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Echoes from the Fall of Richmond: The Instruments and Career of Bandmaster George R. Choate*

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The Confederate capital of Richmond, Virginia stood as the very symbol of the Confederacy, and its fall on April 3, 1865, after four long and bloody years of civil war, signaled the abandonment of Confederate hopes.¹ Civil War bandmaster George R. Choate (1825–1893) sounded his bugle in Richmond on that historic day. Choate's career and his instruments offer a unique picture of a musician's way of life, the early American brass-band tradition, and the country all in the midst of change. Three of Choate's surviving instruments are fine examples of early American brass instrument manufacture. Two of these are keyed bugles made by Elbridge G. Wright, and the third is a cornet made by J. Lathrop Allen. One of the keyed bugles by Wright is an eleven-key E-flat copper bugle with silver keys and trim from early in this maker's career. The other is a magnificent solid silver presentation E-flat keyed

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Finally, the authors would like to dedicate this article to the memory of collector J. Loyd Davis (JLD), father of author Curt Davis, and who had significant influence on the career choice of author Robert Eliason. Over the course of his life, JLD developed an extensive knowledge and deep appreciation for American history, technology, industry, and the social, political, and business forces that shaped the evolution of the United States; and he was always willing to share his knowledge and passion for these subjects with others (see note 94).

1. Nelson Lankford, *Richmond Burning: The Last Days of the Confederate Capital* (New York: Penguin Group, 2002).

bugle, the last presentation bugle known to have been made by Wright. The Allen instrument is a solid silver cornet with ascending fourth valve, the last instrument of this type made by Allen. The two silver instruments were presented to Choate by the regimental band members and officers of the 35th New York Volunteer Infantry during the early part of the Civil War. At the end of the Civil War, Choate was leader of the 20th New York Cavalry's regimental band, and this band was among the first union troops to enter Richmond during its capture and occupation by Union forces.

Out of Nowhere in Northern New York

That George Raymer Choate (1825–1893), growing up in rural Jefferson County, New York in the 1830s some seventy miles north of Syracuse, could have studied music “at an early age” and become “a master of the bugle and cornet”² is surprising evidence of the early and rapid spread of brass instrument playing in the United States. Choate was born March 23, 1825 in Berne, New York about fifteen miles west of Albany. Very soon thereafter the family moved north to the village now called Carthage in the town of Wilna in Jefferson County where the younger children of the family were born. Carthage is situated on the Black River, which runs down to Sackets Harbor where the ships that defended Lake Ontario from the British during the War of 1812 were built. George's father, Amos Choate, was a saddle and harness maker and settled the family in Carthage sometime in the late 1820s. Amos Choate was a founding trustee of the village when Carthage was incorporated in 1841.³

No direct evidence of musical activity in Jefferson County during the 1830s has been found that might have inspired Choate's musical interests, but new developments in brass instrument playing were happening nearby. Irish keyed bugler Richard Willis was leading the band at West Point during the 1820s, and Francis Johnson of Philadelphia was also famous in the 1820s and 1830s for his keyed bugle playing and often spent part of the summer at Saratoga, New York. All-brass bands with solo and alto parts requiring keyed bugles were first formed in Boston and New

2. *Morning Star* (Rockford, IL), Sunday, August 13, 1893, p. 5, col. 3 with extracts from *Winona Daily Republican* (Winona, MN), Tuesday, August 8, 1893, p. 3, col. 3.

3. John A. Haddock, *The Growth of a Century: History of Jefferson County, New York from 1793 to 1894* (Albany, NY: Weed-Parsons Printing Company, 1895), 769.

York about 1835. Edward “Ned” Kendall, famous keyed bugle soloist and bandleader in Boston, toured the country as leader and soloist with all-brass bands in various circuses throughout his entire career.⁴ Of particular note were his tours in 1833, 1834, 1837, 1840, and 1841 that included a wide variety of cities in New York such as Albany, Troy, Rochester, Auburn, Syracuse, Utica, Rome, and many others.⁵ These circus tours, which were very popular and appealed to large segments of the population, likely contributed to the rapid spread of brass bands throughout New York in the 1830s and 1840s.

In addition to the keyed bugle and cornet, Choate also learned to play a stringed instrument, probably the violin, for in 1854 and 1855 he was billed as the leader of “Choate’s String Band” for several circus tours.⁶ Choate’s youngest brother, Hannibal, played both the violin and flute and is listed on the 1850 census as a “musician” at the young age of fifteen.⁷ Thus, it is clear that music education was available to both Choate and his younger brother as they were growing up, but there is no evidence indicating how they received their musical training. Their father was a drummer in the War of 1812, but it seems unlikely that he could have been the sole source of their musical education, given the breadth of instruments the two boys learned to play.

In addition to Choate, another well-known keyed bugle player grew up in the Wilna/Carthage area. Anson E. Olds (1828–1881) was the son of John Olds, a farmer in Wilna.⁸ Anson Olds eventually settled in Ogdensburg, St. Lawrence County, New York in the 1850s where he operated, along with his younger brother Edward H. Olds, a photographic studio. St. Lawrence County is the county immediately to the east of Jefferson County, and Ogdensburg is only forty-five miles from Wilna. Anson Olds founded and, for several decades, led Olds’s Band,⁹ a well-known brass band in Ogdensburg. Olds and Choate were “famous bandmasters of that day [and] were expert players of the key bugle.”¹⁰ Since Choate and Olds were only a few years apart in age, grew up together in

4. Robert Kitchen, “Edward Kendall, America’s First Circus Bandmaster,” *Bandwagon* 21, no. 2 (1977): 25–27.

5. Stewart Thayer, *Annals of the American Circus, 1793–1860*, vols. 1, 2, and 3 (Seattle: Dauven and Thayer, 2000), 232, 243, 254, 281.

6. *Ibid.*, 482 and *Havana Journal* (Havana, NY), Saturday, July 21, 1855, p. 3, col. 2.

7. 1850 Census, Amos Choate and family, Wilna, Jefferson County, NY.

8. *Ibid.*, John Olds and family, Wilna, Jefferson County, NY.

9. *Ogdensburg Journal* (Ogdensburg, NY), Tuesday, September 10, 1946, p. 4, col. 3.

10. *Commercial Advertiser* (Canton, NY), Tuesday, August 9, 1921, p. 4, col. 2.

the Carthage area, and both played the keyed bugle, it is likely they both learned to play from the same source.¹¹

A Fine New Keyed Bugle

Choate initially followed his father in the harness making trade and by the mid-1840s was successful enough in that and in his playing to afford a fine new E-flat keyed bugle (fig. 1). The eleven-key E-flat bugle of copper and silver he purchased (the first instrument in this study) was made by E. G. Wright sometime during the years 1845–47 when Wright was working in Boston at No. 8 Bromfield Street. Choate evidently continued to use this bugle at least until he was presented with a solid silver keyed bugle (the second instrument in this study) in the early years of the Civil War.

The keyed bugle, invented about 1800 in England,¹² first came to prominence in the United States with the playing of Richard Willis, leader of the West Point Military Academy band from about 1816 until his death in 1830.¹³ The first keyed bugles imported to the United States probably had six or seven keys, and came in two sizes, the high E-flat model and the larger, more common B-flat model. Because the keyed bugle was the first soprano brass instrument capable of playing all the notes in any scale, its rise to prominence was rapid during the initial period of American brass band history. Until the 1830s, the melody in military band music was carried by clarinets or oboes, and as brass bands were formed, the nearest brass instrument replacement for this function was the smaller E-flat keyed bugle.

In the Boston Brass Band, formed in 1835, Ned Kendall, leader and E-flat keyed bugle soloist, began pushing the limits of this instrument, prompting Henry Sibley, mechanic as well as trombonist in the band, to develop improved models of the keyed bugle.¹⁴ The instrument's length was adjusted to allow for a tuning device, and additional keys were added to improve notes in the lower and upper registers and to provide alternate fingerings for ease of playing and better intonation. Elbridge G.

11. An E. G. Wright silver keyed bugle that descended in the Olds family is now preserved at the Williams College Museum of Art, Williamstown, MA.

12. David Lasocki, "New Light on the Early History of the Keyed Bugle Part I: The Astor Advertisement and Collins vs. Green," *Historic Brass Journal* 21 (2009): 11.

13. Ralph T. Dudgeon, *The Keyed Bugle*, 2nd ed. (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press Inc., 2004), 57–62.

14. Robert E. Eliason, "Recently Found Keyed Bugle by Boston Maker Henry Sibley," *Newsletter of the American Musical Instrument Society* 38, no. 2 (Fall 2009): 20.



FIGURE 1. Keyed bugle in E-flat, copper body, silver trim, eleven silver keys in box mounts, inscribed: "E. G. Wright / Maker / No. 8 Bromfield St. / Boston." (a) left side; (b) right side; (c) maker inscription. Photos courtesy of the J. Loyd Davis Collection, Prairie Village, Kansas. See color photos p. 223.

Wright, another mechanic and trumpet player, joined the Boston Brass Band in the late 1830s. He soon joined in the development of the solo E-flat keyed bugle, rapidly becoming the foremost maker of the instrument in the United States. From the mid-1840s until the early Civil War years, Wright was the maker of the very finest E-flat keyed bugles to be found anywhere in the world. More than a dozen of his decoratively engraved presentation instruments of silver and gold with eleven or twelve keys are known,¹⁵ and the owners of these presentation instruments were greatly admired and respected bandleaders and soloist performers.

