

BRASS INSTRUMENTS USED IN CONFEDERATE MILITARY SERVICE DURING THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR

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One of the major problems encountered in doing research on brass instruments that can be assumed to have seen service in the armies of the Confederacy during the American Civil War is the paucity of such instruments, as well as the destruction or loss of important records of the men who performed in the bands and field units that used the instruments. There are many reasons for this state of affairs—confiscation of band and field musical instruments from the Confederate armies at the close of the war, lackadaisical staff work in preparing morning reports, or lack of personnel to perform such tasks as the Southern manpower dwindled to skeletal proportions in the spring of 1865, etc.

The two best known collections of actual instruments that saw service in the armies of the Confederacy are in Winston-Salem, NC, in the Museum of Old Salem; and Staunton, VA, in the rehearsal room of the Stonewall Brigade Band.¹ Recently, I made a quick trip to both these locations, where I photographed their instruments, obtained some official photographs from Old Salem, and recorded some information about both sets of instruments from interviews and museum information cards.²

The instruments I was able to peruse while in Old Salem are as follows:

#690-1 (accession number in the museum) (Figs. 1, 2)—This instrument is described as a “bass horn” with piston valves, 41 inches in length, with a bell diameter of 10 1/2 inches. One valve was broken and the instrument was severely dented when it was acquired from the North Carolina Department of History and Archives in 1959. The bass instrument was played by members of the 33rd NC Regimental Band, and was donated by O.J. Lehman to the Hall of History in 1918 (Lehman served as director of the Bethania, NC Band). This instrument is pictured in Robert Garofalo and Mark Elrod’s *Pictorial History of Civil War Era Musical Instruments and Military Bands*.³ The illustration is on page 29, and it is described as “Upright bass saxhorn in E-flat, Unsigned, c. 1860. Brass with three Berliner piston valves.”⁴ This instrument is also pictured in Hall’s book.⁵

#690-2 (Fig. 3)—Described as a B \flat fluegelhorn, OTS (over-the-shoulder), acquired from the North Carolina Department of History and Archives in 1959. It was initially described as “brass alto horn,” but this appellation was later corrected. The length is 25 1/2 inches and the diameter of the bell is 5 7/8 inches. This instrument is pictured in Garofalo and Elrod’s book, page 29, and is described as having “three string rotary valves” (something for which I will have to take the museum’s word, since they would not remove it from a display case for closer inspection).⁶ It was used in the 33rd NC Band, and was given to the Hall of History of the State Department of Archives and

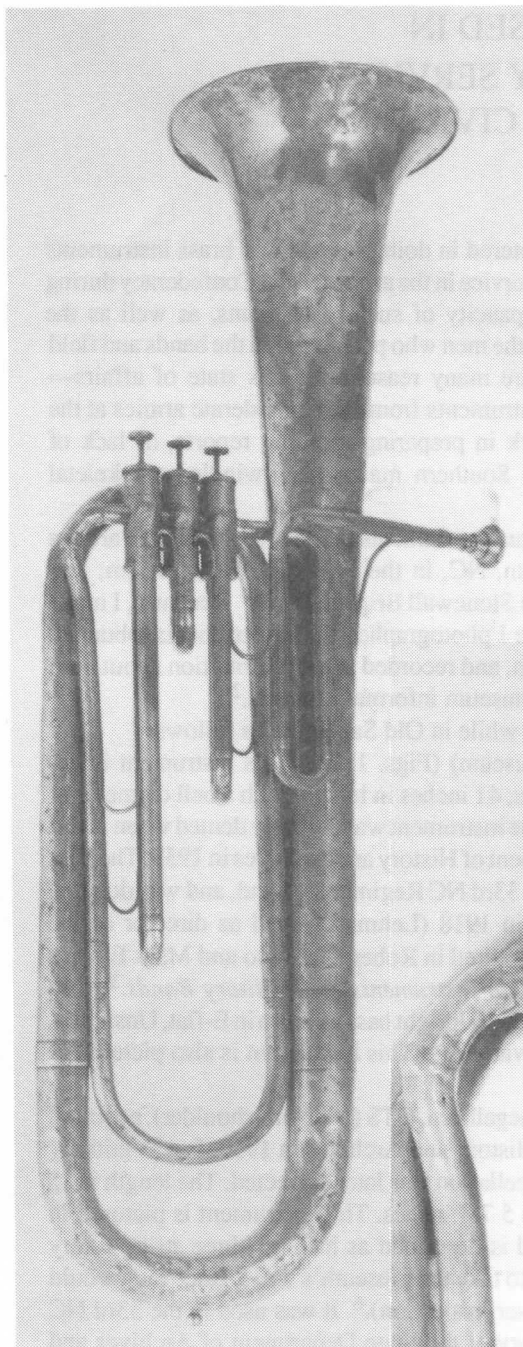


Figure 1
Brass Horn, #690-1
(Courtesy of Old Salem, Inc.)

