

Brass band source of pride in Bloomington in 1900

"We ain't got no fire department, but we got the all-firedest brass band dat ever blowed a horn!" — Bloomington *Evening World*, Sept. 20, 1900.

"Pride Of The Town," Our Brass Band Appreciated by Our Citizens," read the headline on the front page of the *Evening World*. It was the 10th anniversary of the band's summer concerts that prompted such high praise.

Boasted the newspaper, "The Mechanics' Band, now the Second Regimental Band, stands high in the estimation of every citizen of Bloomington, and no organization in the city has added more to the pleasure and entertainment of the public than the band."



Looking back

By Rose McIlveen

For the benefit of younger readers the *Evening World* recounted some of the history of the musical group. "The Mechanics' Band was organized in 1886 and since that time it has gone through the ups and downs that only members of such an organization can fully appreciate. The membership has been constantly changing until now there remains only three members

in the present organization that were among the original number that constituted the first band."

Those three, according to the newspaper, were Charles Stineberg, (baritone); Andrew Nell (alto); and Paul Seward (tuba). The other members in 1900 were Walter Hinds, leader; Wylie Cathcart, solo cornet; Walter Allen, first cornet; Bridge Nichols, E Flat; Walter Burke, William Mooney and Charles Wylie, clarinet; Robert Spratt, piccolo; A.C. Rott, tuba; Morris Demaree and Louis Hughes, slide trombone; William Cosner, alto; and Harry Feltus, and Norman Walker, drummers.

According to the *Evening World*, the band had played under the

name the Mechanics Band at the last state encampment of the state militia and "on account of the high standing of the band as a musical organization, it was mustered into the State militia and is now know as the Second Regimental Band.

"Continued the newspaper, The uniforms have not yet been issued, but they are expected to arrive at any time. The State allows them as a military organization \$120 per annum, for rentals and current expenses."

Apparently, the band was as much a social group as a musical one. The *Evening World* described camping trips to Martinsville and Spencer and added, "The tales that have been told of the jokes of these

gentlemen while in camp long after have furnished subject matter for hearty laughs, and many of the incidents are fresh in the memory of our genial Postmaster, Ira C. Batman, Charley Barnhill, Chester Spiceley and many others who have enjoyed the hospitality of the band boys while in camp."

One of the group's annual affairs was a minstrel show that rivaled any of the road shows coming to town. But it was their concerts that had endeared them to Bloomingtonians.

Explained the *Evening World*, "Every Thursday evening during the summer months the band has

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