

The Brass Firemen Scrapbook

1885-2002

*Created by
Darin LaGarry*



Dedication



Remembering Fred. Often referred to as the “Father of the Band” to some, and “Grandfather of the Band” to others, Fred Morgan organized and guided the Norwood Fire Department Band as manager from 1945 until 1977. Fred established all the standards by which the band currently operates.

Fred worked hard to keep the business aspects out of the band. He summed it up well when he said, “We are strictly a volunteer group and play for fun, enjoyment, and fellowship... one seldom hears an argument or word of dissension. It has been said ‘you fellows have more fun than your listening audience’ and we agree. Also we have been asked ‘How do you keep young people in the band with all the old-time music?’ ... again, the answer is fun and fellowship.”

The fun and fellowship were possible thanks to Fred’s hard work behind the scenes. All the band members had to do is show up with an instrument and a good attitude and Fred did the rest.

After leaving the band in the late 70’s for health reasons, Fred’s support of the band never diminished. He praised the band in the media and attended our performances whenever he was able. Former band member and son Jack Morgan observes, “*Each time I would see him at a concert or parade his comment would always be the same: ‘Jack, just listen to that band ... I don’t think I have EVER heard them play any better!’*”

This scrapbook is dedicated to the memory of Fred Morgan. “*Thanks for making us proud of who we are.*”

Keeping the Fire Burning. Bob Haggett joined the Norwood Fire Dept. Band in 1969 and took over as Manager in 1977 from his Uncle Fred. Bob has been managing the band ever since.

Bob had the challenge of continuing a process that had gained a fair amount of momentum in the preceding 35 years. As the popularity of the Brass Firemen grew, the management demands became more challenging. The band had 10 weeks to raise \$18,000 in 1983 to travel to the Olympics. Bob and his wife Judee worked tirelessly to make such trips possible for the band. It is difficult to put into words what it was like to perform in front of a world-wide audience of millions, to play for the First Lady, or to march through Indianapolis for 400,000 people. We don’t consider the management demands when we think of these events. This means that Bob performed his job well.

Bob was careful to try to remain faithful to Fred’s vision for the band. Bob said, “Fred would tell me ‘keep the money out of the band’. As soon as it becomes about money, you lose something.”

The band has teetered on the edge of world fame several times during Bob’s tenure as manager. There were many directions the band could have taken as a result, most of them contrary to Fred’s vision. Bob has tried to keep the formula simple and as a result, here we are still entertaining North Country audiences in the 21st century.

This scrapbook is also dedicated to you Bob, for your continued hard work and dedication to the band. Thank You!



Acknowledgements



A Message From the Editor (That's me to the left there)

I was excited to hear that a Brass Firemen reunion was in the works, and I immediately volunteered to do a scrapbook for the band, thinking "How hard can that be?" What I had underestimated was the sheer volume of material that has been captured for this band over the last 50 years. I realized that I was faced with the difficult task of deciding what to leave out.

I really had 2 goals in mind when I created this book: a) capture the key events that punctuated the bands long history and b) capture images of as many band members as possible. Despite my efforts, there will inevitably be some events and band members not documented here. If you are one of these individuals, hopefully this will not deter from your enjoyment of the book. Every band member helped make the band what it is today. Please also excuse the inevitable misspellings of names and occasional factual error. Certainly I would like to know about these occurrences so that I can make corrections.

While I will gladly take credit for the presentation of the material and some of the written works, everything else was provided by band members and friends of the band. Bob Haggett and Fred Morgan have already written much about the history and experiences of the band, and also maintained some well organized scrapbooks. This effort would be far less meaningful without their contributions. Also, our story has been competently covered by the newspapers over the years. I would like to thank the Courier Observer and Watertown Daily times for their continued interests in our pursuits.

The Brass Firemen are grateful for the financial contributions made by the following local business & organizations, which helped make this scrapbook possible:



Norwood Kiwanis



GM PowerTrain Massena



Norwood Vol. Fire Dept.



Norwood American Legion
Post 68



Barrett Paving, Inc.



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I would also like to thank a few other significant contributors: Jack Morgan, Bob Haggett, Ken Beckstead, Dave Flint, Jodi LaGarry, Lyle Camp, Jerry Gallagher, Tim Donahue, Dennis Williams and The Norwood Museum. I also received numerous emails with personal accounts... thank you for taking the time to send your stories. Finally, I would like to thank God for blessing us with our talents and giving us such an honorable forum with which to express them.

