

The St. Lawrence County Historical Association
QUARTERLY

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The St. Lawrence County Historical Association at the Silas Wright Museum

The St. Lawrence County Historical Association is a private, not-for-profit, membership organization based at the Silas Wright House in Canton, New York. Founded in 1947, the Association is governed by a constitution, by-laws, and Board of Trustees. The Historical Association's membership meets annually to elect its trustees.

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The St. Lawrence County Historical Association is a not-for-profit membership organization and museum which serves as an educational resource for the use and benefit of the citizens of St. Lawrence County and others interested in the County's history and traditions. The Association collects and preserves archival material and artifacts pertinent to the County's history. In cooperation and collaboration with other local organizations, the Association promotes an understanding of and appreciation for the County's rich history through publications, exhibits, and programs. The St. Lawrence County Historical Association operates within museum standards established by the American Association of Museums.

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Membership in the St. Lawrence County Historical Association is open to all interested parties. Annual membership dues are: Individual \$30; Senior/Student \$25; Family \$40; Contributor \$55; Supporter \$100; Patron \$250. Members receive the SLCHA Quarterly, the Historical Association's bi-monthly newsletter, and various discounts on publications, programs and events.

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The SLCHA Quarterly welcomes contributions. To submit a manuscript, or for further information, please contact the editor through the St. Lawrence County Historical Association. Please address communications to: Managing Editor, *The SLCHA Quarterly*, P.O. Box 8, Canton, NY 13617.

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Jane Subramanian

On the Cover

*This candid photograph of the Brass Firemen is from the 1980's.
Courtesy of Bob Haggett. Photographer: Gerry Gallagher.*

From the County Historian

By Trent Trulock

Every fall the St. Lawrence County Historical Association develops its operating budget for the next year. Last year the Board of Trustees and I had a tough time putting together a balanced budget. This was due to the tough economic times everyone was facing. This year the tough times continue. We have received a 13% cut for 2004 from the New York State Council for the Arts. This amounts to \$1,800 less funding than last year. This cut is on top of the 10% cut that we received for 2003. We are facing an 8 1/2% cut from St. Lawrence County, which amounts to \$1,625. These state and county cuts come on top of 3 bad years for the stock market. The association's endowment has felt the same sting of loss that others' retirement accounts have endured. But the market is improving as I write this article, so I will take that as a hopeful sign. The historical association has also seen its insurance cost for the museum building and the artifact and archival collection skyrocket, due to the 9/11 terrorist attacks and the dismal stock market. It does look like the tough times are here to stay for a while longer.

But there are two things that help us in tough times. One is our overall commitment to our mission to collect, preserve, research, and interpret the history of St. Lawrence County. This is basically the same mission that we have had since our inception in 1947, and it guides us through the difficult times. Our mission is important to everyone involved with the St. Lawrence County Historical Association, and this mission gives us the incentive to keep going and the perspective that things change over time. We know that bad times don't last forever.

The second thing that helps us through these troubled financial times is the support of our members. Our members are truly amazing. We have over 1,000 members who stick by us through the good and bad times. These members provide 32% of the financial



The Silas Wright House, home of the St. Lawrence County Historical Association.

support for our operating budget through their membership dues, donations, and memorial gifts. Last year that amounted to \$47,319 out of our operating budget of \$146,560! These figures do not include planned gifts that some of our members make through wills and estate planning. These planned gifts add to the long-term financial stability of the association.

Support from our dedicated members has always been critical to the operation of the St. Lawrence County Historical Association, and this support also comes in many more forms than just money. Members donate artifacts to the museum and archives, attend exhibit openings and programs, and read our publications. Without our members, the St. Lawrence County Historical Association would be a "hollow organization", it would have a great mission with no foundation to support it or passion to drive it. Your interest and continued membership lets the association continue with its mission. I thank you for your support of St. Lawrence County's history.

This *Quarterly* happens to focus on the members of another organization in our county and shows how a few dedicated individuals can make a great difference. The Brass Firemen band from Norwood is our featured topic in this issue. This group has been making delightful music for over 120 years and adds to our feelings of community and connectedness, feelings that we have all come to expect from our North Country institutions. The Brass Firemen are a perfect example of what can be done when a group of people comes together for a worthy cause. Their history is part of our history, and their commitment makes us all a little wealthier.

The Enduring and Strong Beat of the Norwood Brass Firemen

By Jane Subramanian

The tragedy of Sept. 11th encouraged a recent resurgence in the importance of patriotism and community within the United States, but many elements of patriotic spirit had been present and a significant part of everyday American life for quite some time. One strong and lasting representation of such community spirit is the band, with the early bands tracing their roots back to the 18th century when colonization was taking place and immigrants were bringing the traditions of instrumental ensembles from their homeland.¹ The tradition of the band as encouragement for the military was another European influence that appeared in the United States, and these bands also played for community functions as well. In the early 1800's, a new type of ensemble also began to appear, when bands solely comprised of civilians for community purposes developed.² The early bands in Europe and on our soil were comprised of a variety of instruments, but in the 1830's, instrumentation switched to brass and percussion, due to the ability of brass instruments to project outdoors and the improvements made in the quality of those instruments.³ Within our county, one brass band has been an important element of life in the North Country for many years.

The Norwood Brass Firemen has very early roots, with first records tracing its presence back to the 1870's. Exactly what groups existed in Norwood is now rather muddy and unclear, but evidence exists of the Young Recruits Band and a Cornet Band, both of whom performed regularly for the community.⁴ The first bands included woodwind, brass, percussion and sometimes even strings, and played for summer programs and special events, including in the opera house⁵, but the opera house was lost in a



1904-05 Band

fire in 1907.⁶ A newer ensemble was formed around 1910 and was sponsored even at this time by the fire department in Norwood, with the log book of the Fire Department mentioning the purchase of the bass drum in the late 1890's.⁷ The early bands marched in parades with the firemen.⁸ These two groups evolved into a community band that played in Norwood from 1905-1935.⁹ The community provided strong support for the band even in the early years, and built the first bandstand on the Village Green in 1910 for band performances where the band played weekly concerts. One article describes the stand and the band in more detail:

The solidly built stand made of concrete, has iron posts spaced around it and the original plans called for a roof, but this was never accomplished. The Norwood Band played about twenty-five years, the members changing through the years, and finally disbanded during the 1930's.¹⁰

While the band was still going, they also performed in the Norwood Music Hall, located at the site of the current Municipal Building, which was built in the 1890's and taken down



1910 Band. 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.

in the late 1940's.¹¹ World War II interrupted the existence of the brass band, although other groups filled in, such as the Kings of Rhythm, under bandleader Joe Calipari.¹²

