

MUSIC MATTERS: A CITY'S BAND IN THREE CENTURIES

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Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of
University of Pittsburgh in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

University of Pittsburgh

2008

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH
SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

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University of Pittsburgh, 2008

The Ringgold Band of Reading, Pennsylvania, has continuously performed music for a span broaching three centuries. Founded in 1852 as the Independent American Brass Band, the ensemble has successfully maintained relevance and sustained an active place within its community. This thesis draws attention to the 156-year-old relationship between the ensemble and the city of which it is a part.

The longevity demonstrated by the Ringgold Band results from the intersection of its continual adaptation with a favorable environment. This thesis summarizes environmental factors—including leadership, close proximity to mid-Atlantic metropolitan areas and economic vibrancy within the community—to explore the basis for the ensemble’s success. The Band has adapted in response to these factors as well as to meet the social needs of its members, audiences and community.

The thesis posits a concept of “music enacted,” not merely performed, as the band has fulfilled social needs both locally and regionally, in a variety of venues and through the creation of new musical works.

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PREFACE

The story of the Ringgold Band of Reading, Pennsylvania, is in one way the story of hundreds, perhaps thousands, of other similar bands which have flourished in America. As commonplace as bands are in American communities, no universally agreed definition of the ensemble exists. The term “band” is insufficient to describe the variety of characteristics of instrumentation, community functions, and organizational structures which influence our understanding. Transcending time and locale, these attributes in their differing degrees form points of entry to a shared experience.

While any band could be worthy of study, the Ringgold Band of Reading, Pennsylvania, is exceptional for its longevity. Its history spanning more than 150 years poses many challenges for the researcher. An inability to interview early band members and a lack of written materials by them, as well as dispersed archival resources hinder a complete understanding of the motivations that have sustained the Ringgold Band. Rather than writing a detailed history based on a series of representative works and biographical accounts this thesis examines social relationships and the mediation of identity as a means to understanding their longevity. Making music across three centuries the Ringgold Band has created a presence far greater than the agency of an individual, suggesting instead a unique confluence of individual, community and environmental circumstances.

There are numerous individuals for whom particular acknowledgment is due beginning with Maria Reichenbach, historian of the Ringgold Band. Her work to document the history of the ensemble paired with efforts to preserve original materials in the formation of an archive provides an invaluable and living link to the past. Similarly librarian Gene Umbenhouer has not only kept music on the stands for concerts, but meticulously cared for the vast repository of works also forming a link from past to present. Additionally Jim Seidel, music director of the ensemble, has been a willing and generous source of information about the band. As performer,

conductor and educator Seidel has been an Atlas-like figure in the modern history of the Ringgold Band and an invaluable resource.

There are not enough words available to express the appreciation due also to the committee members James Cassaro, Don Franklin and Deane Root for their support, insights and wisdom so generously shared. I wish also to acknowledge the faculty of the Music Department at the University of Pittsburgh which has collectively created an environment which transcends the boundaries of disciplines in pursuit of excellence in scholarship. Lastly, special appreciation to Scott Beach, Director of the Survey Research Program and Senior Research Associate at the University of Pittsburgh for his time and assistance.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

For any organization longevity is one measure of success. An exemplary model appears in the Ringgold Band which has brought music to the City of Reading, Pennsylvania, for a period spanning parts of three centuries. Founded in 1852, it is the third oldest non-military band in America and has successfully maintained its relevance and sustained an active place within its community.¹

The Ringgold Band is currently a professional community-based wind ensemble. There is difficulty in assigning a single comprehensive label to an organization such as the Ringgold Band for it has been—and is—many things. The word “band” possesses many meanings; for example the connotations of the term for an ensemble from the rock’n’roll genre would be erroneous, although the Ringgold Band has performed arrangements of popular rock’n’roll music. Likewise it is not a dance band, but performing at dances was once a fundamental component of its activity. Additionally, while many of the members earn their livelihood as musicians and music educators, others treat their participation simply as an avocation. Even the instrumentation has changed markedly; the ensemble began as an entirely brass band, but now comprises woodwinds, brass and percussion. What has remained constant throughout the history of the Ringgold Band is its connectedness to the community.

In this thesis I will analyze the attributes of the region, history of band activities and the methods of music-making to demonstrate that the longevity of the Ringgold Band is the direct result of continual adaptation to meet the changing roles and expectations of the society of which the ensemble is a part.

¹ With a first performance on July 4, 1828, the Allentown (Pennsylvania) Band is the oldest community band in the United States, followed by the Repasz Band of Williamsport, Pennsylvania which was founded on August 17, 1831. Close rivals include the Macungie Band (formerly Millerstown (Pennsylvania) Band founded in March, 1855, and the New Holland Band, which was founded in 1829, but cannot claim continuous activity until 1856.

Any organization has moments of prominence and success as well as ones of challenge and adversity. This review of the ensemble's 150-year history focuses on particular moments of adversity that threatened the existence of the band, and on its response as being illustrative of the organization's adaptability. (See [Appendix A](#): Timeline of Significant Events.) A secondary concern is to demonstrate the far-reaching and extensive influence of individual members within the community, beyond the domain of the band.

Cementing the Ringgold Band's place in history is the distinction of it having been the last band John Philip Sousa ever conducted. Engaged to direct the band as part of its 80th celebration, Sousa completed a rehearsal on March 5, 1932, and returned to his room at the Abraham Lincoln Hotel where he passed away.² This event coincides with the rise of radio and a paradigmatic shift in the role of live music in America. Richard Hansen in his vast study of the cultural history of the American wind band declares, "The final concerts of the band before Sousa's death marked the end of the Golden Age of bands... Still, questions remain as to why professional bands died and why bands and band music did not enjoy the same flourishing the rest of American musical culture did during post-World War I years."³ The moment of this shift in music-making in America is indicative of the many challenges the ensemble has faced, in this case forming a mid-life crisis for the band.

The goal of this thesis is to facilitate a better understanding of historical and ethnographic connections to the band's history through the resources of biography, repertoire, source study and survey of historical context. Were the topic a singular entity such as a composer, one might be tempted to collapse the events of the biography into representative periods marked by the changes of compositional procedure as steps along a stylistic progression. Yet, as will be demonstrated, the Ringgold Band has been a dynamic, adaptable and continuously changing ensemble, not only over time, but also within any given moment as it simultaneously mediated competing and complimentary agendas.

This thesis identifies those characteristics that have enabled the band to sustain relevance for more than 150 years. These include: (1) an examination of the organization's response to the

² Officially at 1:30 a.m., March 6, 1932. Jason Brudereck, "Final Visit," *Reading Eagle*, March 4, 2007.

³ Richard K. Hansen, *The American Wind Band: A Cultural History* (Chicago: GIA Publications, 2005), 65.

moments of greatest adversity and success; (2) consideration of features that seem to be recurrent and prevalent attributes of the organization; and (3) historical factors and trends that have limited the organization's potential.

When considered with the benefit of hindsight, the prominent traits from which historical trends are defined can be seen as a crucial component for the success of the organization. Although written in a different time, to a different end, John Peter Lozo's introduction to the study of recreation in Reading at the turn of the twentieth century bears commentary relative to today:

Prior to the twentieth century the relative simplicity of society as a whole made it possible for the research worker in the social field to discover with comparative ease the causal relationships that existed among the intertwining factors of the life of a given period. As a general thing, if a problem existed that intrigued the interest of an individual or a group, it was fairly simple to ascertain the reasons for its existence and to work out methods for its solution. More recently, however, the complexity of society and the speed with which change has occurred have made it increasingly difficult to identify the particular elements in society that motivate changes in the social pattern.⁴

This thesis focuses on the social, political, and cultural conditions from which history is made. Historians, of whom musicologists are specialist members, are wise to note that every fact and belief currently held is likely to be challenged by new data and shifting perspectives. The scope is meant to describe the nature of the band, its activities and members in order to allow a variety of perspectives to illuminate and inform the circumstances within which the Ringgold Band has existed.

The source materials for this study are comparatively rich for a performing community band; unlike most regional ensembles the Ringgold Band is the subject of a published book, *A History of the Ringgold Band of Reading, Pennsylvania (1852-1994)* by Maria Reichenbach. As the acting historian of the Ringgold Band, Reichenbach has organized a repository of archival materials including minutes of meetings, concert programs, and official correspondence, and has documented the recollections and impressions of band members. Her history relies heavily upon the local newspapers, the *Reading Eagle* and *Reading Tribune*, providing a summary of the Band

⁴ John Peter Lozo, *School and Society in the City of Reading: Relative to Recreation, 1900-1935* (Ph.D. diss.: University of Pennsylvania, 1938), iii.

and its activities as documented in the press. In many ways this thesis is an extension of her initial efforts. Another source, *Musical Remembrances: Profiles of Creative Berks Countians Copiously Illustrated*⁵ by Cedric Elmer provides a narrative account in which data such as home addresses, alternate careers, and a wide variety of music and photographic reprints illuminate the lives of many past band members.

Three collections provide materials for a source study of the band. First are the archives of the band which include more than 200 programs, 300 photographs of the Ringgold Band and other local ensembles, as well as numerous newspaper and magazine articles in addition to the important ledgers and minutes books dating from their inception in 1852. (See [Figure 1](#), *Minutes*, June 28, 1852.) The second resource is the music library of the Ringgold Band featuring nearly 4,500 pieces for band. Both collections are located at the Ringgold Band's home and rehearsal hall in Laureldale, Pennsylvania.⁶

A third collection of repertory exists at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania (HSP) which possesses a single stereoscope photograph and loose leaf parts and part books of the band circa 1870-80, representing approximately 155 songs, of which 51 bear titles.

While much is known, there are numerous shortfalls of available data. A lacuna exists in the official documentation of the band for the years 1866-1881; the minute books are missing, mostly likely due to a fire at the rehearsal hall.⁷ Additionally, despite the success of the band establishing a regional presence, music written for the band or by its members did not establish wide circulation. Many of the works composed for the band or by Ringgold Band leaders were often published within Reading, but failed to achieve widespread dissemination.

For example, within the vast holdings of the Library of Congress and Sheet Music Consortium a search on the topic of the Ringgold produced only the *Ringgold March Two-Step*,⁸ featuring an image of the band on the cover. A small number of songs—dedicated to Samuel

⁵ Cedric Elmer, *Musical Remembrances: Profiles of Creative Berks Countians Copiously Illustrated* (Kurtztown, PA: Berksiana Foundation, 1976).

⁶ Although located in the same building, many of the photographs and materials of the archives are mounted along the walls of the rehearsal space and stored in a turn-of-the-last-century safe in the corner near the podium. The library is in a separate extension to the building and owing to a recent grant is scheduled to receive a fire suppression system. Located at the same address these resources are in one location but the oversight, care and usage create different domains.

⁷ Maria Reichenbach, *A History of the Ringgold Band of Reading, Pennsylvania (1852-1994)* (West Chester, PA: West Chester University Press, 1994), 14.

⁸ A reproduction may be found in Cedric Elmer's text *Musical Remembrances*, (Kurtztown, PA: Berksiana Foundation, 1976.).

Ringgold, the band's namesake—are identifiable but predate the formation of the ensemble.⁹ Closely associated with the Ringgold Band is J. S. Unger, an active publisher in Reading whose oeuvre can only be identified in these collections through one work, Julian Jordan's piano piece *Bye-Gone Days*.¹⁰ Reading's musical history, while rich in activity, is veiled by the lack of wide dissemination of music written or published there.

Additionally, an increasingly vast digital repository of newspapers and broadsides provides accounts of the band's activities, not just in Reading but throughout the nation. A search for references to the Ringgold Band in Newspapers outside of Reading through the American Antiquarian Society's "Archive of Americana" yielded sixty-seven news stories. (See [Appendix B](#): Additional Citations)

⁹ Accessible works include: *Ringgold Infantry Quick Step* (1846), *Maj. Ringgold's Quick Step* (1845) and *The Death of Ringgold* (1857) available at the American Memory project of the Library of Congress at <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/mussmhtml/mussmhome.html>. Additionally *Major Ringgold's Funeral March* (1846), *Maj. Ringgold's Quick Step* (1845), *Ringgold Infantry Quick Step* (1846) and *Ringgold Infantry Quick Step* (1864) are available at the Sheet Music Consortium at <http://digital.library.ucla.edu/sheetmusic/>

¹⁰ *Bye-Gone Days* (1893) by Julian Jordan and published by J. S. Unger Music House is accessible online through the Sheet Music Consortium at <http://musicbox1.library.umaine.edu/musicbox/index.asp>

2.0 ATTRIBUTES AND CONTEXTUAL BASIS

An overview of the history of Pennsylvania and the region surrounding the city of Reading introduces the contextual basis by which the Ringgold Band's longevity is best understood. Historically prominent features of the community of Reading include strong ties to a German heritage, racial homogeneity and a cultural environment slow to change. While the scholarship of community, semi-professional and professional ensembles such as the Ringgold Band is limited,¹¹ there is substantial scholarship on the early years of Pennsylvania and the city of Reading.