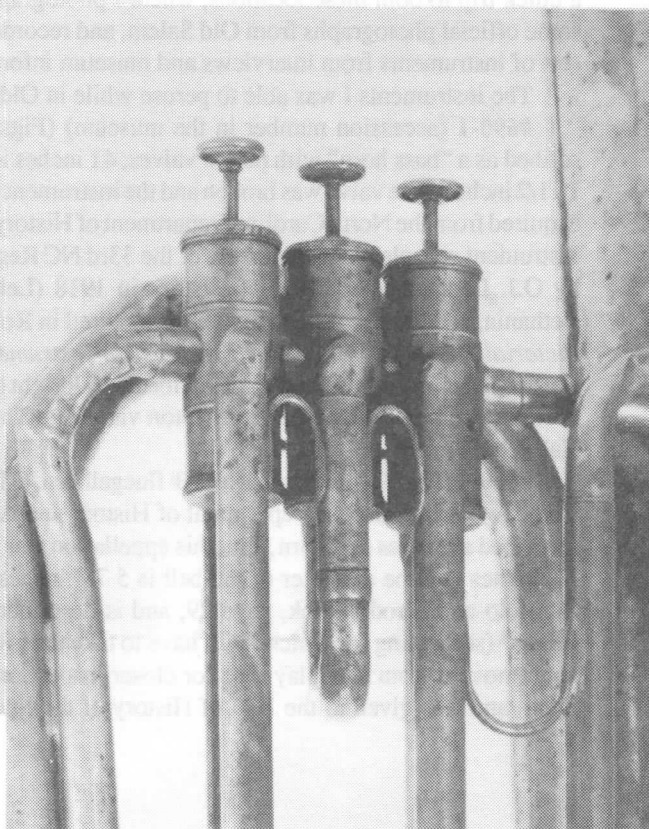


Figure 2
Detail of Brass Horn, #690-1
(Courtesy of Old Salem, Inc.)

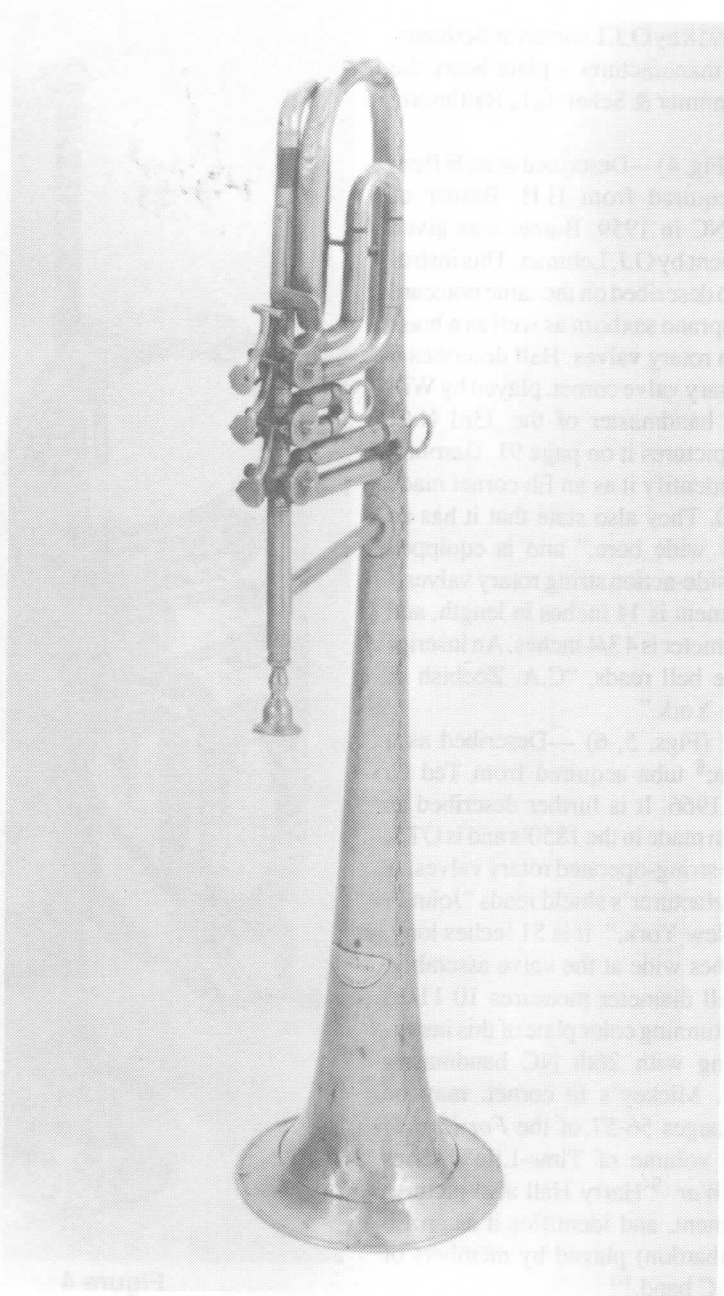


Figure 3
 B) Fluegelhorn, #690-2 (Courtesy of Old Salem, Inc.)

History in 1918 by O.J. Lehman of Bethania. The silver manufacturer's plate bears the legend: Kummer & Schetelich, Baltimore, Md.

#693 (Fig. 4)—Described as an E \flat fluegelhorn acquired from H.H. Butner of Bethania, NC in 1959. Butner was given the instrument by O.J. Lehman. This instrument is also described on the same notecard as an Eb soprano saxhorn as well as a brass cornet with rotary valves. Hall describes it as an Eb rotary valve cornet, played by Will N. Butler, bandmaster of the 33rd N.C. band, and pictures it on page 91. Garofalo and Elrod identify it as an Eb cornet made about 1860. They also state that it has an "extremely wide bore," and is equipped with three side-action string rotary valves.⁷ The instrument is 14 inches in length, and the bell diameter is 4 3/4 inches. An inscription on the bell reads, "C.A. Zoebish & Sons, New York."