During the war years, ALCOA sponsored many musical performances as morale boosters, and although they had an orchestra and chorus for their performances, Robert Hoy, who was director for the shows, wanted additional groups from the area.¹³ Fred Morgan, well known to many in the North Country for his significance in the Norwood Brass Firemen, formed a small band of seven musicians, although ALCOA's last show never came about because of the end of the war. Instead, Fred and his group drove throughout the county to help everyone in the North Country celebrate the end of the war – as Fred Morgan comments “What a night – we were out all night long, on the back of a truck, into every town, and I guess, into every bar.”¹⁴ According to Bob Haggett, present manager of the band and nephew of Morgan, the band



1940's Band. L to R: 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



Susan Lyman Historical Museum, Norwood, NY
(Fred Morgan's Scrapbook)

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

was called "The Dutch Oompah Band" and regarding the name, Haggett comments "It was really a German Oompah band, but they were fighting the Germans at the time, so they had to make it Dutch."¹⁵ The band continued to play, traveling all around the area in Fred's station wagon to perform a minstrel type program.¹⁶ Fred's scrapbook shows a clipping for one such show, a Minstrel Show on May 19, 1948 called "Musical Extravaganza."¹⁷ Fred had actually been a member of the band in one of its earlier incarnations, joining the band in 1929 at the invitation of his father¹⁸, and Fred learned to play the tuba from his father.¹⁹ Clearly family connections have run strong in the band, and have been a tremendous help in linking the musical group from one generation to the next. Fred's sons also all played in the band at one time or another, and in addition to the Morgan family, other families who have had more than one member include the Boyer's, Clark's, Coon's, Cotey's, Donahue's, Durant's, Haggett's, Lewis's, McLennan's, Regan's, Royce's, Van Duyne's, Vaska's, Wolfe's and Zenger's.²⁰ Fred actually had fond memories of the earlier band even prior to his joining, and comments as follows:

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, held on the old band stand on the village park. My father played in the band. This event we kids always looked forward to.²¹

The rebirth and reorganization of the band after the war resulted in the shifting of instrumentation to that of a brass band. Although a couple woodwind players still hung on, as did happen with brass bands, the last



Susan Lyman Historical Museum, Norwood, NY
(Fred Morgan's Scrapbook)

4th of July parade in 1949



Jack Morgan

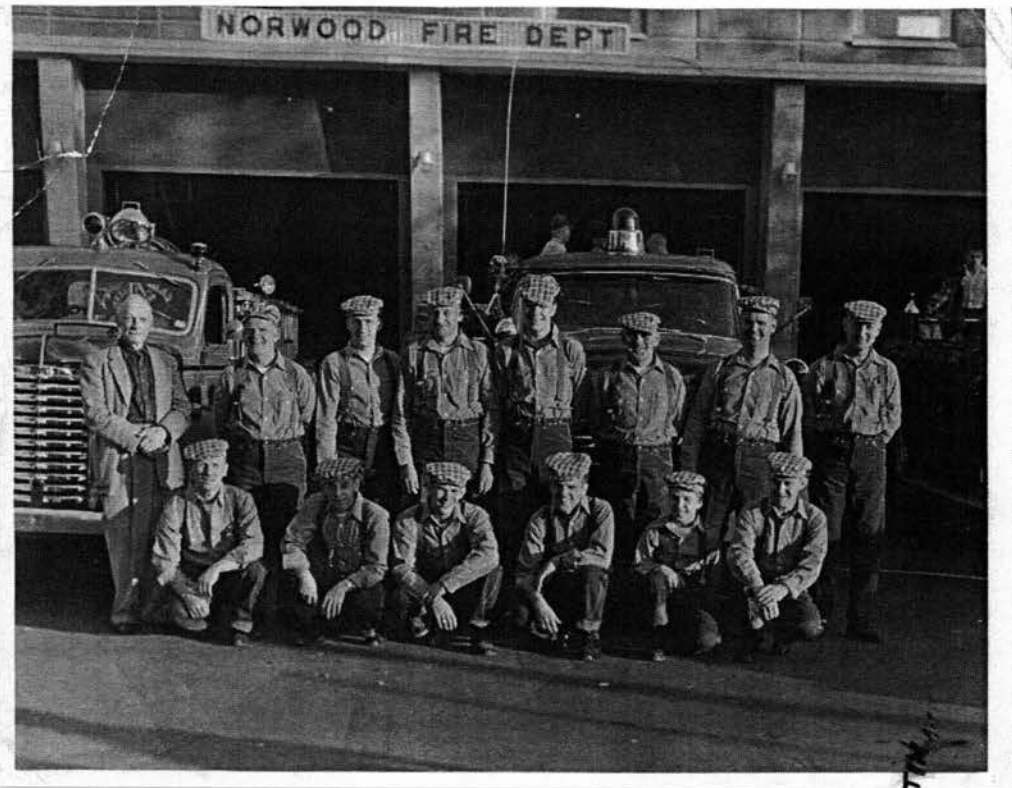
Fred Morgan, known as the Father of the band and the Grandfather of the band

woodwind player shifted to playing the baritone horn in 1951 to truly make an all brass band²², following the prevalence of this format of ensemble in the U.S. at that time. At first, the group rehearsed in Fred's garage, but it quickly became too small, so rehearsals shifted to the Norwood Fire House.²³ On May 4, 1946, the band was asked to play for a meeting of the Fire Department by fire chief Norman D. Lavoie. The vote taken at that meeting resulted in the Norwood Volunteer Fire Dept. sponsorship of the band, and the group became the Norwood Volunteer Fire Department Band.²⁴ Continuing through the 40's and into later years, the band played every Wednesday night at the Village Green in Norwood.²⁵ Although many communities had a band during this time period, the Norwood Brass Firemen is one of the few that has endured. It is one of the last in New York State, a state where once many had existed. It is interesting to note that "by 1889, over 10,000 bands existed in the United States ranging in size from 12 to 25 players."²⁶ Norwood's Brass Firemen has been going strong without interruption ever since it's reformulation in 1946.