Choate's eleven-key copper bugle, with silver keys and trim, dates from early in Wright's career when his improvements and workmanship first brought him to prominence and when the addition and placement of the last few keys were still in development. It still has the old style box mounts, and it was probably also equipped with a plain or telescopic tuning shank, but that part, as well as key nine, is missing. Silver keys, trim, and maker nameplate, as well as some unusual decorative features, set this instrument apart from the usual copper and brass instruments of the period. Just beyond the long mouthpipe ferrule is a silver sheath that tapers after a few centimeters to a narrow strip extending around the inner side of the bow to the footplate of key nine. The narrowing of this silver sheath gives it a pleasing decorative angle, and the narrow strip is decorative but also covers a seam in the tube. In addition, there is an unusual silver guard plate beginning at the bottom of the first bow and extending past key nine (fig. 1). Also of interest is a silver sheath at the end of the guard plate, narrow at the bottom but widening on the top to allow enough room for the tone hole and box mount of key eight. Although it appears original in every way, it is possible that this silver sheath was added later to cover an alteration moving this tone hole a short distance along the tube toward the bell. Indeed, this tone hole is about 10 mm closer to the bell than on Choate's twelve-key instrument and other bugles of the period (Appendix B).

The total length of the instrument is 877 mm, about 22–25 mm shorter than the later twelve-key Wright presentation instrument and other E-flat bugles of the time (Appendix B). The spacing of the tone holes, however, is consistent with comparable bugles. The shorter length was undoubtedly made up by a shank or tuning device inserted at the

15. Robert E. Eliason, "Bugles Beyond Compare," *Journal of the American Musical Instrument Society* 31 (2005): 91–132.

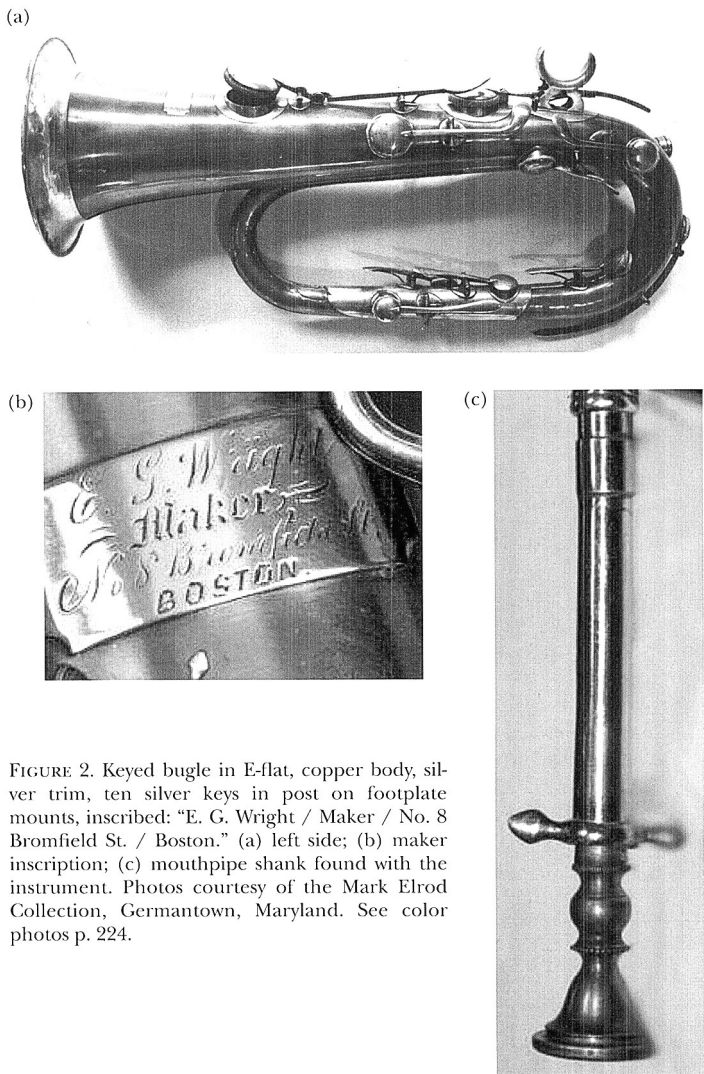
mouthpipe. This device would have to add about 95 to 100 mm to the length, which is not an uncommon amount. An almost identical keyed bugle by Wright with the same nameplate is found in the collection of Mark Elrod (fig. 2). It lacks the last key of the Choate bugle and has post and footplate mounts, but matches almost exactly in design, length and materials and was found with just the sort of long tuning shank needed to complete the necessary length. When the Elrod instrument was restored, it was discovered that the last keys on this bugle had been moved.

Keyed bugle keys are numbered beginning with the key nearest the bell, and all keyed bugles have a basic set of six or seven. The increase in the number of keys from seven to eleven or twelve has often been cited as the final improvement to the instrument, but the specific uses of these additional keys have not been well documented. A logical observer might well deduce from their positions that these keys provided alternate fingerings for notes A-flat^{''}, A^{''}, B-flat^{''}, B^{''}, and C^{'''} in the highest register, but, as far as is known, this was only one of their intended or actual functions. References found about their use include pedal notes, trills, and alternates for intonation or fingering, in addition to playing in the high register.¹⁶

These extra three to five keys on ten, eleven, or twelve-key bugles might be called enhancement keys, since they slightly enhanced the playing capabilities, but were probably more of an enhancement to the player's prestige than his playing. Their functions are often unique to the individual instrument and they have never been identified consistently for specific uses. If key eight on the Choate eleven-key bugle were moved like keys eight and ten on the Elrod instrument, it probably solved a problem on this instrument and was not necessarily applicable to any other instrument.

The use of these keys is also somewhat limited by the difficulty in fingering them. With the left hand thumb and forefinger in use for keys six and seven, a player has three remaining fingers for four or five keys on the top and both sides of the lower tube. The leader of a band might

16. The original Asté patent included a fingering chart for a ten-key model in which key eight with key seven was used for pedal octave note F-sharp, key eight alone for pedal G, and key eight with key nine for pedal A-flat. Key nine fingered only pedal notes G-sharp with key eight and A; and key ten was used only for pedal note B-flat. Dodworth's fingering chart for a ten-key E-flat bugle reproduced by Dudgeon shows key eight used only as an alternate for third space C and in combination with other keys for high A and B-flat. Keys nine, ten, and eleven are used only in combination with other keys for high B-flat, B, and C. Dudgeon, note 13, p. 24, 225.



have more use for keys providing the low pedal notes in order to play cues for the lower instruments. Choate acquired his eleven-key Wright bugle just before he began his career as bandleader and harness maker in Utica, New York, and he may have purchased it and adjusted it in anticipation of that move.

Harness Maker and Bandleader

Setting out on his own, Choate initially followed his father Amos in the trade of harness making, moving first to Utica, New York. The 1848–49 Utica city directory lists Choate as follows: “Choate, George R., harness maker, bds Franklin House.”¹⁷ Two other Choates are also listed, possibly cousins or other relations who may have been at least part of the reason George moved to Utica. The directories for 1845–47 are missing, so he may have arrived a year or two before 1848. Evidence of Choate’s musical activity in 1848 and 1849 is provided by local newspapers:

FOR CAMDEN.—Quite a large body of the Odd Fellows left this city yesterday morning to attend the celebration of the Order at Camden yesterday. They were accompanied by the Utica Brass Band, whose music was of course A No. 1. The sweet notes of Choate’s bugle, charmed the ear, and were the source of remarks by all who heard them.¹⁸

Osceola Hose Co. No. 9 paraded through the main streets with their new and beautiful Hose Cart on Saturday. They were escorted by Franklin Hose Co. No. 5; the whole led and enlivened with the music of the Brass Band. This is the first appearance of the Band this spring. Our old friend Choate was on hand with his bugle.¹⁹

The militia training, yesterday, passed off in real old fashioned style. There was a gathering of our sturdy “citizen soldiers,” such as could not have failed to convince the most inveterate Wouter Von Twiller,²⁰ of the safety of the Republic. The “company” assembled at an early hour, in front of Trinity Church on Broad St., and having formed in “battles magnificently stern array,” took up their line of march to the soul-stirring music of Choate’s Military Band, led by the inimitable Choate himself on a huge E-flat Bass Drum (his favorite instrument on all occasions of this kind, though he does play the bugle *some*) [italic emphasis as in original article] to which our friend Walker played second fiddle on the tenor . . . The music was truly superb.²¹

17. City directory of Utica, NY, 1848–49.

18. *Oneida Morning Herald* (Utica, NY), Wednesday, August 2, 1848, p. 1, col. 5.

19. *Ibid.*, Tuesday, May 8, 1849, p. 1, col. 4.

20. Director-General of New Netherland colony from 1633 until 1638.

21. *Oneida Morning Herald* (Utica, NY), Thursday, September 6, 1849, p. 1, col. 4.

