

NOTES ON BUGLE CALLS

Originally written to accompany the tape sent to Dom Dal Bello by Scott and Randy Pierson
by: Dom Dal Bello for the AoP: April 1995; revised July, 2002, revised April 2015
With help from John D. Billings (*Hardtack and Coffee*, 1887).



While the **ARMY OF THE PACIFIC** often uses drums and fifes for the camp calls and on the battlefield, the bugle, especially for skirmishers, is an important tool for communication. While it is not expected that every one know all the calls, it would be beneficial to be familiar with some of the “vital” ones in running a battalion, and moving a skirmish line. Obviously, we will verbally/visually “interpret” the calls when necessary to avoid confusion.

This document includes the music for the bugle calls, both “General” and for “Skirmishers,” as given in William J. Hardee’s *Rifle and Light Infantry Tactics*, 1861 (see also Casey’s).

A basic source to listen to the Infantry bugle calls is here, gathered by Todd Bemis:

<http://civilwarbuglecalls.blogspot.com> <http://2ndcalifornia.tumblr.com/> <https://soundcloud.com/2nd-california>

A good Bugle Call booklet and media for the reenactor is by 1st Federal Division bugler, R.J. Samp, “Infantry Bugle Calls for Non-Buglers.” Another good media/booklet set is by George Rabbai – “Infantry Bugle Calls of the American Civil War.”

I would like to highlight a few of the signals:

GENERAL CALLS

1. **ATTENTION** is sounded to bring the men to *attention*. Also, when they are in camp, or otherwise unoccupied, it is a signal to prepare to fall in - at the **ASSEMBLY**.
2. **THE GENERAL** is the signal to strike tents, and is sounded so that there will be enough time for the wagons to be loaded before the designated time of march. However, John Billings informs us that
the General was little used in the latter part of the war. ... after the Shelter tent came into use, and each man was his own wagon, the General was seldom heard unless at the end of a long encampment; for, when the marching orders came, each man understood that he must be ready at the hour appointed, even if his regiment waited another day before it left camp. [p.336-7].
Thus, the **GENERAL** will only be used when we are breaking a semi-permanent camp at an event.
3. **THE ASSEMBLY** is the signal for the companies to form on their company parade grounds (streets); **DO NOT FORM THE BATTALION**.
4. **TO THE COLOR** is the signal for the companies to march to the battalion parade ground in order to form the battalion line. The Color Company will arrive first, the companies then dressing on the line from center to flank.
13. **ASSEMBLY OF BUGLERS**, equivalent to **MUSICIANS CALL**, is sounded to gather the musicians together (this is in fact the “First Call” of the day, which is followed by **REVEILLE**).
14. **ASSEMBLY OF THE GUARD** is blown to indicate that the Guard detachments of the various companies to form on their respective company parade grounds - **ADJUTANT’S CALL** is sounded to have the various detachments form at the battalion parade ground.
15. **ORDERS FOR ORDERLY SERGEANTS** is sounded daily, at 11 a.m. or noon (or so), at which the *first sergeants* of each company and the company clerks, report to battalion headquarters to receive their orders for the following 24 hours (at least in the daily routine).
18. **OFFICERS’ CALL**.

CALLS FOR SKIRMISHERS

We will simply note that some of the Skirmish Calls - e.g., **FORWARD, HALT**, &c., may be used when the battalion is in close order.

EXAMPLE: Falling-In and marching

Consider the battalion in camp. The commander wishes to form the battalion, and march off. He may have the bugler sound the following sequence, at appropriate intervals (5-10 minutes):

ATTENTION	The men will prepare to fall in (put on their traps, etc.).
ASSEMBLY	The 1st Sgts. will form the companies.
TO THE COLOR	The company commanders will march their companies to the parade ground, and the battalion will be formed.

The battalion commander may then order “Right - FACE,” and then have the bugler sound:

FORWARD	When the bugle stops playing, the battalion will march off.
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Thus, with four calls, and one verbal command, the battalion has marched off. The bugle call is much easier to hear than anyone yelling commands (and easier on the Adjutant’s and Battalion Commander’s vocal chords).

Finally note that there are similar calls for the drum as well. In either case, the use of music for communications makes things much more military, and once the necessary calls are learned, they are a great time- (and voice-) saver. With the calls,

we will also provide “hand-signals” and/or hints in undertones to ensure the right message is understood; as the even goes on, recognizing the calls become easier.

Calls we should be familiar with. Those underlined are probably a bit more important to know.

General Camp Calls

1. Attention (“I know you are tired but still you must go, down to Atlanta to see the big show” - jingle to tune, - from *Si Klegg and His Pard*).
3. The Assembly
4. To the Color
5. The Recall
9. The Reveille (to be played after the fife and drums - as the final signal).
10. Retreat (the one towards the end of the day)
11. Tattoo
12. To extinguish lights
13. Assembly of the Buglers
15. Orders for Orderly Sergets.
16. For officers to take their places in Line after Firing
18. Officers Call

Skirmish Calls

1. Fix Bayonet
2. Unfix Bayonet
6. Deploy as Skirmishers
7. Forward
8. In retreat
9. Halt
12. Commence Firing
13. Cease Firing
16. Lie Down (“All lie down., all lie down.”)
17. Rise Up (“All rise up! all rise up!”)
21. Rally on the Reserve
22. Rally on the Battalion (run to the battalion)
23. Assemble on the Battalion (reverse of deploying the skirmish line).

THIS HERE BRIGADE, IT’S GOT ITS OWN BUGLE CALL

Several years ago, R.J. Samp, Chief Bugler, **1st Federal Division**, put together the following calls as “preludes” to unit commands. The Division and each brigade has a prelude call.

The **Army of the Pacific** (Dal Bello) was the first **1st Brigade, of the 1st Federal Division**. The 1st Brigade Call, written by R.J. Samp, is as follows:



This call may be heard on the AoP website: <http://press.armyofthepacific.com/>

At RR3 will use this call as the prelude call for the **battalion**. The call has the same notes as “Dan-Dan-Dan Butterfield, Butterfield” but played slower, and the last “flourish” is only played once. (I have a feeling the men always prefer “Damn, Damn, Damn Dal Bel-lo”; at least I would).

After the unit call, the next call is for Dal Bello’s **battalion** (brigade). If the Division bugler sounded the call, it was to order the brigade to do something. If the brigade bugler sounded the brigade call, and no call followed, it was to acknowledge the Division signal.