Fred Morgan is often called the "Father of the Band" or the "Grandfather of the Band" and served as the manager of the band

for the sizeable time period from 1945 to 1977.²⁷ In addition, Fred set the tone of the band, initiating the strong spirit of community and good times that has been part of the band ever since. The band performed for not only community functions, but generously for others unable to attend open performances – one such example is a letter dated May 1, 1946 from *Fred Morgan's Scrapbook* from Norman D. Lavoie, Special Services, outlining arrangements for the band to play at Sunmount, which was then a veteran's hospital, on May 19, 1946 and indicated "The program will be broadcast to all the bed patients over our hospital broadcasting system."²⁸ In Lavoie's thank you letter of May 24th following the performance, he states "Your generosity in coming here and the kindness of your town people who sponsored this trip, should be a matter of pride to you and the people of Norwood."²⁹

Fred's sousaphone playing days ended in 1979, when he was hit with a stroke.³⁰ Although he could no longer play with the band, he was always there in terms of encouragement and support. The band felt he was with them while traveling even though he could not be with them in person. He still put his sousaphone to good use, however, even after he could no longer play the instrument. He used the sousaphone as a mailbox to his home, placing a regular mailbox in the bell and locating the creative mailbox at the side of the road. On top of the mailbox was a sign saying "Notes Come And Go." Additionally, he rigged the mailbox such that when it was opened, music played – a tape of songs played by Morgan himself on the tuba. The mailbox was so unusual a photo of the mailbox hit the national wires.³¹ People from all over the area enjoyed going to visit the mailbox, and it can still be visited today in its permanent home in the Susan Lyman Historical Museum in Norwood. The Museum also has many other items related to the band's history. Fred's legacy carries on today with his nephew Bob Haggett serving as band manager since 1977, having joined the band in 1969.³² Harry Feikert was the first director of the band, and other directors over the years have included



Tim Donahue

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



Susan Lyman Historical Museum, Norwood, NY (Fred Morgan's Scrapbook)

Vocal quartets from the 40's/50's. From L to R: Otto Phelix, Esther Hickey, Tom Charlobois, Leo Hickey, Claire Dockum, Jim Calnon, Joyce Calnon, Gerald Dockum. Missing: Luella Burton.

Tim Donahue Sr., John Cotey, Dick Burns, Tom Stickney, Bob Thorpe, Jeff Brackett, Andy Van Duyne, and Dan Frick presently serving in that role since 2000.

As the band continued growing and hit a membership of 18 players in 1951, it became difficult for the band to continue to travel in Fred's station wagon, so in May 1952, the band purchased its first bus, a small bus that was a 15 passenger van being auctioned by the Norwood School District.³³ This vehicle allowed the group to travel much more easily for their various performances. As they became well known in the region, with increased mobility, the more popular name of the group shifted to the "Brass Firemen" in 1952.³⁴

In the 40's and early 50's, two vocal quartets appeared regularly with the band. One of the groups was a male quartet and consisted of Leo Hickey, Jim Calnon, Jr., Gerry Dockum, and Tom Charlebois. The other ensemble was a female quartet, with members Esther Hickey, Claire Dockum, Joyce Calnon, and Louella Burton.³⁵

During the long years of the band's history, the ensemble has traveled long distances to several exciting events. The first long trip was to the Firemen's Association of the State of New York (FASNY) Convention in Albany in 1966. The band membership had grown to 26, and thus the old van could not be used for transportation. The band quickly took advantage of the Firemen's Home in Albany's offer to donate an old 40 passenger school bus to the band.³⁶ Older shelves which had been installed by the band members on the initial van for storage were transferred to the newer bus³⁷ and thus, a part of the band's history continued to travel with them. It should be noted that the Firemen's Home in later years continued their support of the Brass Firemen, donating yet another bus in July 1993, this time a new coach bus.³⁸ The band played until 2:00 a.m. that morning in Albany, and became a regular at the annual conventions, traveling to several areas of the state for the conventions over the years, including Syracuse, Buffalo, Niagara Falls, Rochester, New York City, and Watertown.³⁹



Lyle Camp

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



Lyle Camp

1972 State Convention, Syracuse. Front row 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, Jerry Dresye.

The band enjoyed some humorous times on these trips and just three examples are included here, all told by Robert Haggett. The first explains an encounter with Msgr. McCarthy:

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!⁴⁰

With regard to a second especially funny event, Robert tells the tale:

This was the first year that we played in a central reception room....we had



Bob Haggett

Dedication of the new coach bus

to drag our instruments from floor to floor. There were too many of us to fit on a single elevator, so we split up between elevators. To keep ourselves entertained we would play a song as we got in the elevators and see if we were still together when we got off.⁴¹

One last example details the 1980 State Convention trip:

On the trip to Rochester in 1980 we had a flat tire ten miles from our destination. We stayed at a volunteer firehouse. As we had no transportation to get into the city to play our concert, there was only one thing to do. The Chief of this volunteer house started up an open cab fire truck and transported the band into the city. Just imagine driving along the expressway and meeting a fire truck carrying a 21-piece brass band playing 'Hot Time in the Ol' Town Tonight!'⁴²

In May 1966, the band hit a particularly exciting event when members traveled to Alexandria Bay to audition with Buddy Paige for the Ted Mack's Amateur Hour, a very popular program during that period of time.⁴³ Although they didn't get to play for the program, it was a memorable occasion nonetheless.

The band's next trip was to Norwood, Massachusetts in 1972, when that community celebrated their centennial. The bus carrying Norwood, New York dignitaries and their wives and band members and their wives were accompanied by police escort upon their arrival at the city limits of Norwood, Massachusetts. The community residents were appreciative of the band's outdoor concert at their town municipal building, which they enjoyed a great deal, and the band also played in the motel lobby where they were staying for an additional event as part of the festivities.⁴⁴

In January 1979, when the band played in the New York State Assembly Chambers⁴⁵ by invitation of Assemblyman David O'B



Bob Hagggett

The band playing in the New York State Assembly Chambers, January 1979



Elmer James

The band playing on the steps of the nation's Capital, September 1981

Martin, the event was noteworthy as being "...the first time live music was offered in the Assembly chamber during a session."⁴⁶ A citation given to the band at this event "recognized them for 13 years of service at the FASNY Conventions and they were given the title 'Official Fireman's Band of Northern New York'.⁴⁷ The band received much visibility from this event, with televised broadcasts throughout the state as well as on local stations in our region.⁴⁸ Following the event in the Assembly Chambers, the Brass Firemen played two impromptu numbers in Lt. Governor Mario Cuomo's office. The trip to play in the Assembly Chambers was not without mishap – as one scrapbook details:

This trip was made during a winter storm with our own bus. The windshield wiper motor quit. Buz Sawyer drove while Fred Morgan and Bob Haggett hand-cranked the wipers for three hours to get to Albany on time!⁴⁹

As time went on, mishaps seemed to hit during the band's trips quite often, but band members always took the surprises in stride.

The Brass Band next was invited to play in Washington, D.C. by Rep. David O'B

Martin in September 1981.⁵⁰ They first performed on the steps of the Capital, and then at the Lincoln Memorial.⁵¹ For this trip, a bus was chartered and family members rode along. During their tour of the White House during that visit, the band signed the register "The Norwood Brass Firemen".⁵² The band was excited to see the West side of the White House, including the Oval Office and Vice President Bush's office, and one band member even sat in Mr. Bush's chair. They left a record of the band on Mr. Bush's desk and later received a personal thank you note from Mr. Bush.⁵³ The band's second trip to Washington was for a performance on the South Lawn at the White House for Mrs. Regan in July 1982. At this event, the band members were supplied with red plastic fire hats, so they looked more like firemen.⁵⁴ Mrs. Reagan truly appreciated the band's performance, and "Mrs. Reagan was so moved by the band's version of 'America' that she asked the band to play it again."⁵⁵ The Brass Firemen were actually able to meet Mrs. Reagan at the event⁵⁶ and had lemonade with the First Lady.⁵⁷ At the end of the event on the South Lawn, the band played a closing medley that began with "St. Lawrence River".