As shown in these articles, George Choate had become the leader of a fine brass band by the time he was only twenty-three years of age. The Utica Band (fig. 3) was first organized in 1822²² and was one of the first bands in central New York. The instruments used at first included an E-flat bugle, three bassoons, one serpent, four first clarionets, two second clarionets, an octave flute, a C bugle, one piccolo, a concert trumpet, two French horns, G trombones, tenor trombones, and the leading instrument was an E-flat clarionet.²³ Following the lead of the Boston and New York bands, it became an all-brass band sometime in the late 1830s.

All three of the newspaper articles quoted above note Choate's bugle or bugle playing, and it was common in New England in the late 1830s and 1840s that the leader of a brass band was also an E-flat keyed bugle player and soloist. This custom originated with the formation of the first brass bands where the keyed bugle became the leading soprano voice, replacing the oboes and clarinets in this function.²⁴

Choate does not appear in the Utica City Directories of 1850 or 1851 and evidently moved to the town of Antwerp back in Jefferson County, New York about twenty miles or so north of the family home in Carthage. An article in an Antwerp newspaper reported "A fire department band originated in 1853 with 10 to 12 men who called it the Brass Band Club with George R. Choate as leader."²⁵ Choate did not stay long in Antwerp, for in the same year the Antwerp fire department band was formed he began a new career as a circus bandleader.

Circus Tours

Music in the early American circus was originally supplied by violins, clarinets, flutes, and drums with the melody provided by woodwinds. However, brass instruments and bands became popular in the 1830s because of the great appeal of their more forceful and energetic playing. Circus promoters quickly recognized the benefit of brass bands as an attraction in and of themselves, so much so that special music carriages or bandwagons were developed so that the brass band could lead a parade or caravan into each new city or town to advertise that the circus was in town.²⁶

22. M.M. Bagg, *Pioneers of Utica* (Utica, NY: Curtis and Childs, 1877), 313.

23. *Utica Sunday Journal* (Utica, NY), Sunday, May 24, 1896, p. 3, col. 1-2.

24. Dudgeon, note 13, 78-79.

25. *Gouverneur Tribune Press* (Antwerp, NY), Thursday, August 21, 2003, p. 4, col. 4.

26. Thayer, note 5, 133-135.



FIGURE 3. The Utica Brass Band of 1855, five years after Choate left. Top row reading from left to right: William Arnott, Alonzo F. Miller, John Pfeifer. Middle row: Charles Brown, William England, John F. Gibbs, Walter W. Lane. Bottom row: Joseph Arnott, leader; James A Rich; George Barnum; Watkin J. Roberts and George Dinkler. Photo courtesy of the Oneida County Historical Society, Utica, New York.

During the 1850s George Choate was able to transition from being a harness maker and part-time bandleader into a full-time career as a circus musician and bandleader. Choate first appeared as a circus band-leader with the Spalding & Rogers North American Circus in 1853.²⁷ Circus owner Gilbert R. Spalding was originally a manufacturer of paint and drugs in Albany, New York, but he became the country's most innovative and successful circus promoter in the 1840s and 1850s. In 1854 and 1855, Spalding combined his Southern circus that played in a specially constructed amphitheater on a steamboat along the Mississippi river (the "Floating Palace") with his Northern circus operation to form the Spalding & Rogers' Two Circuses operation. Ned Kendall was the

27. *Ibid.*, 478.

leader of the brass band and Choate was the leader of the string band in both years as shown in figure 4.

Ned Kendall, the greatest native-born keyed bugler in the United States,²⁸ toured the country with various circuses throughout almost his entire professional music career from about 1832 until 1858.²⁹ Touring the country for several years with this nationally known bandleader and keyed bugler would have undoubtedly been an excellent learning opportunity for the younger Choate as he began his career as a full-time musician. In 1854 the Spalding & Rogers' Two Circuses toured throughout the northeast and Mid-Atlantic states in the spring and summer and then moved into the south in the fall.³⁰ To promote the circus at each location, the brass and string bands participated in a daily parade in a specially-designed carriage that was advertised as "A Triumphant Procession through the principal streets, about 10 o'clock AM, at every place of Exhibition, of the Bands, in the Grand Floral Car of Statuettes, Drawn by 40 Horses!"³¹ The horses were arranged in a special hitch, four columns wide with ten horses in each column, which allowed a single driver to control the team of horses and drive the carriage containing the bandsmen. The circus wintered in Savannah, Georgia and then in 1855 toured through much of the South, then into the Midwest, and finally wintering in Philadelphia.³² While in Philadelphia, Choate met and married Caroline Wilson on December 29, 1855.³³

In 1856 Choate left the employment of the Spalding & Rogers' circus and became the leader of the brass band playing in another circus called Jim Meyer's Great Show.³⁴ Choate appeared in 1858 as the bandleader for yet another circus called Burt & Robinson's Old Fashioned Circus.³⁵ Finally, in 1860 Choate became the bandleader for L.B. Lent's Great National Circus that toured mostly in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York, and Ontario, Canada.³⁶ Lent's circus was in New York City in June 1860, and this is where Choate completed the 1860 census on June 15,

28. Dudgeon, note 13, 82.

29. Kitchen, note 4 and Thayer, note 5, 232, 243, 254, 281, 316, 431, 481-82, 624.

30. Thayer, note 5, 481.

31. *Sumter Banner* (Sumterville, SC), November 22, 1854, p. 4, col. 1.

32. Thayer, note 5, 482.

33. *Morning Star*, note 2.

34. Thayer, note 5, 587.

35. *Ibid.*, 621-22.

36. *Ibid.*, 566.

(a)

SPALDING & ROGERS'
Two Circuses!
 CONSOLIDATING THEIR CELEBRATED
FLOATING PALACE CIRCUS!
 From their Patent Aquatic Amphitheatre, on the Mississippi and Ohio rivers, and their
North American Circus!
 So favorably known in the North and East, into
ONE MONSTER CONCERN
 With the Two Companies, comprising respectively the most distinguished Northern and Southern Performers.
IN FRIENDLY STRIFE.
 Daily, in the same Ring, in presence of the audience, with
Two Sets of Performers!
TWO SETS OF CLOWNS!
FIVE CLOWNS IN THE RING!
TWO SETS OF RING HORSES!
A Complete Dramatic Corps!
Pantomime Every Afternoon!
PUTNAM, EVERY NIGHT!
NED KENDALL, the Bugler!
KENDALL'S BRASS BAND!
CHOATE'S STRING BAND!
 A Triumphant Procession through the principal streets, about 10 o'clock A.M., at every place of Exhibition, of the Bands, in the Grand Floral Car of Statuettes,
Drawn by 40 Horses!







(b)

SPALDING & ROGERS'
TWO CIRCUSES!
 CONSOLIDATING THEIR CELEBRATED
Floating Palace Circus!
 From their Patent Aquatic Amphitheatre, on the Mississippi and Ohio rivers, and their
NORTH AMERICAN CIRCUS!
 So celebrated North and East, into
One Monster Concern!
 WITH THE
TWO COMPANIES
 Comprising the most distinguished
NORTHERN AND SOUTHERN
 Performers, in the same Ring,
IN FRIENDLY STRIFE!
 In presence of the Audience.
BOTH COMPANIES
UNDER ONE TENT!
 WITH
TWO SETS OF PERFORMERS!
TWO SETS OF CLOWNS!
TWO SETS OF RING HORSES!
Pantomime
 EVERY AFTERNOON,
SPECTACLE
 EVERY NIGHT.
NED KENDALL,
THE MAGIC BUGLER.
 Kendall's Brass Band!
 Drawn in Triumphant Procession, on the morning of arrival at every place of Exhibition, by
Forty Horses
DRIVEN BY ONE MAN!
CHOATE'S STRING BAND!
 A SUD OF
TRICK PONIES!
Dancing and War Horses!
 And everything else upon the same elaborate scale, with the following distinguished Equestrians, Clowns, Equitarians, Gymnasts, Pantomimists, &c.:



M. MAGLTON,
 F. DONALDSON,
 C. BROWN,
 W. KINKADE



M'LLY AGNEE



NED KENDALL



MAD. ORMOND.

FIGURE 4. Newspaper advertisements for Spalding & Rogers' Two Circuses from 1854 and 1855. (a) Sumterville, SC, *The Sumter Banner*, November 22, 1854. (b) Havana, NY, *Journal*, July 21, 1855. Both list "Kendall's Brass Band" and "Choate's String Band" as attractions. Images courtesy of the J. Loyd Davis Collection, Prairie Village, Kansas.

listing his occupation as a "musician."³⁷ As the circus moved north towards Ontario for its July appearances, it passed through Jefferson County and the Watertown *New-York Reformer* noted, "The band that accompanies Lent's circus, is led by a Carthage boy Geo. R. Choate—and a very clever player he is."³⁸

Almost all the information above on the circuses and their performers, including bandleaders, was compiled and published by Stuart Thayer in his *Annals of the American Circus* after reviewing advertisements

37. 1860 Census, George R. Choate, 22nd Ward, 4th Division, New York, NY.

