed by a shell at the Battle of Shiloh and became known as "The Drummer Boy of Shiloh" in song and poem.



Figure 16 -- German Army Drum Corps and Band, Berlin, 2001, UN photo by Eskinder Debebe. This is one of the last armies to still carry a "Schellenbaumtrager" or Jingling Johnny.



Civil War sheet music c. 1862 showing drums, bugles, fifes and cymbals.



The legend of a drummer boy wounded in the leg, being carried on the shoulder of a veteran soldier so he could continue to play his drum, was made famous by Eastman Johnson's painting, "The Wounded Drummer Boy." In actuality, like the bandmen, the fifes and drums were given duty to care for the wounded or act as messengers.

However, even these duties could be done under enemy fire and more than a few field musicians received the Medal of Honor for brave performance of these duties while under fire.

Buglers and trumpeteers would remain by their commanders in front line actions and records prove many of them became casualties of enemy fire.

Many a Civil War veteran would recall fondly the sounds of the fifes, drums and bugles. The historian of the 17th Maine Infantry, Edwin B. Houghton, wrote poetically of the role of the drum corps in his brigade:

*"As the first beams of the rising sun begin to tinge the eastern skies, the clear notes of the bugle sounding Reveille from headquarters are heard, repeated in turn by the regimental bugles. The drums of one regiment commence their noisy rataplan, which is taken up by the ear-piercing fife and spirit-stirring drum of another, 'til every drum corps of the brigade, with accompanying bugles and fifes, join in the din; and the morning air is resonant with the shrill notes of the fife, or the clarion tones of the bugle sounding Reveille."*

While the fifes and drums were no longer in the center of the battle, the color guard was. Their position was up front in the center of the regiment. It was a position of immense danger in combat, since the colors would always draw the heaviest fire.

Only the bravest could be entrusted to carry out this dangerous, yet honored duty. The colors not only acted as a guide for the soldiers to follow, but were symbols of the regiment and the country its men had pledged to defend with their lives.

A regulation color guard consisted of two color sergeants who carried their national and state or regimental colors, and up to eight color corporals who guarded the colors. Entire color guards could be wiped out in the course of a battle.

The 26th North Carolina lost 13 color bearers at the Battle of

Gettysburg, including their commander, Col. Henry Burgwin, who fell bleeding with their battle flag wrapped around his body.

The 24th Michigan's color guard was also decimated at Gettysburg, losing nine color bearers; the flag took 23 bullets before it was



Figure 18 -- Tenor drummers of the British Hampshire Regiment Corps of Drums, wearing traditional leopard skins, once worn by hired African drummers (photo copyright by Robert J. Marrion).

removed from the field.

Many acts of gallantry are recorded with regard to the colors. More than half the Medals of Honor awarded by the United States during the Civil War were for deeds of valor regarding the color guard or the colors.

The veterans of America's bloodiest war would form many organizations after the war. The two largest were the South's United Confederate Veterans and the North's Grand Army of the Republic. These organizations also formed ladies auxiliaries and sons of

veterans units. Both held state and national conventions, called encampments, that featured large parades.

These parades included color guards, drill teams, bands and drum corps. The two marching units most identified with the Union veterans were the quick-stepping Zouave drill teams and the fife and drum corps.

The post-Civil War era and the Centennial of 1876 brought about what might have been the golden age of the fife and drum corps. Many drum corps and militia units from the 13 original states would adopt uniforms patterned after those of George Washington's Army and march at the 18th century cadence.

Some would survive to the present as ancient fife and drum corps or musket companies and take part in annual parades and musters in the New England states.

Some of the GAR and independent corps would add bugles or even three-valve cornets to their fifes and drums and play band and bugle marches. A few would evolve into drum and bugles corps years later. In the late 1970s, the Meadowlands, NJ, Royal Brigade (Fig. 19) competed in open class wearing blue and gold cavalry-style uniforms.

The corps was a merger of the Secaucus Meadowlarks and the Carlstadt-Woodridge Townsmen. The Townsmen were organized on May 1, 1880, by the George A. Custer Post No. 17, Grand Army of the Republic.

In 1867, the Army adopted "Upton's Tactics," a new drill system developed by Major General Emory Upton. In this manual, Upton standardized the many different and varied calls of the Civil War. It listed 67 bugle and trumpet calls, plus five nameless bugle quicksteps numbered one to five.

Around 1875, the Army did away with the fife in its drum corps and adopted bugles. The Marine Corps did the same in 1881, making the drum and bugle corps the regulation field music for all U.S. regular ground forces.

