

# Welcome!

I threw away a lot of Marine Band harmonicas in my foolish youth, and I wish I knew then what I know now. This report is the result of years spent playing, customizing, collecting, and sorting through boxes of Marine Band Harmonicas.

This will be a chapter or two of my next book “Turbocharge Your Harmonica, Volume 2” So this is really a draft. It contains some great information, but it probably also contains typos, and sentences that could be better. So if you have any ideas on how I can improve this, I am inviting you to let me know.

The Marine Band has a long and fascinating history, and this article does not pretend to be a complete report on all things Marine Band. My goal is to give you the most useful information that I can offer on how to check out Marine Bands. Enjoy!

## The Marine Band Field Spotters Guide (How to sort through a pile of old Marine Band Harmonicas)

Why would you want to read something with a goofy title like “The Marine Band Field Spotters Guide”?

Well, to begin with, if you play the diatonic harmonica, you can’t escape the Marine Band harmonica, so you might as well know a few things about them from someone who knows them well. The 10 hole Marine Band harmonica model number is 1896, and 1896 is the year that the Hohner company started making Marine Band Harmonicas. The Marine Band harmonica is the most famous harmonica in the world and shows up everywhere, from classic recordings to modern masters of the harmonica.

It is one of the miracles of modern man in my opinion, that Matthiaus Hohner somehow got so many things right with the design of the Marine Band Harmonica. Here we are, well over a hundred years since this harmonica came out, and it still defines the essence of a great diatonic harmonica. How many other musical instruments came out of the starting gate basically done?

You may have a pile of old Marine Bands somewhere in your house. You can use the information in this article to help you figure out what to do with them. A lot of old Hohner harmonicas are basically Marine Bands with different cover plates, so a lot of the information in this article will apply to them as well.

Marine Band harmonicas belong to a class of harmonicas now called “handmade” harmonicas, to distinguish them from the other main class of harmonicas now being made by Hohner, the “M.S.” harmonicas.

## “Handmade” and “M.S. (Modular Series) harmonicas by Hohner

The “handmade” harmonicas include the Golden Melody, the Special 20, and the Marine Band, Marine Band Deluxe, and the Crossover. The reeds in all of these harmonicas are interchangeable. They are also interchangeable with reeds in the earliest Marine Bands made as far back as 1896.

The M.S. series reed plates are slightly bigger than the traditional Marine Band Reed Plates, and all of the harmonicas in the M.S. series are put together with screws. The reeds are different sizes than the Marine Band and other “handmade” harmonicas, so you CANNOT use them for replacement reeds for a Marine Band!

The M.S. series includes the Big River, MeisterKlasse, Blues Harp, and the Cross Harp.

## Collector Harmonicas vs. Player Harmonicas

I have a small collection of Hohner Marine Bands and other vintage harmonicas, and I enjoy having some great examples of old harmonicas and the original boxes. I love the artwork on the boxes and cover plates. I think of these harmonicas as if they were my collection of vintage automobiles in vintage garages. I get them out and drive them around on special occasions, but I would not drive them to the supermarket or on a long family trip.

I owned several antique cars a number of years ago, and believe me, vintage harmonicas are a lot less trouble to deal with than vintage cars!

I encourage everyone interested in playing the blues harmonica to find at least one vintage Hohner Marine Band harmonica or get one set up as close as possible to the way they were tuned and adjusted during the 1930s through the 1950s. They have a sweet, beautiful sound that has a lot to do with the pure just intonation tuning. If you are not sure what Just Intonation means, here is an article I wrote that explains it: <http://www.harmonicatunes.com/justintonationtuningforharmonicas.shtml>.

The unsealed pearwood comb also helps to give them a soft, warm sound, especially in the lower keys like G.

I would not play this harmonica at the local blues blow-off, however. They will not cut the room like a modern upgraded harmonica with a sealed comb. But a tuned and adjusted vintage harmonica is a great harmonica for playing in quiet settings where you can hear the full range of sound, and if you play them quietly, they can last for years without breaking a reed.

Is your Marine Band a collector harmonica? A gig harmonica? Or both?

You are the final judge of that, but we can collect evidence to help us make these decisions by examining boxes, cover plates and reed plates.