2.1 THE REGION

Although Minsi Indians of the Lenni Lenape tribe had occupied the area for an indeterminate length of time the first European settlers arrived after the conquest of Dutch territories in 1664 by King Charles II and subsequent grant of Pennsylvania to William Penn in 1681. Following his death the Penn family divided this section of his holdings into patents for Richard Hockley, Thomas Lawrence and Samuel Finney in the years 1733-1741, and retained some land for themselves. In the 1740s Thomas and Richard Penn drafted plans for the formation of the Town of Reading and a formal survey and plans were drawn up in 1748.

As was much of Pennsylvania, Reading was populated initially by large numbers of German immigrants. In 1747 three-fifths of the population of the province was of German

¹¹ The band movement in America and popular music studies have grown significantly in recent years, but this comparison is made to topics such as the development of the symphony orchestra.

origin.¹² In 1789 the *Neue Unparteiische Readinger Zeitung* was founded and printed in German to serve the population of Reading, nine-tenths of whom could claim German ancestry. Although accepting of subsequent waves of German immigrants throughout the nineteenth century, the city grew primarily from within. A brief ethnography¹³ notes, “The city of Reading, located in a county with a population so predominantly of eighteenth century origin, occupies in this century a unique position among industrial centers of its size and type in that it lacks their usual degree of ethnic and religious heterogeneity.”

As with the rest of the nation, Reading experienced tremendous growth throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. (See [Appendix C: Population](#)) Such growth was generally not integrated though and as late as 1920 Reading’s population of nearly 108,000, “had the largest proportion of native white persons (90.3%), and of native whites of native parentage (75.2%) of *all* cities of more than 100,000 persons in the United States.”¹⁴ Describing the climate in Reading from the turn of the century up to 1935, Walter Frees, a leading figure in the community, observed, “it takes long years of living in Reading to get the confidence of the natives. As was noted previously, Reading’s population has always been predominantly German, little pressure, until recent years, being exerted by outside influences to shake it from its stolidity.”¹⁵

Without addressing the complexities of historical ethnographies the point is clear that Reading has been a closed, insular society. The lack of diversity—whether of race, national origin, or generation—correlates to a diminished cultural diversity. This situation suggests that Ringgold’s success historically has been possible in part because it lacked challenges from other cultural forces.¹⁶

¹² Morton L. Montgomery, *Historical and Biographical Annals of Berks County, Pennsylvania* (Chicago: J.H. Beers & Co., 1909), 16.

¹³ The ethnography is presented as context in preparation of a review of the Socialist Movement in Reading in the years 1896-1936, by Henry Stetler. Based largely upon historical documents and census records it provides quantitative description of the characteristics as well as an interesting look at the state of politics and labor relations in this industrial city.

¹⁴ Henry G. Stetler, *The Socialist Movement in Reading, Pennsylvania 1896-1936: A Study in Social Change* (Ph.D.: Columbia University, 1943), 16.

¹⁵ Lozo, *School and Society*, 38.

¹⁶ Cedric Elmer notes in particular that Italians had been looked down upon until the 1920s.

2.2 ENVIRONMENT

Although it is impossible to unravel the layers of cause and effect that contribute to the life of a city, some characteristics will become historically more prominent and possess a disproportionate impact upon the nature by which it is defined. The Ringgold Band has played a role as a point of intersection among these attributes. Ringgold Band's history may be understood in part by recognizing the impact of improved transportation infrastructure, the influence of secret societies and significance of fire companies as social centers, each possessing a role in shaping the potential for success and sustainability for the Ringgold Band over the years.

Reading's central location between New York and Philadelphia allowed the citizens to enjoy access to many of the resources of both cities. An expansive growth in infrastructure through the canal system and then the railroad linked the industrial city of Reading to these cities and points along the Eastern seaboard. This made possible the engagement of many forms of entertainment from circuses and magicians to all manner of musical ensembles passing through the region. There was a long tradition of commerce through Reading from the initiation of a stage coach in 1789 to Philadelphia, to the early Union (Schuylkill) canal which linked Reading to Harrisburg and Philadelphia through 220 miles of canal.¹⁷ Canal systems were rendered obsolete with the advent of the steam locomotive which witnessed dramatic growth; 9,000 miles of track were laid by 1850, 30,000 by 1860, 53,000 by 1870 and 93,000 having been laid by 1880.¹⁸ Reading was an early recipient of daily rail connection to points east and west with the first line to Philadelphia established in 1838. (See [Figure 2](#), Rail Road Advertisement.) It is easy of overlook, but the growth of the city and the capacity for the Ringgold Band to perform and establish itself would not have been possible were it not for the connections this means of transit provided.

In the mid-to-late 1800s "secret societies" were an overarching term for all manner of associations and clubs. From banking and professional to charitable and religious, organizations

¹⁷ J. Bennett Nolan, *Early Narratives of Berks County* (Reading, PA: Historical Society of Berks County, 1927), 178.

¹⁸ Chauncy M. Depew, ed., *1795-1895: One Hundred Years of American Commerce By One Hundred Americans* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1968) 111.

were formed to address the interests and needs of the rapidly growing and affluent city. The popularity of such groups was noted by Morton Montgomery who declared, “The secret society has come to be the greatest social feature at Reading, exceeding in total male membership even that of the Churches.”¹⁹ Cultural fields were served by literary associations, libraries and musical ensembles. The first were the Masons who established a presence in Reading in 1780²⁰ and the Odd Fellows organized in 1838, and had established a structural presence by 1852. The original blank book in which the Ringgold Band’s first ledger was penned bears the marking “H. A. Lantz’s, Cheap Book Store, Odd Fellows’ Hall, Reading, Pa.” (See [Figure 3](#), Ledger Book and [Figure 4](#), Bookseller’s Mark.) The earliest musical formations to organize in the city were the Reading Military Band and the Beethoven Society founded in the year 1832 and the Reading Maennerchor in 1847 (they merged with the Harmonie Maennerchor in 1874). The Reading Choral Society did not make its debut until 1875.

Surprisingly, it was perhaps the formation of numerous fire companies that made live music flourish in Reading in the nineteenth century. “The history of the fire companies of Reading was the history of the social life of the middle classes of the city, according to Frees, member of the Riverside Fire Company since 1896, member of the Firemen’s Union since 1896, Treasurer of the Relief since 1911, and President of the Berks County Firemen’s Association since its inception in 1913.”²¹ Fire companies have a long history with the earliest ones formed were the Rainbow (1773), Junior (1813), Reading Hose (1819), Neversink (1829) and Friendship (1848).

In addition to fighting fires, fire companies were highly social clubs. Participation in parades, carnivals, fairs and balls helped defray the cost of group trips to other cities (as far as New Orleans, Atlantic City, Los Angeles and even Cuba) with as many as 200 members of the company in attendance. These events frequently necessitated the hiring of a band for entertainment but also provided a way to demonstrate their affluence. Likewise, many fire companies from other cities would visit Reading providing an ample and near ceaseless opportunity for “jollification.” (See [Figures 5-8](#), Ringgold Band with Reading Fire Companies.)

¹⁹ Montgomery, *Historical and Biographical Annals*, 214.

²⁰ Montgomery *Historical and Biographical Annals*, page 62 notes the foundation of the Mason’s as 1780, but Lozo *School and Society*, page 20 sets the date as 1794.

²¹ Lozo, *School and Society*, 170.

A close relationship with the fire companies provided a ready audience, regular engagements and an important source of revenue for the Ringgold Band. (See [Figure 9](#), Rainbow Fire Co., 1889.) The presence of a band at special events was so commonplace as to not even warrant mention. Note for example the Rainbow fire companies' portrait of 1889 which provides no description of the non-uniformed men in the back row with horns, nor for the large bass drum with the letters "RIN..." and "READI..." visible between the men.



[Figure 9](#): Rainbow Fire Company photo, 1889

With increasing prosperity came a rise in the time and resources dedicated to entertainment in Reading. By the end of the nineteenth century the city boasted more than thirty large halls where meetings and concerts could take place. Musical performances were frequently held at the Grand Opera House, the Academy of Music, and at secret society lodges—in particular the Rajah Theater. Additionally, two major parks in the city were sites of regular outdoor concerts. The popularity of these concerts in the park can be gleaned deep within a survey of playgrounds in the early years of the twentieth century in which Lozo notes: "...eight playgrounds were open in 1915, with 22 play leaders serving nearly 5000 children on opening

day.”²² Furthermore, “The principal events of the season were the establishment of an outdoor kindergarten for those under seven, the formation of a baseball league for boys under fifteen, no swimming because of the lack of facilities, the attendance of 5000 persons at a band concert, the provision of facilities for camping for fifty girls along the Tulpehocken River...”²³ Without calling into question the veracity of the observation, any number close to 5,000 is still an extraordinary amount for a city at the time with a population just over 100,000.

In 1934, Albright College organized its first Music Festival in which nearly 1,000 musicians and singers from 115 organizations participated for two nights. Performing as soloist, was Paul Althouse, Wagnerian tenor of the Metropolitan Opera House. While Reading was able to draw numerous guest artists of significant stature, Paul Althouse was a particularly popular artist as he was nephew to Ringgold Band leader Monroe Althouse. Events such as these attest to the positive response the community had towards music making, and the strong regional presence Reading had.

One additional perspective warrants consideration, namely that of the education system. The richness of the musical experience was sustained in part by a curriculum that made music available to future generations of consumers. Throughout the years 1904 to 1935 both vocal and instrumental music were offered to boys and girls represented by the courses of A Capella Choir, Bands, Boys’ Quartette, Ensembles, Glee Clubs, Harmony, Melody Writing, Mixed Choruses, Mixed Quartette, Music Appreciation, Music Theory and Orchestras.²⁴ For a primarily industrial city—one which in 1898 boasted over five hundred shops, factories and foundries²⁵—the wealth of courses offered in music are further testimony to the value placed upon the arts at the time.

So what do fire companies, German heritage and railways have to do with the Ringgold Band and their successes and failures? These attributes of Reading seem disparate but together they form an infrastructure upon which specific events are able to unfold and others made impossible. As one considers the activities of the band in more intimate detail some connections are immediately apparent while others are evocative of “the chicken and the egg” paradox. Many of these broad topics have played a seemingly small but crucial role in the band’s history.

²² Lozo, *School and Society*, 118.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Lozo, *School and Society*, Table XIII

²⁵ Of which Montgomery proceeds to briefly describe three hundred of them.

A tradition of music began early in Reading; records note the assembling of the “town band” as early as 1813 when the population was only 3,500. At the time Reading, Pennsylvania, was incorporated in 1847 it was in a state of profound change. In the preceding decade the city had nearly doubled its population from 8,410 in 1840 to 15,743 in 1850.²⁶ Due in no small part to the arrival of railroad lines to Reading in 1838, the city soon became an important center for industry and the arts. In 1832 both a Beethoven Society and Reading Military Band were formed followed by the establishment of the Reading Maennerchor in 1847.

In this optimistic time of growth eighteen men, “who were mostly mechanics but fond of instrumental music,”²⁷ came together to form the Independent American Brass Band in 1852. Officers were elected and Emanuel Bracefield was chosen leader and treasurer. Cedric Elmer in his *Musical Remembrances* notes: “From the first By-Laws of the Ringgold Band, dues were fixed at ‘not less than six cents a month and such further sums as the By-Laws shall prescribe.’ The By-Laws also stated the duties of the leader: ‘The Leader shall serve as long as he may be satisfied and the Band may see proper and it shall be the duty of the Leader to play the leading parts with an instrument called the E-Flat Bugle.’”²⁸

The group was well organized from the beginning; its regular meetings were well attended and it formed committees to manage its business. Performances for private parties, serenading, local lodge events as well as social and military functions earned the ensemble revenue. This income was sometimes split among its members, but often placed into the band treasury for future use.²⁹ As some band members were also members of the Ringgold Light Artillery it is not surprising the ensemble found frequent engagement with the military unit in what would form a close and long lasting affiliation between the groups.

²⁶ These numbers reflect Lozo’s compilation of U.S. Census data and stand in contrast to Reichenbach’s assertion of 13,000, and Elmer’s assertion of 12,000.

²⁷ Montgomery *Historical and Biographical Annals*, 74.

²⁸ Elmer, *Musical Remembrances*, 67.

²⁹ Ringgold Band Minutes, 23 March, 7 July, 29 September 1853 as cited by Reichenbach in *History of the Ringgold Band*, 6.

2.3 STRONG LEADERSHIP

The product of performing ensembles, the concerts themselves, are an amalgamation of many disparate activities coming together. Matters such as musical accuracy in performance, quality of participant members, pieces chosen for performance and engagements accepted are a few of the many responsibilities of the music director. Less visible and equally important are the components that lead to the performance such as: rehearsals, composing and arranging of music, the acquisition of music itself and distribution of parts, the securing of rehearsal space and promoting attendance at those rehearsals. Additionally, the management of funds and the accounting of finances although aided by the offices of Secretary and Treasurer have historically remained closely tied to the oversight of the band's music director. A review of the eleven Ringgold Band leaders shows that each has had different strengths that have shaped the focus of the band. Importantly each has exercised the strong and compelling leadership necessary to guide the members through the critical moments of adversity when adversity jeopardized the existence of the band.