I am hopeful that this scrapbook project will become a constant "work in process" and that I will continue to update it over the years as the band continues its evolution. This then, can become the permanent record for the greatest band and best bunch of guys in the North Country... the Norwood Brass Firemen.

- Darin LaGarry, May 2003 (Band Member 1983-1990, 2002-)

DRAMATIC

ENTERTAINMENT,

UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE

YOUNG RECRUITS BAND,

OF NORWOOD,

AT TOWN HALL, NORFOLK, N. Y.,

Friday Evening, March 27th, 1885.

The entertainment will open with the new and interesting Temperance Drama entitled

FRUITS OF THE

WINE CUP

IN THREE ACTS.
CAST OF CHARACTERS.

MR. HAMILTON
MR. BAILEY
CHAS. BAILY
ANDREWS
SPECULATION
JESSEMAH, (The Yankee)
KATE HAMILTON
MARY
SARAH
FLOHA
WINSTABLE

W. J. FLETCHER
W. H. WELLS
L. L. ANSLEY
H. E. REDFELL
H. H. BAILEY
E. J. HOLY
MISS MARY HURD
MISS CLARA WHITNEY
MISS ALICE MUNNION
MISS LILA MCCLELLAND
E. J. JOHNSON

There will also be presented the pleasing comedy entitled

MY TURN NEXT!

CAST OF CHARACTERS:

FARABUCUM TWITTERS, (A Village Apothecary)
TOM DILLON, (The Professional Amositor)
TOM TRAP, (A Conventional Traveler)
FARMER WHEATEAR, (From Backsary - Utility)
LYDIA, (Twiter's Wife - the Walking Lady)
JESSIE, (Her Niece)
PEGGY, (Twiter's Maid Servant and Housekeeper)

E. J. HOLY
HUGH FLACK
THOS. WILSON
BERT BEAN
LILA MCCLELLAND
ALICE MUNNION
CLARA WHITNEY

The popular Institution, entitled "The Village Band," will be delivered between the Plays by J. W. Driskoll.

THE YOUNG RECRUITS BAND WILL BE IN ATTENDANCE

And give an Open Air Concert and also furnish Music for the Entertainment.

General Admission 25c., Children under 12, 15 Cents.
Doors open at 7, Entertainment will commence at 7:45 o'clock.

PER ORDER OF COMMITTEE.

NORWOOD NEWS PRINT.



1904-05 Band

Early History of the Brass Firemen. (Contains some excerpts from Fred Morgan's "Brief History of the Norwood Fire Dept Band") Recorded history of the Norwood Fire Dept. Band dates back to the early 1880's. At that time the Young Recruits Band and a Cornet Band, both from Norwood, entertained North Country residents with regular concerts and engagements. This core of instrumental musicians remained in the area for many years preceding the Norwood Fire Dept. Band, and formed a community band that played regular concerts in Norwood from about 1905-1935. One of the first published photographs of this band is shown above.

Fred Morgan recalls, "The first I remember of the band was in the early 1920's as a small boy. Once a week during the summer our family would load into the family car, a Model T Ford, and drive to Norwood to the band concerts which were held on the old band stand on the village park. My father played in the band. We kids always looked forward to this event."

The band stand was built around 1910 specifically for the purpose of providing a place for the Norwood Band to play. There was provision for a roof, although this part of the structure was never completed. The band stand was eventually removed (along with a few cherished elms) in the late 1940's to make way for the present day Municipal Building.