#2121 (Figs. 5, 6) —Described as a bombardon;⁸ tuba acquired from Ted C. Kerner in 1966. It is further described as having been made in the 1850's and is OTS. It has three string-operated rotary valves. A brass manufacturer's shield reads "John F. Stratton, New York." It is 51 inches long, 11 1/4 inches wide at the valve assembly, and the bell diameter measures 10 11/16 inches. A stunning color plate of this instrument, along with 26th NC bandmaster Samuel T. Mickey's E \flat cornet, may be found on pages 56-57 of the *Forward to Richmond* volume of Time-Life's series *The Civil War*.⁹ Harry Hall also pictures the instrument, and identifies it as an Eb bass (bombardon) played by members of the 33rd NC band.¹⁰

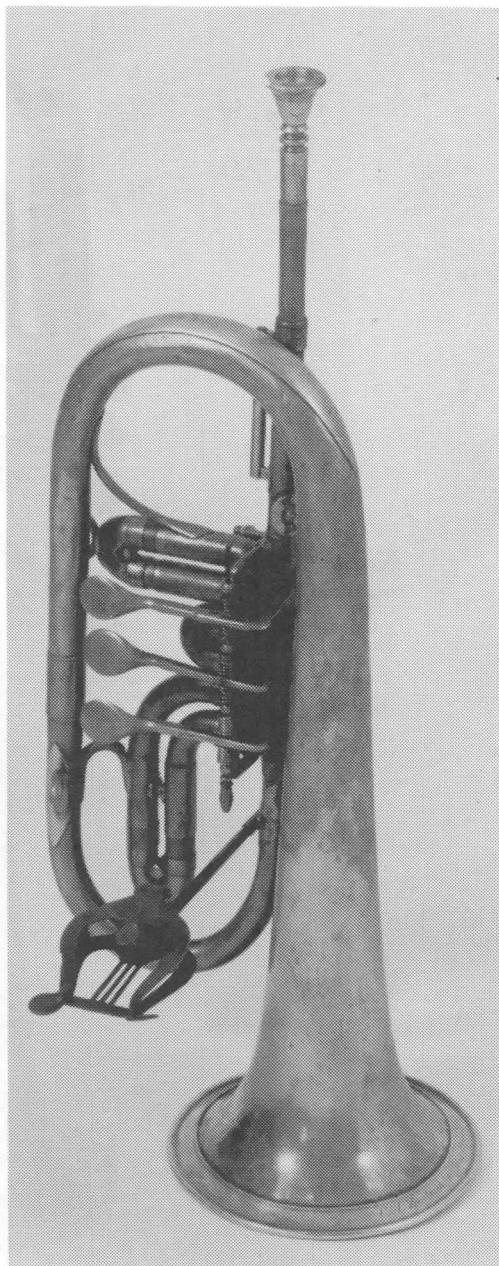


Figure 4
E \flat Fluegelhorn, #693 (Courtesy
of Old Salem, Inc.)

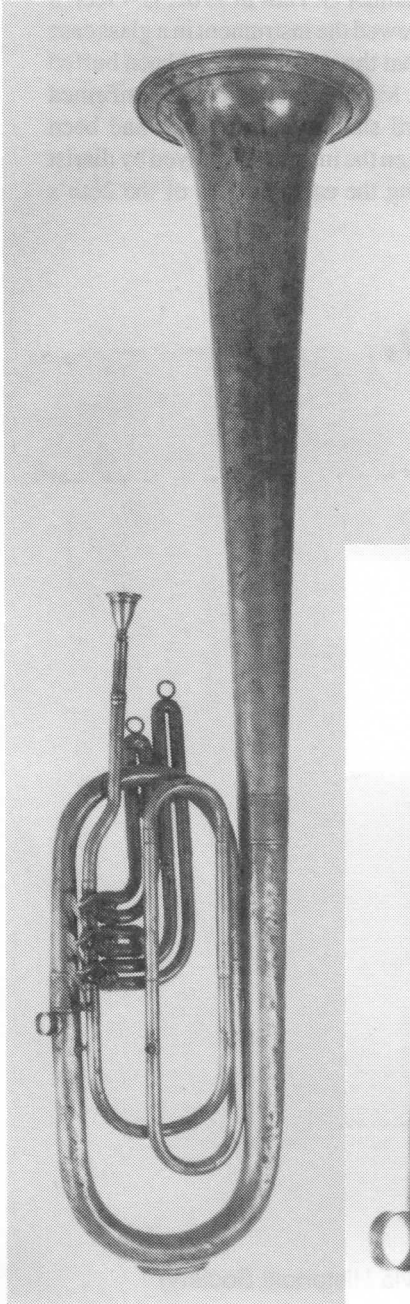
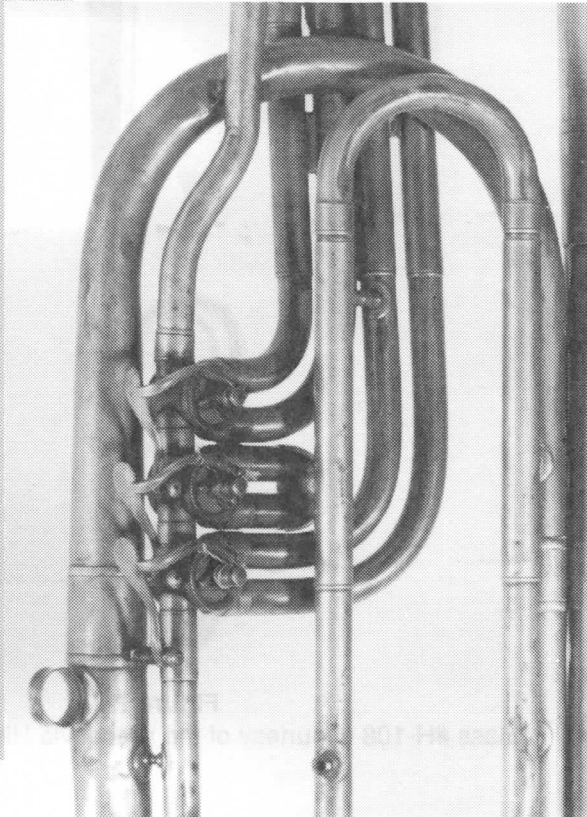