38. *New-York Reformer* (Watertown, NY), Thursday, July 19, 1860, p. 2, col. 6.

from hundreds of newspapers. However, as noted by Thayer, the compilation, while extensive, is incomplete due to gaps in newspaper collections and reluctance of some circus operators to advertise at all or only sporadically.³⁹ In addition, not all circus performers are known since Thayer compiled only those listed in the advertisements. For example, Thayer does not list Choate as the string bandleader for the Spalding & Rogers' Two Circuses in 1854,⁴⁰ but the newspaper advertisement shown in figure 4a, as well as many others, show that Choate was the leader of that circus's string band in 1854. As such, it is very likely that Choate was also playing in or leading bands with circuses in both 1857 and 1859 even though information about these particular years has not yet been located. In particular, it is likely that Choate toured with Yankee Robinson's Big Show⁴¹ in 1859 since this was run by the same two promoters who ran Burt & Robinson's Old Fashioned Circus in 1858 where Choate was employed as the bandleader.

Lent's circus finished the 1860 season in New York around October. Soon thereafter, Choate moved to Ogdensburg, St. Lawrence County, New York either at the end of 1860 or early in 1861. As mentioned previously, Anson E. Olds, a keyed bugle player from Wilna in Jefferson County, had moved to Ogdensburg and established Olds's Band there in the 1850s. Since Choate had no prior connection to Ogdensburg, it is very likely that Choate decided to settle in Ogdensburg because of a friendship with Anson Olds and the opportunity to continue earning a living as a musician playing in Olds's Band. An Ogdensburg newspaper reported in September of 1861, "Mr. Choate is one of the best musicians in the country, and was connected with Olds's Band, of this village."⁴²

Music for the Great War

When the Civil War broke out, Choate, like hundreds of other band members across the Union, volunteered for service in June of 1861. Choate along with eleven other local musicians joined the 35th New York Volunteer Infantry regiment organized near his boyhood home in Jefferson County, New York. Choate was promoted to "Leader of the

39. Thayer, note 5, 429.

40. *Ibid.*, 481.

41. *Ibid.*, 407–410, 621–622.

42. *The Advance* (Ogdensburg, NY), September 13, 1861, p. 5, col. 4.

Band as a 2nd Lieutenant” immediately after his enlistment and muster in to the regiment.⁴³ The regiment left New York on July 11, 1861 and arrived in Washington, DC early on the morning of July 12, 1861. A Washington newspaper reported the arrival of the 35th NY and noted, “The[y] have a band of fourteen pieces, led by Prof. Choate”⁴⁴ Corporal L.C. Hubbard also reported on the arrival of the 35th NY in Washington in a Carthage newspaper and noted, “We have now with us a cornet band, at the head of which is our old friend, Geo. Choate, formerly of Carthage, whose fame as a bugle-player is known to the world.”⁴⁵

Since volunteer Union regiments were authorized to have up to twenty-four men in the regimental band, Choate recruited additional band members to join the regiment in the fall of 1861. An Ogdensburg newspaper carried the following notice:

We notice that George Choate, of this place, who is the leader of the regimental band connected with the 35th regiment of New-York volunteers, advertises in the Jefferson county papers for 12 musicians, at \$20 per month, for a term of twenty months.⁴⁶

By the end of September 1861, the 35th NY advanced to Arlington, Virginia and then to Taylor’s Tavern at Falls Church, Virginia, the most advanced position of the Union front line at that time. There, the 35th NY cleared timber to build a fort, constructed a winter camp, spent time perfecting themselves in drills and exercises, and performed picket duty on the front line, including minor skirmishes against rebel troops.

The regimental band, at its maximum strength of about twenty musicians by October 1861, also used this time to get organized and become a cohesive unit. Some twenty-five years later, the regiment’s colonel, Newton B. Lord, recalled this time in the fall of 1861:

Taylor’s Tavern! What a host of memories come back suggested by that name. The process of building up our regiment in drill and discipline commenced there. There George Choate [sic] built up a good band for us, the best of the corps, and through silver instruments purchased by the boys, each giving according to his pay, made sweet and cheering music for

43. Choate, George R., Muster Records of the 35th NY Volunteer Infantry, New York State Archives, *New York Civil War Muster Roll Abstracts, 1861–1900*, Cultural Education Center, Albany, NY, Archive Collection #13775–83, Box #117, Roll #975–976.

44. *National Republican* (Washington, D.C.), July 13, 1861, p. 3 col. 4.

45. *Carthage Republican* (Carthage, NY), July 25, 1861, p. 2, col. 5.

46. *The Advance*, note 42.

us-made music by which we learned to march as one, and to be a unit in organization.⁴⁷

While Lord's description of the "silver instruments purchased by the boys, each giving according to his pay" is not, by itself, clear as to the ownership of the silver instruments, Choate's obituary provides important additional information:

As a memento of his war record and a token of the esteem in which he was held, he was presented by the Thirty-fifth regiment band with a solid silver bugle, and by the officers of the regiment with a solid silver cornet.⁴⁸

A review of newspaper accounts and other documents show that the regimental band of the 35th NY performed at a wide variety of functions and activities. Examples include playing while on marches,⁴⁹ at religious services,⁵⁰ for dances,⁵¹ for various regimental ceremonies (e.g. flag presentation, troop reviews, sword presentations, officer farewells, etc.),⁵² and for entertaining commanding generals.⁵³ In total, these accounts demonstrate that the regimental band of the 35th NY was an integral part of the regiment's daily life and was highly valued by both the officers and enlisted men of the regiment. A Jefferson County newspaper reporter visiting the regiment in the spring of 1862 summarized this nicely:

The brass band of the 35th regiment, whose leader is George R. Choate, formerly of Carthage . . . is a full band of good musicians, and they conspire to relieve, as much as inspiring music may, the tedium of camp life. They do much to cultivate the military enthusiasm and patriotic ardor.⁵⁴

Despite the widely acknowledged benefits described by both officers and enlisted men in many regiments, Congress passed Public Law

47. Shaw, Albert D., *A Full Report of the First Re-Union and Banquet of the Thirty-Fifth N.Y. Vols. held at Watertown, N.Y. on December 13th, 1887* (Watertown, NY: Times Printing and Publishing House, 1888), Colonel Lord's Second Letter, March 3, 1888, pp. 54–55.

48. *Morning Star*, note 2.

49. *Jefferson County Journal* (Adams, NY), January 1, 1887; Wesley Shaw, *Letters, 1861–1865*, various letters from March 1862, New York State Library, Scanned Publications Collection, Document ID #8385, Alt ID #122314952.

50. *Jefferson County Journal* (Adams, NY), September 19, 1861.

51. *Ibid.*, October 24, 1861.

52. *Ibid.*, August 15, 1861; *Carthage Republican* (Carthage, NY), September 5, 1861, p. 2, col. 4; *Ibid.*, January 9, 1862, p.1, col. 6 and p. 2, col. 1; *National Republican* (Washington, DC), January 13, 1862, p. 1, col. 5–6; Shaw letters, note 49.

53. *Daily News and Reformer* (Watertown, NY), March 1, 1862, p. 2, col. 4–5.

54. *Ibid.*, March 10, 1862, p. 2, col. 4.

No. 165 on July 22, 1862 abolishing all regimental bands in *volunteer*⁵⁵ units as a cost cutting measure. This law required that regimental bands be mustered out of service within thirty days. The War Department issued General Order No. 91 on July 29, 1862 implementing this law.⁵⁶ Consequently, most of the regimental band of the 35th NY was mustered out of service around August 16, 1862 at Culpeper Court House, Virginia, including Choate and fourteen other band members.⁵⁷

All the 35th NY band members left for home after their discharge except for Choate, who remained in Washington, DC working for the Commissary Department.⁵⁸ Then in October of 1863 he enlisted again in the 20th NY Cavalry, becoming the leader of their unofficial regimental band.⁵⁹ Choate's obituary states, "He was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the Twentieth New York [Cavalry], but had served only a few days when he again became bandmaster . . ." ⁶⁰ The 20th NY Cavalry was commanded by Colonel Newton Lord, formerly of the 35th NY Infantry, and, like Choate, many of the 35th NY soldiers re-enlisted in the 20th NY Cavalry when it was organized in the summer and fall of 1863.

The earliest mention of the 20th NY Cavalry's regimental band comes from a letter written by Colonel Lord to the "Town Committee" in Watertown, New York that was responsible for recruiting volunteer soldiers. The letter, published December 22, 1863, was a recruiting pitch that listed several benefits of joining the 20th NY Cavalry. The letter closed with the following:

A Band has been formed under George Choate, late of the 35th N.Y. Should any musicians desire to enlist, an opportunity is offered to them to join the

55. Regular US Army regiments were allowed to keep their regimental bands.

56. John F. Bieniarz, *I Was Detailed to the Regimental Band, A Compendium of Civil War Brass Bands from New England*, vol. 1 Massachusetts (South China, ME: Sam Teddy Publishing, 2012), iv–xxiii.

57. In addition to Choate, the other regimental band members mustered out around this time were: Joseph DeCory, Chester S. Elmer, John Fitzgerald, Erastus H. Gillman, William W. Gleason, David Joy, Jr., Zabina Lane, Emory Leasure, Charles Sawyer, Wells B. Smith, Franklin B. Mallory, John H. Raymond, William H. Potter, and John N. Vodra. Several other band members were discharged prior to August 1862 for various reasons, and a few band members who had been temporarily detailed to the band were transferred back to their original company after the regimental band was discharged.