The band's next trip in February 1983 was closer to home, and this was the first time they did a performance during the winter. This time they headed to Lake Placid to play for the



Bob Haggert

Band performance on the South Lawn at the White House for Mrs. Regan, July 1982

Junior Olympic Luge Competition.⁵⁸ This provided the ground work for the band's longest trip, when in 1984, the band headed for Sarajevo, Yugoslavia for the Winter Olympic Games. The group of 24 members had very little time for all of the fund-raising and planning for the trip abroad, finding out just ten weeks prior to the event that they would be going.⁵⁹ They managed to miraculously raise all of the needed \$18,000 to fund the trip through the amazing support from the entire area community, with even children in the Norwood Elementary School helping in the effort.

Preparations for the trip to Yugoslavia were extensive, despite the short time period. In addition to the fund-raising, there were many details to handle such as obtaining passports, planning transportation, planning for playing in cold weather outside for a normally summer season ensemble (including is-

sues of uniforms used normally for warmer weather and different valve oil needed for the cold), etc. Packing was no small effort since the group had to bring their instruments and uniforms. Band members found assistance from the community with other things beyond fund-raising, including the chance to learn about the country of their destination from area residents. According to a news article in the *Courier-Freeman*, "Dr. Matijevic and Dr. Joseph Cratochvil, both of Clarkson College's Chemistry Department, and Maja Vuckovic, an American Field Service foreign exchange student at Potsdam High School this year, spoke and answered questions on their native country - Yugoslavia - Sunday afternoon."⁶⁰ Dr. Egon Matijevic reassured the band members, saying, "Just be yourself and they'll like you."⁶¹

Finally after all the effort with the pre-trip preparations, the band was on the road,

traveling in one of two buses headed for Kennedy International Airport for the flight to Yugoslavia. The first bus of the duo had an accident on the way due to slippery roads, and ended up sliding off the road of the New York State Thruway near Poughkeepsie.⁶² Thankfully, all of the band members were traveling in the second bus, and thus, were not involved in the accident. The band members showed their strong volunteer spirit by helping passengers on the first bus and identifying the injured prior to the arrival of rescue squads.⁶³

After many hours of travel by bus and plane, the band members finally found themselves in Sarajevo. The earlier bus accident had unfortunately caused them to miss their first playing obligation, but thankfully, they didn't miss the most important events. Despite their long trip and the misfortune of their bass drum getting lost on the way⁶⁴, they were in high spirits. Thankfully, the drum was found the night before the opening ceremonies of the Olympics, although it was never quite clear how it got lost nor how it got found!⁶⁵ Their time in Yugoslavia was made especially interesting not only because of the special Olympic events, but also because of their chance to experience the people and culture. Although upon arrival the band discovered that lodging arrangements had not been made, they ended up living with Yugoslavian families, which was a wonderful experience despite little notice to the families regarding their guests. Bob Hagggett described their life while there as follows:

During our stay, we lived with private citizens. Their homes were very accommodating and the people very helpful and friendly. The whole city was beautiful compared to anyone's standards.⁶⁶

The band's first performance was for the arrival of the Olympic flame from Greece on Tuesday of the events.⁶⁷ Then on Wednesday, the band escorted Mayor Robert Pea-



Bob Hagggett

Bus accident while headed to JFK for the flight to Sarajevo (thankfully, the band members were on the other bus)

cock of Lake Placid and the Olympic Flag in the opening ceremonies. The most important part was playing for the presentation of the Olympic Flag by Mayor Peacock to the Mayor of Sarajevo. The presentation of the flag from the government official from the previous Winter Olympic location to the new Olympic site has been a tradition since 1956.⁶⁸ The mayor of the previous Olympic site has the opportunity to choose a musical group to represent their country for the opening ceremonies of the next Olympic, and it was Mayor Peacock who had selected and asked the Norwood Brass Firemen to play in Sarajevo in that capacity. Darin LaGarry of the band describes this moving experience:

I was used to playing field days to crowds of people who enjoyed our playing, but these people had never heard music like this before and were completely enthralled. There was a group of small children who danced for us in yellow snowsuits. They were there to perform a traditional dance, but first they danced to our music. The whole scene was like a dream.⁶⁹

Estimates of television viewers watching the opening ceremonies was around two billion people, with another 55,000 people in the stadium itself.⁷⁰ The band also got to play in more traditional North Country spirit with an



The band playing for the Winter Olympic Opening Ceremonies in Sarajevo, Yugoslavia, 1984

unscheduled spontaneous performance as they left the Kosevo Stadium. Band member Paul Hagggett describes this particular experience:

We were leaving the stadium, near our bus, when we started to play. Suddenly, all these people from the city began surrounding us, crowding us. There were at least 750 people there, dancing and clapping, chanting "U.S.A." and having a great time. We ended up playing for 45 minutes.⁷¹

The band members felt just as moved if not more so with their couple of opportunities for impromptu concerts as with their formal performances as part of the official Olympic ceremonies during their stay in



Bob Hagggett

Small children dancing to the Brass Firemen's music at the Olympic Ceremonies in Sarajevo



Bob Haggett

Band standing in front of the Olympic Stadium in Sarajevo. Front row L to R: John Wolfe, Chris Clark, Jamie Callahan, Kevin Murray, Lyle Camp, Roger Davis. Back row: Lee Farrington, Joe Liotta, Jerry Gallagher, Jeff Brackett, Paul Haggett, Bill Felix, Matt Vaska, Dave Rourke, Chris Greenwood, Andy VanDuyne, Tim Donahue, Elmer James, Paul Vaska, Paul Santimaw, Bob Haggett, Bob Thorpe, Dave Flint, Darin LaGarry.

