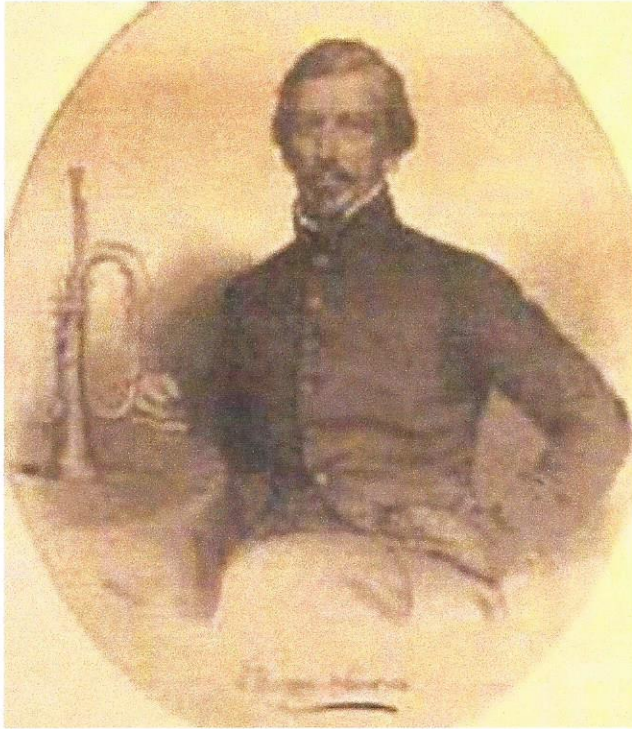


WINDJAMMERS HALL OF FAME

EDWARD "NED" KENDALL - 1808-1861

2006 Inductee – The First Circus Superstar Musician



The decade of the 1840s saw the rise of the star soloist as an advertised feature of the circus performance. The biggest name in the circus musical world was also the most famous brass solo performer in the nation, Ned Kendall.

Edward "Ned" Kendall was born March 20, 1808 in Newport, RI. At the age of 17, he made his Boston debut as a soloist on the keyed bugle, and was playing in the Tremont and other theaters of Boston shortly thereafter. According to a 1931 pamphlet entitled *The American Band* that was produced by The Providence Institute for Savings, keyed bugler William Hamilton established a band there in the mid-1820s. This account mentions that Ned Kendall was a violinist who came to Providence to study the keyed bugle with Hamilton, but his progress was so rapid that Hamilton gave him a place in the band, and that "it soon became perfectly evident that he could play circles around Hamilton, improvising variations that the other had not the skill to match."

With his brother James, Ned Kendall organized the Boston Brass Band about 1835, and that ensemble became one of the leading musical organizations on the East Coast. His first documented experiences with a circus band were in 1834 with the Waring,

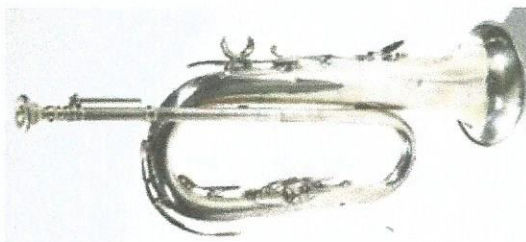
Tufts & Co. Circus, and in 1835 with Palmer's Circus. His notoriety grew, and soon he was the most famous keyed bugle soloist in America. Kendall spent the seasons of 1840 and 1841 with the Sam H. Nichols Amphitheater Circus as bandmaster and soloist. In 1842 he began an association with Spalding's North American Circus that would last for several years and would help Kendall reach the pinnacle of his fame. He played with the Victory Arena & Great Western Circus which hired the Boston Brass Band in 1842 and 1844. The New York City *Tribune* reported on June 27, 1845:

"The concert last night at the Tabernacle gave us a idea of what brass was capable – and that is certainly something as times go. Kendall's Brass Band and Dodworth's New York Cornet Band hereafter stand without rivals. The Boston boys had a great many tried friends in the house, and really deserved all of the enthusiasm which was manifested in their behalf. But we must confess that the Cornet Band are by no means behind their Boston contemporaries. They are not perhaps quite so astonishing in the rapidity and fullness of execution, because they have no bugles or other keyed instruments; but certainly nothing can exceed the rich roundness of the tones of their instruments or the perfect fullness and accuracy of their harmonization. In a word, the Boston Band is the most brilliant and effective – Dodworth's excels in harmony, expression and sentiment. Either however, is most admirable; but playing together or in contrast, as last night, the effect is really enchanting. It is most impossible to conceive that any amount of practice and labor could distill such sweet, clear, pure and rapid tones from those great brass stovepipe joints; and the effect made us find the analogy between this process and the homeopathic titration of drugs, by which their latent spiritual qualities are along brought out. A curtain between, and you would think Kendall's bugle or the Dodworth cornet the most magnificent Nicholson flute you ever heard; while the wonderful grace and delicacy of that monster-looking ophicleide can never be sufficiently admired nor described.