58. *Morning Star*, note 2.

59. Bieniarz, note 56. While all official bands in Union volunteer regiments were abolished by the end of 1862, recent work by Bieniarz has documented hundreds of unofficial, post-1862 brass bands in volunteer Union regiments.

60. *Morning Star*, note 2.

Band, there are sixteen in the Band, to whom instruments have been furnished by the regiment; instruments will be furnished by the regiment to all who join the Band. —N.B. LORD, Col. 20th N.Y. McClellan Cavalry.⁶¹

On April 3, 1865 the 20th NY Cavalry was among the first of the Union troops to enter and occupy Richmond, Virginia, capital of the Southern Confederacy, after it was evacuated hastily by the retreating Confederate army. The front page of the *New-York Times* reported a variety of details of the regiment's activities that morning, and this included information about Choate and the regimental band:

THE PURSUIT.

. . . . From Our Own Correspondent.

Richmond, Va., Tuesday, April 4, 1865.

. . . . On arriving here I found the Twentieth New York Cavalry, Col. Evans,⁶² commanding, in charge of the city, and was informed that it had been surrendered by the Mayor into the hands of Gen. Weitzel about 8 A.M. On being placed in charge, Col. Evans established his headquarters at the transportation office of the Confederate Government, and proceeded to restore order.

. . . . Lieut. Choate, also of the Twenty-fifth [typo: Twentieth as above] New-York Cavalry, brought the regimental band into the city about 11 A. M., and had it play several national airs. Thus, it happened, this regiment was the first organized national cavalry to get within the city limits, the first to restore order, and its band was the first to perform national music in Richmond since the war commenced.⁶³

While Union troops, some poor white Richmond citizens, and a large number of freed slaves celebrated the Union capture of Richmond on the capital square, it was a shocking and demoralizing event for most of Richmond's white citizens. One Richmond lady recalled her feelings on that morning of April 3, 1865 after seeing the Star and Stripes flying above the Confederate Capital and

. . . hearing an old familiar tune floated upon the air—a tune that, in days gone by, was wont to awaken a thrill of patriotism. But now only the most

61. *New-York Daily Reformer* (Watertown, NY), December 22, 1863, p. 2, col. 2.

62. Colonel Newton Lord resigned his commission in March of 1865 and Lieut. Colonel David M. Evans was then promoted and became colonel of the 20th NY Cavalry.

63. *New-York Times*, Sunday, April 9, 1865, p. 1, cols 1, 2. Additional details about the 20th NY Cavalry's activities that morning include establishing mounted patrols to control rioting and restore order, working to control a large fire in the business district that almost destroyed all of Richmond, chasing the retreating rebel army, and capturing about 100 rebel prisoners and placing them in prison.

bitter and crushing recollections awoke within us, as, upon our quickened hearing fell the strains of "The Star Spangled Banner." For us it was a requiem for buried hopes.⁶⁴

Following Richmond's capture, George Choate and the regimental band of the 20th NY Cavalry were undoubtedly among the bands given the great honor of playing "fine music" and "national airs" at concerts on the Capital Square each evening. These concerts likely were ordered by the Union commander as a not so subtle reminder to the Richmond citizens about who was now in charge of the city. The *Richmond Whig* reported:

Fine Music is now to be enjoyed every evening on the Square, and the old, almost forgotten national airs of "Hail Columbia," "Yankee Doodle" and "The Star-Spangled Banner" sound almost like new music to ears accustomed so long to "Dixie," the "Bonnie Blue Flag," and other now obsolete ditties.⁶⁵

In addition, for residents who may have forgotten them, the Richmond paper also published the words to "Hail Columbia" by Joseph John Hopkinson and the "Star Spangled Banner" by Francis S. Key.⁶⁶

Six days after Union troops entered Richmond, General Robert E. Lee surrendered at the Appomattox courthouse, effectively ending the bloodiest armed conflict in the history of the United States. Raising the Stars and Stripes at the Confederate capital and the playing of "national music" was a momentous occasion. It is very likely that the silver presentation E-flat keyed bugle given to Choate by his fellow band members of the 35th NY Volunteers which he "greatly prized"⁶⁷ was there, used by Choate,⁶⁸ and heard by many of the Union troops and citizens of

64. Sallie A. Brock, *Richmond During the War; Four Years of Personal Observation* (New York: Carleton & Co., 1867), 367.

65. *Richmond Whig* (Richmond, VA), Friday, April 7, 1865.

66. *Ibid.*, Thursday, April 6, 1865.

67. *Morning Star*, note 2.

68. Our research has found numerous references that specifically mention Choate's bugle playing, and these include pre-war, during the war, and post-war accounts. Other than his obituary, we have found no mention of Choate playing the cornet in any of the documents reviewed thus far. The overwhelming evidence indicates that Choate played the keyed bugle whenever he was performing in brass bands. See notes 10, 18, 19, 20, 45 and also *New-York Daily Reformer* (Watertown, NY), October 16, 1866, p. 3, col. 1; *Watertown Daily Times* (Watertown, NY), June 24, 1876, p. 3, col. 2; *Malone Palladium* (Malone, NY), December 26, 1867, p. 3, col. 1; *Ibid.*, May 30, 1867, p. 3, col. 1.

Richmond. Choate's part in the union capture of Richmond was remembered at his death nearly thirty years later:

An Old Musician Passes Away. . . . He was then commissioned as a second lieutenant in the Twentieth New York infantry [typo: cavalry], but had served only a few days when he again became bandmaster, and this band had the honor of playing the first national airs in Richmond after it was taken.⁶⁹

Instruments of Honor

The solid silver E-flat presentation keyed bugle given to Choate by the regimental band members of the 35th NY is one of the most advanced of E. G. Wright's designs. It is now known to date from late 1861,⁷⁰ making it the latest example of Wright's work found so far. It has a gold plate with the maker's name and decorative engravings on the mouthpipe, finger saddle, and bell garland (fig. 5). Technical improvements include post-on-footplate key mounts and the addition of a twelfth key. Normally, it would have had a telescopic tuning shank, but that piece and keys six and ten are missing.

Choate was undoubtedly aware of Wright's presentation E-flat keyed bugles, especially since he traveled and performed with Ned Kendall in the Spalding and Rogers' Two Circuses for at least two years in the 1850s. The band members of the 35th NY must also have known of Wright's presentation bugles and the status they conveyed. While some of the officers in the 35th NY were presented with fine swords made by Tiffany and Co. in New York, the band members of the 35th NY chose to honor Choate by giving him a solid silver presentation bugle from the finest keyed-bugle maker in the country, who specialized in these presentation bugles.

Choate's silver keyed bugle would have cost the band members probably around \$400.⁷¹ Since the average regimental band member's pay was around \$20/month,⁷² each band member would have contributed about one month's pay towards the purchase of the silver bugle, assuming all twenty band members contributed. By way of comparison, the senior

69. *Morning Star*, note 2.

70. Eliason, note 15, 94: in this 2005 article, it was dated much earlier due to the author's misreading of the inscription.

71. *Ibid.*, Bugles number 6 and 7 in the article's appendix were both twelve-key silver bugles presented in 1851 and cost \$350 and \$480, respectively.

72. Bieniarz, note 56, p. xix.



FIGURE 5. Keyed bugle in E-flat, silver body, gold maker nameplate, silver trim, twelve silver keys in post on footplate mounts, inscribed: "Made by / E. G. Wright / Boston / Presented to / G. R. Choate / Leader / 35th N. Y. V. Regimental Band / By Its Members." (a) left side; (b) right side; (c) mouthpipe.

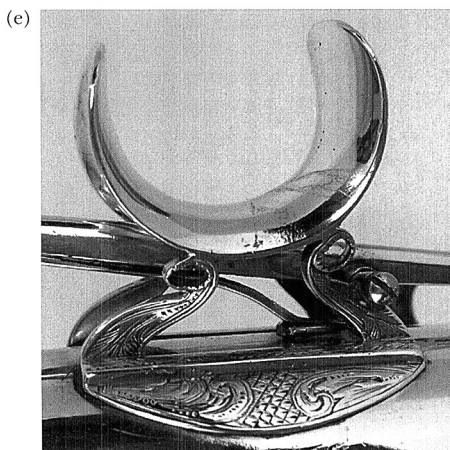


FIGURE 5 (*continued*). (d) bell with presentation inscription detail; (e) saddle. Photos courtesy of the J. Loyd Davis Collection, Prairie Village, Kansas. See color photos p. 225–226.

officers of the 35th NY spent \$182 on a presentation sword and accessories from Tiffany & Co. that was given to the regiment's colonel, Newton Lord, around Christmas of 1861.⁷³ At the start of the war, lieutenant colonels, majors, and captains made \$181, \$169, and \$115.50 per month, respectively. Assuming all ten captains, both majors, and the lieutenant colonel of the 35th NY all participated in the Colonel's gift, each of them would have had to contribute only the equivalent of about three days of pay, even less if any of the regiment's many lieutenants or other staff officers (surgeons, quartermaster, etc.) contributed. Thus, the band members who presented Choate with the silver keyed bugle were very generous. Their generosity and gift of the solid silver keyed bulge made by Wright in no small measure demonstrates the respect and admiration they must have had for Choate.