Figure 5
Bombardon, #2121
(Courtesy of Old Salem, Inc.)

Figure 6
Detail of Bombardon, #2121
(Courtesy of Old Salem, Inc.)



#H-108 (Figs. 7-9)—Identified as a bass (bombardon) used by the 21st N.C. Regimental Band. It was given to the museum by Samuel G. Hall in 1902, is 4 feet, 8 inches in length, with a bell diameter of 10 inches. I viewed the instrument in a glass case at the Visitor's Center in Old Salem, where I noted that the instrument had been buffed to a high gloss and appeared to have been lacquered. My observations were confirmed by museum officials and a notation on the notecard stating that the horn had been "repaired" in 1959 by C.G. Conn.¹¹ This may have been the instrument played by diarist and band member Julius A. Leinbach, at least during the early months of the 26th's enlistment, around 1862.¹²

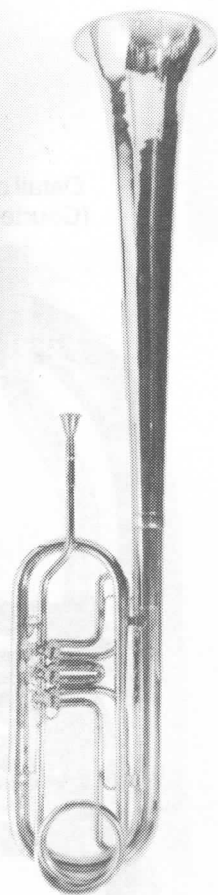


Figure 7

Bass #H-108 (Courtesy of the Wachovia Historical Society)

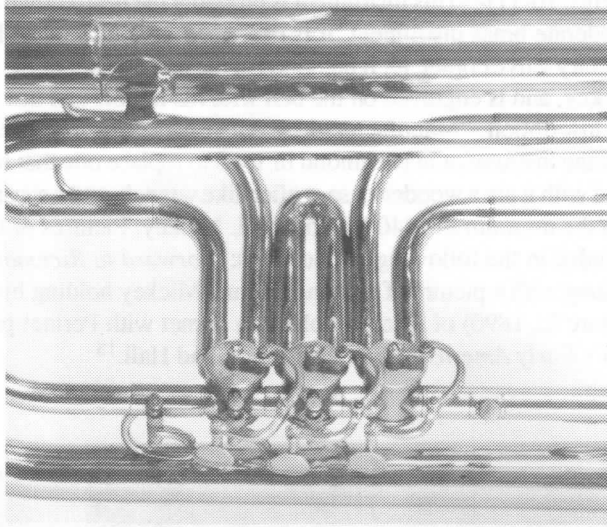


Figure 8

Detail of Bass #H-108 (Courtesy of the Wachovia Historical Society)



Figure 9

Bass #H-108, in Visitor's Center

#H-210 (Figs. 10-11)—This instrument is probably the best-known and most often pictured Confederate brass instrument. It is described variously as an E \flat fluegelhorn; bugle, valve; rotary valve cornet, E \flat . It belonged to the bandmaster of the 26th NC band, Samuel T. Mickey, and is engraved on the bell with his initials and last name. Also on the bell is the inscription, "Manufactured by Allen Mfg. Co., Harvard Pl., Boston." Mickey bought the instrument in Richmond in 1863 to replace one that had been lost or stolen. Included with it are a wooden case, a plier-like wrench, and a music "clip" (lyre). It was given to the museum in 1940 by Robert H. Mickey. Pictures of this instrument have been included in the following publications: *Forward to Richmond*;¹³ Garofalo and Elrod,¹⁴ along with a picture of a young Samuel Mickey holding his instrument,¹⁵ and a later picture (c. 1890) of Mickey holding a cornet with Perinet piston valves;¹⁶ Robert Eliason's *Early American Brass Makers*;¹⁷ and Hall.¹⁸



Figure 10

Mickey's E \flat Cornet and Case #H-210
(Courtesy of the Wachovia Historical Society)



Figure 11

Detail of Mickey's E \flat Cornet #H-210
(Courtesy of the Wachovia Historical Society)

#C-397 (Fig. 12)—Identified as cornet-silver. One valve is broken and mouthpiece is included. The donor was F.C. Meinung, Sr. and the gift is dated 1875.