## Marine Band Boxes

If you find Marine Band Harmonicas in the cardboard boxes, you can find some clues about the vintage of the harmonica by checking the bottom of the box. Before I get into what to look for, one caution: I have frequently found that boxes are not matched to the harmonica inside of them. In other words, somewhere along the line the original harmonica ended up in another box. So you can't rely on boxes as the final proof of what is inside of them.

I love those old cardboard boxes, even though they fall apart and became useless if you actually carry your harmonicas around in them.



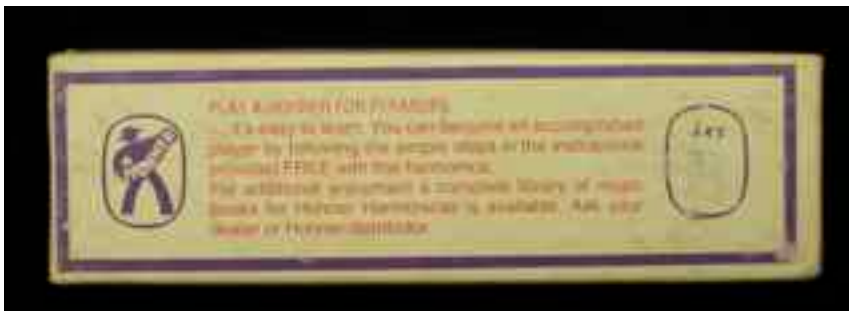
The oldest boxes have actual photographs of the U.S. Marine Band glued to the top of the box. They are a work of art, and if you find these boxes, keep good care of them – they are hard to find and nobody is making any more of them. On the bottom of most of these boxes you will see the Hohner address as New York City.

The Hohner headquarters in the U.S. was New York City from 1901 until 1960. In 1960, Hohner moved to Hicksville, New York,



So –the next big change in the cardboard boxes is to what I call the “Hicksville Marine Band” box. The glued on photograph of the U.S. Marine band is replaced with a black and white dot screen reproduction of the photograph, the box is cream color with red and blue accents, and it is still quite handsome. The address on the bottom of the box is Hicksville, New York. Hohner had its U.S. headquarters in Hicksville until 1982.

These boxes and the harmonicas that came in them are some of my all time favorite Hohner Marine Band harmonicas. I’ll get into why I like these harmonicas so much in the next section of this report.



In the final stages of the cardboard box, the Hicksville address no longer appears on the bottom of the box. The accents are red and purple. The photograph is more blurred. One of the interesting things to check out is how the photograph over the years disintegrates into meaningless blobs of vague general shapes. It is actually pretty funny now that I think of it...

The plastic Marine Band boxes started appearing in the eighties. The plastic boxes hold up much better to the punishment of carrying them around in your gig box, but they have one real problem: they seal in moisture, which can cause all sorts of nasty problems. Don't store your harmonicas in them unless you are totally sure that they are free of moisture. Please!

### Summary: Marine Band Boxes

So, to wrap up the story on Marine Band Boxes: The oldest boxes have photographs of the U.S. Marine Band glued to the top of the box, and most of them also have the Hohner address on the bottom of the box as New York City.

The Hicksville Marine Band Box is red, cream color and Blue, has a printed photo, and the Hicksville address on the bottom of the box.

The next generation of Marine Band cardboard box, with red and purple colors as highlights, has no address on the bottom.

The Plastic boxes replaced the cardboard boxes in the 1980s.