Sarajevo. The band also enjoyed other experiences, such as the entertainment provided by the Yugoslavian Folk Dance Group, which had preceded the band in the Opening Ceremonies, when they performed for the band at City Hall following the Opening Ceremonies, with nourishment of Pivo (beer), Sljivovica (plum brandy) and hors d'oeuvres provided.⁷² The group became well known to the people in Sarajevo, with band member Jeff Brackett commenting:

Band members, who wore their maroon and gold baseball caps emblazoned with the band's name, were recognized instantly, in Sarajevo, in

the airports, and aboard the flight home. "Oh, you're the band," people said.⁷³

The Brass Firemen impressed the crowds back home in the U.S. as well. Newspapers such as *The Atlanta Journal* ran articles about the band's appearance, including comments such as:

You can talk all you want to about the importance of Americans bringing medals home, but the Norwood Volunteer Fire Department Band to me is what America is really all about. And they're winners, even without the medals.⁷⁴



Bob Hagggett

Yugoslavian Folk Dance Group entertaining the Brass Firemen at Sarajevo's City Hall

The same article ends with "Like I say, I would like America to win all those medals, but I feel the moment that opening ceremony took place, the Norwood Volunteer Fire Department Band already had put us on top."⁷⁵

While in Yugoslavia, the band received a personal telegram from Mrs. Reagan, which stated:

Congratulations and best wishes on helping to represent our nation at Sarajevo. I hope all goes well for you and, as I asked you at the White House, play 'America' again and again. Sincerely, Nancy Reagan.⁷⁶

Mrs. Reagan had still remembered their rendition of "America" on the White House South Lawn.⁷⁷

The trip back home normally would be long enough, but delays added yet more hours to the return trip. They spent nineteen hours in the Sarajevo airport⁷⁸ and then rescheduling took place several times for their flight home. Upon arrival at JFK in New York, they waited another five hours for their chartered bus (the Lake Placid delegation had failed to notify the bus lines of the arrival time at JFK)⁷⁹, finally leaving New York City at 10:30 p.m. once their chartered bus arrived.⁸⁰ With sheriff escort from Hopkinton, and Fire Department and Rescue Squad escort upon hitting the Norwood Village limits, as well as the

fire alarm ringing to announce their arrival, the tired band members rolled into Norwood at 5:40 am. They were greeted back home by a lively crowd of around 200 people. Although their appearance in Sarajevo had been seen by the world, the Brass Firemen did not forget the dedicated community that helped them get there, nor their fondness for their hometown followers. Despite the long hours in the air and on the road and their tiredness, the band celebrated with their hometown immediately upon arrival, playing in a parade around the village green.⁸¹

The band was invited back to Washington D.C. once again in 1985, to march in President Ronald Reagan's Inauguration Parade, representing New York State Firefighters.⁸² Unfortunately, the extreme cold of -20 degrees⁸³ on the parade day caused the cancellation of the parade, but the Brass Firemen were one of only four bands out of the original 50 scheduled to play in the parade who were invited to one of the inaugural parties, which were held at the Cap Center.⁸⁴ They had better luck on their third trip to Washington D.C., however, when they traveled back to the nation's capital in 1989 for President George H. W. Bush's Inaugural Parade, where "in recognition of its services to the community of Norwood, the State of New York, and the United States, the 'Brass Firemen' were asked to represent all volunteer firemen in the nation."⁸⁵ This time they actually got to march, although the experience was not without mishap. As the parade was under way, a hot dog stand exploded, and thus the parade was held up while the secret service investigated, and thankfully determined it was truly an accident.⁸⁶

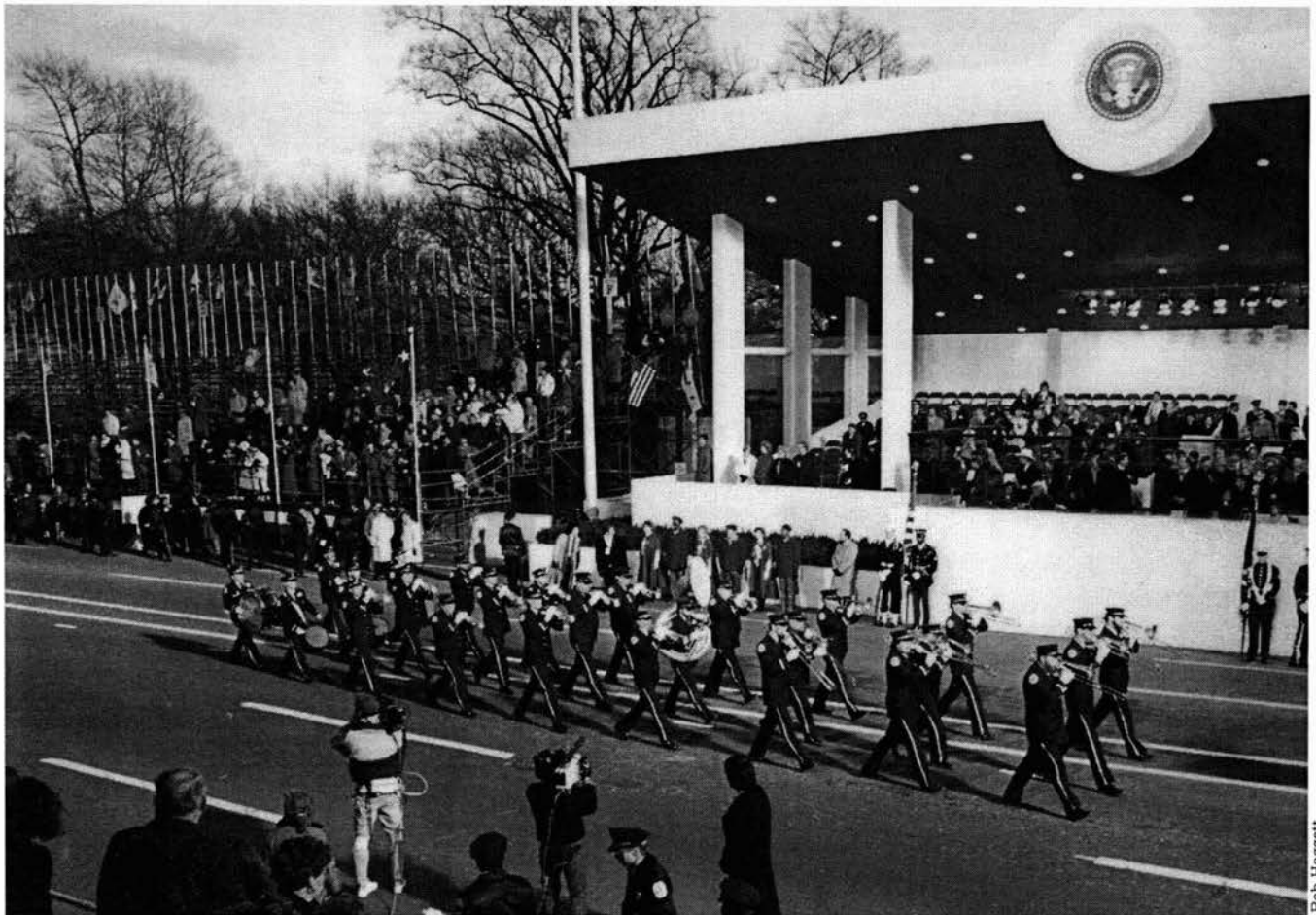
On a quite different note, the band headed for the Indianapolis 500 Parade on Memorial Day weekend in 1994. This event involved a parade processing a span of 3 ½ miles in downtown Indianapolis the day before the car race, with around 400,000 people attending the parade. The day of the race, the band paraded again on the actual race track, a length of 2 ½ miles. As manager Bob Hagggett comments,