Finally, there is a curious picture included in the National Historical Society's publication *The Image of War 1861-1865*,¹⁹ identified as a bandsman of the 26th NC. He is holding what appears to be a cornet, apparently with three string rotary valves. Although the photograph is extremely sharp, and there is a clear identifying "26" on the hat worn by the instrumentalist, I cannot match him to any of the bandsmen pictured in the famous furlough photograph of the 26th N.C. band.²⁰ Further, the plumed hat he is wearing does not match either those in the photograph, or the description of the uniform hats given by Leinbach in his diary. The photograph of the mystery bandsman is credited as being from the Dale S. Snair collection in Richmond, VA.

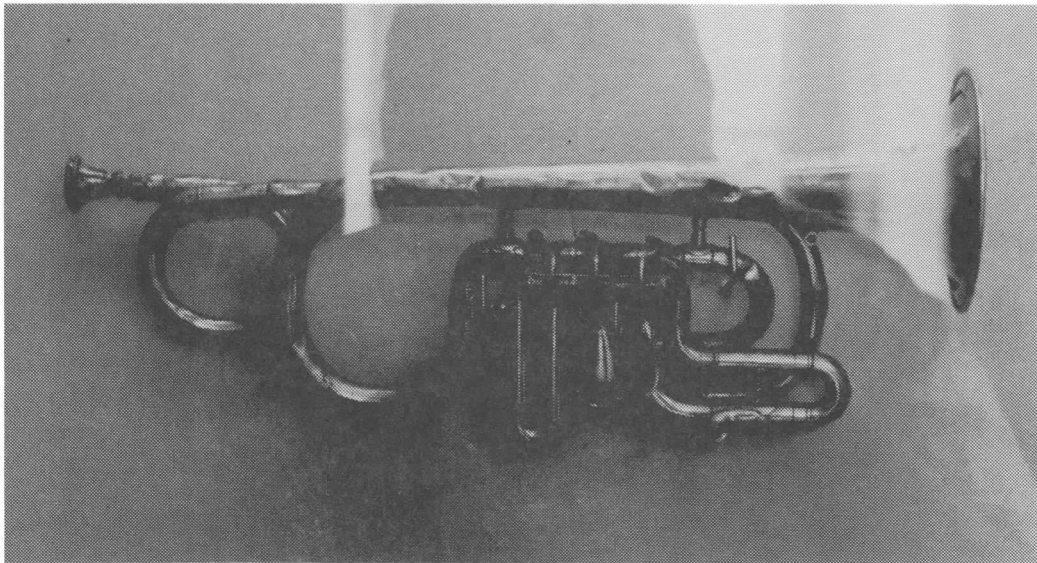


Figure 12
Cornet, #C-397 (Photo by G.B. Lane)

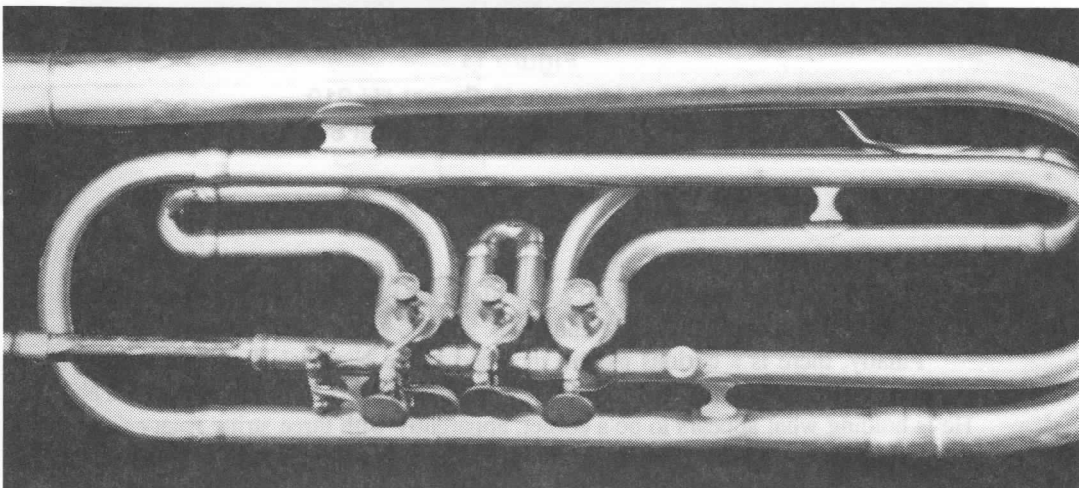


Figure 13
Saxhorn, Stonewall Brigade Band
(Figs. 13-17 depict the Stonewall Brigade instruments, on display in the band's rehearsal room in Staunton, VA) Photos by G.B. Lane

