

April 17, 1946

BEAMSVILLE BAND HISTORY TOLD BY C. L. TALLMAN ONCE WENT TO PETAWAWA AS REGIMENTAL MOUNTED BAND OF 2ND DRAGOONS

"The Beamsville Citizens' Band hasn't missed an Armistice Day service yet," Charles L. Tallman told the Village Council one night a couple of weeks ago when he was asking that Council provide a room in the new fire hall building for practice, and accommodation for storage of instruments, uniforms and music.

That statement bespeaks a fine record, but when we got to talking to "Pete" Tallman the other day he gave us a fuller account of the origin and history of a village organization deserving of the highest respect and interest of every citizen. Pete's story went something like this:

Back in 1908, 38 years ago, Beamsville, had no band. There was one once, but interest had waned and it disintegrated, leaving only a few old instruments behind.

Origion of the Band

The late Messrs. J. W. Buck and A. McAnteer headed a citizens' Committee to revive the band and the late James Zimmerman agreed to act as leader until the organization was put on a sound financial footing. The committee purchased \$2,000 worth of Besson brass band instruments in England and the Beamsville Citizens' Band was launched.

Pete Tallman and George Konkle are the only two originals still with the band, Pete now being bandmaster. Pete was young and lacking seniority of any kind at the time the instruments were apportioned out and he didn't get one, but digging up an old, cracked clarinet which had belonged to the former band he became an enthusiastic, if rather untutored, bandsman about a month after practices commenced. Music for the Beamsville Old Boys' Reunion of 1908 was to be the new band's first big assignment. Though 25 strong, they were a rather motley crew, and a fortuitous circumstance proved the means of outfitting them with uniforms. The late M. F. Rittenhouse of Vineland, booked a room at the Couse House one day and the band seized its opportunity by serenading him on King street. The story goes that Mr. Rittenhouse was much impressed, as much by the music as by the nondescript appearance, and shortly after he left a tailor appeared with orders to fit out the band from top to toe. Thirty uniforms were provided by Mr. Rittenhouse who became a sort of "father" to the organization.

Yearly Concerts at Vineland

In grateful return, the band offered to place itself at the disposal of its benefactor and was asked to play three concerts yearly, in June, July and August at Vineland. Mr. Rittenhouse had a shell built there for the purpose and for the next six or seven years the band played its series at Vineland, receiving an annual cheque for \$100 from Mr. Rittenhouse until his death. The bandshell is still to be seen on the grounds of Victoria Hall.

Thus was the band enabled to turn out a smart appearance for the gala Old Boys' Reunion celebrations, meeting the trains, playing concerts and providing music for all the joyous festivities. A picture of the band about that time shows H. N. Reid, now Village Clerk, with knee pants and a big alto horn. Another original who deserves mention is the late John Konkle who served continuously with the band from its inception until his death in 1944.

Becomes Mounted Band

In 1912 came a digression from the usual routine of village band practices and concerts. Through the influence of Lieut Arthur Stares of the 2nd Dragoons, Hamilton, the Commanding Officer of that unit invited the Beamsville band to play in the Hamilton Armouries. Col. Fraser was favourably impressed and he secured their appointment as the 2nd Dragoons' Regimental Band. Incidental to this appointment was the fact that they became the only mounted band in Canada.

The Dragoons' annual camp of 1912, at Petawawa was a big occasion in the band's life. The problem of horses was pressing, but somehow the requisite number was "scrounged" and the steeds made up in enthusiasm what they lacked in military deportment. Pete recalls that his "charger" was borrowed from somewhere around St. Anns and the others came from various parts of the district. One trooper was required to hold each bandsman's horse when the order was given to mount but after a few practices most of the horses became resigned to riders armed with saxophones instead of sabres.

The band went to camp only the one year, for the Canadian militia was already preparing itself for its first struggle against the Boche. Lieut. Art Stares died and J. W. Shadwick, (who subsequently went to the 80th Battalion Band at Belleville and is now leading a band near Chicago), became bandmaster.

The war years saw a struggle to keep the band together, since many of its members joined the colours, but it managed to play its quota of concerts and provide music for all special occasions. After the Armistice some military members returned and the twenty years that followed were some of the most successful.

Won Conn Trophy

For 11 of those year the Beamsville Citizens' Band travelled to the Canadian National Exhibition at Toronto and played in open competition against some of the best bands in the country. Four prizes were given annually and never once was the band out of the money. On several occasions they took third and second prizes, and in 1935 were presented with the C. G. Conn Trophy as the best in their class.

Throughout the second Great War the band has provided music for all sorts of patriotic and fund-raising occasions and last year played for eight special functions, including the VE and VJ Day celebrations. They also played their regular series of seven Sunday evening concerts on the Public School grounds. In 1944 they purchased new uniforms, having worn the original ones for 36 years.