What prompted the eighteen men to come together to form the Independent American Brass Band remains mere speculation, but a strong foundation was created through their Articles of Incorporation. It stipulated that leaders were responsible not only for playing their part, but also arranging the rehearsals, tending to the oversight of the inventory of instruments and uniforms and in many cases composing and arranging music for the band to perform. This has changed little in the past 155 years, as the current director Jim Seidel notes: "When I inherited the band—and being president at that time—you pretty much did a lot over everything yourself. You had a business manager, a treasurer, but the director he, well, shall we say, really was the impetus to make it happen."³⁰ There have been eleven directors to lead the band, each of whom has left a distinct imprint reflective of their individual strengths and interests, but in every case they have been flexible and able to address the multi-faceted demands of the position.

Following the band's initial assembly in 1852, it took a few months to work through the organization of the ensemble, drafting and accepting a constitution and by-laws, with the principal result being the resignation of Bracefield as leader early in 1853, replaced by John

³⁰ Jim Seidel, interview, November 3, 2007.

Hook. (See [Figure 10](#), John Hook.) At the same meeting the group chose to change its name to The Ringgold Light Artillery Brass Band. Under Hook's leadership the band received positive reviews in the newspapers and witnessed increasing support in the form of "contributing membership" from the public at large. Ringgold Band historian Maria Reichenbach notes; "For two dollars a year a contributing member received a certificate entitling him to a serenade once a year."³¹ By 1854 the ensemble was able to purchase instruments from Philadelphia and continued to perform throughout Reading, engaged now by fire companies for conventions and as entertainment at hotels, and successfully presented its own ball on December 26, 1854, which netted \$210.

In 1856 the group altered its name to Ringgold Cornet Band: engagements were numerous up until the advent of the Civil War. Performances were for all manner of events and organizations including charitable balls, political rallies, and religious groups such as the Protestant Association of Philadelphia. On May 28, 1859 the group chose to expand the band and admit one piccolo and three clarinets, in keeping in line with the tastes of the time. Later in this year that a formal Board of Trustees was established to assist in the oversight of the band and manage its increasing inventory of property.

The cannon-fire upon Fort Sumter, Charleston, South Carolina on April 12, 1861 nearly heralded the end of the Ringgold Cornet Band. In response to President Lincoln's call for troops on April 15th, the Ringgold Light Artillery³² responded immediately, reaching Harrisburg on April 17th, and Washington D.C. by April 18th. Accompanying the unit were three members of the Ringgold Band, John A. Hook, the leader, William C. Eben and Isaac S. Leeds. While records throughout wartime are often sketchy or contradictory, Arthur Graeff's compilation of Ringgold Light Artillery members lists Hook as bugler for the Twenty-third Regiment (formerly Twenty-fifth) Pennsylvania Volunteers with Eben as a Sergeant of Company E, 128th Pennsylvania Volunteers and Leeds as a private in the same unit.³³

³¹ Minutes, 29 September, 3 October, and 6 October, 1853 as cited by Reichenbach, *History of the Ringgold Band*, page 7.

³² Under the command of James McKnight this unit earned a "First Defenders" distinction for rapid response and was one of six companies and two bands of music to respond in the first three months. The Ringgold Light Artillery was equipped with four 6-pounder cannons and mustered over 200 men. An additional 40 companies came from the Reading area during the course of the war.

³³ This is disputed by the muster compiled by Samuel Bates at Harrisburg on April 18, 1861 which notes John A. Hook and George B. Eckert as musicians with William C. Eben as a private. There is no listing for Isaac S. Leeds,

On May 4th, sixteen members of the Ringgold Cornet Band accepted a call to be the Regimental Band of the Twenty-Fifth Regiment of Pennsylvania Volunteers.³⁴ By May 16th the remainder of able-bodied band members joined their three vanguard members in Washington, D.C. becoming the first band to respond to President Lincoln's call. A handful of members remained in Reading and tended to the business affairs of the group, with all activity suspended by the end of the year. Outstanding debts necessitated that a portion of property held by the band had to be sold. Without use and care the uniforms and instruments were in general disrepair and rendered unserviceable by the close of the war. The demise of the Ringgold Cornet Band seemed eminent.

In 1865 several members met to discuss the rebuilding of the band, and plans were laid to create a group of twenty-five musicians.³⁵ Unwilling to let the band die the community warmly received efforts to acquire used instruments and funds for music. By September, 1865 gifts and pledges of \$1,344 had been secured, orders were placed for instruments and nineteen men met to begin rehearsals at the home of Henry Crecelius. Shortly thereafter Reading native Joseph Winter was elected leader, an auspicious choice, as he would lead the group (with a small hiatus to unsuccessfully form his own group in 1870) up to the twentieth century.

Under Winter's leadership the ensemble continued to prosper in its traditional role of providing entertainment for fire companies, the numerous lodges and societies, regular serenading and parading. Concerts in local parks and a new association with the First Brigade of the National Guard of Pennsylvania kept the members busy. By the late 1880s the direction and role of the Ringgold Cornet Band was put to question as members began to turn down engagements so as to perform with other groups. (See [Figure 11](#), *Minutes* March 29, 1853.) A fissure developed between those who wanted popular music and those who wanted classical pieces leading to the resignation of ten members on February 3, 1887. These members soon formed the Germania Band, of eighteen members, under the direction of Monroe A. Althouse and were immediately successful.

although Jacob Leeds appears as a private as well. See Samuel P. Bates, *History of Pennsylvania Volunteers, 1861-5. Prepared in Compliance with Acts of State Legislature*, (Harrisburg, PA: B. Singerly, State Printer, 1869-71), and Arthur Graeff, *Four Firsts in Berks – 1861*, (Berks County, PA: Historical Society of Berks County, 1961).

³⁴ Service to this unit was brief, only three months, before assignment as Regimental Band to the Eighty-Eighth Regiment on August 1861.

³⁵ Instrumentation was to have been 3 E-flat cornets, 2 B-flat cornets, 2 B-flat tenor horns, 4 E-flat alto horns, on B-flat baritone horn, 2 E-flat bass horns and reed and percussion instruments making up the rest.

Despite the seeming catastrophic loss of more than a third of its members the reputation of the Ringgold Band and the richness of Reading's musical community allowed the band to see an increase in its membership up to thirty by 1890. Typical of its continuing self promotion, the band presented a banquet and concert on May 27, 1891 with nearly 400 people in attendance. Following the band performance the Ringgold Orchestra, featuring sixteen Ringgold band members gave a performance under the baton of Harry Fahrbach.³⁶ A program for the concert exists, with the band portion consisting of *Kennebee* by R.B. Hall, *Martha Overture* by Flotow, *Home Sweet Home*, *Fantasie* for clarinet solo by Rollinson, *Scotch Fantasie* by Wiegand, and *Une Serenade* for baritone solo by Chapelle. When combined with the orchestra portion of the concert this performance represented a widely appealing range of marches and overtures, and both instrumental and soloist features. This pattern was followed in the July 4, 1891, concert at Mineral Spring Park. (See [Figure 12](#), Program.) The program also mentions the Band's presence every Saturday through July and August, in alteration with the Germania Band's performances each Wednesday. The capacity of Ringgold Band members to adapt their ensemble in order to perform orchestral music became a hallmark of the band in this time period, as will be demonstrated later.

The richness of Reading's musical culture allowed both the Germania and Ringgold Bands to specialize in different repertoire. During the years under the leadership of Winter, the Ringgold Band continued to incorporate progressively more complex works by contemporary composers. Self-presenting concerts was a source of substantial revenue for the band and became an annual event, drawing at times as many as 1,000 guests. Winter could program music to suit his interest and often brought in guest artists from outside of the city. One such concert, January 31, 1893, (see [Appendix D](#), Programs), features the Fest March of Wagner's *Tannhauser*, Concerto for B-flat Clarinet by Von Weber, and a selection from *Cavalleria Rusticana* by Mascagni.

Despite 35 years of successful leadership and improvement, however, nothing could be done to prevent the course of nature—Joseph Winter unexpectedly passed away on August 30, 1900. Harry Fahrbach was elected to replace Winter as leader of the band, but would resign

³⁶ Although Fahrbach's tenure with the Ringgold Band was brief, he remained active throughout the Reading community. On November 29, 1913 Fahrbach conducted the inaugural performance of the Reading Symphony Orchestra at the Hippodrome Theater (renamed State Theatre) with 47 core musicians and 8 guest musicians. The RSO has remained in continuous operation ever since.

within four months.³⁷ For ten months the band went without an elected leader and initiated a dialogue with the Germania Band, then under Monroe Althouse. The minutes of October 18, 1901, record that:

The committee consisting of the above named members of the Ringgold Band met a corresponding committee of the Germania Band, composed of M.A. Althouse, J.B. Miesse, Al Keppelman, Geo W. Flatt and J. A. Kepler, to discuss ways and means of consolidation of the two Bands, thereby giving the Citizens of Reading a good large Band and continue the reputation of the Ringgold Band.

After a general discussion of the question and a thorough ventilation of ideas by both committees, it was finally agreed that the members of the Germania Band should join the Ringgold Band as individuals (not as a Band). The office of “Conductor” of the Ringgold Band being vacant; M. Althouse was assured that he would be elected to that office and that he was to have full control of the Band while playing an engagement or at rehearsal.³⁸ ([Figure 13](#), *Minutes* October 18, 1901.)

Then on October 24, 1901 at a special meeting of the Ringgold Band, the twenty-seven members of the Germania Band were nominated and inducted into the Ringgold Band. Shortly thereafter the new ensemble presented itself to the public with a performance on November 29, 1901. The *Reading Times* declared, “If the old Ringgold was good and the Germania was good, surely the new Ringgold is the best band which Reading has ever possessed and one of which the city may be justly proud.”³⁹ Keeping the name of the Ringgold Band and under the leadership of Althouse, a new era had begun.

Born in 1853, Monroe Althouse⁴⁰ had been gainfully employed as a hatter and had learned the violin, baritone horn and trombone for pleasure. In the years 1874-1876 and he is noted as having played with the Maennerchor, Germania and Philharmonic Orchestras and he gave up his business as a hatter to work as a professional musician. Althouse formed his own ten-piece orchestra for the Reading Academy of Music and became an active composer and publisher. Through his role at the Academy, Althouse met John Philip Sousa and established a lifelong friendship, a connection which would later bring a small measure of infamy to the

³⁷ Maria C. Reichenbach, “The Ringgold Band in Pennsylvania Celebrates 150 Years of Music,” *The Instrumentalist* 56:9 (April 2002): 64.

³⁸ *Minutes*, December 7, 1901.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ Monroe Althouse’s nephew was the noted tenor and Metropolitan Opera star Paul Althouse, formerly of Reading, PA.

Ringgold Band and the city of Reading. In 1887, Althouse had become leader of the Germania Band, a few years before its merger with the Ringgold Band.

In 1901, now with a larger ensemble of more than fifty musicians, the Ringgold Band settled into a period of consistent growth and refinement. In addition to its regular performances at Penn's Common and Mineral Spring Park, serenades to contributors, and for the activities of the fireman companies and secret societies the band began to self-present formal concerts more frequently at the larger halls in town, generating notable income. (See [Figure 14](#), Penn's Common.) The programming was not overtly formulaic: its diversity was one source of the band's popularity. Programs included the requisite marches and waltzes, balanced and contrasted by new works (in arrangements adapted to suit the band) from composers such as Wagner, Verdi, Liszt, Saint-Saëns, Meyerbeer and Rossini. Additionally, Althouse would regularly compose pieces in honor of special events, celebrations and for persons and businesses of note.

Not willing to allow an opportunity to be missed, Althouse also led the Germania Orchestra as a component of the Ringgold Band business. The Band could offer the classic Ringgold chestnuts of marches and concert arrangements alongside the popular and dance music so successfully performed by the Germania Band, as well as integrating a string component in order to engage any opportunities that might arise for orchestra. The motto evidenced in letterhead of the day sums up the mission of the band: "Music furnished for all occasions." (See [Figure 15](#), Letterhead.)

Opportunities to perform were seemingly never missed, and this attitude extended to the band's business acumen, always looking to generate some measure of profit. In 1905 the band earned \$1 a night in extra income by renting its hall to Professor Fred Moyer's Glee Club. As well, the increasing popularity of the Ringgold Band led to greater sponsorship from businesses and individuals as well as pervasive paid advertisements within the program books.⁴¹ (See [Figure 16](#), Program.)

⁴¹ For an example of how advertisements featured prominently, see the program to the December 7, 1915 concert ([Figure 16](#)). Note also the soloist is band member John Wummer who went on to acclaim as a member of the New York Philharmonic and NBC Orchestra.

Despite the band's increasing success, Althouse retired from the position of director in 1922 at the age of 69. The rigors of performing, travel and ill health were too much,⁴² and he handed over leadership to Robert Mattern. Mattern was an accountant and had been a clarinetist with the band for less than a year when he was appointed the interim position assistant director, then eight months later to director upon Althouse's retirement. The band had numerous engagements and continued to perform well, but Mattern was unwilling to meet the full-time needs (in addition to his business, he was organist at Loey Lutheran Church) and expectations of the position. Within a year he resigned as leader, although he continued to perform as a clarinetist in the band: Eugene Weidner succeeded him as leader on June 5, 1924. Weidner had been a member for nine years and had experience as a director, having previously led the Pottstown Band and the Rajah Temple Shrine Band of Reading.

Under the leadership of Weidner, the Band maintained its formula for success: parades, parks concerts, and special events. Weidner innovated, adding educational concerts by arranging for the band to play at Northeast Junior High School in 1925. Another tradition was begun in 1928 when a guest conductor was invited to lead the band for its annual anniversary concert.