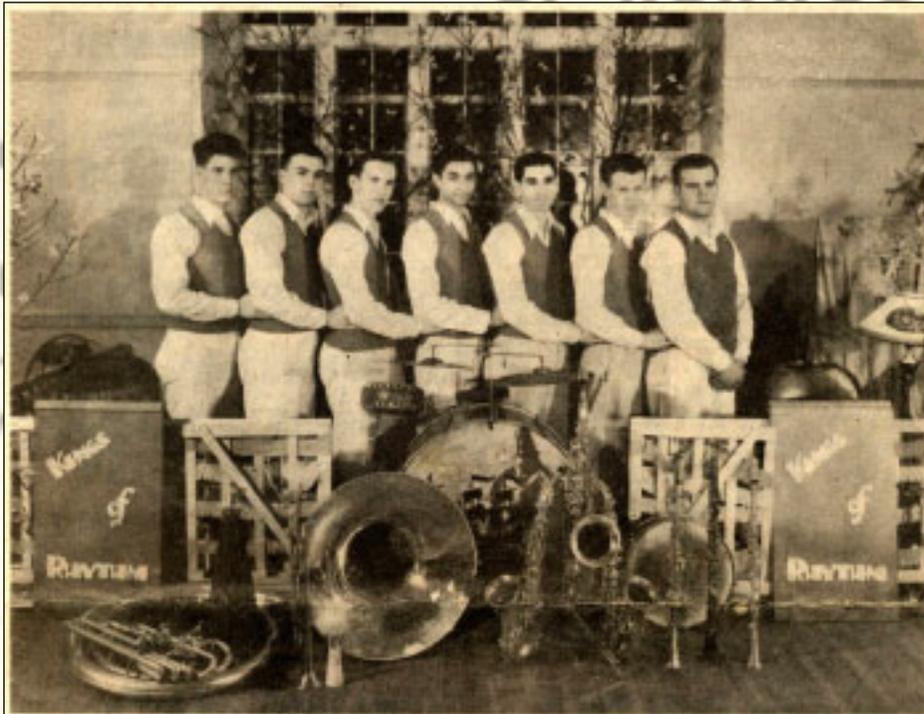


Band stand

What precious things are memories - I recall everyone hurrying through supper on summery Wednesday evenings in order to be on hand for the open air concert the Norwood Band played from this bandstand which stood on the north east corner of the Village Green. The bandsmen read their music from the dim light given from a string of bulbs fastened to the white upright posts.



Norwood Band, 1910. Front Row L to R: Harold Stowell, Charles Drew, ?? Beaudry, prop boy, Frank Morgan, ?? Giles. Middle Row: Harold Nims, Arthur Camp, Mark Cummings, bandleader Frank Worden holding his son, Edson Farmer, Will Bishop, Guy Finch. Back Row: Earl Claffey, A.C. Nickerson, Arthur Gay, Edson Morgan, Wayland Williams, Leo Anable.



WITH THE 'KINGS' — Fred Morgan, far right, played with the "Kings of Rhythm," under bandleader Joe Callpart, in the 1930s. Shown from left are Willard Harper, John Steel, Dean Hart, now a local dentist; Joe Callpart (the late father of Mayor Joseph Callpart); John Morrison and Morgan.

The Norwood Band had to disband during World War II as many of the members were enlisted to fight for our country. Some musicians remained, however, and joined other groups to fill the gap left by the band, such as the "Kings of Rhythm" for whom Fred Morgan performed (left).

ALCOA in Massena was a major sponsor of musical performances during the war, and had a 40-piece orchestra and 60-member choral group that regularly gave morale building concerts. For the last show planned, director Robert Hoy wanted additional groups, with members from various localities. So Morgan, an ALCOA employee, gathered seven musicians – Harry Feikert, James McLennan, Jim Calnon, Leo Hickey, Seeley Buck, George Bixby and himself – and formed an "oompah" band.

Fred remembers, "We called it a Dutch band. It was really a German band, but we were fighting the Germans then."

That last show was never held, as the war ended before the scheduled date of the performance. Fred's band had a momentum of its own, however, and that night the band traveled from town to town in the back of a truck putting on performances in numerous local taverns. The band stayed together, and in 1946, the Norwood Volunteer Fire Dept, under Chief Leo French, offered to buy the band uniforms, music and a set of drums. The band then became known as the Norwood Fire Dept. Band, and participated with the Fire Department in numerous field days, parades, and other events.



Norwood Fire Dept. Band in the 1940's. This picture was taken in the Norwood Music Hall. L to R: Jim Calnon, Leo Hickey, Gene Lewis, Hubert Bond, Jim McClennan, George McClennan, George Bixby, Ernie Delaney, Seeley Buck, Harry Feickert, Murray Farmer, Fred Morgan, Don Jarvis, David Donahue.



Along with the band stand, the Norwood Music Hall (left) was used for regular musical performances in the village. The hall, at the site of the current Municipal Building, was built in the 1890's and dismantled in the late 1940's.

In the 40's and early 50's the band was often accompanied by one of 2 vocal quartets (below). They, with the band, traveled twice to the Sunmount Hospital in Tupper Lake and entertained the veterans. Sunmount at that time was a veteran's hospital. Also, the groups entertained crowds of nearly 10,000 people during the annual firemen's 4th of July celebration. Fred recalls, *"It was especially thrilling for me to sit and play 'The Star Spangled Banner' while the finale of the fireworks was being shown – the loud aerial bombs – the bright flashes of light – car horns blowing, nothing can compare to it!"*



The men's and women's quartets. From L to R: Otto Phelix, Esther Hickey, Tom Charlobois, Leo Hickey, Claire Dockum, Jim Calnon, Joyce Calnon, Gerald Dockum. Missing: Luella Burton. The Norwood Fire Dept Band can be seen sitting in the back.