The morning of the race all the bands marched around the track. One lap took us 65 minutes. It took [race winner] Al Unser, Jr. 42 seconds.⁸⁷

The band's success through their travels and dedication to local causes has also been recognized in other ways over the years. Following their Sarajevo trip, St. Lawrence University President Lawrence W. Gulick honored the band at one of their concerts on the green by presenting a large sign in green, stating "Home of the Norwood Brass Firemen, the U.S. Olympic Band, Sarajevo, Yugo. 1984" to recognize their accomplishments.⁸⁸ The band was recognized the same year with a certificate of appreciation from the Department of State, which noted the "deep sense of pride these envoys of music and good will bring to New York

State."⁸⁹ They also received a North Country Heritage Award from TAUNY in 1996.⁹⁰

The Norwood Fireman's Brass Band has had many interesting travels and opportunities, but at this point, they were beginning to feel burned out from all of their activities and travels.⁹¹ They also felt a strong devotion to the North Country and felt their important roots and emphasis in the community should not be forgotten. Despite their overwhelming success on their travels, their music is appreciated just as much if not more in the local region, where they are well known for their performances at many standard community events. The July 4th parade in Norwood certainly would never be complete without them, and those who reside in Potsdam can't remember a Summer Festival Ice Cream Social on Thursday evening without their presence. In addition to ice cream socials, they are a permanent fixture at the



Bob Haggett

1989 Presidential Inaugural Parade for George Herbert Walker Bush

Norwood Village Green concerts, as well as for firemen's field days for many earlier years.⁹² Beyond Norwood, they have also paraded in Potsdam, Racquette River, Norfolk, Colton, Massena, Brockville and Cornwall in Ontario, etc.⁹³ Their days are very busy even with the standard local events, with a typical year averaging around 16 performances at this point. They had been doing 33 performances a year in the 70's and 80's, but that schedule was very demanding in terms of time and effort.⁹⁴ Their dedication to helping local organizations fund-raise with their performances has had significant impact over the years.

Playing for local annual firemen's field days had also been a regular event for the group, but the number of field days has gradually dwindled, with all of the more standard style of field days with parades having ceased entirely in recent years, except Norwood's which still continues.⁹⁵ The band also used to play at the local fireworks itself for 4th of

July, sometimes for crowds of 10,000 people, an enthralling experience as Fred Morgan describes it:

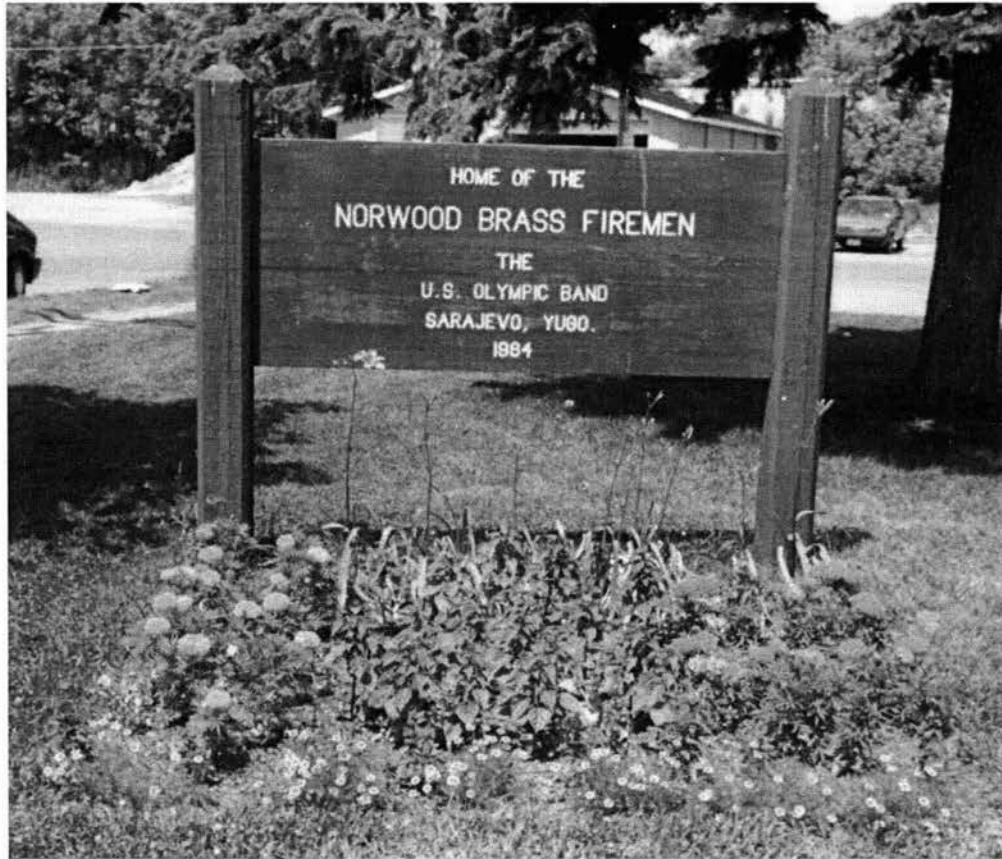
It was especially thrilling for me to sit and play with the band "The Star Spangled Banner" while the finale of the fireworks was being shown, - the loud aerial bombs - the bright flashes of light, - car horns blowing, - the Star Spangled Banner, - nothing can compare with it!⁹⁶

The band uses the same uniforms as the department volunteers in the annual reviews and parades⁹⁷ and the band reciprocates the sponsorship of the fire department by assisting in its fund-raising. To boost the fund-raising efforts, the band recorded a record album for sale in 1972 and then again in 1976 with tapes also available, with each al-



Bob Haggert

Indianapolis 500 parade in 1994



Bob Haggett

Wooden sign in Norwood

bum/tape selling around 2,500 copies each. Caps similar to the Brass Firemen's were also sold.⁹⁸ By later years, sales of albums and tapes had reached 5,000 copies.⁹⁹ Some members of the band are active volunteer firefighters, but it is not a requirement to be in the band, and most band members are not.¹⁰⁰

The collegiality of the band can be sensed even by those listening to their performances. One delightful aspect of the band is the membership ages ranging a wide span from the young to the old. The present band consists of 28 members, from age 17 to age 83.¹⁰¹ In addition, one characteristic of the band is more unique, that of the diversity of occupations and means of musical preparation. Included in the band are those who have trained in music at the college level, mainly at the Crane School of Music at nearby SUNY Potsdam, and those who have had no formal musical training, but have

the wonderful ability to play most anything by ear. As manager Bob Haggett notes, the group contains a large range of talent, with all equally strong musicians who do well on solos and provide a great blend. Although most band members come from Norwood and Potsdam, members have also come from longer distances, and all of the members of the band participate on a volunteer basis. The members of the band try to experience something new each time no matter where they go.¹⁰²