There were few changes made in programming or instrumentation under Weidner's leadership and membership remained high at 55 musicians. Guest artists from outside of Reading were often hired to perform, and likewise many Ringgold Band members frequently performed frequently elsewhere. One such prominent member was Joseph O. DeLuca who was soloist with the Creatore, Conway and Sousa Bands. Another notable member was Edna Phillips, harpist, who went on to become the first woman to perform in Stokowski's Philadelphia Orchestra.

In 1932, the Ringgold Band was prepared to celebrate its 80th Anniversary. Having established a new tradition of guest conductors for the annual event, it was an obvious choice to invite the "March King" John Philip Sousa to lead the band. It was to be a major event for the band (featuring also the great grandniece of Major Samuel Ringgold) and Sousa arrived on March 5th, leading the band in rehearsal that evening in preparation for the concert on the following day. After dinner Sousa returned to his room at the Abraham Lincoln Hotel where he suffered a heart attack and died late in the night. As his body was taken to the train station to be

⁴² Monroe Althouse passed away with two years of his retirement, on October 12, 1924 at the age of 71.

returned to Washington, D.C. the band performed several pieces, including one by his late friend Monroe Althouse, the funeral march *Silent Friend*.

The remaining years under Weidner continued to be prosperous. Little else changed, and no other guest conductors or performers suffered calamity while engaged. One last innovation featured the combination of the Ringgold and Allentown Bands for a joint concert in 1932. The Band was honored with an invitation to participate in the inaugural parade of Franklin D. Roosevelt on March 4, 1933. While in Washington, the band participated in a contest that evening and took second place, further fueling its pride and reputation.

On May 8, 1936, Eugene Weidner died. The band looked within once again and elevated a clarinetist to the position of leader, re-electing Robert Mattern. This time Mattern would lead the band for seven years. He continued many of the ideas and events instituted by Weidner, but also stayed true to the band's successful traditions. Mattern perhaps best embodied the double perspective of performer and leader; he was not only a clarinetist, but a featured soloist on clarinet as well as a member of the ensemble's saxophone quartet.

Mattern, who led the band through 1943, was followed by Fred Cardin, who assumed leadership of the band in the midst of the Second World War when many of the bandsmen left, and their places had been filled—as had most roles in America—by women. As Maria Reichenbach notes, “The eight women who joined the band in 1944 did not remain with it as the men returned.”⁴³ Cardin led the band throughout the duration of the war and shepherded a return to normalcy. He was followed by Walter Gier, elected in 1960, who led the band for twenty years characterized by social revolution and a significant shift in cultural foundation of the nation. His successor, Jim Seidel (elected in 1980) notes: “Early on the band did talk about audiences, but they didn’t worry about it. There was a time period when it developed a real reputation. Then in the 70s the social culture changed. You couldn’t rest on the historic reputation, and unfortunately the members weren’t looking forward.”⁴⁴

A key point underlies the comment made by Seidel: a critique that the collective interests of the band had reached a point of stasis from which society was moving away, straining the relevance of band and threatening a disconnect.

⁴³ Reichenbach, *History of the Ringgold Band*, 64.

⁴⁴ Jim Seidel, interview, November 3, 2007.

Seidel is uniquely qualified to comment on the sentiments of the band having originally been a trumpet pupil of Gier beginning at the age of 8, and by the age of 16 having become accomplished enough to receive an invitation to participate in a rehearsal with the Ringgold Band. Since that first rehearsal Seidel has been not only a performing member, but also a featured soloist. He has also served as President and Assistant Director of the Band prior to his appointment as Director.

Seidel has also performed with the Pottstown Band, the Reading Symphony Orchestra, the Berks Chamber Orchestra, and the Reading Civic Opera Society Orchestra. He is also involved in numerous other free-lance opportunities throughout the Reading area including participation in a brass quintet. Seidel has toured with Keith Brion's New Sousa Band and is on the staff at Allegheny College, where he teaches a summer seminar on community bands with attendees from across the country. This course has provided Seidel input and insights on the wide array of band activities as practiced throughout the country. His principal occupation though has been a long tenure as music educator for the Exeter School District, beginning in 1973, and where he continues to this day as chairperson of the Music Department. The wide range of activities evidenced in the career of Jim Seidel to date is a testament to an agenda of active engagement in music-making.

As director of the Ringgold Band, Seidel has endeavored to foster more than a collegial environment, one with familial overtones. This is combined with a concerted effort to connect to the community as evidenced by performances that feature new arrangements, regular soloists from within the band, and new programs such as "Banding Together" which rehearses the band alongside middle school students as well as a new scholarship and performance opportunity titled the Ringgold Band Young Artist Award (RBYAA).

The leader, in addition to making the many musical decisions, must provide strong administrative leadership concerning the needs and expectations of the band. Reflecting on the start of his tenure Seidel notes, "When I inherited the band, and being president at that time—you pretty much did a lot of everything yourself. You had a business manager, a treasurer, but the director he, well shall we say really was the impetus to make it happen."⁴⁵ For instance, in the 1990s the band was informed that the space they were rehearsing in would no longer be

⁴⁵ Jim Seidel, interview, November 4, 2007.

available. Although Seidel secured an alternate location for rehearsals the band floundered without a home and the immense library of 4,500 works was relegated to the garage of the librarian.

Rather than continuing a compromise solution in perpetuity, the leadership of the band resolved their dilemma by purchasing a new home for the band. The building features a rehearsal hall and space for the library and archives. The establishment of a new permanent home was also accompanied by a separation of business and musical matters,⁴⁶ as the role of President took over issues relating to finances and day-to-day operations. The sphere of influence by Seidel and preceding band directors has been extensive, providing numerous points of contact between the Ringgold Band and the greater Reading region.

2.4 PLACE IN TIME

The climate in which the Ringgold Band was formed was a time of significant musical growth and change in America. An articulated, independent American style of performance was not yet possible given the dependence upon Old World values and standards, although soon the rise in popularity of bands on both continents would form an environment conducive for the success of the Ringgold Band. Influential leaders such as the Dodworth family, Patrick Gilmore and John Philip Sousa contributed to the formation of a band tradition which came to dominate and, in part, define American musical taste in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The enormous popularity of the movement is known as the Golden Age of Bands.

The Great Migration brought five million Europeans to the United States in the years between 1820-1860, and along with it came a taste for waltzes, polkas and quadrilles which dominated popular taste of the old world. One such immigrant family was the Dodworths from

⁴⁶ This is not a unique circumstance, as the minutes of October 28, 1901 note: “The question of contributing members was taken up and it was the opinion of the majority present that the confidence of the Public would be assured and more contributing members be secured if the management of that part of the Banc’s Business was left to men of reputation who were not members of the band. Mr. Landis then made a motion (which was passed) that the President—approved—two (2) members of the Band, they to secure three (3) influential business men to act in conjunction with the 2 Band members, in the management of the Band in all business except the making and playing of engagements and the payment of money received for engagements.” *Minutes*, October 28, 1901.

England, who would form the Independent Band of New York in 1825, arguably the first professional brass band in America, led by the brothers Thomas, Allen and Harvey. From concerts to balls, the band featured arrangements of the overtures and opera arias of Europe's leading composers, as well as social dances, military marches and novelty works.

Perhaps the Ringgold Band followed the Dodworth model closely, not only in name—originally being the Independent American Brass Band—but also in activity. Charles Hanson's summation of the Dodworth family could easily be superimposed upon the Ringgold ensemble. Hanson notes of the Dodworths: "The importance of the Dodworth family of musicians to the emergence of America's musical culture needs to be revisited. They were involved in nearly everything of consequence from 1825 to 1870s: forming and organizing ensembles, directing and soloing in orchestras and bands, composing, publishing music, teaching dance, and designing and selling instruments."⁴⁷

The Dodworth name was variously applied, depending on the opportunity at hand. Newspapers touted pending performances of the Dodworth Cornet Band, the Dodworth Orchestra, and the Dodworth Brass Band as well. The broad spectrum of music performed was made possible as members were successful doublers, able to perform a wind and string instrument with equal facility. The Dodworth family musicians helped found the New York Philharmonic Society in 1842, and one of America's first renowned orchestral conductors, Theodore Thomas, had been a member of the Dodworth Cornet Band⁴⁸.

The turmoil of continental Europe in the nineteenth century prompted numerous artists and musicians to seek their fortunes in America. Amongst the immigrants was the Germania Musical Society, who toured North America from 1848 to 1855. The ensemble embodied the ideals of democracy integrating a system in which each member possessed an equal voice in the business of the group; both musical and social. Notably, Carl Bergman was a cellist in Theodore Thomas' chamber series and had been a champion of Wagner's music, performing the first all-Wagner program in the United States in 1853. As well, Society member Carl Föeppl had played in the newly formed New York Philharmonic and taught George Ives harmony and counterpoint. There is no evidence to connect the Germania Musical Society to the Ringgold Band, but

⁴⁷ Hansen, *American Wind Band*, 24.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 37.

similarities such as the democratic membership, being German immigrants, and far reaching musical connections form notable parallels.

Likewise there is no evidence to connect the Ringgold Band to the Dodworth Band; each happens to have developed a similar set of characteristics, forming a model of success. While the interests of the Dodworths diverged into other aspects of performance, another ensemble would soon take the vanguard of brass performance.

On October 16, 1849 Patrick Sarsfield Gilmore came to New York from England, joining his brother John Hugh Gilmore who had relocated in the preceding year.⁴⁹ Gilmore soon performed and began conducting successful early brass bands such as the Charleston Band (1849), the Suffolk Band (1849), the Boston Brass Band (1852) and the Salem Brass Band (1855). Under his leadership the reputation of the Salem Band in particular grew, earning numerous distinguished engagements such as a performance in the inaugural parade for President James Buchanan in 1857. The following year he left to form his own ensemble, the Gilmore Band which did well until the outbreak of the Civil War at which point the group became affiliated with the Twenty-fourth Massachusetts Regiment.

In addition to his capacity as an extraordinary musician and director Gilmore refined important extra-musical skills as a band leader early on. Perhaps inspired by a performance of Monsieur Louis Jullien, Gilmore recognized the importance of spectacle and creating the impression of concert as an event. Gilmore had worked for P.T. Barnum, a figure with whom he soon developed a mastery of spectacle for the sake of publicity and notoriety. The famous arrival of Jenny Lind in 1850 was carefully orchestrated by Barnum and documentation exists suggesting Gilmore had been worked for Barnum promoting her tour.⁵⁰ The refinement of promotional skills led Gilmore to organize concerts with incredibly large numbers of musicians; such as the inauguration of the Governor of Louisiana Michael Hahn in 1864 featuring 500 band members and 6000 singers augmented by 50 cannons. The success of the event led Gilmore to even greater extravagance including the National Peace Jubilee and Musical Festival (1869) and

⁴⁹ The misconceptions which held Gilmore's arrival to the United States as an Irish immigrant to Boston, or as having arrived to Canada as part of an Irish regimental band in 1848 have been refuted by the discovery of Gilmore's arrival in the Official Passenger Ship Files of the National Archives in Washington, D.C. (Frank J. Cipolla and Donald Hunsberger, eds., *Wind Ensemble and its Repertoire: Essays on the Fortieth Anniversary of the Eastman Wind Ensemble* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 1994), 282.)

⁵⁰ Hansen, *American Wind Band*, 31.

the World Peace Jubilee and International Music Festival (1872) which featured a collection of nearly 20,000 performers.

As extraordinary as these individual events were, Gilmore cemented his role as an integral part of the American band tradition by forming and touring a band in the 1870s and 1880s. From an initial and highly successful 150 concert run in New York at Barnum's Hippodrome in 1875 he made extensive tours with his band across America and to Europe. Featuring the finest musicians available, the band was not only enormously popular, but became a model from which local bands could emulate.

Although a large photograph of the Gilmore band resides as part of the Ringgold Band archives—its date of acquisition and significance are unknown—there is no known evidence directly connecting the two bands.⁵¹ It does remain plausible though, given the extensive traveling of both groups, that the renowned of Gilmore's ensembles would clearly be known to the bandsmen of Ringgold. On this note, Gilmore was the Musical Director of the centennial celebrations held in Philadelphia in 1876, where the Ringgold Band performed as part of the celebration "by request."⁵² A similar speculative connection exists in the collection of repertory at HSP which includes a work titled "Jullien's Prima Donna Waltz." Suggesting perhaps the Ringgold Band possessed a connection to Louis Jullien, the French bandmaster who inspired Gilmore.

While the nature of the relationship of Ringgold and Gilmore or the activities of his band remains unknown, there is a strong relationship to Gilmore's heir, John Philip Sousa.⁵³ As was previously noted music director Joseph Winter had programmed Sousa's music, but the relationship between Sousa and the Ringgold Band was cemented in 1909 when the band manager and assistant leader, Herbert L. Clark came to perform as a guest conductor of the Ringgold Band. The concert held at the Academy of Music and precipitated Sousa's interest in the band and its conductor Monroe Althouse. Eventually the two would become friends and numerous Ringgold Band musicians would find employment in Sousa's band.

From Dodworth, Gilmore and Sousa, band performances were the pinnacle of entertainment of the day in what would eventually become known as the Golden Age of Bands.