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DEPARTMENT BAND**

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BAND CONCERT VILLAGE PARK
THURSDAY 8 P. M.



**Norwood Fire
Dept. Band
Gives Concert**

Norwood—The first concert of the season by the Norwood Fire Department band was well received by a large audience at the Norwood town hall a week ago Friday evening. The band was under the direction of Harry Feickert. Leo Hickey acted as master of ceremonies. The following program was presented:

Band, "America"; band, "Colonel Miner March"; alto felix on the violin; band, "Organ Echoes"; male quartet (James Calnon, Gerald Dockum, Leo Hickey, Tom Charlebois) "Meet Me Tonight in Dreamland" and "Mandy Lee"; band, "Puribus Unum"; solo, Hubert Clark, "On the Road to Mandalay"; solo, Louella Burton, "I'll Be Seeing You"; band, "Beer Barrel Polka"; male quartet, "Be Sure It's True," "Dance with a Dolly"; band, "March Religioso"; girls quartet (Joyce Calnon, Claire Dockum, Esther Hickey, Louella Burton) "Sentimental Gentleman from Georgia," and "Sioux City Sue"; band, "The Outlook"; dance orchestra (J. Calnon, H. Bond, W. Wordon, L. Hickey, P. Morgan, J. McLennan) "Dinah," and "Wubash Blues"; band, Star Spangled Banner.



**1949
ANNUAL
FOURTH OF JULY
CELEBRATION**

NORWOOD, N. Y.

Sponsored by
NORWOOD FIRE DEPT

Donation 50c

Good Afternoon and
Evening

4th of July in Norwood, 1949. Left Column: Robert Morgan, Seeley Buck, unknown, Robert Clark. Middle Column: Jimmy McLennan, Wayne Morgan, Robert Donovan, Clyde Morgan, Gene Lewis. Right Column: Fred Morgan. Majorette: Jean Kingsley.



1940's Band. From the left: Robert Morgan, Hubert Bond, Clyde Morgan, James McLennan, David Donahue, George Bixby, Jim Cotey, Ernest Delaney, Fred Morgan, Seeley Buck, Dick Hollister, Murray Farmer, Robert Clark, Harry Feikert.

The Maestro, Harry Feikert, director par excellence of the Norwood Fire Department Band for about 10 years, was a Spanish-American War veteran who had seen duty in Cuba during World War I was a Regimental Band-master. He received his musical training in a New York City Conservatory of Music and was active in bands all his life.

"I remember in the early 50's practices were held in the old Fire Dept. building, upstairs. I remember a few members at that time: Seeley "Off-Beat" Buck, mellophone (does anyone still know what that is?); George Bixby, valve trombone; Ernie Delaney, snare drum and Dad on the sousaphone. I was only 15 or 16 at the time"

- Chuck Morgan



1959 Band. Back Row, L to R - John Dow, Fred Morgan, George Reynolds, Seeley Buck, Tim Donahue, George Bixby, Dick Burns, John Cotey. Kneeling - Jim McLennan, Lyle Camp, Dennis LaFleur, Jack Morgan, Fred A. Morgan, Hubert Bond.

Firemen Band auditioned by Ted Mack Producer

Sixteen weary members of the Norwood Volunteer Fire Department Band arrived home at 4 a.m. Tuesday morning after auditioning before Buddy Paige, the Ted Mack Show Producer and the Ted Mack orchestra leader at Clayton. With their audition scheduled for 10 p.m. the "boys" barely had time to answer two fire alarms in the early evening hours of Monday before "embarking" in a five-car caravan, together with the equipment truck loaded with assorted band instruments, for the summer resort community of Clayton. However, the hands of the clock stood at 1 a.m. before the Band's turn to be heard.



1966 Band. L to R: Dick French, Fred Morgan Jr., John Cotey, Phil Regan, Jim Coty, Fred Morgan, Lloyd Sawyer-Chief, Lyle Camp, Lee Farrington, Bud Clark, Dennis LaFleur, Seeley Buck, George Bixby, Emmett Regan-Chief, Gerry Dreysee, Dick Burns, Vern Ingram Jr., Tim Donahue Sr.

Officials of the Ted Mack Show told the group that they would receive word as to the results of the audition in a letter within a few days.

