

Dover band hit high notes in '33

Musicians claimed a national title

The 1932-33 school year was a stellar one for Dover High. It fielded strong football and baseball teams and its basketball squad won the state Class A championship in March 1933. To top it all off, the high school band snagged a state title two months later.

But the marching band, under the direction of the legendary L.H. Alexander, wasn't done yet.

The organization was invited to participate in a national band championship at Evanston, Ill., near Chicago, in June. A campaign was started in late May to raise the money to finance the trip, and by June 5, about \$1,000 in cash had been collected. That was quite an accomplishment, considering it was one of the worst years of the Great Depression.

The more than 70 members of the band, along with Alexander and four chaperones, Rev. and Mrs. Paul F. Ebert and Mr. and Mrs. R.O. Finger, left for Illinois on June 7 at 5:30 a.m., traveling in two chartered buses and two private cars. A large crowd of parents and supporters gathered at the high school to wish them well.

Before the band's departure, someone in the crowd shouted to its director, "Bring home the bacon, Alex."

Alexander responded, "You're asking a lot. If we don't bring home the bacon, we'll be sure to get a piece of the rind."

It was a long, tiring journey across Ohio, Indiana and Illinois, and the band didn't reach Chicago until 1 o'clock the following morning. Due to the shifting around of sleeping quarters, some of the young people didn't get any sleep that night. But they had to compete that day at noon.

The band made a good showing, despite the fact that Illinois was in the midst of a record heat wave and members had to compete in heavy uniforms, as required by the contest rules. Two Dover young people collapsed because of the heat, but they came around in excellent shape.

After competing in the sight reading and field music phases, the students had a day off. They used the opportunity to visit the World's Fair, which was being held at Chicago at the time.

The next day, June 10, band members participated in the drill competition at Dyche Stadium at Evanston. That was followed by another trip to the World's Fair, in which they marched in a gigantic parade and performed in a mass band concert with their fellow competitors that was carried live over the NBC radio networks. All told, they marched for four hours that day.

But it was worth it. When the band headed back to Ohio, it left as the Class B national



Photos provided

A parade headed by the Junior School Band under the direction of Dominic Greco heads down E. 3rd St. in Dover on June 12, 1933, as the city celebrates the Dover High band's national title in the Class B Division.

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champions.

Alexander was proud of the accomplishments of his students. "They shamed some of the Class A organizations," he later told the Dover Daily Reporter. "The Dover band attracted the most attention of any of the bands. The members made a fine appearance and had plenty of style."

When they reached Dover on the morning of June 12, they were greeted by more than 4,000 people as the band paraded through town before heading to the high school to unpack.

That evening, the band was the guest of honor at a huge celebration in downtown Dover. A parade wound its way through the streets of the downtown, led by the Strasburg High band, under the direction of Dominic Greco. The Dover band didn't march this time. Instead, members rode in several cars. Among them were Buddy Davis and Harold Braun, who were also on the state championship basketball team.

The parade was followed by a ceremony at a platform erected on 3rd St. in front of the Elks lodge. There, Mayor Simon Kappeler presented Alexander with a massive gold key to the city.

"We're still up in the air," Alexander told those in attendance, "but we do feel proud of having such a city to return to with the honor we have won."

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Above, Dover High band members ride in a chartered bus through the streets of downtown Dover after winning the national Class B division title. Below, automobiles parade down E. 3rd St. in Dover as the city welcomes the band.