The presentation of the silver bugle was made by the regimental band members of the 35th NY just before Christmas of 1861. Choate's hometown newspaper, the *Carthage Republican*, provided a few details of the presentation:

Well Deserved.

We see by a correspondent of the Daily News, that George R. Choate, who is a Carthage boy, and leader of the Cornet Band of the 35th Regiment, has been presented by the band with a solid silver bugle, as a testimonial of their appreciation of his talents and merits as a musician. The speeches on the occasion were brief. The member of the band who made the presentation, said, "Mr. Choate, I present you this instrument in behalf of the band." Mr. Choate's reply was, "Gentlemen of the band, I thank you very much, but as I am not in the habit of making a speech, I will let the instrument speak for itself!" and thereupon the bugle proceeded to speak, as Mr. Choate is well known to be able to make such instruments speak.⁷⁴

The "Daily News" in this quote was the *Watertown Daily News*, and a regimental band member was the correspondent who provided the original description of the bugle presentation. This band member ended his letter describing how "the bugle spoke as no other man can make it speak this side of the Potomac."⁷⁵

The second presentation instrument Choate received, a solid silver cornet given to him by his regimental officers, is also of interest in

73. *Carthage Republican* (Carthage, NY), January 9, 1862, p.1, col. 6 and p. 2, col. 1.

74. *Ibid.*, January 2, 1862, p. 2, col. 6.

75. *Watertown Daily News* (Watertown, NY), December 27, 1861, p. 2, col. 2. The correspondence letter was sent by regimental band member Wells B. Smith (note 57) on December 22, 1861.

American brass instrument history (fig. 6). As it became obvious that valved instruments were easier to play than their keyed predecessors, American brass band soloists sought valved instruments that could play the band parts and solos they were accustomed to playing. During the 1840s and early 1850s, Graves & Co., E. G. Wright, Thomas D. Paine, Isaac Fiske, and a number of other American makers developed valved instruments of various kinds,⁷⁶ and imported valved brasses from France and Germany were readily available. The E-flat cornet with an ascending fourth valve by J. Lathrop Allen was among the last attempts to continue the uniquely American brass-band tradition of using high E-flat instruments for band music melody and solo playing.

Joseph Lathrop Allen began his musical instrument-making career in Sturbridge, Massachusetts in 1838. He was in Boston in 1842 and 1843, then in Norwich, Connecticut from 1844 to 1851, where he was joined by European-trained brass instrument maker Louis F. Hartmann.⁷⁷ In 1852, Allen returned to Boston where he began producing instruments with his uniquely designed, flat-windway rotary valves. These small valves, combined with the American string action,⁷⁸ were very quick and easy to manipulate, and due to the enclosed stopping arrangement, very quiet as well. They became quite popular and were made by Allen and several other firms for many years.

Choate's presentation E-flat "cornet" is fatter in appearance than the usual cornet. It looks very similar in proportions to the keyed bugle, and it is, in reality, an attempt to continue the keyed bugle sound with the improvement of valves instead of keys. It could be called, more accurately, a valved bugle, but during the 1860s it would have been called a cornet since this was generally understood at the time to refer to "any soprano valved brass instrument that could be used to play the melodic part, rather than to one particular type of instrument."⁷⁹ In addition to the usual three valves, it has an ascending fourth valve, which means that at rest the tubing of that valve is included in the length of the instrument. When the fourth valve lever is pressed, this length of tubing is removed,

76. Robert E. Eliason, "D. C. Hall and The Quinby Brothers," *Journal of the American Musical Instrument Society* 33 (2007): 85–97.

77. City directories of Sturbridge, Boston and Norwich; 1850 United States Census.

78. A method of turning rotary valves with a string wrapped around a collar on the valve shaft still commonly used on French horns. The idea was first used by Thomas D. Paine of Woonsocket, Rhode Island on instruments he produced in the late 1840s.

79. Bufkin, William A. "Union Bands of the Civil War." PhD. dissertation, Louisiana State University, 1973, 170, 172.

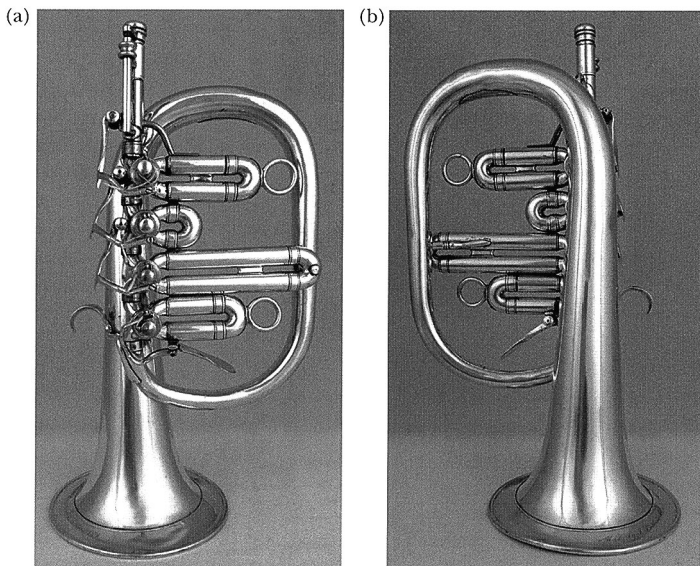


FIGURE 6. Cornet in E-flat, silver, with four Allen flat-windway valves, inscription along the bell rim: "Made by J. Lathrop Allen, No. 111 E. 18th St. N. Y." (a) left side; (b) right side. Photos courtesy of the J. Loyd Davis Collection, Prairie Village, Kansas. See color photos p. 227.

shortening the instrument and, in this case, raising the pitch of the instrument a major second to the key of F. This valve, like the additional keys on a keyed bugle, is designed to ease the playing of the higher notes and provide some alternate fingerings useful for intonation.

This instrument is the last one known to have been made by Allen before he turned to other enterprises and represents one of his final efforts in designing a soprano brass instrument for American bands. It is also the only known Allen instrument of solid silver. The American brass-band tradition of melody brasses in E-flat, for which both of Choate's presentation silver instruments were designed, ended in the decades following the Civil War as the European tradition of B-flat cornets, a fourth lower, for melody and solo was adopted by most American bands and soloists. This change was also accompanied by the re-introduction of woodwinds and trombones into most bands.

Bandmaster and Teacher

The bands of the Civil War meant a lot more to the soldiers than just music for marching. In a situation of uncertainty and fear, bands provided the inspiration of patriotic and religious music, the solace of music about home, family, loved ones, and reminded them of the gaiety and dancing of better times. Returning survivors of the war wanted this kind of musical organization in their communities, creating post-war professional opportunities for bandleaders and teachers like George Choate.

Choate returned to his home area in northern New York after the war, and by the late 1860s was teaching and leading a number of bands around Ogdensburg. In 1867 the *Daily Journal* of Ogdensburg reported the following:

Grand Concert at Malone. The Malone Cornet Band will give a grand concert in the Methodist Church at Malone on Friday evening 10th inst. The band has recently been reorganized, and for several weeks has been under the drill of Prof. G. R. Choate, a teacher of high qualifications and established reputation.⁸⁰

Also in 1867, Choate became master of a brass band in Oswegatchie, which is the township that surrounds Ogdensburg:

The Oswegatchie Band. George R. Choate has been appointed Master of the Oswegatchie Band, and will during the next six months, put it through a regular course of training. We understand that it is the intention of the Band to get up a set of quadrille parties during the winter, the first to take place at Lyceum Hall, on Monday, between Christmas and New Year's.⁸¹

In 1869 Choate was also the leader of a string band:

Oswegatchie Band Pic Nic. The Oswegatchie Band of this city, will make their first annual Pic Nic, on Wednesday, September 1st. They have chartered the steamer St. Lawrence and will go up the river. Choate's string band will be in attendance.⁸²

In addition, Choate also helped out with a nearby brass band in Canton, New York when extra help was needed.⁸³

Despite all of Choate's various band activities in the late 1860s, this was apparently not sufficient for him to continue earning a living solely

80. *Daily Journal* (Ogdensburg, NY), Wednesday, May 8, 1867, p. 3, col. 2.

81. *Ibid.*, Saturday, December 14, 1867, p. 3, col. 3.

82. *Ibid.*, Saturday, August 28, 1869, p. 3, col. 4.

83. *Commercial Advertiser* (Canton, NY), Tuesday, August 9, 1921, p. 4, col. 2.

as a bandleader. The 1870 Census of Oswegatchie lists: "Choate, George R; age 45, male, white, Harness Maker, born in New York" and "Choate, Caroline; age 44, female, white, Keeping House, born in Pennsylvania." The Choates continued to live in Ogdensburg/Oswegatchie for several years, and then moved to St. Albans, Vermont sometime around 1874⁸⁴ before settling for a longer stay in Rockford, Illinois sometime around 1879.

In Rockford, Choate was first a full time musician, but then fell back on his harness making trade again after 1883. The 1880 Rockford city directory listing is: "Choate, G. R., (2) professor music, res. 501 N. Third," the "2" meaning that he had lived in the city for two years. The same directory also shows that he is "leader and instructor of the St. James Band."⁸⁵ The 1882–83 city directory lists Choate as "music teacher," and the *Rockford Journal* noted that "A new band has been organized in the city and is under the instruction of Mr. Choate, a thorough musician."⁸⁶ Over the rest of the 1880s until 1889 his listing in the directories is "harnessmaker," but there are frequent newspaper references to Choate's band and his playing.