This change from fifes was not adopted by all the militia, state or national guard regiments. Many used their bugles for signaling, but still preferred to parade to the traditional sound of fifes and drums. At the Marine Corps Barracks in Washington, D.C., a school was established to instruct buglers. However, a group of old Marine fifers tried in every way to continue to use their fifes, claiming they had enlisted as fifers, not buglers.

Finally, the colonel in command directed that no fifer would be permitted to re-enlist without a written agreement that he would learn to blow the bugle.

In the British and German armies, the infantry would keep their fifes and drums, but all would also carry a bugle and be able to play all their duty calls, a practice still seen today in Britain's foot



(Figure 19 -- The Royal Brigade, shown here in 1978, could trace their roots back to 1880 (photo by Ron Da Silva from the Drum Corps World archives).



A boys drum and bugle corps from Dormot, IA, at a parade on November 16, 1918 celebrating the end of World War I. Note the bass drum and Civil War-style Zouave uniforms. They are not Shriners (photo from the collection of Ron Da Silva).

guards. The Americans and the French favored the quick-paced style of the light infantry drums and bugles.

Many bandmasters, including John Philip Sousa, would compose pieces for drum and bugle, or marches for combined band and bugle corps.

What made the fife so popular was its ability to play all types of songs, from marches to popular ballads. Wanting to make the bugle just as popular and maybe even equal to a brass band, a few bugle majors, or chief trumpeteers of the later half of the 19th century, would add keys, crooks, valves or rotaries to military trumpets and bugles or introduce different voices to their horn sections and create trumpet or bugle bands.

This was done decades before the American Legion adopted such innovations in their drum and bugle corps. (See Chapter 2 in *"A History of Drum & Bugle Corps,"* Volume 1.)

With the introduction of smokeless gun powder, repeating rifles and ground weapons that were much more accurate than the muskets and cannon of past wars, the tactics of close order drill and massed formations were not only obsolete, but suicidal.

The use of colorful flags and uniforms, once a necessity, now only gave your position away or made you an easy target. By the 1890s, most armies would start developing field uniforms in shades of gray, green, brown or khaki.

Field musicians' uniforms would now be distinguished by only a shoulder decoration or

sleeve insignia.

Buglers and trumpeteers would still go into battle, but now armed as the rest of the troops in their unit, with their horn slung over their shoulder or at their side.

Field musicians would serve in the last of the Indian Wars, travel to Cuba and the Philippines during the Spanish-American War and chase Pancho Villa during the Mexican Border War.

In 1914, the European powers would go to war expecting it to be a short repeat of the great battles of the Napoleonic era. The French were still wearing bright blue and red uniforms that hadn't really changed for almost 70 years. They and their British allies still believed that a mass infantry attack and the "elan" of the troops would overcome any enemy position. How wrong they were!

The technology of modern weaponry would bring about mass destruction and the

stalemate of trench warfare. Long-range artillery, the machine gun, poison gas and barbed wire would turn the fields of honor into horrific killing fields and cause millions of casualties.

When the United States entered World War I in April 1917, all the combative nations had adopted steel trench helmets and the dullest, most drab uniforms ever seen on a battlefield. The "war to end all wars" put a dismal end to all the pageantry and color once seen on battlefields.

Even the bugle and field trumpet were giving way to the whistle and trench telephone. Field music for communication at the front would join unfurled battle flags and officers' sabres in a state of limbo.

However, these items would still be used in military reviews and solemn ceremonies to honor past glories and fallen comrades. The veterans of World War I, especially the American Legion, would take these military traditions to new heights and popularity with



A Civil War drum corps (illustration from the collection of the Library of Congress).



their colorful parades and conventions. These events featured their own color guards, drill teams, rifle squads, bands and drum and bugle corps, competing against each for trophies, titles and prize money.

Just as a fife and drum corps, wearing black or gray Stetson hats, became a symbol of the veterans of the Civil War, the American Legion drum and bugle corps in chromed trench helmets would become a visual and musical symbol of American veterans of the First World War.

Their drum corps and color guards would develop into a truly unique and American form of pageantry that would also be adopted by other veterans groups, youth organizations, civic and fraternal societies and even the military itself. The following chapters will document the history and development of the drum and bugle corps and color guard activities in North America.

And so, the pageantry that once had tactical origins on the battlefield has become show biz and competition on a football field. But if one looks and listens closely, a corps' name, a uniform, a maneuver or even a piece of music just might reveal the activity's proud but fading military origins.

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Zouave drum corps leads GAR parade in Elizabeth, NJ, May 11, 1889 (illustration from the collection of Ron Da Silva).

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For a photo and bio of Ron Da Silva, turn to page 55.