⁵¹ Mounted on the wall in the rehearsal hall, is a photo of the Gilmore Band.

⁵² Unfortunately, the date of this event corresponds to those years missing in the minutes.

⁵³ The connection between Gilmore and Sousa's bands were cemented when 18 members of the former joined the latter following Gilmore's death in 1894.

The ideal of entertainment appealing to a broad base continues to be a fundamental component of the band as it exists today. Music Director Jim Seidel notes, “The key to the success of an organization is to before you go out and play at a given venue to think about who’s going to be at the venue... My goal when I program a concert is that every person in the audience will walk away with something they like and there will be something they don’t like.”⁵⁴

In retrospect, the traits and characteristics of these leading historical models demonstrate striking parallels in the practice and performance as embodied by the Ringgold Band. Although the Ringgold Band never achieved the national prominence of the Dodworth, Gilmore or Sousa bands it has far exceeded them in terms of longevity. In each case the ensembles benefited from strong leadership and the rise in popularity of the band genre but it has been the Ringgold Band’s interconnectedness to Reading which has sustained them. Success for the band has been directly related to their ability to meet the changing needs and expectations of the audiences they perform for and the community in which they are a part.

⁵⁴ Jim Seidel interview, November 4, 2007.

3.0 PARTICIPATION AS SOCIAL CONSTRUCT: THE HISTORY

Although it is not possible to know the individuals' motivations that led to the band's formation, the Ringgold Band has at least in part fulfilled a need for social interaction. In mid-nineteenth century America, the local band provided its community with entertainment that was largely self-produced. Additionally, membership in a band provided its members with esteem and pride through performances as well as the reputation for sound governance, propriety and fiscal responsibility demonstrated throughout the years.

3.1 ORIGINS OF THE BAND

A review of the constitution, official minutes, ledgers and correspondence since its inception show that participation in the Ringgold Band has been fundamentally shaped by social relationships within and around it. At their initial gathering on June 28, 1852, the eighteen men who founded the band quickly laid out a plan for the formation of the organization. They elected officers, assigned committees, and issued directions for a constitution to be drafted. The constitution of the Independent American Brass Band (see [Figure 17](#), Constitution) puts the foundation of the band this way: "It shall be composed of men who understand music or are likely to make such having the natural talent for learning music, and agree to be governed by the following Constitution and By Laws."

Such a broad opening speaks to the importance of a "natural" inclination, towards the making of music. The undefined and subjective aspect of some inherent talent as prerequisite to membership is left open, but elsewhere in the Constitution more qualifiers define the membership; Article 2 states:

Section 1: No person shall be admitted a member of this band who is not of good moral character, and agrees to pay his equal part of all expenses contracted by the Band. Such as rent light fuel music etc. Also if any member should quit the Band, said member must leave a copy of all his music, or the original parts.

Section 2: Any person wishing to join shall make application. If the Band are satisfied of such application, there shall be a committee of two appointed to inquire as to the character and fitness of said person and report at next meeting, and shall be elected by acclamation having a majority in the affirmation he shall be considered elected. (See [Figure 18](#), *Minutes* February 16, 1853.)

Therefore four criteria for membership existed: the capacity to make (or learn to make) music, absence of moral defect, a willingness to pay a share of expenses, and the capacity to garner the approval of existing members. In practice though it took very little time for matters extra-musical to become central to the debate of membership and arrangement. The meeting on February 16th, 1853 begins with an impasse, procedurally unable to approve of the preceding minutes, which were rejected due to the dissatisfaction and perceived unconstitutionality of the requirement that the band leader must play cornet. This question was, “then brought as before and discussed at considerable length. J.H. Satz expressed his opinions as follows, that he (JHS) would like to see W.A. Rochold or P.M.E. on the cornet because he would like to see Harry Crecelius in the band and, if neither, W.A.R. or P.M. would not get the cornet, Harry would, get disgusted, and would perhaps leave the band, in other words, it would look as if we wanted to shove him out. W.C.E. then in order had opinions of a different nature...”⁵⁵ What had troubled the band had in essence been a matter of who would play what.

For an ensemble whose “leader” was constitutionally required to play cornet, this was likely no small matter. Whatever personal motivations and common interests drew the members together in the first place soon collided with personal agendas and interpersonal dynamics. Fortunately, the majority of members remained flexible and the band began performing eventually under the leadership of John Hook, who had “...said he would take cymbals or cornet.” Alternately, and more typically, matters of admission could be a relatively easy affair, as noted later in the minutes: “W.C.E. then proposed O. Ermald as a member of this band, the

⁵⁵ *Minutes*, February 16, 1853.

president asked the Leader a few question as to his ability and his fitness the Leader (J. Hook) replied that he thought him (OE) every way qualified to be a member of this band. He was therefore elected unanimously. H. Satz then proposed H. Crecelius as a member. Pres. put the same question to the leader as heretofore, and gave his opinion as before. He was elected unanimously.”⁵⁶

The creation of a constitution provided a vehicle for governance and outlined the responsibilities and expectations of the band’s members. In hindsight it reveals the thoughtfulness and care with which the initial members looked to the future and anticipated the needs of the organization. As a resource for understanding the band’s history, the official documentation is often suggestive at best, merely hinting of the tensions and conflicts that existed below the surface. The *Minutes* convey at times a sense of the mediation of differing interpretations of the constitution and the agendas of individual members, but they generally function as a chronicle of activities of the organization. Unfortunately, the available documents fail to convey the motivations and interests that initially brought the men together.

Efforts to piece together the relationships between members in an ensemble—especially from a distant historical perspective—is virtually impossible as they are always changing and any extant evidence bears the risk of being misleading. The myriad of possibilities can at best be summarized in the observation of the words and actions of the members themselves, so long as they are assessed within the context of an incomplete truth.

Consider briefly the less explicit medium of the ledger book entries for the month of April 1915, which now feature a number of recurring salaried positions. Persons named Bayer and Fenstermacher received weekly payments, as did Mrs. Darlington for cleaning. There were also weekly payments made for “paper towels,” “papers + supplies” and “toilet paper + towels.” (See [Figure 19](#), Ledger.) These entries are accompanied by end-of-month payments to: “Keller Cal Cigar, Reading Brew for Beer, Leb Wm Cigarettes, Baelman Pretzels and Burley H.G. Cigars.”⁵⁷ Upon first consideration the affairs of the band seem to have taken on the characteristics of a gentleman’s club or fraternity house. A lack of entries noting expenditures for music, travel or promotional materials suggests the band had shifted its emphasis to

⁵⁶ *Minutes*, February 16, 1853.

⁵⁷ *Ledger*, April, 1915.

socializing and entertainment of an extra-musical nature. Did the presence of a monthly bill for consumables and weekly payments for cleaning mean that personal benefit of the members of the band had supplanted the earlier focus on music-making?

The historical sources do not establish the nature of interpersonal relationships between band members. The community band in modern America has been the topic of recent survey by Mary Ellen Cavitt published in the *Journal of Band Research*.⁵⁸ Cavitt sought to identify factors influencing participation in ten community bands, representing more than 400 respondents. She collected a wide variety of data, including reasons for participation. As Cavitt notes, “Analysis of the open-response data revealed that 70% of respondents indicated that enjoyment and having fun was the most important reason for participation in community band. Social interaction (25.1%) and being able to play with a group (12.9%) were also important reasons for participation.”⁵⁹ The sentiment behind these results is echoed in the empirical evidence experienced by Jim Seidel, music director of the Ringgold Band, who observes, “At Allegheny University I teach a seminar on community bands. They come from all over the country and have different stories and set ups... They are more for the people playing than they are for the community.”⁶⁰

The Ringgold Band was a focal point of social interaction, and on May 15, 1930 a Ladies Auxiliary was formed. Conducting business at Ringgold Band headquarters at Fourth and Penn Streets in Reading, officers were elected at the first meeting which included special guest Eugene Weidner, director of the band. The group met monthly, paying dues of 10 cents a month, and held numerous fundraisers benefiting the band and themselves. One type of event—the card party—was a particular success. With donated door prizes to entice the tickets were 50 cents each and earned \$15 to \$25 in revenue for the group. Other important activities of the group were to arrange gift baskets at holiday time for needy families in the community or band.⁶¹ With donated door prizes and tickets at 50 cents each, the event earned \$15 to \$25 for the group. Other important activities of the group were to arrange gift baskets at holiday time for needy

⁵⁸ Mary Ellen Cavitt, “Factors Influencing Participation,” *Journal of Band Research* Fall (2005): 42.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 51.

⁶⁰ Jim Seidel, interview, November 4, 2007.

⁶¹ Website, <http://www.ringgoldband.com/articles.htm> accessed 10/28/2007.

families in the community or band.⁶² The Ladies Auxiliary no longer exists; it dissolved in the 1970s, but has been replaced by “The Groupies” which are generally the spouses of the members of the band meeting in accordance with the interests of its members.

3.2 BAND IDENTITY WITHIN READING

The relationship between the city of Reading and the Ringgold Band is interwoven so as to be indivisible. For most of the city’s history, the Ringgold Band has been an integral part of its identity and band members have often assumed leadership roles within the musical life of the community. The contributions and variety of roles played by individual members such as Obadiah Unger, John Wacha and Jim Seidel demonstrate the interconnectedness of the Ringgold Band to its community.

This relationship has stimulated philanthropy toward the band’s financial needs. The minutes of March 23, 1853, note the need to acknowledge the ensemble’s first recorded gift: “Resolved that a note of thanks be tendered to Capt James McNight for his liberal donation to the band and entered on the minutes also a committee appointed to inform him of the same...” From this initial contribution, to the broad range of individual, corporate and individual giving that occurs today, the generous support of the band is demonstrative of the desire of the citizens of Reading to support the Ringgold Band.

Recognition of the renown and honor brought to the city through the activities of the band reached a pinnacle at the turn of the twentieth century. At the merging of Ringgold and Germania Bands, the practical considerations of having a high quality local band were as notable as the preservation of the band’s renown. The minutes note: “The committee consisting of the above named members of the Ringgold Band met a corresponding committee of the Germania Band, composed of M.A. Althouse, J.B. Musse, Al Keppelman, Gus W. Flatt and J.A. Kepler, to discuss ways and means of consolidation of the two Bands, thereby giving the citizens of

⁶² Website, <http://www.ringgoldband.com/articles.htm> accessed 10/28/2007.

Reading a good large Band and continue the reputation of the Ringgold Band.”⁶³ (See [Figure 20](#), *Minutes* December 7, 1901.)

The vast amount of travel by the band suggests that the group was professional in presentation and activity. Yet the summary of employments of the band members in 1898 as compiled by Morton Montgomery contains no claim to status as a professional performing musician. His census lists 8 artists (up from 1 in 1840), 5 piano tuners, 9 book-sellers, and other occupations; 60 members identify themselves as “Teachers, Music” under the category of miscellaneous employments. For the summary of the field he states, “The musical character of the people is of a superior order. The societies for producing instrumental and vocal music are numerous, and several of each class have a wide reputation.”⁶⁴

Musicians in Reading never evinced singular areas of specialization. They performed, taught, composed and published, and sold and repaired instruments, creating a powerful and far-reaching influence within their community.

One example is Obadiah Unger, born in Kutztown, Pennsylvania, in 1849, who studied piano and harmony in Boston and worked as a music teacher in Allentown before moving to Reading to establish a music store and join the Ringgold Band in 1871. He additionally founded his own Liberty Band and the First Ladies Symphony Orchestra of Reading. Other activities included the study of violin and eventual participation in the Germania Orchestra and regular employment as organist for both St. James and St. Matthew’s Lutheran Churches. After Joel S. Unger⁶⁵ took over the music store, Obadiah served as leader of the Philharmonic Band for ten years and began to compose; writing more than two hundred works before his death. Joel expanded the business to include publishing, printing Obadiah’s *Kind David Funeral March* for band. Joel Unger was also a piano tuner and salesman, as well as composer of numerous piano works in the “salon” style.

Similarly, John F. Wacha was a member of the Ringgold Band, and served for a while as an assistant leader. Wacha, born 1870, also participated in the Philharmonic and Germania Bands. He was engaged to lead Reading’s Cadet Band from 1910 to 1915, and then the

⁶³ *Minutes*, October 18, 1901.

⁶⁴ Montgomery, *Historical and Biographical Annals*, 214.

⁶⁵ The exact relationship between the two men is unknown, but a residence for Joel is noted in 1880 where he taught music and in 1885 he was employed as a clerk in Obadiah’s store. A photograph of them at the store can be seen in Cedric Elmer’s *Musical Remembrances*, p. 2.

Philharmonic Band from 1915 to 1920. Concurrently he was a trombone soloist at the Colonial Theatre from 1917 to 1924, primarily providing music for silent movies. As is typical, a musical leader such as Wacha was also engaged as a music teacher (from his home) and composed thirty-one published works including *March to the Klondike* and *First Defenders P.V.*, both published by J.S. Althouse.

Members of the Ringgold Band still play many roles in the community. Music director Jim Seidel—in particular through his long-standing association with the Exeter School District—helps link the band and the city.