The Transit was not overloaded on the first trip up to the Resort house last evening, but on the remaining trips the boat carried quite a crowd . . . Choate's band discoursed enchanting music from the upper deck of the steamer.⁸⁷

Alderman Crowel Serenaded. . . . Prof. Choate's brass band furnished excellent music.⁸⁸

. . . Force furnished excellent music assisted by his right and left bowers, Choate and Bucklin.⁸⁹

Choate was well known in Rockford, and the *Rockford Journal* even noted his travels when he visited his younger brother and sister in Winona, Minnesota in 1888.⁹⁰ In 1889 he evidently had a "severe attack of the grip [influenza], and from this he never fully recovered."⁹¹

84. *St. Albans Daily Messenger* (St. Albans, VT), February 7, 1874; March 9, 1875 and *Malone Palladium* (Malone, NY), Thursday, December 10, 1874, p. 3, col. 1.

85. City directory of Rockford, IL, 1880, p. 8 under "St. James Band."

86. *Rockford Journal* (Rockford, IL), July 22, 1882, p. 1, col. 1.

87. *Ibid.*, July 29, 1882.

88. *Ibid.*, April 21, 1887.

89. *Ibid.*, January 13, 1888.

90. *Ibid.*, December 2, 1888.

91. *Morning Star*, note 2.

Unable to work or play his bugle, Choate filed for a Civil War pension in July 1890 and was subsequently granted a pension of \$12/month.⁹² In failing health, Choate moved to Winona, Minnesota in 1890 to be with his younger brother, Hannibal, and younger sister, Louisa. He died there on August 7, 1893⁹³ and is buried in the Choate family plot in the Woodlawn Cemetery (fig. 7).

Conclusion

Choate's career is illustrative of the rapid development and spread of all-brass band music in America. Whether for dancing, parades, community events, circuses, or military musters, all-brass bands quickly replaced the old woodwind bands of oboes, clarinets, horns, and bassoons. When the necessary brass instruments were invented and available, it took only the examples of Richard Willis at West Point, Francis Johnson of Philadelphia, The Dodworths in New York, and Kendall's Boston Brass Band to fire a revolution in military and community music that spread rapidly to the tiniest frontier communities, even to the small village of Carthage in Jefferson County, New York. Although other new brass instruments were required to fill out an all-brass band, the keyed bugle and the cornet were the symbolic instruments of this change. They were the favored instruments of the leaders of this transformation like Choate, who went from town to town as bandleaders and teachers, spreading the technology, the skills, the music, and its function in the community.

The two silver presentation instruments given to Choate in the Civil War are significant on their own, each an example of the culmination of distinctly American brass instrument development. The keyed bugle is the final example of the magnificent keyed bugles made by E. G. Wright, and the four-valved cornet is the last instrument, and the only one of solid silver, known to have been made by J. Lathrop Allen. Wright and Allen were among the leading makers of their time, and these instruments were designed for the unique American brass band featuring the high E-flat keyed bugle or E-flat cornet as the leading soprano voice.

92. Choate, George R., pension file, application #875592, certification #656830, Civil War and Later Pension Files, Records of the Department of Veterans Affairs, Record Group 15, National Archives Building, Washington, DC.

93. *Morning Star*, note 2.

(a)



(b)



FIGURE 7. Choate family burial plot in Woodlawn Cemetery in Winona, Minnesota where George R. Choate is buried along with his wife, Caroline, his older brother, William, his younger sister, Louisa, and his younger brother Hannibal. (a) Choate family monument; (b) George R. Choate headstone. Photos courtesy of the J. Loyd Davis Collection, Prairie Village, Kansas.

Choate's instruments were acquired by collector, J. Loyd Davis⁹⁴ of Prairie Village, Kansas, who recognized their historic value, even though he was unaware of their full history. They were purchased in 1969 from a neighbor in the town where Choate died (Appendix A), when the only published information about keyed bugle history in the United States or the makers, E. G. Wright and J. Lathrop Allen was a short reference in an old book by Christine M. Ayars.⁹⁵ Not only are they important examples of the work of these early brass makers and outstanding representatives of America's brass band era, but they are also associated with historic events of the Civil War. It is not known for certain which of his bugles Choate used to play the "National Airs" at the fall of Richmond, but out of one of them came patriotic notes that symbolized the end of the greatest armed conflict in US history.

Appendix A. Provenance of the Choate Instruments

When George Choate passed away in 1893 in Winona, Minnesota, he was living at 264 W. Broadway⁹⁶ in a home owned by his younger brother Hannibal Choate. Hannibal Choate was a very successful businessman who lived at 263 W. 5th St., which is the property immediately behind the home in which George Choate was living when he died. George's wife, Caroline, lived another ten years after he died but had no "property

94. J. Loyd Davis (1936–2011) was an avid collector of antiques in the Kansas City area for more than forty-five years. His greatest knowledge and most extensive private collection were in early American phonographs, but his collecting hobby started with a focus on early American sheet music and musical instruments. He acquired instruments locally but also through national advertisements that appeared in *Collectors News* and the *Antique Trader*. By 1966 Davis had acquired several dozen instruments, and he then began to hold various public exhibits to educate and inform a larger audience.

In the early 1960s, the UMKC Conservatory of Music's Carl Busch Collection of scores, manuscripts and instruments was donated to the American Bandmasters Association housed in the Sousa Library at the University of Illinois. A few instruments remained and were acquired by Davis after "seven months of negotiation" in exchange for nineteenth-century American sheet music (note 103). It was a display of these left-over instruments in the mid-1960s, including an ophicleide, which caught the attention of doctoral student Robert E. Eliason. The display influenced Eliason's choice of a dissertation topic and set him on a course of studying American made brasses.

95. Christine M. Ayars, *Contributions to the Art of Music in America by the Music Industries of Boston, 1640–1936* (New York: H. W. Wilson Company, 1937), 224.

96. *Winona Daily Republican* (Winona, MN), Tuesday, August 8, 1893, p. 3, col. 3.

of any kind” and was “absolutely dependent” upon Hannibal Choate for support.⁹⁷

While Hannibal was a very successful businessman, he was also a musician like his older brother.⁹⁸ He played both the flute and violin, and every Sunday afternoon after church would play chamber music in a large and impressive music parlor on the first floor of his home. Both of Hannibal Choate’s surviving granddaughters state that the large music parlor, as well as most of the rest of the house, was kept as it was left by Hannibal Choate until about 1960.⁹⁹ In addition to Hannibal Choate’s flute and violin, the music parlor contained “a grand piano, an organ and a stand of rare brass instruments.”¹⁰⁰ Both granddaughters recall that these brass instruments were on a small display stand in Hannibal’s music parlor off to the side of the room. These instruments were “very old” and several were “unusual looking.” In addition, they were not played by Hannibal Choate or others since the music parlor was primarily used by Hannibal and his friends for playing chamber music. Also, none of Hannibal’s three children played a musical instrument.¹⁰¹ Given these facts, it is very likely the small brass instruments on display in Hannibal Choate’s music parlor in his home on 263 W. 5th St. were those that belonged to his older brother George Choate. Certainly, the silver Civil War presentation E. G. Wright keyed bugle would have been a highly-valued family heirloom given its history, the presentation inscription, and the prominent discussion of it and Choate’s Civil War record in his obituary.¹⁰²

Loyd Davis kept a record book¹⁰³ and also saved some correspondence describing details of the purchases for most of the musical instruments in his early collection. These records show that all three of the

97. Choate, George. R., pension file, note 92. Affidavit of Hannibal and Harriet Choate, September 23, 1893 supporting widow’s pension claim of Caroline Wilson Choate, application #581745, certification #388762.

98. US Census, 1850, note 7.

99. Deborah Choate Thomas, daughter of Charles Choate, granddaughter of Hannibal Choate, telephone conversation with author, February 24, 2013 and Rebecca Choate Garland, daughter of Charles Choate, granddaughter of Hannibal Choate, telephone conversation with author, March 14, 2013.

100. Deborah Choate Thomas, e-mail message to author, February 24, 2013.

101. Thomas and Garland, note 99.

102. *Morning Star*, note 2.

103. Record book, “James Loyd Davis Rare Instrument Collection,” September, 1964–March, 1971.

Choate instruments described in this paper were purchased by Davis from Mrs. Margaret Paape of Winona, Minnesota in June of 1969. Paape lived with her husband, Emil, at 602 E. Broadway,¹⁰⁴ only one mile from Hannibal Choate's home and the adjacent home where George Choate died. According to her daughter, Paape regularly went to estate sales and purchased a variety of antiques that she would then sell to earn extra income for the family.¹⁰⁵ Paape did not have an antique store, but instead regularly sold most of the antiques she found in estate sales by correspondence with collectors she found through advertisements in the *Antique Trader* and *Collectors News*. Davis ran advertisements in both of these outlets in the 1960s looking for early American musical instruments, and his record book has many entries of instruments that were purchased from sellers across the country, like Paape, who contacted Davis in response to these ads.

