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History Lives

In the small details of everyday life in the small details of everyday life. Today as yesterday, we go about our daily routines of work and play even as global changes unfold around us. Check out your local library, museum or historical society for more information, or these sources that we found especially interesting:

Woodwind Instruments and Their History
Anthony Baumes
Old Fort Snelling Instruction Book for the Fife
Watson and Walz
3rd US Infantry/The Old Guard Fife & Drum Corps
<http://www.mdw.army.mil/fdc/>
Library of Congress, Dayton Miller Collection
<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/dcmhml/dmprcf.html>

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ment enjoyed equally by beginners playing simple folk tunes, and woodwind artists playing complex early music and modern arrangements. throughout the 18th century and into the 19th century. Although it played an important role in the military during the American Civil War, the fife had long since found its home in civilian life. It was an instrument particularly well suited to the fies and reels early America was so fond of, and was a natural for the patriotic parades that were the fashion. Today the traditional fife is an instru-

fife and drummer know their signal calls and play them flawlessly. lives depended on the fife and drum calling out the orders on the battlefield and in the camp. When the companies were assembled, the fifiers and drummers formed a corps that provided music for reviews, parades and special ceremonies, as well as for dances and entertainments. The fife remained popular

The fife is a simple, high-pitched member of the flute family. This instrument came early to the New World as a military instrument with European soldiers and a folk instrument with settlers. In 18th century Europe and her American colonies, one fifer and one drummer were assigned to each company in a regiment. It was of utmost importance that the company

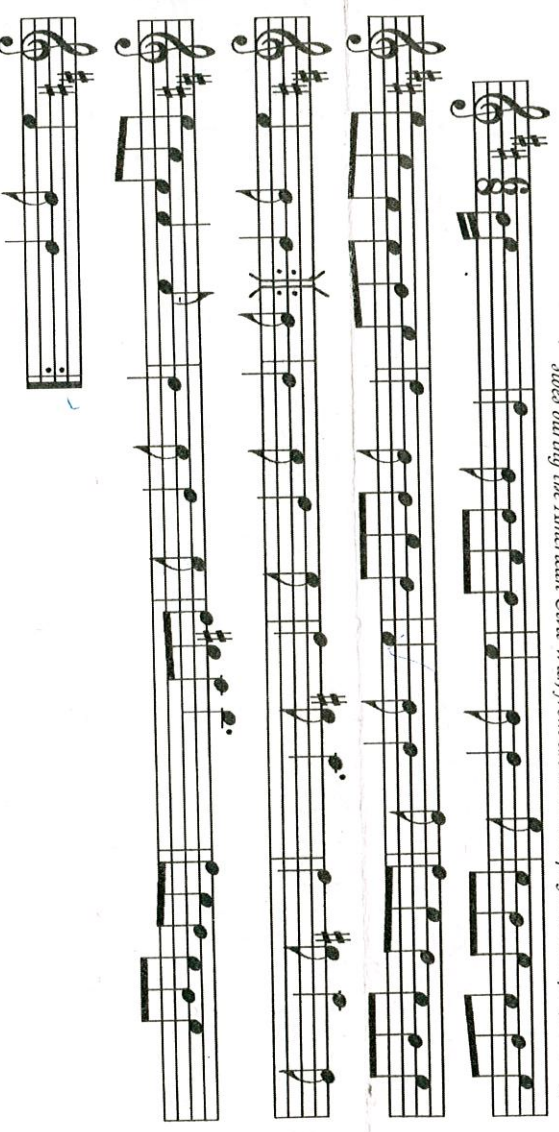
To Arms

New and Complete Instructions for the Fife, G. Goulding (ca.1787)



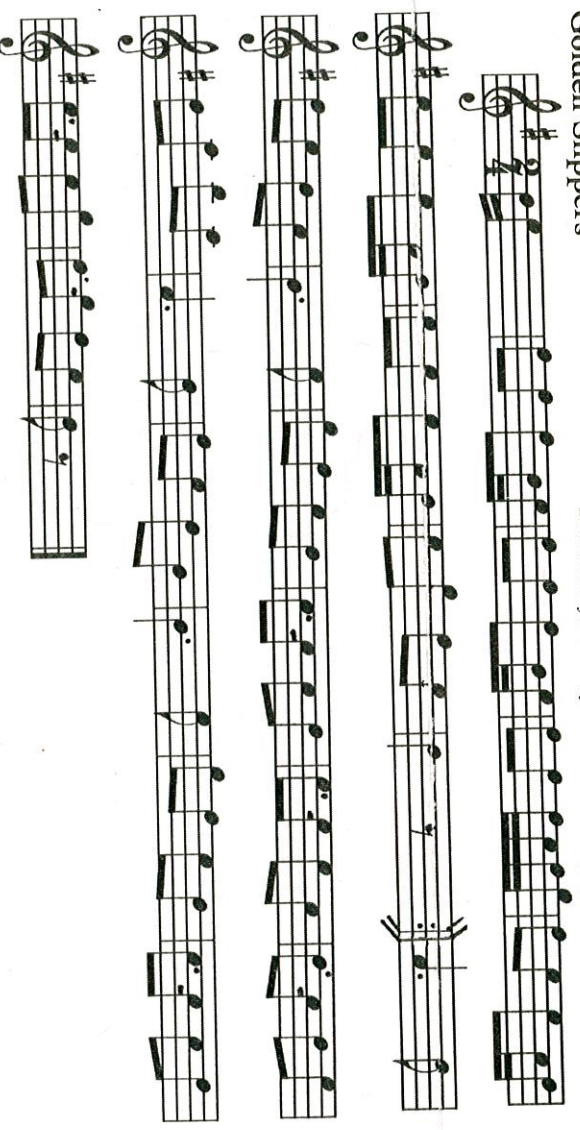
Jefferson and Liberty

Irish-Scottish traditional tune, popular since the 18th century, and played by both sides during the American Civil War, from the A. J. Murphy manuscript (ca. 1961)