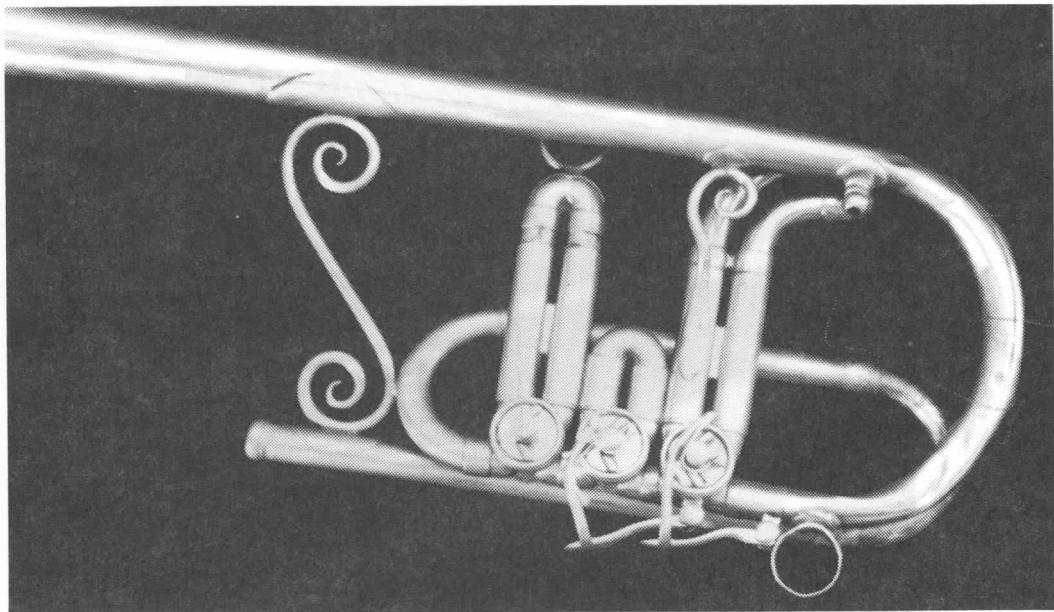


Figure 14

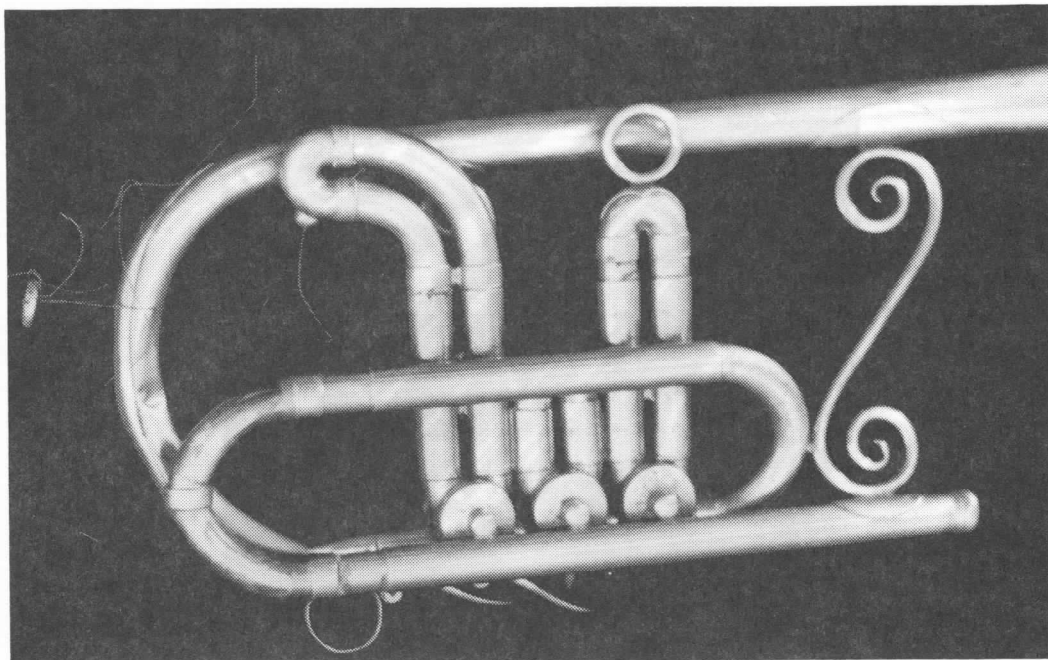


Figure 15



Figure 16

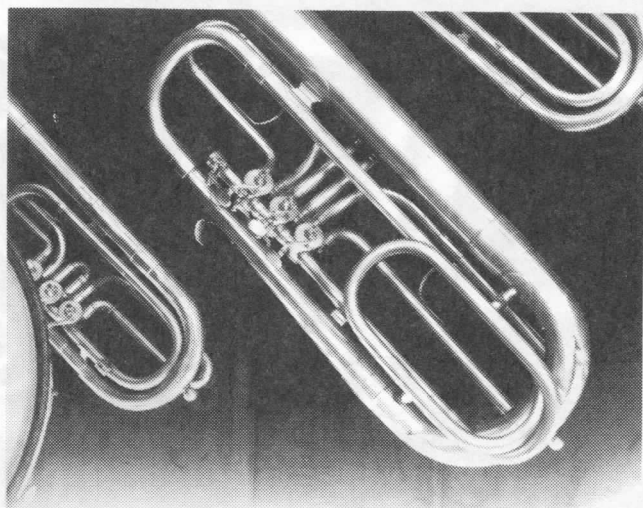


Figure 17

Staunton, Va.: Rehearsal Room of the Stonewall Brigade Band

Arguably, the most fabled unit in the entire American Civil War was the Stonewall Brigade. It is therefore natural that the band attached to the brigade (actually the 5th Virginia Regiment) would share in its fame and glory. Marshall Brice's book, *The Stonewall Brigade Band*, records contemporary accounts of the purchase of the instruments the band is reputed to have carried throughout the entire war. They were purchased in 1859 for Turner's Silver Cornet Band, also called the Staunton Mountain Sax Horn Band.²¹ Antoine Sax of Brussels is credited with their manufacture, and they were imported by Clemm [*sic*] and Brothers of Philadelphia.