The group had previously been auditioned in the local fire station, and had received many kind words from both Paige and Mrs. Esther Levy, public relations director, who accompanied the auditioner to Norwood.

This is one of the few marching bands still left in this area, and Norwood is one of the few towns still to enjoy weekly Band Concerts throughout the summer.

Members of the band have a wide variety of occupations, but all have one common factor: they love to play.

NORWOOD'S PRIDE — Shows above are members of the Norwood Fire Department Marching Band, which was auditioned at Clayton Monday evening by Buddy Paige for the Ted Mack Amateur Hour.

The State Convention Gallery, 1968-76



The Firemen's Association of NY (FASNY) holds annual conventions at various cities in the state. The Norwood Fire Dept. Band has been playing at these conventions since 1960, representing the northern delegation. Bill Reid (left), an executive director for FASNY and former Norwood resident, was very influential in the band's growth with FASNY and welcomed the band with open arms at every visit. For several years, a professional photographer was brought in to photograph the band at convention. These wonderful photos appear on the next several pages.



"When we first started traveling by bus, our toilet facilities were a hole drilled through the floor with a funnel. On our first trip to Syracuse it worked great until we were going 60 mph on Route 81. Seeley Buck, the bus driver, looking in the rear view mirror saw 2 cars with their wipers going like mad!"

- Fred Morgan

1968 State Convention in Syracuse. From L to R: Mike Edwards, John Cotey (Director), Fred Morgan, Seeley Buck, Gerry Dreysee, Lyle Camp (with Bass Drum), Steve LaBarr, George Bixby, Tim Maloney, Lee Farrington, Dick French.



1969 State Convention in Buffalo. From L to R: Lyle Camp, Lee Tessier, George Bixby, Fred Morgan, Dick French, Lee Farrington, Robert Haggett, Gerry Dreysee, Mike Edwards, John Cotey, Seeley Buck, Steve LaBarr, Pete McLaughlin



"I remember Msgr. McCarthy, who was also known as the 'carnival priest'. He had quite a sense of humor. Once he asked us to play "Your Cheating Heart". During the performance he opened his shirt and a big red heart on a spring popped out!"
 - Robert Haggett

1970 State Convention in Watertown. Front Row L to R: Dave Flint, John Cotey, Tim Donahue, Gerry Dreysee. Back Row: Bill Reid, Bill Felix, Fred Morgan, Seeley Buck, Msgr. McCarthy, Lyle Camp, Steve LaBarr, George Bixby, Dick French, Joe Liotta, Bernie Bolio, Lee Farrington.



1971 State Convention Niagara Falls. 1st row L to R: Bill Reid, Fred Morgan Jr., Dave Flint, Robert Haggett, John Cotey, Bill Felix. Second Row: Msgr. McCarthy, Joe Liotta, Gerry Dreysee, Dick French, Fred Morgan Sr., Lyle Camp, Lee Farrington, George Bixby, Tyler McHugh, Pete Crayford



“Marty was known for performing the ‘worm dance’... he would kick off his shoes, lie on his back, and play his trombone with his bare feet. I’d never seen anything quite like that!”
 - Robert Haggett

1972 State Convention Syracuse. Front L to R: Tim Donahue, Lyle Camp, Dave Flint, Dave Russell, Marty Coons. Back Row: John Cotey, Bill Felix, Fred Morgan, Lee Farrington, Dick French, Jerry Donnelly, Seeley Buck, Tyler McHugh, Rick Ellis, Gerry Dreysee.

"We picked up Dick French and Rick Ellis in Syracuse. Buzz Sawyer drove the bus. Good organization in Rochester and we were very well received. Good band!"

- Fred Morgan



1973 State Convention in Rochester. Back Row, L to R: Elmer James, Bobby Thorpe, Tim Donahue, Dick French, Jerry Dreysee. Middle Row: Peter McLaughlin, Andres Vaska, Gerald Donnelly, John Cotey. First Row: Dave Flint, Robert Haggett, Fred Morgan, Lyle Camp, Rick Ellis, David Russell, Lee Farrington



1974 State Convention in NYC. Back L to R: Joe Liotta, Gerry Dreysee, Andres Vaska, Rick Ellis, Tim Donahue, Tom Palmatier, Fred Morgan, Dave Flint, Gerry Donnelly, Lee Farrington, Bob Thorpe, John Cotey, Elmer James, Bill Reid. Front: Bill Felix, Lyle Camp, Dick French, David Russell.