Golden Slippers

Traditional folk tune, from the A. J. Murphy manuscript (ca. 1961)



tunes, as well as woodwind artists playing complex early music and modern arrangements. Fife and drum corps, civilian and military, parade throughout North America and Europe ensuring that this musical tradition will be both preserved in its historical form and kept vital for the future: celtic music groups add the fife to small ensembles; the fife and drum bands of Mississippi and Georgia carry on their unique style of hill country blues; and educators take advantage of the fife to expand group performance options on an easily accessible instrument with cross-cultural roots and historical significance.



D	D#	E	F	F#	G	G#	A	A#	B	C	C#
○	●	○	●	●	○	○	●	○	○	○	○
○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Close your lips, then open them slightly in the middle. Hold the fife extended to your right, without covering any finger holes, and rest the center of the closest edge of the mouth hole just under your bottom lip. Direct a stream of air across the mouth hole just as you would to sound a note from a soda bottle. Roll the fife slightly forward and away from you, or adjust the shape of the opening in your lips, until you can produce a clear note. If you have trouble getting the note at first, don't worry; it can take a bit of practice to find just the right spot and just the right amount of air to get the note.

When you can make that first note sound, place the first three fingers of your left hand on the three holes nearest the mouth hole and the first three fingers of your right hand on the other three holes. Taking care to stop the holes firmly and lightly, blow gently and you sound the note Low D. To sound Low E, lift the third finger of your

right hand, and so on for the other notes as indicated on the chart. When you can sound the notes of the low octave, try the middle octave. Draw your lips tighter to let the stream of air come out finer and stronger. Practice the whole scale from bottom to top and top to bottom until you have learned every note perfectly and can play all the notes on the scale without stopping. After you feel comfortable with the low and middle octaves, try the notes of the high octave, forcing the air stream out still stronger than you did for the middle octave.

D	D#	E	F	F#	G	G#	A	A#	B	C	C#
○	●	○	●	●	○	○	●	○	○	○	○
○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

The fife was in common use as a martial signal instrument from the 14th century onward. 18th century military fifes were usually pitched in d (corresponding roughly with modern piccolos) and in c by the 19th century; b and b-flat became increasingly common, and b-flat is now considered the standard pitch. While the fife changed in pitch, its fingering remained the same, so that today the fingering of the fife is better associated with the note on the page than the tone that is sounded; for example, the first

D	D#	E	F	F#	G	G#	A	A#	B	C	C#	D
○	●	○	●	●	○	○	●	○	○	○	○	○
○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

The six vertical dots represent the six finger holes of the fife. Black dots indicate covered holes; clear dots open holes; and half-black dots half-covered holes.

Alternate fingerings



fingering of a b-flat fife may sound like a b-flat, but it is read as a d. The fife is capable of producing nearly three full octaves, with music written primarily in the middle octave.

Tunes for The Fife

The fife has a long tradition as a military signal instrument. In 18th century Europe and her American colonies, military fifiers would typically have been boys between the ages of 12 and 16. One fifer and one drummer were assigned to each company in a regiment, which

consisted of ten companies. When the companies were assembled, the ten fifiers and ten drummers formed a corps that provided music for reviews, parades and special ceremonies. *Yankee Doodle* and *God Save The King (or Queen)* are representative of fife tunes popular during the period of the

American Revolution, and still familiar today. It was of utmost importance that the company fifer and drummer know their signal calls and play them flawlessly. Lives depended on the order to drum calling out the order to advance or retreat, to fire or hold fire. In camp the fifer and

drummer would announce when to get up in the morning and when to go to bed at night, and everything in-between. The duty call *To Arms* was played to quickly bring the troops from work or leisure activity to battle readiness.

Yankee Doodle

Thomas Nixon manuscript, unpublished (ca. 1778)

God Save The King

Entire New and Compleat Instructions for the Fife, John Preston (ca. 1778)

The fife remained popular throughout the 18th century and into the 19th century. The instrument continued to play an important role in the military during the period of the American Civil War in signaling battle commands and performing at ceremonies; the patriotic tune *Jefferson and Liberty* was played by both Union and Confederate forces. But the fife had long since found its home in civilian life. It was an instrument particularly well-suited to the jigs and reels early America was so fond of, and was a natural for the patriotic parades that were the fashion. Manuals for the fife containing hundreds of popular airs first appeared in America in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. The tunes were often of folk origin, as represented here by *Golden Slippers*, and Celtic influences were especially well represented.

The traditional fife is an instrument that can be enjoyed by beginners playing simple

FINGERING CHART

In theory, it is possible to finger and play many more notes than are displayed in this fingering chart. However, these are all the notes I can play on good day with a good fife. You will never have a need for some of them, but one never knows. If you ever need any notes that are not on the chart, the tutorial has served its purpose well, and you are now an expert fife player.

F F# G G# A A# B C C# D D# E F F# G G# A A# B