However, a comparison with information given about the Sax family in Langwill's *Index of Musical Wind-Instrument Makers* has produced some anachronisms.²² Antoine Joseph (also called Adolphe) Sax moved to Paris in 1842, after working with his father, Charles, in Brussels. While Charles survived until 1865, and Antoine could have assisted him while the father was still active in Brussels, it seems more likely that the instruments were either made by Antoine in Paris, or by Charles in Brussels.²³ The provenance of the instruments poses an intriguing mystery, and I plan to do further research in this area.

The instruments are located in the band's rehearsal room, in a display case approximately 10 feet off the floor, and in a niche measuring about 6 feet by 10 feet by 3 feet. The director of the Stonewall Brigade Band, Robert Moody, graciously allowed me to mount a ladder up to the niche so that I could view the instruments close up and take photographs. The eleven instruments I counted in the display case (not including the percussion instruments) are in wonderful condition, and seem to be matched. They are all made of silver, OTS, with rotary valves. At least one of the instruments may not be an original part of the set.²⁴ The famous Stonewall Brigade bugle, which actually dates from the American Revolution, is safely stored in a bank vault and was not included in my count. The instruments range from 21 inches to 55 1/2 inches in length, and the bell diameters from 4 3/4 inches to 11 1/2 inches. Although time and the condition of the instruments did not permit me actually to play the horns, I believe they were in standard Civil War era brass band keys: two E^b sopranos, two B^b sopranos, three E^b altos, two B^b tenors, one B^b baritone, and one E^b bass. I base my conclusions partially on Brice, who gives the band roster and instrumentation as of 1873, the last year the wartime instruments were used.²⁵ The leader would most likely play one of the E^b sopranos, and the band employed a solo alto player, as well as a 1st and 2nd alto.

There are no mouthpieces with the instruments, and if removable leadpipes or crooks were used, Moody was not aware of their location, but speculated that they might be stored along with other paraphernalia belonging to the Civil War years. I took the pictures of the instruments while perched in the display niche. My best shots (like the fish that got away) were not suitable for publication because my arms and legs were shaking, and, even in the best of circumstances, my photographic skills are minimal. However, I think that the overall condition of the instruments can be observed.

Acknowledgments

I wish to thank Old Salem, Inc., and the Old Salem Restoration for the invaluable assistance in preparing my article, and for the photographs which they made available to me. Special thanks go to the Registrar, Johanna Metzgar. Robert Moody, director of the Stonewall Brigade Band, took time off from his workday to assist me (and graciously mailed me the tripod I left in the Band room). All the photographs of the Brigade Band instruments in this article were taken with the permission of the Stonewall Brigade Band.

NOTES

1. Two books that give unique insights into Confederate military bands from these areas are Harry H. Hall's *A Johnny Reb Band from Salem* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1980), originally published in 1963 by the North Carolina Confederate Centennial Commission, and based on the diaries of Julius A. Leinbach, E^b bassist and B^b cornetist with the 26th North Carolina band during its wartime service; and Marshall M. Brice's *The Stonewall Brigade Band* (Verona, Va.: McClure Printing, 1967), recently back in print and available from several bookstores, including The Bookstack, 1 E. Beverly St., Staunton, VA 24401.

2. Robert Moody, director of the Stonewall Brigade Band, and the staff of the Old Salem museum were very cooperative in allowing me to view the instruments in their collections. Those who are interested in Moravian wind instruments in general should consult Ernest W. Pressley's *Musical Wind Instruments in the Moravian Musical Archives* (Ph.D. diss., University of Kentucky, 1975).

3. This book combines some of the most useful information on both brass instrument making and the activities of Civil War Bands. See Harry H. Hall's review in *Journal of Band Research*, 21 #2 (spring, 1986): 60-63.

4. According to Adam Carse (*Musical Wind Instruments* [1939; rpt. New York: Da Capo, 1965], pp. 70-71), these valves were designed by Wieprecht and Moritz in 1835. One is described by Carse as a "short, wide-bored cylindrical piston-valve in which the two ends of the valve-tube were placed opposite each other in the same horizontal plane as the main inlet and outlet tubes." An illustration of the valve is included on p.71.

5. Hall, *Johnny Reb*, p. 18.

6. Robert Garofalo and Mark Elrod (*A Pictorial History of Civil War Era Musical Instruments and Military Bands* [Charleston, WV: Pictorial Histories Publishing Co., 1985]) call this instrument a "saxhorn," not because it was necessarily made by one of the Saxes, but because they decided to use the term *saxhorn* for all upright and OTS brass instrument designs. There is evidently a need for more consistency in terminology in describing brass instruments manufactured during the 19th century.