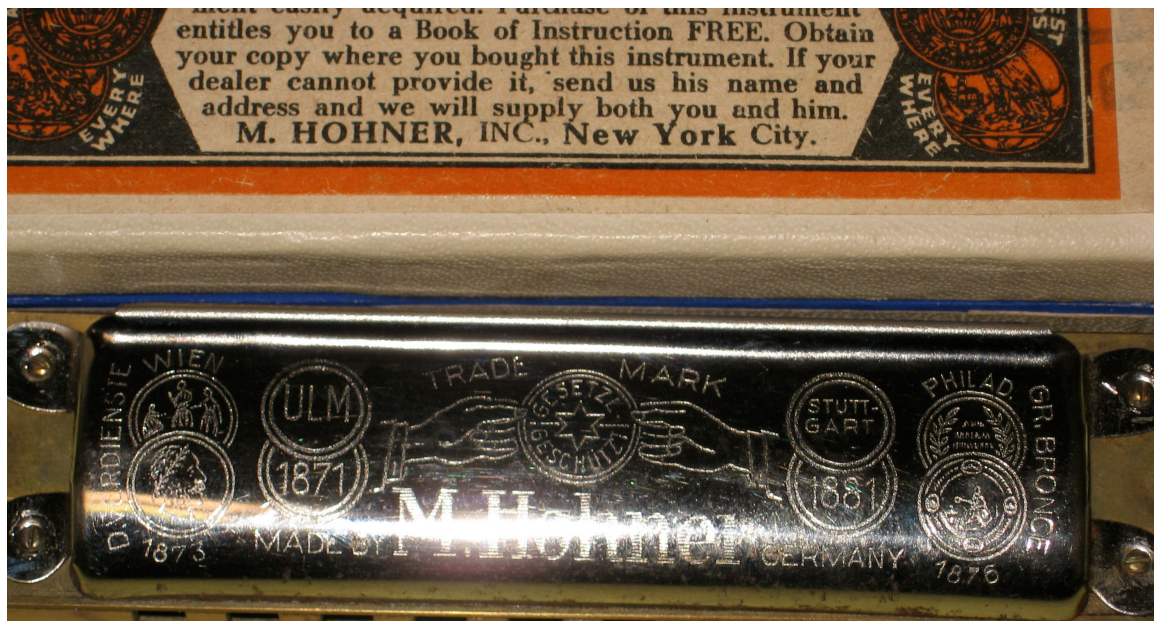
### Cover plates:

The earliest Marine Bands have double tabs on the sides for nails. These are sometimes called "mouse ears"





If you have “mouse ear” Marine Bands in beautiful condition, I would hope that you would at least take good care of them. They are hard to find. They will play well if adjusted properly. They tend to have slightly thinner reeds than later Marine Bands, and are relatively quiet harmonicas.



The other big clue is on the lower cover plates. In the middle of the design there is a circle that is held by two hands. If there is a six-pointed star in this circle, it is a “Pre-War” Marine Band harmonica. All of the Marine Bands with the “mouse ears” have this six-pointed star.



The oldest of the “mouse ear” Marine Band harmonicas also have what is called “ragged sleeves” – the sleeves attached to the hands holding the circle in the middle have a ragged, zig-zag edge.



The next major change in the cover plates is when the “mouse ears” were dropped for single tabs on either side. This is the basic design that is used to this day on Marine Bands, Marine Band Deluxes, and the new Crossover Marine Band harmonica.

The oldest Marine Band Harmonicas with the single tabs have the six pointed star in the middle of the lower cover plate. They will all play well if you set the curve and offset of the reeds well, and you make sure that the comb and reed plates fit together properly.

The reeds and slots on these harmonicas generally have very good tolerances, although some of them have reeds that fall short of the end of the slot and then they don't work very well unless you take the reeds out and put them back in so they do get closer to the end of the slot.

So in general, the Marine Bands that have the six pointed stars on the lower cover plates are very old and tend to play well, especially with some reed work. Some of the oldest ones have reeds that are thinner than the ones that I consider to be ideal, but they still play quite well with some work.

The Marine Bands that do not have the six-pointed star on the lower cover plates started appearing in the fifties. I believe that Hohner had quite a pile of the old cover plates with the six pointed stars that were made before World War Two, and continued to sell them into the fifties. The newer cover plates with no six pointed star became the norm by the late fifties.

So the Marine Band Harmonicas made for the last 50 years or so have no six-pointed star, and the quality of the harmonicas goes all over the map. The real important clues for finding the best ones come in the next section on reed plates, but first, a....

### Summary – Marine Band Cover Plates

- The oldest Marine Band cover plates have “mouse ear” double tabs in the sides, a six pointed star in the middle of the lower cover plate, and “ragged sleeves” on the hands holding the circle in the middle of the lower cover plate.
- The next oldest are the double tab “mouse ear” covers with six pointed star on lower covers but no “ragged sleeves”
- The next generation of Marine Band Covers had single tabs on the sides and the six-pointed star in the middle of the lower cover plate.
- The cover plates with the six pointed stars are usually referred to as “pre-war “ Marine Band cover plates. They were probably made before World War Two. They were still being sold in the fifties until the stock ran out, and then the six-pointed star disappeared.
- For the last fifty years or so, the Marine Band cover plate has been the same basic design with no six-pointed star on the lower cover plate.