3.3 A NATIONAL PRESENCE

Almost since its inception the reputation of the Ringgold Band has transcended the boundaries of the city of Reading. In addition to meeting the needs of the community of which it is a part, the band has capitalized upon opportunities to position itself as a representative of the city and a marker of its cultural achievement. Performances at centennial celebrations, inaugurations, parades and numerous conventions throughout the nation expanded the renown of the group. The musical successes have been made possible in part by the group's flexibility to pursue opportunities wherever they arise and the capacity to adapt to changing musical tastes.

The Band's first national attention was its citation as a *First Responder* in the Civil War. (See [Appendix E](#): Civil War Rolls) The city of Reading had assembled the Ringgold Light Artillery shortly before the Civil War began, and was thus able to quickly muster these soldiers and the band at the outbreak of hostilities.

Civic pride continued to grow in the years immediately following the war. The Ringgold Band's high quality and renown made them ideal representatives of the city. Whether through their own engagements as featured acts or as accompaniment to traveling lodges, fire companies or political group's highlights of their travels include:

- accompaniment for the State Fencibles of Philadelphia to the centennial celebration of Bunker Hill;
- by request at the Centennial Celebration of Philadelphia in 1876;
- by engagement to the centennial celebration at Valley Forge in 1878;

- accompanying the Governor to the centennial celebration at Yorktown, VA in 1881 whilst attached to 1st Brigade National Guard Pennsylvania;
- to the 100th anniversary celebration of the constitutional government in New York City, 1888;
- inaugural Parade for President Franklin D. Roosevelt, 1933.

Engagements such as these were but a few of the many in which the band participated. Although there is a certain glamour associated with being selected to participate in inaugural events, other performances outside of their community may have done more to cement their position. As Fred Long notes, “From contact with the traveling band came the need for the town band and a community wasn’t much if it didn’t have such an organization. By 1889, there were ten thousand small bands in the United States. This doubled by 1900. These bands turned civic occurrences into rousing events. Band music was everywhere.”⁶⁶ To modern American audiences, it is difficult to imagine the importance of the local band as a source of identity and pride for the community.

Associative identity functions on many levels; the Ringgold Band exploited its opportunities to full effect. Traveling to Atlantic City in 1904, the band performed at the National Hardware Association’s Tenth Annual Convention. (See [Figure 21](#), and [Figure 22](#), Ringgold Band in Atlantic City) For the occasion, music director Monroe Althouse composed the *R.H. Co. March.*, dedicated to John Harbster, president of the Reading Hardware Company; in so doing, he not only cemented the relationship to one of the band’s supporters, he introduced a new work to a wide audience and made certain it was available for sale as sheet music at the event. Further, the piece was sold at hardware and general stores.

A program for one of the concerts in Atlantic City interestingly notes that the performance at “The Grotto” of the Hotel Rudolf was presented “Compliments of Reading Hardware Co.” As Cedric Elmer recalls, “Music was sold everywhere, but a favorite outlet was the five and ten cent stores on Penn Street. Each store had the music department located just inside the front door with the music displayed in the windows or tables outside. Some readers may recall how, upon request, the music department clerk would play the selection on the store

⁶⁶ Fred E. Long, *George Rosenkrans and the Grampian Band* (Altoona, PA: F.E. Long, 1981), x.

piano so the purchaser would know how the music sounded before paying for the sheet music. Much of the music of Monroe Althouse and others was popularized by this sales technique.”⁶⁷

Similarly a local department store, Lord and Gage, sponsored a concert at Mineral Spring Park on July 28, 1911. In honor of this support, Althouse composed and dedicated *Live Wire March* to the store. (See [Figure 23](#), Cover *Live Wire*) The popularity of the concert and good will it generated precipitated Lord and Gage to sponsor the Ringgold Band to perform every Friday at the park throughout the summer. It was a nearly ideal relationship between the two entities, as Lord and Gage was positioned to be Reading’s preeminent music retailer.

Perhaps the biggest event for the citizens of Reading was the Sesqui-Centennial Celebration of the city in 1923. Morton Montgomery provided the official history of the event, his summary of the weeklong celebration records the proceedings and events in great detail. The celebration had an Executive Committee of forty-four members, thirty-five committees—including Music chaired by Thomas P. Merritt—and numerous subcommittees; it was extensive and well organized.⁶⁸ The numerous appearances of the Ringgold Band in a variety of events made them an integral part of the proceedings, but surprisingly not the central attraction. That position was held by many of its former members as embodied in the Germania Band.

The Ringgold and Germania bands performed in alternation throughout the celebration and a compilation of their activities as recorded by Montgomery document that the Germania Band had more performances than Ringgold. (See [Appendix F](#): Activities of Ringgold and Germania Bands at the Sesqui-centennial Celebration) The celebration of Reading’s 150th was funded primarily through the raising of subscriptions (contributions) by citizens. Of the \$10,394 budget raised, the Music Committee had the single largest allocation and spent \$1,429.70, much of which was likely used to hire these two bands for the public performances.

It is impossible to know why the Germania Band assumed such a striking presence in the celebration. Perhaps its focus on more popular music was one factor. Yet one may not discount other possibilities, such as Germania having offered lower bids to perform, Ringgold Band members may have voted to accept fewer engagements, or other commitments by individual members to other aspects of the celebration are all plausible. Regardless of the reason, the

⁶⁷ Elmer, *Musical Remembrances*, 93.

⁶⁸ Committee members were; T. Merritt, T. Heizmann, W. Chafey, E. Berg, W. Boas, W. Benbow, W. Baltzell, W. Davis, H. Fahrbach, M. Keller, W. Heaton, J. McGowan, S. Krebs, W. Wilde, F. Livingood and T. Zimmerman.

combined presence of these two groups in so many performances is a testament to their popularity.

The issues of identity and popularity are closely intertwined in the activities of the Ringgold Band. The ensemble has functioned simultaneously as a representative of its community, and as a mediator of its place within that community. As Simon Frith notes: “The ...reason...we enjoy popular music is because of its use in answering questions of identity: we use pop songs to create for ourselves a particular sort of self-definition, a particular place in society. The pleasure that pop music produces is a pleasure of identification—with the music we like, with the performers of that music, with the other people who like it.”⁶⁹

Music is clearly a social marker of identity, whether for “pop songs” or band music. creates a statement which is both more accurate and complex. Any definition of “popular” is ephemeral and tenuous within such a broad historical context as is the history of the Ringgold band—especially given the fragmented, highly-compartmentalized post-modern society of which band music is now a part.

⁶⁹ Simon Frith, *Performing Rites: On the Value of Popular Music* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), 140.

4.0 MUSIC ENACTED

Another way to understand the success of the band's longevity is to consider what connects band to audience: the music itself. Available research materials include an extensive music collection, an archive with numerous resources for examining the programming used in performance and a small but important collection of part books for the years 1870-80. These materials illustrate not only an extraordinary variety of music performed by the ensemble throughout much of its history, but a readiness to quickly adapt and embrace changing American tastes and to remain at the vanguard of popular sentiment.

4.1 REPERTOIRE

The current music library of the Ringgold Band contains nearly 4,500 pieces. Acting librarian Gene Umbenhouer estimates nearly a third of the library's holdings are currently out of print, and bands throughout the nation frequently draw upon the vast holdings to replace missing parts.⁷⁰ A large number of pieces are original manuscripts composed by Ringgold members for use by the band. Umbenhouer's predecessor created a print catalog of the library listing category, title, composer, arranger, and file number, although only new acquisitions since 1997 have been entered into an accessible computer format.⁷¹ This extraordinary repository represents a vast array of musical possibilities available for performance.

The secondary collection of repertoire at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania includes individual loose-leaf parts and bound part books of the band circa 1870-80. The collection

⁷⁰ Gene Umbenhouer, interview, November 3, 2007.

⁷¹ An additional notation of "MA" to the file number delineates those works which exist in manuscript form.

consists entirely of handwritten manuscript parts and corresponds to the important period in which the ledger books and records of the band are missing. Providing a snapshot perspective, a cursory examination of the identifiable works reveals a preponderance of popular forms of the day, such as the quickstep, polka and waltz. (See [Appendix G](#): Titles of Works at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania) Arrangements draw from a variety of familiar works such as Donizetti's *Elixir of Love*, *La Traviata Quickstep* and *The Introduction to the Opera of "Ernani,"* alongside *Massahs in the cold ground*, *Rows Mug or Die* and *Junior Bachelors Grand March*. The presence of these works fails to suggest how they were employed though. Some may have existed solely for concerts, others for parades, and some perhaps may never have been heard beyond the rehearsal hall.

In conjunction with available repertoire, an archives collection of programs includes more than 200 programs, 300 photographs of the Ringgold Band and other local ensembles, as well as numerous newspaper and magazine articles in addition to the important ledgers and minute books dating from the inception in 1852. The programs reveal that the band was quick to embrace new music, and works by leading European composers featured prominently. A single concert in September, 1894, included works—or rather arrangements of works—by Haydn, Mozart, Roussel, Rossini, Weber, Verdi and Wagner. (See [Figure 24](#), Programs, 1894)

Likewise, American-born hits were quickly integrated into the programming of the band. In August, 1894, the Band performed Sousa's *Liberty Bell March*. Composed in 1893, intended as part of the operetta *The Devil's Deputy*, this march was one of the first sold to the John Church Company which distributed it widely, securing Sousa one of his first financial successes. Although much is known of Sousa's close relationship to Althouse and to the Ringgold Band late in his life, the performance of this march in 1894 suggests that either the band possessed a connection early on with the young Sousa or was within the mainstream of new publications for band.⁷²

The potential for a comprehensive study of programs and repertory exists but has not yet been done. In the [Appendix D](#) provides a number of sample programs to illustrate the broad range of works chosen for concerts. In absence of more comprehensive information, though, a

⁷² The first documented connection to Sousa is the performance of his assistant in 1909, although it seems plausible an earlier awareness and relationship is likely to exist.

programming pattern does appear in which each concert features one or more soloists, at least one march, and often a tried and true hit such as *William Tell Overture*.

Indicative of an effort to understand better the attitudes of its audiences, the Ringgold Band recently surveyed its patrons. A summary of the survey declares:

Readers most enjoy concerts that feature a theme. The 2004 fall dinner concert will feature a “dance” theme (see cover story). Equally important to you was concerts with a solo instrumentalist, in addition to vocalist Debbie Greenawald. The band boasts numerous outstanding musicians, and each year we strive to spotlight one or two of them for you. In addition, the spring concert and fall dinner concert always feature talented guest instrumentalists.

Also high on readers’ lists was homemade food. The venues for many Ringgold concerts are outdoors picnics or fairs. If you haven’t attended one, you’re missing delights both aural and gastric.

About $\frac{3}{4}$ of you report that your favorite Ringgold music is—drum roll, please—variety! You then chose marches, symphonic works, solos/duets and Broadway or movie themes for individual styles. Contemporary and light or novelty tunes were the least chosen. In general audiences seem to prefer works of historic significance, with the silver screen and Broadway adding modern flavor.⁷³

Within the programs an abundance of information about the musical tastes and interests of the times reside. More importantly though, the programs demonstrate in part the extent to which the band has been informed and engaged with the latest trends in music.

4.2 VENUE

With performances over 150 years, it is not surprising the Ringgold Band has performed in a wide variety of settings. From the concert hall to parades and from roving bands of serenaders to firehouse merrymaking and church picnics the ensemble has remained always at the ready to present live music. The willingness to accept engagements in a variety of venues

⁷³ Aulenbach, Carol. “Spring Survey Results Are In,” *Ringgold Band Newsletter* Fall (2004): 5.

has contributed to the band's capacity to remain an ever-present fixture within Reading's musical community.

In the minutes that record the formation of the band and election of the leader, reference is paid to the propensity of P.M. Ermentrout to "parade at all times." Obviously, there was the intention for the band to be a regular part of public events though marching music. We have seen already the ensemble at the vanguard of many parades and in esteemed places of honor. The tradition continued well into the twentieth century, but the decreased frequency and expansiveness of parades has diminished the opportunities to perform in this manner. By the early 1990s the band ceased marching, but it continues to participate in local parades by riding upon a float.

Secondly, serenade performances were a quick and successful source of revenue. The serenades were done in part as a fulfillment to a subscription. The original subscriptions were two dollars and would earn the donor a certificate that entitled one serenade a year. Additional serenades appear to have been performed in a somewhat more opportunistic guise. Minutes of March 23rd, 1853, note a "...motion to refund the five dollars what we received by Serenading to those which was along at the time." (See [Figure 25](#), *Minutes* March 23, 1853) The distribution of funds to those in attendance suggests this was not a fulfillment of an outstanding band obligation but a chance to generate income as individual bandsmen. Not surprisingly, there is a motion later in the same meeting to gather and do more serenading on the upcoming Saturday. Whether the performances featured the entire band, or ad hoc sub-groups using the Ringgold Band name, the serenades brought music literally to the doorsteps of its community.⁷⁴ (See [Figure 26](#), Serenade image)

The serenading model took a new form over the next fifty years. A shift at the turn-of-the twentieth century now featured "contributing members," who would receive two tickets to each concert or entertainment for three dollars, with a discounted four tickets to each event being given for a five dollar contribution.⁷⁵ A further evolution included sponsorship of a special concert. For example, eighteen friends and contributing members of the band gave \$5-\$15 each to support a performance at Penn Square on October 4, 1923, during Anniversary Week;

⁷⁴ A photo exists of serenading but the motivations behind this photograph remain speculative.