The overture to "The Two Blind Men of Toledo" was played in a style of varied and mingling excellence which few regular orchestras could equal. The grand "Largo al Factotum" by both bands united was a stunning yet musical crash of sound, laced with a delicate trace-work of several melodies which none but Rossini has so exquisitely woven. The piece from "Norma" by Dodworth's sank sweetly into every heart, and the superb duet from "Semiramide" was the crowning triumph to the genius of

the great master of modern music, as well as to the skill and talent of the artists. We are certain that a repeat of this concert would meet with universal favor."

The 1847 Spalding Circus advertised Kendall in superlatives: "*Kendall's Brass Band – Fifteen picked musicians in Luscious Uniforms of a celebrity in both hemispheres to which no other band aspires, led by the IMMORTAL EDWARD KENDALL, whose fame as the MAGIC BUGLER has penetrated every circle to which music has access, at once gives tone to the pure and admirable amusements of the monster circus, whether in leading the immensely extended procession in the GORGEOUS COLOSSAL MUSIC CAR, or awakening the echoes of the streets while mounted on 15 Richly Caprisoned (sic) Steeds, or metamorphosing the performance into a soiree musicale, not the least attractions feature of which will be the never to be forgotten SOLO UPON HIS MAGIC SILVER BUGLE."*



He was still with Spalding's American Circus a year later, as he was identified in the July 22, 1848 *Lancaster WI Herald* as leading Kendall's Brass Band – 15 picked musicians led by the immortal Edward Kendall, "The Magic Bugler."

In 1850, Kendall was playing as the star soloist with the John Robinson Circus, when the circus owner happened to be standing next to the band during a performance. Kendall put down his horn and Robinson snarled at him to play, to which Kendall replied, "I can't - I have 30 bars rest." Robinson reportedly snapped back at him, "Rest nothing, I hired you to play and you're going to play or quit. You can rest all you want after the show." A successful performance tour to England interrupted his circus career and greatly enhanced Kendall's reputation. In 1851, bandmaster E. K. Eaton, the composer of the first piece of circus sheet music, married Kendall's eldest daughter.

By 1854, Kendall was back with the Spalding show, now known as Spalding & Rogers Circus. They advertised "Spalding & Rogers Kendall's Brass Band led by the Wizard Bugler Ned Kendall. A solo on Kendall's Magic Bugle will be given at every performance." In both 1854 and 1855 Spalding & Rogers paired two of the top bandmasters in the country when they featured Kendall's Brass Band, mostly still Boston players, with a "string band" led by Choate, who was a prominent Philadelphia band and orchestra conductor.

Most contemporary reviews agree that Kendall perfected the technique of the keyed bugle to a degree unmatched by other performers. He was acclaimed to have the fastest tonguing,

loudest volume, and longest sustaining power. Listeners swore that he could drown out the rest of a band during a street parade.

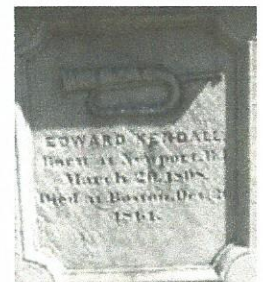
Kendall was bandmaster and soloist for the Grand Olympia Arena and North American Circus in 1855, returned to Spalding & Rogers Railroad Circus in 1856, and played with Nixon & Kemp's Circus in 1858. An advertisement in the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* of October 18, 1858 claimed "*The residents of Brooklyn and its vicinity are respectfully notified that the present is the only opportunity they may ever have of witnessing the performances of the greatest equestrian artists of the age. Forty horses, driven in one hand by a Lady. Madame Mason, late of Astley's Royal Amphi-Theatre, London, will drive a troupe of forty horses, harnessed to the music carriage, conveying the Kendall Bugle Band, led by Ned Kendall in person."*

Another newspaper ad from that season (Huntington, IN *The Indiana Herald* May 5) referred to Kendall as "The Weird Bugler." The most famous incident, or perhaps alleged incident (some band historians argue that it never actually happened) in the career of Ned Kendall, and in the history of keyed bugle, may or may not have occurred in 1856. Kendall's signature solo was the "Woodup Quickstep." Patrick Sarsfield Gilmore (1829-1892), a respected cornet virtuoso who would later become America's most important band director of the nineteenth century, was performing the work as a cornet solo. Legend has it that a competition was arranged between the aging Kendall on his keyed bugle and the young Gilmore on the cornet, with both playing the "Woodup Quickstep" as a solo performance. Both were reported to have performed magnificently, but the inherent technical superiority of the cornet was considered to have won the day, and the keyed bugle faded into obscurity. It's one of the great bits of brass folklore, and the incident is credited by later writers with sounding the death knell of the keyed bugle.