I like finding old harmonicas as a way of learning about harmonicas, but I have never pursued it as a business. My main interest in old harmonicas is to have a deep understanding of what kind of instruments the harmonica pioneers were playing, and as a way of having a good supply of repair reeds. I discovered along the way that there were also old harmonicas that I could make into a good custom harmonica.

This brings us to the most useful information if you are looking for a harmonica to play: what to look for in the reed plates. The best reed plates have very distinct clues



that you can see with the naked eye, and I will now tell you and show you what to look for.

## Reed Plates

Boxes and cover plates give you some clues about your Marine Band but the most important information about what kind of harmonica you have is in the reed plates. Here is what to look for:

- Look at the draw or lower reed plate. How many nails are there **between the ten reeds**? If you have good light or a flashlight, you can look for these nails without taking off the lower cover plate. This is a useful thing to know if you are looking at harmonicas in a flea market or antique shop.

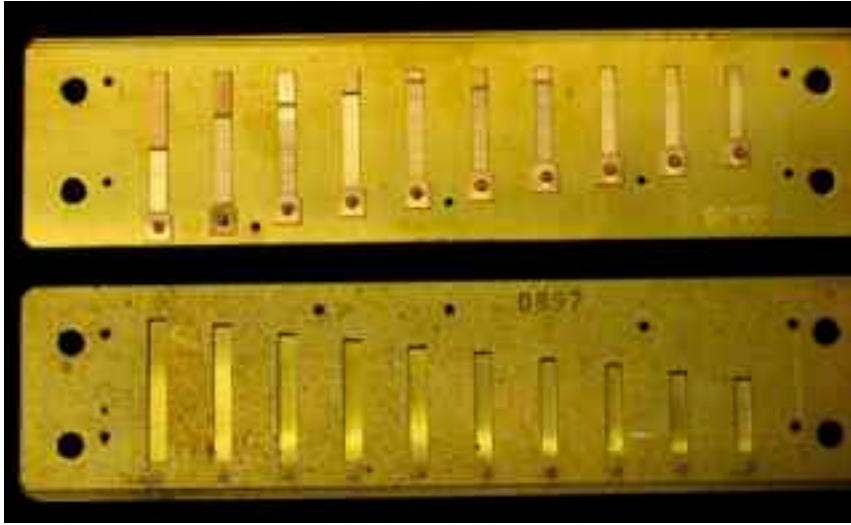


- If the answer is 4, you have a very old Marine Band, and the reeds on those particular harmonicas tend to be thinner than the later Marine Bands. You can make a very good harmonica from these reed plates, but it really is easier to do this with a more recent set of reed plates, and they may be worth more as collector items than as playing harmonicas. My experience with these reed plates is that a simple overhaul gives you very satisfying results (sealed comb, basic reed work) but making an overblow harmonica is too much work.

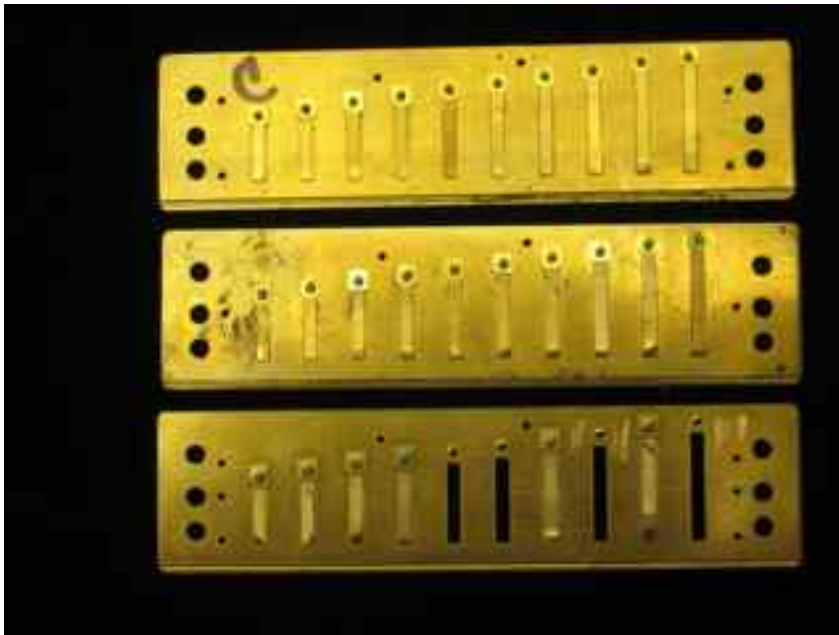


- If the answer is 3, you have a harmonica that you can work on and get good to great results. You will have to work a lot harder to emboss or burnish

these old reed plates than the new reed plates, because the brass is harder and more brittle.