⁷⁵ *Minutes*, November 7, 1901.

recognition given in return was for the list of subscribers to be framed and presented to the band headquarters.

The band no longer participates in the serenading concerts or subscriptions. Engagements of the band are now for specific contracted performances, or self-presented. These special events are frequently held outdoors, the most frequent venue of the Ringgold Band. The majority of concert programs feature the band performing in parks as well as many engagements by local churches. A large number of performances are acquired under the auspices of the American Federation of Musicians' Music Performance Trust Fund (MPTF) concerts. The members of the band are AFM members, and MPTF concerts, also known as "green-sheet" concerts, are the direct result of an agreement signed between the union and RCA and Columbia in 1944. All record companies signed agreements with the AFM pledging a percentage of gross profits to the MPTF, in return for free performances of live music to the public at veterans' hospitals, schools, nursing homes and, when matched by local funds, in city parks and shopping malls. The MPTF was conceived of by AFM president J. C. Petrillo as a hedge against the unemployment of musicians resulting from the use of phonograph records. The interwoven relationship in which performances in Reading are subsidized by the recording industry based primarily in New York, Los Angeles and Nashville, is a reminder of the complex web of culture.

Occurring less frequently, but no less important are the regular annual concerts self-presented by the band. The current annual concert has been combined with a dinner and serves as an important source of revenue for the band. The latest Fall Dinner Concert was held on October 21, 2007, at the Sheraton Reading Hotel, a tradition that goes back to the band's ball on December 26, 1854. Perhaps the first realization that there was money to be earned by hosting balls harkens back to when the band had been engaged by Frank Slouch to perform for the Fancy Dip Ball on March 2nd, 1854.⁷⁶

Looking ahead, the Ringgold Band's 2008 season is representative of the traditional venues the band has performed in, and the schedule could just as easily be from 1948 or 1888. Concerts already planned include the 156th Annual Spring Concert at the Scottish Rite Cathedral of West Reading, a Muhlenberg's Saturday Night Concert Series at Muhlenberg Middle School, a Fourth of July Celebration at historic Conrad Weiser Homestead, a Concert in the Park at

⁷⁶ *Minutes*, February 23, 1854.

Coleman Park and a church picnic at Schwarzwald Lutheran Church. Each of these events but one represents an occasion in which an unaffiliated group in Reading has determined that a band, particularly the Ringgold Band, is an integral component of its own identity. Whether it is as a reflection and perpetuation of an existing identity or the fabrication of a new one, the presence and performance of the band creates a marker by which the culture of Reading continues to be identified.

4.3 ARRANGEMENTS AND NEW WORKS

Without a thorough study of the available repertoire, it is difficult to assess the role that new works have played in the course of Ringgold Band history. Yet numerous examples have demonstrated the creation of music to meet the needs of a particular event, as well as the adaption of a piece which was in vogue to suit the instrumentation of the band. There seems to have been little delay in the acquisition of new works, as the earliest extant programs reveal. Not surprisingly, the records of the organization demonstrate little about the selection and acquisition of individual pieces but they do convey the importance and value of the music itself.

Band members were obliged to return their parts or part books if expelled or if they chose to resign, a topic frequently revisited in the minutes. Similarly the discussion and allocation of funds for paper goods (ledger books or part books) is dutifully recorded. The collection of pieces, all in manuscript form, held at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania is a testament to the time and effort needed to create a working library. Dating circa 1870-80, the music is dominated by the popular dance forms of the time, quicksteps, polkas and waltzes. Of the 51 works bearing a title or notation other than a number, pieces such as *Major Evans Quickstep*, *Capt Spelman's Quickstep*, and *Delavan's Quickstep* each suggest a particular figure for whom the work was written – let alone the self-evident *My Salutation for Reading Quickstep*. Most of the 51 labeled works bear an ascription to Downing, Coates-Easton, or Weigand, who seem to have been the in-

house composer/arrangers for the band at this time. Notably, Joseph Winter's name, leader of the band at this time, does not appear amongst these materials.⁷⁷

This stands in stark contrast to M.A. Althouse, leader of the band from 1901 to 1923 who has more than 60 compositions and arrangements known to have been published. In addition to the *R.H. Co. March* and *Lord & Gage Live Wire March*, other important topical works include *Hotel Penn March*, *Monroe Doctrine March*, *Elks B.P.O.E. March*, *Favorite March* (of 1893, dedicated to the Reading Dancing Class, Season of 1892-1893), and the *Penn Wheelman March*. (See [Figures 28-30](#), Cover Sheets) Other works for special circumstances include the *Reading Sesqui-Centennial March*, the *175th Anniversary March* and the *Rajah Sunshine March*. The titles alone suffice to demonstrate why Althouse would earn the sobriquet of "March King of Berks County." Understandably, this was the height of popularity for community bands throughout the nation and new works, especially those meant to honor and celebrate a business, a society or the city of Reading, were well appreciated.

The circumstances today regarding new works are also significantly different. Audiences attending Ringgold Band performances do not do so with the expectation of dancing, nor are they generally equipped with an in depth understanding of wind ensemble repertory. Additionally, now in an age in which printing is relatively inexpensive and access to materials is very different, one might anticipate the band to rely less on composing and arranging and more on the purchase of works. Indeed, Music Director Jim Seidel admits to only dabbling in arranging, but these occasional efforts are augmented by his assistant Tom Shade who actively arranges new works for the band. From adaptations of individual songs such as *When My Heart Finds Christmas* by Harry Connick, Jr. to full concert suite such as *Miss Peggy Lee*, Shade has written "about 40 works for the band, and is able to maximize the available resources of the band and personalize their performances."⁷⁸

Additionally, the Ringgold Band has recently partnered with the Reading Musical Foundation (RMF) to commission and perform a new work by Paul Whear celebrating the 80th

⁷⁷ This point remains speculative as these three names do not appear in the ledger entry of dues payment for 1881-1886. The missing minutes for the time period 1866-1880 would be an invaluable cross reference to the collection at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. The only discernable link is *Niagara March*, which appears in the collection and is the title of an undated march of the same name by M.A. Althouse who was an active member in 1881.

⁷⁸ Jim Seidel, interview, November 4, 2007.

anniversary of the RMF, due to be performed in 2008. This follows the recent commission by RMF of Robert Maggio for a new work titled *Music in the Wings* in honor of Jim Seidel and his service to the Ringgold Band. Whether through commissions of new works, or by arrangements provided in-house, the presentation of new music provides the members of the ensemble a personalized connection that transcends the moment and enriches the psychological connection to the legacy of the band and its repertoire. Additionally, it provides a vehicle for the ensemble to connect and relate to the community of which they are a part in a very personalized and unique way.

CONCLUSION

Into three different centuries the members of the Ringgold Band have united for the performance of music. The longevity of the ensemble is the result of continuous adaptation and an environment favorable to a community band. Efforts to separate the history of the ensemble from its surroundings are motivated by the belief that such independence will provide a measure of clarity and understanding otherwise not possible. Yet, this thesis has shown the attributes that define Reading are connected and indivisible to those of the Ringgold Band.

Having once represented the cultural mainstream of Reading and stood as a model of what popular music-making was in America, the Ringgold Band currently lacks its former extensive notoriety and recognition. Such a change is a consequence of the paradigmatic shift profoundly altering the relationship between music performer and audience nationwide following the advent of mass media. Addressing the topic of cultural needs of community bands at the start of the twenty-first century, director Jim Seidel notes, “They are more for the people playing than they are for the community.”⁷⁹ Therefore a new pressure arises not only from the mediation of localized issues of identity, but increasingly how they are resolved within the context of imposing national influences.

On the topic of music and its social role, the noted music sociologist Simon Frith makes the observation:

In taking pleasure from black or gay or female music I don’t thus identify as black or gay or female... but, rather *participate in imagined forms of democracy and desire*, imagined forms of the social and the sexual. And what makes music special in this familiar cultural process is that musical identity is both fantastic—idealizing not just oneself but also the social world one inhabits—and real: it is enacted in activity. Music making and music listening, that is to say, are bodily matters; they involve what one might call social movements. In this respect, musical pleasure is not derived from fantasy—it is not mediated

⁷⁹ Ibid.

by daydreams—but is experienced directly: music gives us a real experience of what the ideal could be.⁸⁰

Frith's statement contains three important points that are relevant to this thesis: music-making is a social event and the process is filled with issues of identity; participation in music is the realization of an imagined ideal; and the mediations of conflicting issues of identity are acts of democracy.

Any one piece of data, individual detail or documented fact is not fixed as the result of an isolated linear series of events but is the outcome of hundreds and thousands of events pressing, shaping and altering one another. The process is dynamic, complicated even further by the separation of time. A historical view is a snapshot, one with blinders on where large sections of the "reality" are often obscured by missing data, or misinformation or an inherent bias. By examining multiple perspectives, from a variety of periods, and pursuing some in depth a few conclusions may be made:

1) First, the success of the Ringgold Band in its initial eighty years was part of an overarching trend in the nation that valued live music, especially band music as a primary form of entertainment. As Kenneth Kreitner's in-depth study of three community bands notes, "From the Mexican War to World War I, the amateur band was arguably the most conspicuous and influential musical institution in the United States."⁸¹ This zeitgeist created an atmosphere receptive to a Ringgold Band.

2) Second, the band has been an integral part of the community. The relationship has in many ways been symbiotic, each having been of service and benefit to the other. The band's individual members have had far reaching influence upon not only the musical life of Reading, but all aspects of the social fabric. As a collective the group has been a source of civic pride and helped to distinguish the city from many other industrial towns. Once again, Kreitner notes this role elsewhere in the nation: "Apart from their suitability for outdoor ceremonies, and apart from their efficiency at entertaining their public, these bands had another, less purely musical function. The town band served as a focus of local pride, and part of its energy and individuality was a

⁸⁰ Frith, *Performing Rites*, 74.

⁸¹ Kenneth Kreitner, *Discoursing Sweet Music: Town Bands and Community Life in Turn-of-the-Century Pennsylvania*, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1993), 2.

product of the community spirit of its home town.”⁸² This point holds true as long as a community possesses and maintains a substantial appreciation for the activities of the band and for experiencing live music-making.

3) One must concede that over as long of a period as Ringgold has been around numerous challenges are to be confronted and changes will be incorporated. The responses to moments of acute and dire stress tests the mettle of the band and perhaps best defines its identity. Therefore it is no surprise that the seemingly age-old question for performers and ensembles would arise regarding the balance of popular versus artistic programming of repertoire. What does stand as remarkable though is the facility with which some members seceded from the group, formed what would by all appearances be a rival group, and eventually reunited.

More recently, the loss of rehearsal space seems more likely a matter of inconvenience than a portent of disaster. One could imagine the strain of impermanence precipitating a cascade of unrecoverable events; instead, members of the band stepped in, bringing expertise and resources from their professional lives to find not only a place to rehearse but to establish a permanent home. From the humble priority in the 1850s of tending to parts and uniforms, to the present ownership of a service truck and a building, the organization has grown, continually transforming itself. This is perhaps the clearest example of what the Ringgold Band has done well for decades: adapting to meet the needs of the time. Group decisions, and those of the various leaders, have demonstrated a flexibility which allowed them to capitalize upon opportunities as they arise.

4) Lastly, the Ringgold Band has survived and thrived due to a confluence of unrelated and fortunate circumstances. The cultural homogeneity of the city’s early years may have created an insular and protective environment favoring local groups and musicians. The rise of “secret societies” would only preserve and perpetuate this climate, especially when one considers the potential influence individual members could have within the community. Likewise the central location of Reading provided it with many of the resources of neighboring larger cities, and the advent of rail travel to support commerce provided easy access to other opportunities for the band. Successful commerce in turn created the capacity for individuals and businesses to support ensembles such as the Ringgold Band. The process of identifying interwoven

⁸² Ibid., 186.

relationships can continue ad infinitum, but the examples in this thesis illustrate the profound and far-reaching influence of individual members and circumstances.

Entering its 156th season, the Ringgold Band stands as a musical anomaly. Currently experiencing resurgence, the Ringgold Band employs sixty-five unionized concert musicians, owns its rehearsal hall and a van for transporting equipment to and from performances, gives twenty-five to thirty-five performances a year, and has longevity in its music director, James Seidel, who is in his 27th year. The change surrounding the Ringgold Band has been profound, but by any definition the legacy of the Ringgold Band is an amazing history of sustained relevance and unequivocal success.