By 1860 Kendall's health had deteriorated to the point that a benefit was held for him by Hall's Brass Band (noted as formerly Ned Kendall's Band) at Boston's Tremont Temple. A broadside from the event states:

"To the Citizens of Boston ... Probably you have all heard the famous bugler Ned Kendall play 'Sweet Home' and 'Woodup.' No doubt that you will be sorry to learn that you will never have the opportunity again.

Mr. Edward Kendall is now confined to his bed by that 'fell destroyer,' consumption! His circumstances are such that aid is necessary for his comfort, and may we not now, after he has added so much to our enjoyment during past years, do what we can to smooth his path toward the grave."



Kendall died on October 26, 1861 in Boston.

A FIRST HAND LOOK AT NED KENDALL

By John A. Dingess (1829-1901), circus advance agent.

[Sourced by Charles Conrad from a Dingess manuscript about Kendall and the 1854 Spalding & Rogers Circus]

I will relate an incident in the life of the Wizard Bugler ... Spalding & Rogers was to make a tour of the New England states, attended by many new and attractive features, the most interesting being their unrivalled band of musicians, led by the world-wide renowned bugle player, Ned Kendall.

Ned was then in the prime of manhood and the zenith of his popularity. This was shortly after his return from England, where he had placed all the principal musicians hors de combat and won laurels which were the envy of all Europe. It seems shortly after his return to Boston, from some cause to the writer unknown, he suddenly became violently insane, and was for a time confined in the insane asylum. When he became aware of his impending fate he clutched his much-loved instrument, pressed it closely to his heart, and begged in piteous tones to not be parted from it. But the faculty decided it impracticable, and the attendants were obliged to wrest it from him by force.



Ned Kendall's Silver Keyed Bugle (also, see P. 26)

At this he became fairly exasperated, and not only raved and swore in the most frantic manner, but refused food entirely, and when completely exhausted gave way to lamentations most pitiful to witness.

At last, through the intercession of friends, it was decided to return his bugle and let him abide the consequences, as he would soon die of grief anyway.

At the return of the instrument his joy knew no bounds. He burst into a flood of tears, and, closely hugging it to his breast, he for some moments capered about his narrow cell in the most frenzied way imaginable. Then placing it to his lips he threw his soul into the most enchanting melodies, which were continued almost without intermission for two days, calling large and admiring crowds about the building, who listened completely spellbound to his magic strains. At last, when completely exhausted, he laid him down and slept with his bugle clasped closely to his heart. From this time forward he improved rapidly, and in a few days was discharged.

This incident, together with his brilliant tour in England, gave him a celebrity far above any musician in the known world at that time, giving him the title he was ever afterward known by, the "Wizard Bugler".

I once heard it remarked by one of contemporaries and one of the most celebrated bandmasters in New England, that Ned was never a learned musician, but merely a musical prodigy; that his talent was inherent and for style, taste and skill in execution, his equal was never known for that instrument, which was then considered one of the most difficult to master; that he was a good leader for a band of skillful musicians who well knew their place and kept it; but for a band of amateurs he was not the man, as his kindness of heart and genial nature completely unfitted him for discipline, though his fine personal appearance and tall kingly form rather tended to command respect.

The early life of this wonderful man was passed in an obscure neighborhood in the town of Otisfield. His first musical performance was on a pumpkin vine. He was reared in poverty and inured to hardship. His first appearance in public was at the old muster field in Naples village, a poor, ragged unkempt, forlorn-looking object, where out of pity he was hired to play for the Otisfield Light Infantry for fifty cents that day, but his talent so astonished the entire regiment that he received a handsome donation in addition.

When the great cavalcade entered a town or village with gilded chariots and their brilliant display of richly caparisoned horses and ponies, they were ever greeted by a dense throng of admiring spectators, but the great musician scorned to be the center of attraction. His rendering of his celebrated "Sweet Home" solo was ever greeted with prolonged cheers and an encore. We have often seen him called back over and over again, until prudence forbade and he bowed his thanks and retired.

While making the tour of Vermont, so to avoid the inconvenience and monotony of a dusty and uninteresting carriage road, Ned, with several of his intimate friends, took passage by rail, arriving some time in advance of the company, giving time for a good rest before the street shows, which occurred about eleven o'clock a.m.

