

## The Origin of 'TAPS'



We've all heard the hallowed piece bugled at Military Funerals that can bring tears to one's eyes. But did you ever wonder where it came from, or know the haunting tune has words?

### Virginia, 1862

Captain Robert Ellicombe was a Union officer who had led his men into day battle at Harrison's Landing, a narrow strip of ground in Virginia. At night, the fighting may have ceased, but to say it was quiet would have been to ignore the cries and moans of severely wounded soldiers who lay dying out there in the dark.

Caring not if Union or Confederate, Captain Ellicombe decided to risk his life by crawling to the nearest man, reached a stricken soldier, and pulled him back to his encampment for medical treatment. Safely back behind lines, the Captain went numb with abject shock when a lantern revealed he had not only retrieved a Confederate soldier, but it was his own son.

His boy had been studying music in the South when the war broke out, and unbeknownst to his father, enlisted in the Confederate Army. The boy died the following morning, and heartbroken, the father asked permission to give his son a military funeral despite the gray uniform. His request was partially granted.

Out of respect for Captain Ellicombe, that in lieu of a band, superiors allowed one musician. The Captain selected a bugler and asked him to play a series of simple notes and words written on a piece of scrap paper found in the boy's pocket. The bugler agreed, and TAPS was born.



### The three verses of 'TAPS' found in the boy's uniform

Day is done,  
Gone the Sun  
From the lakes,  
From the hills,  
From the sky.  
All is well.  
Safely rest,  
God is nigh.

Fading light  
Dims the sight.  
And a star  
Gems the sky  
Gleaming bright  
From afar.  
Drawing nigh,  
Falls the night.

Thanks and praise  
For our days  
'Neath the sun,  
'Neath the stars,  
'Neath the sky.  
As we go  
This we know,  
God is nigh.