7. A photograph of the instrument appears in Garofalo and Elrod, *Pictorial History*, 29.

8. The bombardon is a military bass instrument that Carse (*Musical Wind Instruments*, p. 302) explains differed from the British tuba of the 1930s only in key (Eb instead of F) and nomenclature. An unsung performer on the bombardon was Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, author of the Sherlock Holmes stories.
9. William C. Davis, ed., *The Civil War*, 27 vols. with master index (New York: Time-Life Books, 1983-87). The master index cites the following volumes as containing references to music, bands, and buglers: *The Bloodiest Day*, pp. 17, 56, 151; *The Coastal War*, pp. 43, 88 [Union]; 115, 135 [Confederate]; *Death in the Trenches*, pp. 59, 168-69; *Decoying the Yanks*, pp. 41, 70, 132; *The Fight for Chattanooga*, p. 153; *Forward to Richmond*, pp. 4, 13, 54-55, 56, 57, 59, 60, 61, 99; *The Killing Ground*, p. 105; *The Road to Shiloh*, pp. 22, 46, 48, 105; *Sherman's March*, pp. 14, 45, 47, 48, 82, 100, 158; *Spies, Scouts and Raiders*, pp. 120-21; *Tenting Tonight*, pp. 26, 34-35, 158, 166; *The Struggle for Tennessee*, pp. 50, 99; *War on the Mississippi*, pp. 128-29.
10. Hall, *Johnny Reb*, p. 18.
11. I was assured by the same museum officials that restoration techniques had dramatically improved over the past 30 years.
12. Hall, *Johnny Reb*, p. 18.
13. Seen. 9 for full citation of the Time-Life series called *The Civil War*, which includes the volume *Forward to Richmond*. This instrument is pictured on p. 56.
14. Garofalo and Elrod, *Pictorial History*, p. 103.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 102.
16. Carse (*Musical Wind Instruments*, p. 70) states that this valve was designed by Perinet in Paris in 1839. The two ends of the valve-tube were placed one above, the other below the level of the main inlet and outlet tubes.
17. Robert Eliason, *Early American Brass Makers*, rev. printing (Nashville: The Brass Press, 1981), p. 20.
18. Hall, *Johnny Reb*, p. 91.
19. William C. Davis, ed., Bell I. Wiley, senior consulting editor, *The Image of War: 1861-1865*, 6 vols. (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1982-84), vol. II, *The Guns of '62*, p. 241.
20. Admittedly, he resembles a somewhat heavier version of Julius Leinbach, who was both a performer on the bass instruments and the Bb cornet (see Hall, p. 10). As a point of further interest about the photograph of the band, Robert Sheldon, curator of the musical instruments collection of the Library of Congress, and others have pointed out that the picture is reversed, and apparently has been published only in that form. Even the original photograph owned by Old Salem is printed

reversed. Mickey, the leader, should be on the left, and all the instruments are shown backward. The picture appears in the following publications: *Forward to Richmond*, p. 57; *The Guns of '62*, page 242; Hall, *Johnny Reb*, p. 11; Garofalo and Elrod, *Pictorial History*, page 102; and Francis Lord and Arthur Wise's *Bands and Drummer Boys of the Civil War* (1966; rpt. New York: Da Capo, 1979).

21. In the *Decoying the Yanks* volume of Time-Life's *The Civil War*, there is a picture on page 132 of the Staunton Mountain Sax Horn Band. This picture is frequently confused with the 5th Virginia, or Stonewall Brigade Band (cf. Francis Lord and Arthur Wise, *Music and Musket: Bands and Bandsmen of the Civil War* [Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1981], page 83).

22. Lyndesay G. Langwill, *An Index of Musical Wind-Instrument Makers*, 4th ed. (Edinburgh: Lyndesay G. Langwill, [1974])

23. Langwill (ibid.) concentrates primarily on European collections and museums, and therefore does not list the instruments which are in Staunton. However, Adolphe Sax's untiring efforts in influencing musical tastes toward military band music, including brass bands, have been established through several biographies and Sax's own writings. (See Malou Haines, *Adolphe Sax: Sa vie, son oeuvre et ses instruments de musique* [Brussels: Editions de l'Université des Bruxelles, 1979], and Kenneth Deans, "A Comprehensive Performance Project in Saxophone Literature with an Essay Consisting of Translation Source Readings in the Life of Adolphe Sax" [doctoral treatise, University of Iowa, 1980]). It is possible that the instruments were manufactured by Klemm & Bros., whose name appears on several of the bells. However, Langwill states that this firm, which operated in Philadelphia from 1840 to 1880, was a dealer and importer, not a maker (although he lists on page 92 a clarinet made by a Klemm in Philadelphia around 1829).

24. Robert Moody speculated that the largest bass instrument had been regarded by some of the older members of the band as not matching the others. Other experts believe that one of the cornets might have a different origin. At any rate, there is disagreement regarding the number of instruments actually brought back from the war, some suggesting as few as nine. Just incidentally, a favorite myth is that Gen. U.S. Grant, commanding the Union forces at Appomattox, singled out the Stonewall Brigade Band as the only band allowed to retain its instruments after the surrender of the Army of Northern Virginia. Brice and others debunk this story, but it certainly adds to the mystique that has surrounded this famous unit.

25. Brice, *Stonewall Brigade*, p. 60.

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