No music is used by the ensemble, and the band plays all of their pieces in the key of B flat, E flat, or F to make things easier.¹⁰³ Each new song is learned by the leader first playing the tune on their instrument, followed by band members trying things out for a few minutes for both melody and harmony, then the group plays the new song together.¹⁰⁴ They usually begin their season with the one and only rehearsal early in May and there normally is no pre-determined order of the music. The direc-



Jodi LaGarry

The "Dancing Sousaphones" always add to the fun and are always a hit with the crowd. L to R: Ken Beckstead, Darin LaGarry.

tor carries a 3x5 card with the names of all the pieces in the repertoire, and the director selects one piece at a time from the list just prior to the beginning of each one.¹⁰⁵ It is standard for the band to take one or two breaks, with their familiar "Let's Take Five" performed before each.¹⁰⁶

The band's spirit of comradery is perhaps the most important element leading to its long-term existence and success. Members of the band truly enjoy their time together, and they believe in having a good time. That spirit can be felt and extends to their audience wherever they play – audiences also really have a good time. As Bob Haggett commented during an interview with Michael V. Cordaro in May 1993:

the most interesting point, even though the band has achieved so much, nothing could ever replace the fun we have

in just playing together, be it on the lawn of the White House or a firemen's field day in Norwood. The band does grow but the members never seem to out grow the band.¹⁰⁷

Haggett also makes additional comments on the special bond among band members:

...there are a lot of ice cream socials and benefit concerts given by the band between these highlighted trips. This is the true purpose of the band. The great fellowship shared by members is something that the members can only understand and enjoy.¹⁰⁸

The band's spirit that was initiated even from the start by Fred Morgan when he formed the reorganized band back in the 40's

has endured throughout its long history. Band member Leo E. Hickey wrote a poem, which exhibits well the feeling of the band members. Although the date is unknown, he is listed on the text copy of the poem as living from 1912-1977, so it is expected it was written in his later years. It is titled *Our Home Town Band*, and it goes as follows:

There's a group of young fellows
in Norwood they be
Make the best aggregation you
ever did see;
They're the best darned musicians
in all of this land
And they're known thruout Norwood
as Fred Morgan's Band.

Their type of rendition is strictly
their own
When backed up by Fred Morgan's
big Sousaphone,
And although they read music,
they're much better without-
In the Town Hall their concerts
have been much talked about.

There was Georgie McLennon
and his brother Jim
Who gave out on the drums
and the trombone with vim;
And Ernie Delaney beat time
on the snare-
Gene Lewis with cymbals
was certainly there.

There was never a moment
in which to relax
When Murray Farmer was tooting
his small soprano sax
George Bixby from Potsdam
the band did adorn
When he doubled and tripled
on his baritone horn.

On the xylophone we had
a fellow named Bond

He was exceptionally fine
and of him we were fond,
The clarinet playing was talked of
so much
People knew when they heard it,
it was Jim Calnon's touch.

When the trumpets gave out with
their notes round and clear,
John Cotey and Don Jorvis
were the ones you did hear-
With a recent addition from
Erin's Green Isle
David Donahue did join them
with a broad Irish smile.

There is a horn in the band
that is different from most,
To play the French horn
is to be able to boast-
And to have one in our band
we were surely in luck,
Peckin' away on the off-beat
was old Sealy Buck.

The Director of our band
was a man good and true,
Whose knowledge of music
was surpassed by few
He led with abandon
and his cornet was grant,
Harry Fieckert was the leader
of Fred Morgan's Band.

I'll always remember
be my life short or long
All the moments I spent
with these stout lads of song,
And the memories I keep
will be memories grand-
Of that great aggregation
called Fred Morgan's band.¹⁰⁹

The type of music performed by the band appears to be ageless, with a diversity such that those in the audience are apt to find a favorite. Initially in Fred Morgan's time, the band played popular dance tunes, folk songs, and standard marches.¹¹⁰ A copy of an announcement in *Fred Morgan's Scrapbook* lists the band's specialty



There is always a full crowd enjoying the Brass Firemen performances

for a forthcoming concert as “Old Time Dance Music, Quartette Numbers, Popular Dance Music” and the concert was to take place at the Town Hall.¹¹¹ The band did use some music during this time period, with handwritten parts for the dances and published booklets for the marches.¹¹² When John Cotey became director in 1958, he talked the group into trying a Dixieland style and the portion of the performances using these pieces were improvised.¹¹³ Although some marches continued for a time, the Dixieland style gradually took over the repertoire entirely. In the 1970’s, singing was added¹¹⁴ and has been extremely popular with audiences ever since.

The community has always been appreciative of the band, showing its strong support through excellent attendance at its concerts, as well as assisting with fundraising for their trips, as mentioned earlier. A flyer from around 1947 in *Fred Morgan’s Scrapbook* indicates the community’s early enthusiasm and love for the band, with the theme song included in the flyer as follows:

Home Town Band

There’s somethin’ about
a Home Town Band,
That makes you want to shout.

There’s somethin’ about
a Home Town Band,
That brings the neighbors out.
Your sister may be the majorette
Who leads them down the street,
Ta-ra-ta-ta boom,
ta-ra-ta-ta goes your heart
With their feet!
Wherever you live throughout the land,
There’s somethin’ about
a Home Town Band!

It may be the Elks, It may be the Moose,
It may be the Shriners Band,
The Fire department, the police
department,
Or maybe the college band.
It may be the Lions, or the Legionaires,
Or maybe the High School Band.
And if I’ve forgotten to mention one,
Shout or Holler, that one’s grand.¹¹⁵

A special event this past summer was a first time event for the Brass Firemen – the first ever large scale reunion of all those musicians who were ever members of the band. Over 140 volunteers have served in the band over the years.¹¹⁶ A total of 110 former members were contacted for the event, and around 70 of them were able to make the trip back to



Jane Subramanian

The large combined reunion band, past members joining present members, playing on the Norwood Village Green

attend the reunion. Some former members came from quite a distance, including Florida, California, and Seattle, Washington.¹¹⁷ During the parade the second day of the reunion, which was July 4th, there was a special float so that 17 members of the band who could no longer play their instruments could also participate and be honored.¹¹⁸ The largest event of the reunion was a performance in the Norwood Band shell on Thursday night July 3, 2003, with all present band members and former members performing together in a large ensemble of around 60 - the present band members gladly moved over to make room. There was a very large turn-out attending the event ranging from infants to the elderly, and no matter what their age, attendees and performers alike had a wonderful time. The young children in attendance didn't hesitate to join in the fun full force, providing dances to the music for all to see. Many members of the Brass Firemen have contributed many devoted years, but one member was especially honored at the reunion performance. Lyle Camp, former fire chief, was honored for his 50 years of dedication

to the fire department and the band. Lyle continues to give of his time, still playing bass drum in the band. Another long-term member, Jim Cotey of Norwood, joined the band in 1948. The important spot the band plays in the community was also highlighted, with both the band and manager Bob Haggett awarded the DeWitt Clinton Masonic Award for community service. The reunion was not only a wonderful and fun time for performers and audience, but also served as a reminder to all of the long-term impact of the band.