If the answer is 3 AND it has a date stamped on it, it is one of the newest reed plates. These are much easier to emboss than the older reed plates. The reeds vary in thickness and materials used, and so does the response and longevity of the reeds.



If the answer is 2, save these reed plates for the reeds. They will drive you nuts if you try to upgrade them. For example – If you heavily emboss the slots, they sound like kazoos. If you don't emboss the slots, the response is substandard. I could go on and on, but you get the idea.

- If the answer is 2, AND the reed plate nail holes on the right and left number 1 or 3, congratulations! You have found the worst Marine Bands ever made! Save them for reeds. The reeds are fine. The problem is the extra-wide slots. When I refer to the reed plate nail holes, I mean the small nail holes. Don't confuse them with the large holes on the sides that are for the cover plate nails (or screws if used)

The holes for the cover plate nails or screws have their own story: The earliest "mouse ear" Marine Bands had two large holes on the right and left for the cover plate nails. When Hohner came out with the single tab cover plates, they started putting in three large holes for cover plate nails or screws. When Hohner re-did their reed plates in the Ninties, they went back to having two large cover plate holes, like the "mouse ear" Marine Bands.

This information applies to Marine Bands, Old Standbys, The ten hole Echo Vampers, basically all the "handmade" 10 hole diatonic harmonicas made by Hohner. They all had the same reed plates with different cover plates on them. If you save reed plates for reeds, you will find the following section useful: The R. Sleigh Marine Band Reed Replacement Chart and instructions. Enjoy!

On the following page is a reed replacement chart. If you replace reeds in your Hohner handmade harmonicas, you can use this information to get reeds for or from Special 20s, Golden Melodies, old Old standbys, and other Hohner harmonicas.

You may be surprised at some of the reeds that you can swap from one harmonica to another. I know I was when I put this chart together.

