

'Taps' was composed in July 1862 at Harrison's Landing in Virginia, but aside from that basic fact, the fanciful piece quoted above in no way reflects the reality of that melody's origins.

There was no dead son, Confederate or otherwise; no lone bugler sounding out the dead boy's last composition. How the call came into being was never anything more than one influential soldier's deciding his unit could use a bugle call for particular occasions and setting about to come up with one.

If anyone can be said to have composed 'Taps,' it was Brig. Gen. Daniel Butterfield, Commander of the 3rd Brigade, 1st Division, V Army Corps, Army of the Potomac, during the American Civil War. Dissatisfied with the customary firing of three rifle volleys at the conclusion of burials during battle and also wanting a less harsh bugle call for ceremonially signaling the end of a soldier's day, he likely altered an older piece known as "Tattoo," a French bugle call used to signal "lights out," into the call we now know as 'Taps.'