On one of these occasions, Ned, on his arrival, entered the principal hotel, and had just got comfortably seated and was enjoying a cigar, when he was accosted by a little dapper fellow in the height of fashion, who without the least ceremony accosted Ned in a familiar manner, inquiring if he belonged to the expected show. Ned nodded assent.

"A proprietor?" he added.

"No,"

"A rider?"

"No."

"Perhaps you run a side show?"

"No."

"Sell tickets?"

"No,"

"Then, pray, in what capacity do you act?"

"I am a subordinate."

This answer seemed in some measure to disconcert the interrogator for a time as he appeared to not understand the term and was too proud to ask for information.

"Have a fine band I hear?"

"Well, fair, that is so far as I am able to judge."

"Do you know Ned Kendall the leader?"

"Well, some, not so much as I might perhaps."

"What kind of an old chap is he anyway?"

"Well, I hardly know.

I guess no better than he should be, however."

"They say he drinks?"

"Yes."

"And is a spendthrift?"

"Yes."

"Well, I guess he ain't much of a man anyway."

Ned nodded his assent as before.

He resumed his cigar.

"Now, my friend, I will tell you just my opinion of Ned Kendall. He has got a big name from these Boston fellows, so you know if he has that, as the saying is, he can lie in bed till noon. I dare say that there are several, even among the hills of Vermont, just as smart players as Ned, only they haven't gained a notoriety like him. Now I have the vanity to suppose that I can come very near to him. I have made it my whole business for several years and have a first-class band in this place, besides several others in different localities I am teaching. I have the finest bugle ever made in Boston, and can play *Woodup* and solo, as many have assured me, equal to its author. Perhaps you would like to hear it.?"

Ned nodded again and went on with his smoking. The coxcomb now produced an elegant mahogany case from which he drew out a silver bugle of the most exquisite workmanship and highly ornamented. Placing it to his lips, he with might and main, with cheeks puffed out and protruding eye-balls, in the language of the poet of Jack, the Giant Killer: "Wound such peals as erst threw down Old Jericho's substantial town." He then with an oscillating motion of the shoulder most painful to witness, accompanied by a fierce and angry scowl, pitched into Ned's masterpiece, the *Woodup Solo*.

We have read that the celebrated Mozart, while passing the street, heard one of his pupils playing one of his favorite compositions in a very unsatisfactory manner. In a fury, he rushed into the house, and with a stunning blow laid the offender senseless at his feet, exclaiming with a fierce oath: "I tell you I won't have my music used so."

We might have expected the same in this case, but instead, when the performer had finished, and, as one would naturally suppose, turned to his silent listener for his approval, he calmly extended his hand and begged leave to inspect the instrument. "Be very careful how you handle it," said the owner, "as I am very choice of it."

"Well you may be," returned Ned, and without the least apparent effort he sent forth one of his pure and silvery tones, soft and sweet as that of an Italian harp, and then blew several of the principal military calls. "Ah," exclaimed the owner, "you play, do you?" "Some, for my own diversion," returned Ned. "Perhaps you will favor us with a piece," he continued

Ned now rose from his chair, his tall form like that of King Saul, towering head and shoulders above his comrades. How the bantam failed to recognize him from his portrait hung nearby is a mystery, but he failed. Ned now threw his whole energies into his work, and after giving several exhibitions of dynamical skill he struck one of his favorites, which drew a large crowd of admiring listeners whom he held for several minutes completely spell-bound.

At last, the crowd broke into loud and prolonged cheers, while the now crestfallen braggart stood aghast. Ned returned the instrument, politely thanking him for the loan of it, and calmly resumed his cigar. The other gazed at him for some minutes, and then in an undertone remarked, "Well, I believe you are either the devil, or Ned Kendall."

Ned received from Spalding & Rogers a salary of four hundred dollars per month, and all that was required of him was to play for the street parade, the grand entree, and a solo. He continued to travel with this and several other shows with the same success, his popularity never waning until failing health obliged him to retire from public life.



Ned Kendall's famed Silver American Keyed Bugle was handcrafted by machinist and band mate, Henry Sibley. It is in E-flat with eleven keys, a single-loop silver body with a gold cartouche at bell. The leadpipe is engraved with foliate motif. Also included are a telescopic tuning shank, ordinary shank, two mouthpieces, and leather case. The bell is engraved "Henry Sibley/ Maker/ BOSTON 1840" as well as "Edward Kendall".

The instrument was auctioned off on May 22, 2016 by Skinner Auctioneers & Appraisers and was expected to sell for \$12,000 - \$16,000. Actual sale price: \$39,975.