R. Sleigh Marine Band Reed Replacement Chart										
1 / D	14 / F#	28 / A	43 / D	56 / F#	69 / A	83 / D	96 / F#	109 / A	123 / D	Blow
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Low D
3 / E	17 / A	32 / C#	45 / E	57 / G	71 / B	82 / C#	94 / E	107 / G	120 / B	Draw
2 / Eb	15 / G	29 / Bb	44 / Eb	57 / G	70 / Bb	84 / Eb	97 / G	110 / Bb	124 / Eb	Blow
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Low Eb
4 / F	18 / Bb	33 / D	46 / F	58 / Ab	72 / C	83 / D	95 / F	108 / Ab	121 / C	Draw
3 / E	16 / G#	30 / B	45 / E	58 / G#	71 / B	85 / E	98 / G#	111 / B	125 / E	Blow
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Low E
5 / F#	19 / B	34 / D#	47 / F#	59 / A	73 / C#	84 / D#	96 / F#	109 / A	122 / C#	Draw
4 / F	17 / A	31 / C	46 / F	A / 59	72 / C	86 / F	99 / A	112 / C	126 / F	Blow
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Low F
6 / G	20 / C	35 / E	48 / G	60 / Bb	74 / D	85 / E	97 / G	110 / Bb	123 / D	Draw
5 / F#	18 / A#	32 / C#	47 / F#	60 / A#	73 / C#	87 / F#	100 / A#	113 / C#	127 / F#	Blow
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Low F#
7 / G#	21 / C#	36 / E#	49 / G#	61 / B	75 / D#	86 / E#	98 / G#	111 / B	124 / D#	Draw
6 / G	19 / B	33 / D	48 / G	61 / B	74 / D	88 / G	101 / B	114 / D	128 / G	Blow
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	G
8 / A	22 / D	3 / F#	50 / A	62 / C	76 / E	87 / F#	99 / A	112 / C	125 / E	Draw
7 / Ab	20 / C	34 / Eb	49 / Ab	62 / C	75 / Eb	89 / Ab	102 / C	115 / Eb	129 / Ab	Blow
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Ab
9 / Bb	23 / Eb	38 / G	51 / Bb	63 / Db	77 / F	88 / G	100 / Bb	113 / Db	126 / F	Draw
8 / A	21 / C#	35 / E	50 / A	63 / C#	76 / E	90 / A	103 / C#	116 / E	130 / A	Blow
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	A
10 / B	24 / E	39 / G#	52 / B	64 / D	78 / F#	89 / G#	101 / B	114 / D	127 / F#	Draw
9 / Bb	22 / D	36 / F	51 / Bb	64 / D	77 / F	91 / Bb	104 / D	117 / F	131 / Bb	Blow
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Bb
11 / C	25 / F	40 / A	53 / C	65 / E	79 / G	90 / A	102 / C	115 / Eb	128 / G	Draw
10 / B	23 / D#	37 / F#	52 / B	65 / D#	78 / F#	92 / B	105 / D#	118 / F#	132 / B	Blow
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	B
12 / C#	26 / F#	41 / A#	54 / C#	66 / E	80 / G#	91 / A#	103 / C#	116 / E	129 / G#	Draw
11 / C	24 / E	38 / G	53 / C	66 / E	79 / G	93 / C	106 / E	119 / G	133 / C	Blow
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	C
13 / D	27 / G	42 / B	55 / D	67 / F	81 / A	92 / B	104 / D	117 / F	130 / A	Draw
Db	32 / Db	46 / F	58 / Ab	73 / Db	86 / F	98 / Ab	113 / Db			136 / F 145 / Ab 155 / Db
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
D	34 / Eb	49 / Ab	62 / C	75 / Eb	87 / Gb	100 / Bb	112 / C			134 / Eb 143 / Gb 152 / Bb
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Eb	33 / D	47 / F#	59 / A	74 / D	87 / F#	99 / A	114 / D			137 / F# 146 / A 156 / D
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
E	35 / E	50 / A	63 / C#	76 / E	88 / G	101 / B	113 / C#			135 / E 144 / G 153 / B
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
F	34 / Eb	48 / G	60 / Bb	75 / Eb	88 / G	100 / Bb	115 / Eb			138 / G 147 / Bb 157 / Eb
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
F#	36 / F	51 / Bb	64 / D	77 / F	89 / Ab	102 / C	114 / D			136 / F 145 / Ab 154 / C
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
High G	35 / E	49 / G#	61 / B	76 / E	89 / G#	101 / B	116 / E			139 / G# 148 / B 158 / E
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
High G	37 / F#	52 / B	65 / D#	78 / F#	90 / A	103 / C#	115 / D#			137 / F# 146 / A 155 / C#
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
High G	36 / F	50 / A	62 / C	77 / F	90 / A	102 / C	117 / F			140 / A 149 / C 159 / F
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
High G	38 / G	53 / C	66 / E	79 / G	91 / Bb	104 / D	116 / E			138 / G 147 / Bb 156 / D
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
High G	37 / F#	51 / A#	63 / C#	78 / F#	91 / A#	103 / C#	118 / F#			141 / A# 150 / C# 160 / F#
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
High G	39 / G#	54 / C#	67 / E#	80 / G#	92 / B	105 / D#	117 / E#			139 / G# 148 / B 157 / D#
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
High G	38 / G	52 / B	64 / D	79 / G	92 / B	104 / D	119 / G			142 / B 151 / D 161 / G
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
High G	40 / A	55 / D	68 / F#	81 / A	93 / C	106 / E	118 / F#			140 / A 149 / C 158 / E
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Wide Slot Reeds

Narrow Slot Reeds

R.S.#  
Hole #  
R.S.#

38 / G	Pitch of Reed
1	
40 / A	Pitch of Reed

Each vertical column represents one reed size (length x width).  
Locate the reed you want and any reed with the same R.S.#  
will match. (R. S. # - Reed System number)

## Using the Ultimate Marine Band Reed Replacement Chart

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Here are the quick start instructions for using the Ultimate Marine Band Reed Replacement chart:

"Find the reed you want and any reed in the same column with the same R.S. number will match"

slightly longer version:

1. Locate the key of the harmonica that you are repairing.
2. Find the reed that you want to replace.
3. Find the R. S. # (reed system number) for the reed – this will be to the right of the musical pitch of the reed (see illustration)
4. Look in the same vertical column for the same number – sometimes in as many as three places. These will be the exact matches. It helps to put a ruler alongside the column to help keep your eye on track as you look.
5. Now check your parts reed plates or reed stashes for the reed. If you don't have one, go for the next nearest one and try again.