During its long history the Beamsville band has had many leaders. The late Mr. Zimmerman carried on for a few years, until Lieut. Stares took over. Harry Stares, brother of Art and leader of the 91st Highlanders, was bandmaster for a short time. Then came John Holden, St. Catharines, and three Hamilton men, now dead, Charles Wanklin, Arthur Darrow and Thomas Andrews. Fred Timms former director of music in the local schools, was leader for a time, as also was L. E. Turney, formerly of Beamsville. Then came Harold Cummings of Hamilton, present bandmaster of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders Band. Dave Nelligan, Hamilton, took the band to Toronto on three occasions as also did Gerold Marks, St. Catharines, Joe Lomas, Hamilton, who is now leader of a band at McIntyre Mines, was the bandmaster when the local band won the Conn Trophy, which is in Pete Tallman's shop. Other leaders were Robert Edmunds, Grimsby, Harold Rowbottom, Toronto, and W. I. Bax-

ter, Fort Erie.

Mr. Rowbottom fostered a junior band about five years ago but since that time the members have graduated into the parent organization.

During its long history, the band has had its headquarters in several different locations. For some time it practiced in the old Town Hall, then in the Oddfellows Lodge and over Thompson's Dairy. At present it uses the kitchenette at the High School but its equipment and music is stored in various places. According to Pete Tallman, some new music was ruined by mice last winter, owing to lack of proper storage facilities and for this and other reasons, the band is now looking for a new location. It believes its claims to a room of its own are well substantiated by 38 years of faithful service to the people of Beamsville and District. Under Pete Tallman it hopes to enhance that record.—W.F.R.

"OLD BOY" WRITES

Editor, The Beamsville Express. April 24 1946

Dear Sir:

To those who were raised in Beamsville, and I feel sure to the large percentage of new families who have chosen that community for their home, stories similar to the one in the issue of April 17 on the Beamsville Band should be enjoyed. There are many stories of historical interest around Beamsville and there come to my mind the Baptist Church and the Masonic Lodge, as examples.

When I spent a few days in Beamsville last year after an absence of several years, the Old Boys Reunion of 1908 was spoken of many times, and our good friend Jim Sinclair had in mind an idea that a similar event in connection with some kind of recognition to the boys who returned from the war might be in order. If such an event was held in connection with the Fair it would surely give the old boys and girls, who would be sure to come, an opportunity to once more attend the Fair which was an event they recall whenever they meet.

It occurred to me that the food advertisement taken from a Dayton paper might be of interest to compare prices in Canada with those over here. It will be noted that butter does not appear, and we rarely have butter at home, and in some of the better restaurants we see it about one day a week.

In the early days of The Express the writer sold it on the street on Thursday afternoon as I recall it, and now over fifty years after its appearance it is still going strong. May I convey sincere good wishes to the new management.

Yours very truly,
A. LOWELL HIXON.

516 Brookside Drive,
Dayton, 6, Ohio.

Editor's Note — Mr. Hixon's kind letter stamps him as a true Beamsville "Old Boy" and gives us a chance to say in print how much we appreciate the unusual kindness shown to us by everyone in this community. We intend to print, as often as possible, reviews of the points of historical interest in Beamsville and invite further suggestions on this subject.

Mr. Hixon may be as surprised as we were, but prices in Dayton compare very favourably with those in local shops. Meat is just about the same, bacon is cheaper in Dayton and there are many things advertised which are unprocurable here. We'd gladly trade him a half pound of butter for a bottle of our favourite mayonnaise, of which they seem to have plenty.

New Airmail Service From Beamsville P. O.

1946

Improved airmail service from Beamsville to Malton airport was announced by the Postmaster General late last week, effective July 1.

Earlier deliveries will be made because of a new motor vehicle service between Hamilton and Malton Airport. Mail leaving Beamsville at 8.50 p.m., D.S.T., will arrive at Malton at 11.45 p.m., connecting with westbound T.C.A. planes at midnight and with early morning eastbound planes.

Mail thus sent will be delivered the following morning in Ottawa, North Bay, Winnipeg, Regina, Moose Jaw and Chicago, and the following afternoon at Halifax, Moncton, Saint John, Montreal, Saskatoon, Prince Albert, orth Battleford, Lethbridge, Calgary, Edmonton, Vancouver, Victoria and New York City.

Incoming airmail will leave Malton Airport at 2.00 a.m. D.S.T. and arrive in Beamsville 10.51 D.S.T.



Latest photograph of the Beamsville Citizens' Band, led by C. L. Tallman. Mr. Tallman is leaving Beamsville the end of this week to take the position of Superintendent of the County Buildings at St. Catharines. He will continue to lead the band for the remainder of this year at least. Aug 28, 1946

TOP HAT CLEANERS LOCATING HERE April 1947

The old Kennedy property on King Street is taking shape as one of Beamsville's good looking houses under the new ownership of Claude Roland proprietor of the Top Hat Cleaners.

With a new coat of paint, the house has lost that "vacant" appearance, and when Mr. Roland finishes with his modernizations plans it will have two apartments upstairs, adding some much-needed living accommodation to Beamsville's living space.

Cleaning Plant

In the former stables and barn at the rear of the property, the cleaning plant of Top Hat Cleaners will be located. At present Mr. Roland is using it for his pressing machinery and eventually it will house his cleaning plant as well. This equipment is presently located in St. Catharines. New cleaning machinery, costing some \$12,000 is expected to arrive in a couple of months.

Prior to installation of the cleaning plant the building will be fireproofed. When Top Hat Cleaners commence full operation here, Beamsville will be served by its first modern cleaning, and repairing establishment and local people will not have to send all this type of work out of town.