

The Story Of Taps

This story began in 1862 during the Civil War, when the Union Army and Captain Robert Ellicombe was with his men near Harrison's Landing, Virginia. The Confederate Army was on the other side of the narrow strip of land. During the night, Captain Ellicombe heard the moan of a soldier who lay mortally wounded on the field. Not knowing if it was Union or Confederate soldier, the captain decided to risk his life and bring the stricken soldier man back for medical attention. Crawling on his stomach through gunfire, the captain reached the soldier and began pulling him toward his encampment. When the captain finally reached his own lines, he discovered it was actually a Confederate soldier, and he was dead. The captain lit a lantern. Suddenly he caught his breath and went numb in shock. In the dim light, he saw the face of the soldier. It was his own son. The boy had been studying music in the South when war broke out. Without telling his father, he enlisted in the Confederate Army. The following morning, heartbroken, the father asked permission of his superiors to give his son a full military burial, despite his enemy status. His request was partially granted. The captain had asked if he could have a group of army band members play a funeral dirge for his son. The request was turned down since the soldier was confederate, but out of respect for the father, they said they could give him only one musician. The captain chose a bugler. He asked the bugler to play a series of notes he found on a piece of paper in the pocket of his son's uniform. His wish was granted.

This music was the haunting melody we now know as " taps ".