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Now for the longer version and background information :

There are 18 different keys of Marine Band 1896 harmonicas, from low D to High G. Each harmonica has 20 reeds. At first glance, you might think that this means that there are 360 different reeds (18 x 20) to create the different harmonicas.

If you create a system of sorting and storing replacement reeds based on 20 reeds for each key, you need 360 envelopes or containers.

Look a little closer, and you start finding reeds that match from one harmonica key to another. For example, the Draw 1 reed on a G harmonica is an A note that is the same as the blow 1 reed on an A harmonica.

I created this chart by starting with a low D harmonica and giving the number 1 to the blow D reed in hole number 1. Number 2 was the Eb (blow #1 in the lo Eb harp) , the next highest pitch for the same size reed. As I continued to work my way through the harmonicas, the matches started to show up (for example – Draw 1 on lo D (E note) += blow #1 on the lo E harp.

When I started cross referencing reeds from one harmonica to another, I started to discover some matches that were not immediately obvious, like #6 blow reed on the G harp matching the #4 blow reed on the D harp. I created this chart to find all of the reeds that match up in size and pitch from one harmonica to another, and I

discovered that there are 161 different reeds used to create the 18 different keys of Marine Bands. So that eliminates 99 reeds to keep track of and store.

The chart is organized into 13 columns, one for each reed size (combination of length and width) The upper part of the chart goes from low D to C. These are commonly referred to as “long slot” reed plates. The lower part of the chart goes from Db to high G and these are referred to as “short slot” reed plates. If you compare a long slot reed plate to a short slot reed plate you will find two basic differences: The reeds are longer, and this is relatively easy to see. What is not as obvious is that there are wide reeds and narrow reeds, and that the pattern of wide reeds to narrow reeds is different.

On the long slot reed plates, the first 5 slots are wide reeds, the last 5 are narrow reeds.

On the short slot reed plates the first 3 slots are wide reeds , the last 7 are narrow reeds.

Slot # 3 on a long slot reed plate is the same dimensions as slot #1 on a short slot reed plate. This pattern continues until you get to slot #8 on the short slot reed plate. Slot #8 on the short slot reed plate is slightly longer than slot #10 on the long slot reed plate. This is the reason why you see the gap in the lower section of the reed replacement chart – to keep the columns lined up according to exact size.

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Practical ideas for using this chart:

1. Take all of your scrap reed plates and clearly label them with the key of the harp. Sort them into alphabetical order Ab, A, Bb, B etc – I took a bunch of plastic marine band or special 20 boxes & broke them apart to create two small trays – I put the draw reed plates into one & blow reed plates into another – helps if you can color coordinate ( grey for blow, white for draw from different color plastic)
2. With these reed plates sorted out, you can cross reference the chart & look for matching reeds
3. You could also order batches of the reeds that you are most likely to use & sort by R.S. #s and keep these in a box ( or you could just use the envelopes that the reeds come in & add R.S. #s – whatever will work for you as far as organizing.

OK, I hope this article / report / book chapter gives you some useful information. Stay in touch and I will keep you informed of the progress on the next book. I wish you many happy hours of tinkering and playing your harmonicas!

## More resources : Private Instruction

If you want to learn the most efficient ways to work on your harmonicas in record time, consider studying harmonica technology or music with me at my shop in Philipsburg PA. This is by far the fastest way to learn how to take control of your harmonicas. For more information contact me and I will put you in my schedule.

I also teach harmonica technology via webcam, email, and phone consultations. I can supply you with drawings related to your specific questions, evaluate your harmonicas, and generally support your efforts as you work on your instruments.

Many of my students have ended up changing the way they play the instrument as part of the process of learning how to work on them. If there is any question that the way you are playing the instrument is throwing off your tuning, the response of the reeds, or shortening the life of your harps, we can figure this out and correct it.