It is fortuitous that Davis kept these records so that the copper E. G. Wright keyed bugle, the silver presentation E. G. Wright keyed bugle, and the silver Allen cornet could be linked to the same source in Winona, Minnesota where George Choate died and was buried. It is likely that all three of these instruments were acquired by Paape from the Hannibal Choate home at 263 W. 5th when its contents were sold sometime after the death of Hannibal Choate's oldest son, Hannibal Choate, Jr., in 1958. Since Choate's obituary describes how the officers of the 35th NY Volunteer Infantry regiment presented him a solid silver cornet, the discovery that the silver Allen cornet was purchased from the same source as the Wright silver presentation bugle provides convincing evidence that this unique pair of solid silver E-flat instruments were those that were given to bandleader George R. Choate during the Civil War.

Transcriptions of the notes and letters concerning the purchase of the Choate instruments from the Davis record book and files are provided below.

104. *Winona Daily News* (Winona, MN), Monday, March 4, 1968, p. 7, col. 5.

105. Martha (Marte) Paape Knopick, formerly Marte Paape Devine, telephone conversation with author, January 27, 2013.

[Typed Letter, italics indicate Davis handwritten notes]

Rec'd 6-20-69

Called and sent check 6-10-69

\$25.00 for pair.

Dear Sir,

Thank you for your want list, I have taken a picture of 2 coronets that I would like to sell. I don't know their date, but I do know they are old. The mouth pieces are not on the picture but I do have them. Could you please make me an offer on them. If you are not interested in them could you please return the picture.

Mother

Mrs. Margaret Paape,

pronounced "Poppy"

A.C. 507

453-8-1796

Daughter

Copper 11 key E.G. Wright bugle

4 rotary valve "J. Lathrop Allen"

Sincerely,

Marte Devine [signature]

Marte Devine Phone# 4873

267½ Carimona

Winona, Minn.

55987

[End]

[Davis Record Book]

6-23-69

Bugle, 11 keyed E-flat? C./1847

"E.G. Wright

Maker

No. 8 Bromfield St.

Boston"

Copper with Silver Trim

According to ~~Ayers~~ Eliason

Wright was @ this address

from 1846 to 1848.

Bought from Mrs. Margaret

Paape, Winona, Minnesota,

For \$12.50 6-10-69.

Her Daughter, Mrs. Marte

Devine of 267 1/2

Carimona 55987 wrote

originally.

[End]

[Davis Record Book]

6-23-69

Coronet in E-flat? C. 1840-50?

"Made by

J. Lathrop Allen

No. 111 E. 18th St. N.Y."

Silver plated Copper.
 4 small Rotary valves.
 Adjustable tuning slide.

Bought from Mrs. Paape for
 \$12.50 6-10-69

[End]

[Typed Letter, italics indicate Davis handwritten notes]

arrived 6-30-69

*Called and sent Check 6-19-69
 L. D. \$3.40 \$15.00 for bugle.*

Dear Mr. Davis,

Thank you so much for your phone call. I have more musical instruments that I would like to sell. Enclosed are pictures of the 2. There are no markings on the big horn, but on the coronet is written:

“Made by E.G. Wright, Boston. Presented to G. R. Choate (Leader)
 35th NYV Regimental Band. (By its member).”

The coronet is silver. Both are in good condition. Would you please make me an offer again?

*12 keys 2 missing
 elaborately engraved
 in several places.*

Thank You,
 Marte Devine [signature]
 Marte Devine
 267½ Carimona
 Winona, Minn.
 55987

Also Has “Trumpetone” 1908 Disc Phono for \$50.00

[End]

[Davis Record Book]

7-27-69

Bugle, 12 keyed C. 1861–62
 “Made by E. G. Wright Boston”
 (on Gold plate).
 “Presented to G. R. Choate
 Leader 35th NYV Regimental
 Band by its Members”
 (Engraved on Bell)

Silver with elaborate
 engraving on the reinforcement
 rim, lead pipe, and saddle
 mount.

According to G.S.A. records
George R. Choate, age 36, 6-11-61
to 8-16-62.

Bought from Mrs. Margaret
Paape for \$15.00 6-19-69

Letter from Fred Benkovic¹⁰⁶
offered \$350.00 July 10th 1969

[End]

Appendix B. Keyed Bugle Measurements

Comparative measurements of the Choate E. G. Wright (EGW) keyed bugles of 1845–47 and 1861, Elrod Collection EGW keyed bugle, and other similar bugles of the period. Unusual measurements are in bold.

Table 1 shows the total tube length of the keyed bugles. The Choate 11-key and Elrod 10-key instruments, made while Wright was working at the Bromfield St. address, 1845–47, are 15 and 18 mm shorter than the average of the others, a distance undoubtedly made up by a longer tuning shank as discussed above. Neither of the Choate keyed bugles show any significant deviations in tone-hole size.

In distance along the tube, the placement of the tone hole for key ten on the 1847 Choate 11-key is closer to the bell as discussed above (table 2). Tone holes 9, 11, and 12 are also closer to the bell than the average, lowering the pitch slightly. The placement of key six on the 1861 Choate 12-key is also unusual, about 5–10 mm further toward the bell. This is the key for written *e'* and would make the note slightly lower in pitch.

Size and expansion of the tube over the last ten inches to the bell is very much the same on all the measured keyed bugles. Measurements of two valved bugles show similar expansion but somewhat smaller size.

106. Fred Benkovic founded the First Brigade Band of Milwaukee, one of the earliest re-creations of a nineteenth-century brass band, and was an active collector and historian of the period.

TABLE 1. Comparison of total tube length (in millimeters) of various E-flat keyed bugles.

E-flat keyed bugle (date)	Total tube length
Choate 11-key (1845–47)	877
Choate 12-key (1861)	899
Graves 10-key (1837)	905 ^a
Sibley 11-key (1840)	900 ^b
Elrod 10-key (1845–47)	889
Sibley 9-key (1846–7)	915 ^c
Hall EGW 12-key (1850)	920^d
Greene EGW 12-key (1850)	910 ^c
Chase EGW 11-key (1854)	930^f
Litch EGW 11-key (1854)	908 ^g
Pond EGW 12-key (1855)	900 ^h
Pier Graves 12-key (1860)	900 ⁱ
Average minus extremes	905
Range minus extremes	21

^aCollection of Robert E. Eliason, San Diego, CA.

^bCollection of Richard and Karen DeRosa, Bradford, VT.

^cSmithsonian Institution, National Museum of American History, acc. 237.755, Washington, DC.

^dHenry Ford Museum, acc. 72.54.2, Dearborn, MI.

^eRhode Island Historical Society, Providence, RI.

^fNational Music Museum, Joe R. and Joella F. Utley Collection acc. 7059, Vermillion, University of South Dakota.

^gStreitwieser Foundation, acc. 590, Schloß Kremsegg, Kremsmünster, Upper Austria.

^hThe Sousa Archives, acc. 83, Center for American Music, University of Illinois, Champaign.

ⁱSmithsonian Institution, National Museum of American History, acc. 63.610, Behring Center, Division of Cultural History, Washington, DC.

TABLE 2. Distance to tone holes (in millimeters) along bore from bell of various E-flat keyed bugles.

Bugle (date) / tone hole #	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Choate 11-key (1845–47)	92.2	167.3	201.9	240.1	290.7	347.3	375.2	N/A	451.0	477.2	514.6	553.5
Elrod 10-key (1845–47)	98.4	168.3	215.9	241.3	298.5	362.0	393.7	N/A	468.3	500.1	533.4	N/A
Choate 12-key (1861)	92.7	168.4	204.5	243.3	291.8	342.8	373.4	424.3	457.8	487.5	519.4	557.6
Graves 10-key (1837)	97.0	168.0	202.0	246.0	303.0	350.0	381.0	N/A	468.0	503.0	528.0	N/A
Sibley 11-key (1840)	92.5	166.0	210.0	241.0	296.0	352.0	389.0	N/A	455.0	489.0	517.0	550.0
Sibley 9-key (1846–7)	100.0	170.0	204.0	246.0	301.0	349.0	384.0	N/A	478.0	N/A	541.0	N/A
Hall 12-key (1850)	96.0	168.0	206.0	242.0	297.0	351.0	381.0	416.0	457.0	487.0	522.0	559.0
Greene 12-key (1850)	97.0	167.0	209.0	244.0	300.0	354.0	388.0	426.0	469.0	499.0	530.0	566.0
Chase 11-key (1854)	99.0	170.0	208.0	247.0	300.0	353.0	386.0	N/A	465.0	498.0	530.0	567.0
Litch 11-key (1854)	95.0	167.0	208.0	245.0	296.0	349.0	383.0	N/A	460.0	495.0	526.0	565.0
Pond 12-key (1855)	97.0	169.0	207.0	242.0	298.0	351.0	382.0	425.0	460.0	493.0	525.0	563.0
Pier 12-key (1860)	99.0	168.0	206.0	244.0	298.0	353.0	387.0	427.0	463.0	490.0	526.0	565.0
Average minus extremes	96.3	168.1	206	243.5	298.8	350.9	384.5	425.6	462.3	493.2	525.7	563.2
Range minus extremes	7.8	3.0	8.1	5.9	7.0	6.7	8.0	2.7	12.0	13.1	16.4	9.4