With the rapid pace of today's lifestyle, we sometimes forget the past all too quickly. The long history and prominence of the Norwood Brass Firemen, however, creates solid links from one age to the next, and we can expect it to continue to provide important connections into the future. Other things around us may come and go, but the band's harmony, beat, and most importantly, spirit, will still be heard and felt. The ensemble represents the past, present, and future as it contributes to the enjoyment of residents of the North Country, as well as representing our geographic region with pride.

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² Cordaro pg. 3.

³ Cordaro pg. 4.

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⁷ Cordaro pg. 21.

⁸ Freilich, Craig. "Reunion on the Green July 3: Brass Firemen, Past and Present," *North Country This Week*, June 18-25, 2003, pg. 1.

⁹ LaGarry, pg. 3.

¹⁰ Morgan, Fred. *Fred Morgan's Scrapbook*, Susan Lyman Historical Museum, Norwood, undated clipping.



The carriage for some reunion band members in the 4th of July parade for 2003

Jodi LaGarry



Jodi LaGarry

The present band, taken in August 2003 at the State Firemen's Convention in Alexandria Bay: 1st Row, L to R: Charlie Cotey, Ken Beckstead, Jim Whittet, Jim Corbett, Jon Hunkins, Darin LaGarry. 2nd Row, L to R: Don Cannemela, Nate LePage, Bill Felix, John Wolfe, Dick Boyle, Dave "Soupbone" Flint. 3rd Row, L to R: Ben Hopsicker, Josh LaFave, Dave Rourke, Paul Jadlos, Dan Frick, Tom Stickney 4th Row, L to R: Bob Haggett, Wayne Murray, Tim Donahue, Josh Zenger

- ¹¹ LaGarry, pg. 5.
- ¹² Baker, Betsy. "Father of the Band' Looks With Pride At Brass Firemen," *Courier-Freeman*, January 10, 1984, pg. 11.
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- ¹⁷ Morgan.
- ¹⁸ "Brass Firemen Reunite July 3," *Daily Courier-Observer*, June 27, 2003, pg. 7.
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- ²² Cordaro, pg. 26, citing Morgan's diary, 1947.
- ²³ Cordaro, pg. 22.
- ²⁴ Cordaro, pg.23, citing log books 1946.
- ²⁵ Freilich, pg. 1.
- ²⁶ Cordaro, pg. 18, referring to research done by Hazen.
- ²⁷ LaGarry, pg. 1.
- ²⁸ Morgan, Fred. *Fred Morgan's Scrapbook*, Susan Lyman Historical Museum, Norwood. Letter dated May 1, 1946.
- ²⁹ Morgan. Letter dated May 24, 1946.
- ³⁰ Baker, pg. 11.
- ³¹ Baker, pg. 11.
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- ³³ Cordaro, pg. 27, citing Morgan's diary and log books 1953.
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- ³⁵ Morgan, Fred. "...a Brief History of the Norwood Fire Department Band as told by Fred Morgan," <http://www.northnet.org/norwood/brass.html>.
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- ³⁷ Cordaro, pg. 29.
- ³⁸ Cordaro, pg. 38.
- ³⁹ LaGarry, pgs. 8-14.
- ⁴⁰ LaGarry, pg. 9.
- ⁴¹ LaGarry, pg. 12.
- ⁴² LaGarry, pg. 14.
- ⁴³ Freilich, pg. 1.
- ⁴⁴ Morgan.
- ⁴⁵ Furnace, Ashlee. "Brass Firemen Reuniting With Many Memories," *Daily Courier-Observer*, May 16, 2003, pg.1.
- ⁴⁶ White, Karen. "Brass Firemen Fired Up," *Daily Courier-Observer*, July 3, 2003, pg. 2.
- ⁴⁷ Cordaro, pg. 31.
- ⁴⁸ Haggett, Bob. *The Norwood Brass Firemen*. <http://www.northnet.org/norwood/brass.html>.
- ⁴⁹ Untitled scrapbook album, dated February 19, 1984. Susan Lyman Historical Museum, Norwood.
- ⁵⁰ Furnace, pg. 1.
- ⁵¹ White, pg. 2.
- ⁵² Cordaro, pg. 32.
- ⁵³ Haggett.
- ⁵⁴ LaGarry, pg. 17.
- ⁵⁵ Cordaro, pg. 33, citing Cordaro's interview with Bob Haggett in May 1993.
- ⁵⁶ Haggett, Bob, interviewed by author, July 9, 1997.
- ⁵⁷ Haggett, Bob. *Norwood Brass Firemen History Update 1972-1994*, Susan Lyman Historical Museum, Norwood, [1994].
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- ⁸ LaGarry, pg. 25.
- ⁸² Cordaro, pg. 34.
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- ⁸⁹ Untitled reference, 1984, Susan Lyman Historical Museum, Norwood. Norwood Museum
- ⁹⁰ LaGarry, pg. 31.
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- ⁹² Furnace, pg. 1.
- ⁹³ Cordaro, pg. 24.
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- ⁹⁶ Morgan.
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- ⁹⁸ Cordaro, pg. 30.
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Untitled scrapbook album, dated February 19, 1984. Susan Lyman Historical Museum, Norwood.

White, Karen. "Brass Firemen Fired Up," *Daily Courier-Observer*, July 3, 2003, pgs. 1-2.

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Mystery Photo



A view of the baby beauty contestants at the county fair. Date and participants are unknown.

The answer to the mystery photo on p.16 of the last issue of *The Quarterly*:

James S. Nichols of Whiting, New Jersey and Mark H. Snider from Massena both sent in responses to this mystery photo request. Mr. Nichols began work at ALCOA in 1936 and during that time, Jack King was an executive working out of the Pittsburg executive headquarters. Mr. King worked as an engineering consultant for Alcoa in Massena for many years. One of the fabricating products at the plant was high tension aluminum electrical cable, and Jack King supervised the construction of high tension towers in several places throughout the world for the Massena product. The high steel towers supported aluminum cable long distances from tower to tower. Mr. Nichols and Mr. Snider both indicate that the "joint press for field work" photo had something to do with the construction of towers for the conduction of electricity. Mr. Snider also comments that Jack King "was a pioneer in the early days of aluminum transmissions lines."

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