Here are a couple of testimonials from people who have studied with me at my shop:

"I greatly enjoyed working with Richard. I had a lot of ah-ha moments as Richard cleared up one mystery after another with his demonstrations and explanations. Watching a master technician at work and being able to ask questions on the spot is so easy and fun that I did not realize how much I was learning until later on. We worked on a wide variety of harps including XB-40s, chromatics and standard diatonics, and Richard's approach seemed direct and right on for all of them.

I was able to try things out immediately and then have them critiqued - this gave me a reality check on what was actually sinking in and let me uncover more questions and clarifications.

Whether it was routine maintenance, emergency repairs, or just getting a better understanding of the principles which make my instruments work, I found the instruction invaluable. Learning from Richard was a rewarding experience that gave me the confidence to go beyond basic repair to trying out some of my own customizing ideas."

I was fortunate to have spent two weekends with Richard at times when he had gigs in nearby State College, PA (Penn State Univ). Working by day and enjoying great music at night was the perfect combination.

I'll definitely return again to take advantage of Richard's experience as a harmonica instructor as well as have him critique some of the customizing work I have done since my last visit."

Terry Dyroff,  
Silver Spring, MD

I have been playing Richard Sleigh's harps for years (and believe me, I ain't gettin' 'em for free!!). But even though I've spent a chunk of change

on them and had to wait a long time for some of them, I've never regretted the investment that I made. Playing music is what gives me some of my highest highs, and these harps have taken me to places that I didn't know I could go to. For example, I fell in love instantly with his low D for fiddle tunes, and it completely changed that game for me - and it is so much kinder to my neighbor's pets than the standard D, to boot.

I play a wide range of styles from Blues to Old Time, Standards to Country, and Richard has dialed in the harps for my needs and then some. They are extremely even in their response from reed to reed, and when it comes to playing bends and overbends, it feels like I have power steering. They are WAY more playable than any production harp or other custom harp I've tried.

In the past few years I have also studied with Richard at his shop and I've been using his tools as well, and my sense of control over this part of my musical life has increased immensely. Working directly with Richard has been a series of breakthroughs and his tools just make tuning so much easier that I look forward to it (sometimes). I have even gotten good at replacing reeds, and it really makes it easier to know that Richard will bail me out if worst comes to worst.

Trip Henderson ~ New York, NY

<http://www.myspace.com/triphenderson> <http://www.youtube.com/tripharmonica>

For more information on my custom harmonicas, tool kits, instructional materials, teaching schedule and my next book, go to the following websites or contact me – thanks!

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814 342 9722 (w)  
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[myspace.com/richardsleigh](http://myspace.com/richardsleigh)  
[www.youtube.com/rsleighharp](http://www.youtube.com/rsleighharp)  
[www.rsleigh.com](http://www.rsleigh.com) (this web site will be up and running soon)

Also available from Richard Sleigh:

## Train Rhythms and Pentatonic Scales

CD, bonus CD, instructions and personal coaching. One of the reasons I created this set of CDS came out of working with people who were playing well tuned harmonica out of tune. In other words, they were making some of the notes flat by the way they were breathing through the instrument. These exercises eliminate the partially blocked breathing that makes notes go out of tune.



These exercises are the result of a long search for the most versatile and basic harmonica skills for any style of music.

Step by step instructions on how to:

- Create HUGE TONE at will - When your throat gets big on the inside, the tone on the outside gets big as well.
- Smooth out how you go from blow to draw notes so your playing has an effortless, free-flowing feel and sound.
- Go from the thinnest, "cut the room" treble sound to a deep round bass tone when you want to. It's like having a tone control that gives you the whole range from high to mid to low
- Conserve your energy and never run out of breath. When you play, people will ask you "When do you breathe??" and you can say "All the time!"
- Use 3 single note patterns as the framework for melodies in at least 6 different positions, speed patterns, and jamming. These "superhighways" are tabbed out for the entire 10 hole harmonica, and set you up for playing in 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> position on a diatonic harmonica. They also set you up for playing in different keys on a chromatic harmonica. They are also tabbed out as triplet patterns, and the 2<sup>nd</sup> position minor pentatonic and blues scale are included in addition to the 6 basic pentatonic scales.

For more information, go to:

[www.customharmonicas.com](http://www.customharmonicas.com) or [www.RSleigh.com](http://www.RSleigh.com)

As of September 2009, RSleigh.com is still mostly under construction, but this will change soon.....