APPENDIX A

TIMELINE OF SIGNIFICANT EVENTS

- 1832 Beethoven Society and the Reading Military Band are formed.
- 1838 Railroad reaches Reading, contributing to rapid growth and expansion.
- 1847 The borough of Reading now officially classified a city with a pop. of 12,000-13,000.
- 1852 Independent American Brass Band is formed with 13 members with Emanuel Bracefield as leader.
- 1853 John Hook becomes leader as Emanuel Bracefield resigns.
- 1853 Independent American Band dissolves and reforms as the Ringgold Light Artillery Brass Band retaining John Hook as leader.
- 1854 The Ringgold Light Artillery Brass Band has 17 members.
- 1856 The band approves a motion to change the band's name to Ringgold Cornet Band.
- 1860 A board of trustees is formed to oversee the inventory of band property.
- 1861 Abraham Lincoln issues a call for troops. The Ringgold Light Artillery responds immediately.
- 1861 The Ringgold Cornet Band responds to the call with 16 members joining the Union Army and forming the Regimental Band for the Twenty-Fifth Regiment of Pennsylvania Volunteers, becoming the Regimental Band for the Eighty-Eight Regiment until 1862.
- 1865 Joseph Winter elected leader of the Ringgold Cornet Band.
- 1866-81 Official documentation and minutes of the organization are missing.
- 1870 Benjamin M. Henry elected leader, as Winter leaves to organize own band.
- 1870-80 Time period of sheet music held at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania.
- 1873 Joseph Winter re-elected leader of the band.
- 1894 Harry Fahrbach becomes leader of the band.
- 1898 Monroe A. Althouse composes and publishes *Sesqui-Centennial March* for the 150th anniversary of the founding of Reading by the Penn brothers.
- 1901 Monroe Althouse becomes leader of the band.
- 1921 Ringgold Band removes *Germania Orchestra* from letterhead.
- 1923 Robert Mattern elected band leader.
- 1923 Both Monroe Althouse and Joel S. Unger compose and publish versions of 150th *Anniversary March*.
- 1924 Eugene Weidner becomes band leader.
- 1930 Ladies Auxiliary of the Ringgold Band is formed.
- 1936 Robert Mattern re-elected band leader.
- 1936 Fred Cardin elected leader of the band.
- 1960 Walter Gier elected leader of the band
- 1980 James S. Seidel elected leader of the band.
- 2006 Ringgold Band Young Artist Award is created.

APPENDIX B

ADDITIONAL CITATIONS

Through the *Archive of Americana* presented by Readex and the American Antiquarian Society⁸³ a large repository of newspapers, broadsides and ephemera have been scanned and converted into an enormous and valuable database of information. The simple search of “Ringgold Band” netted 67 results in which the ensemble received mention. The preponderance of entries mentions the Band’s accompaniment to other organizations and the announcement of upcoming performances. Nearly every citation came from the *Philadelphia Inquirer* and provides a complimentary addition to the archive of the *Reading Eagle*.

These citations not only establish an important aspect of the Band’s activities but also demonstrate that as more databases become available one will be able to more thoroughly reconstruct the activities of an ensemble such as Ringgold. A few such citations from the *Philadelphia Inquirer* identified through the *Archive of Americana* database include:

“150 members of Councilman Rowan’s West Philadelphia Club traveled to Washington D.C. for the inauguration of President Garfield accompanied by the Ringgold Band. It is noted they wore silk hats and ulsterette overcoats.”

-*The Philadelphia Inquirer*, February 28, 1881, page 2.

“Ringgold Band accompanies the Odd Fellows Lodge of Reading in the welcoming of guest members of various lodges of Odd Fellows. 2,000-3,000 persons join in the celebration.”

-*The Philadelphia Inquirer*, September 15, 1882, page 8.

“Ringgold Band accompanies the Rainbow Fire Company to New Orleans, LA.”

-*The Philadelphia Inquirer*, April 30, 1893, page 2.

⁸³ See <http://www.americanantiquarian.org/digital2.htm> for more information.

APPENDIX C

POPULATION

Population of Reading, Pennsylvania.⁸⁴

Year	Population of Reading
1790	2,234
1800	2,386
1810	3,462
1820	4,332
1830	5,856
1840	8,410
1850	15,743
1860	23,162
1870	33,930
1880	43,278
1890	58,661
1900	78,961
1910	96,071
1920	107,784
1930	111,171
1940	110,568
1950	109,320
1960	96,177
1970	87,643
1980	79,000
1990	78,380
2000	81,207
2006	83,463

⁸⁴ Information compiled from official U.S. Census records available online at:
<http://www.census.gov/prod/www/abs/decennial/index.htm>.

APPENDIX D

PROGRAMS OF RINGGOLD BAND PERFORMANCES

A representative selection of concert programs is presented in this appendix. These are reconstructed from the original materials held at the archive of the Ringgold Band. The archive features a large collection of programs in loose pamphlet and scrapbook forms. (See [Figure 12](#), [Figure 16](#) and [Figure 24](#)) Spelling, punctuation and formatting are given as they appear in the original program.

Program for Ringgold Band portion of Banquet and Concert May 27, 1891

<i>Kennebee</i>	R.B. Hall
<i>Martha Overture</i>	Flotow
<i>Home Sweet Home, Fantasie</i> for clarinet solo	Rollinson
<i>Scotch Fantasie</i>	Wiegand
<i>Une Serenade</i> a baritone solo	Chapelle.

Programs for concerts of the Ringgold Band at Mineral Spring Park July 4, 1891

Morning:

March "Columbia"	Collins
Overture "Morning, Noon, and Night"	Suppe
National Airs.	
Waltz "Reinsagen"	Gungl
Selection "Attila"	Verdi
Galop "Rifle"	Farmer

Afternoon:

"Star-Spangled Banner"	
Overture "Light Cavalry"	Suppe
Waltz "Visions of Paradise"	Bennett
"A Soldier's Life"	Keler Bela
Trombone Solo "The Message"	Brooks
performed by Harry E. Fahrbach	
"Hail Columbia"	
Galop "Fire"	Lauendan
"Hunter's Dream"	Clarence
"Waltz "Kuenstler Lieben"	Strauss
"Recollections of the War"	Beyer
"Scotch Fantasia"	Wiegand
"Yankee Doodle"	

Program for Ringgold Band concert at the Grand Opera House January 31, 1893

Fest March "Tannhauser"	Wagner
Overture "Ludovic"	Herold
Duett "Venetian Boat Song"	Tosti
performed by Mrs. Pyle and Osbourn	
Recitation	Selected
Miss Sallie Grancell	
Concerto for B-flat Clarinet	Von Weber
performed by Howard Keehn	
Taumbilder "Fantasie"	Babye
Soprano Solo Conzonetta from Margitta	Helmond
performed by Mrs. Kate Bisselle-Pyle	
Overture "Fairy Lake"	Adam
Piccolo Solo "Polacca de Concert"	Thiere
performed by Mr. W.H. Stauffer	
Contralto Solo	Handel
Recitative and Aria "Awake Saturnia"	
performed by Mrs. Emma Osbourn	
Recitation	Selected
performed by Miss Sallie Crancell	
Selection "Cavalleria Rusticanna"	Mascagni
Duett "The Maid of the Mill"	Kucken
performed by Mrs. Pyle and Osbourn	
Galop "Chariot Race"	Sherman

Program for Ringgold Band performance at "The Tower" September 8, 1895

The Silver Trumpets	Viviani
Overture – <i>Lampa</i>	Herold
Grand Selection – <i>Faust</i>	Gounod
Intermezzo – Le Secret	Gautier
The Heavens are Telling (from <i>The Creation</i>)	Haydn
Romance and Polacca (clarinet solo)	Thiere
Overture – <i>William Tell</i>	Rossini
Grand Fantasia – Village Life in Olden Time	Thiere
Cujus Animam (from <i>Stabat Mater</i>)	Rossini
Grand Selection – <i>Trovatore</i>	Verdi
Grand Selection – Mass in G	Weber
Potpourri – <i>Huguenots</i>	Meyerbeer
Fantasia – Traumbilder	Lumbye
Old Hundred	Luther

Program for Germania Band concert on June 9, 1898

March "Sesqui-Centennial"	Althouse
Overture "William Tell"	Rossini
Gavotte "Royal"	Moses
Selection "Lady Slavery"	Kerker
Potpourri "El Capitan"	Sousa
Selection "Fackeltanz No. 4"	Meyerbeer
March "The Mystic Shrine"	Althouse

Program for Ringgold Band concert at Central Park July 26, 1925 - afternoon

Overture "The Mill on the Cliff"	Reissinger
La Pirouette	Hosmer
In a Clock Store	Orth
Suite: Dwellers in the Western World	Sousa
Saxophone Solo – Premier	Llewellyn
performed by Mr. Fred Breninger	
Scenes from Chimes of Normandy	Planquette
Fantasia – Hungarian	Tobani
Trombone Solo – Slidus Trombonis	Lake
performed by Mr. Andrew Fisher	
Valse – Sleeping Beauty	Tschaikowsky
March – Indienne	Meyerbeer

Program for Ringgold Band concert at Central Park July 26, 1925 - evening

Overture – Phedre	Massenet
Cornet Solo – Russian Fantasia	Levy
performed by Mr. Walter J. Hunsicker	
Suite – Tales of a Traveler	Sousa
Scenes from Samson and Dalilah	St. Saens
Fantasia – The Hall of Fame	Salranek
Saxophone Solo – Valse Erica	Wiedoft
Airs from Rose Marie	Friml
Overture – Beautiful Galatea	Suppe

Program for Ringgold Band Annual Concert December 7, 1930

“Norvegienne Rhapsody”	Lalo
Trombone Solo, “Leona Polka”	Zimmerman
performed by Mr. Andrew Fisher	
Symphonic Poem, “Les Preludes”	Liszt
Clarinet Solo, “Concertino”	von Weber
performed by Mr. Robert W. Mattern	
March, “Stepping Along”	Goldman
Overture, “Oberon”	von Weber
Tone Poem, “Finlandia”	Sibelius
Overture, “William Tell”	Rossini

Program for Ringgold Band Annual Concert on October 21, 2007

America the Beautiful	Samuel Ward, arr. C. Dragon
The Roof Garden March	Monroe Althouse
Selections from West Side Story	Leonard Bernstein, arr. W. Duthoit
One Tuba Samba	Antonio Carlos Jobim, arr. J. Bailey
My Regards to Broadway	arr. T. Shade
Echo Waltz	Edwin Franko Goldman
performed by S. Wolf, G. Hyneman, D. Coldren	
Clarinet Capers	William McRae
Black Diamond March	William Orth
Festive Overture	D. Shostakovich, tr. D. Hunsberger
Holiday for Trombones	David Rose, arr. C. Herfurth
The Four Hornsmen	David Bennett
Persuasion	Sammy Nestico
featuring Neal Lutz, alto saxophone soloist	
Humoresque on Swanee	J. P. Sousa, ed. J. Bailey
When My Heart Finds Christmas	Harry Connick, Jr., arr. T. Shade
featuring Debbie Greenawald, vocalist	
Penny Whistle Song	Leroy Anderson
The Ultimate Sing Along	arr. Jerry Brubaker
The Stars and Stripes Forever	J. P. Sousa

APPENDIX E

CIVIL WAR ROLLS

Major Samuel Ringgold was killed at the Battle of Palo Alto, 1846 and was the first United States soldier killed in the war with Mexican-American War. Ringgold was an important military innovator and developed the concept of “flying artillery” which introduced the tactical movement of artillery pieces on the battlefield.

The Ringgold Light Artillery (RLA) of Reading, Pennsylvania, was formed on May 21, 1850 and named in his honor. At the time of inception the unit was an auxiliary unit, part of the First Regiment of the Fifth Pennsylvania Volunteers. The RLA was one of five companies to answer the call to arms by President Lincoln. This unit had maintained a close relationship to the Ringgold Band and was a patron of their services. It is understandable then that a band always ready to perform would choose immediately to join their compatriots of the RLA.

*Members of the Regimental Band, 25th Regiment—Pennsylvania Volunteers*⁸⁵

<u>Name</u>	<u>Rank</u>
John A. Hook	Leader, Musician
Sebastian Behnlien	Musician
A. C. Greath	Musician
Charles Rothenberger	Musician
Isaac L. Leeds	Musician
Ernst Firepfeil	Musician
William C. Eben	Musician
Peter L. Benson	Musician
William Mohring	Musician
Henry Redmond	Musician
Edward Greath	Musician
Thomas Hoeb	Musician
John Wagner	Musician
Charles Ritner	Musician
James Y. Hill	Musician
Howard D. Potts	Musician
Valentine C. Kleckher	Musician

⁸⁵ Compiled from data in Samuel P. Bates, *History of the Pennsylvania Volunteers, 1861-1865*, (Harrisburg, PA: B. Singerly, State Printer, 1871).

APPENDIX F

ACTIVITIES OF RINGGOLD AND GERMANIA BANDS AT THE SESQUI-CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION

The performances of the two bands has been compiled from the official history of the event written by Morton Montgomery in 1748-1898, *History of Reading Pennsylvania and the Anniversary Proceedings of the Sesqui-Centennial June 5-12, 1898* (Reading, PA: Times Book Print, 1898).

June 5	afternoon:	Ringgold Band performs at Penn Square, followed by the Germania Band
June 6	morning:	Germania Band performs at the Court House
	afternoon:	Civic Parade, Germania Band (is the first band to appear) between the First Defenders, Ringgold Light Artillery and the Executive Committee of the Sesqui-centennial. The Ringgold Band appears as part of the Seventh Division of the parade. The parade totaled 5,937 persons.
June 7	morning:	Germania Band performs at the Academy of Music, Ringgold Band performed at the Court House
	evening:	Germania Band accompanies 500 voices of the Grand Choral Concert. ⁸⁶
June 8	morning:	Germania Band performs for Committee on Reception
	afternoon:	Fireman's Parade featured Germania Band in the lead, with the Ringgold Band at the head of the First Division.
June 9	afternoon:	Industrial Parade featured the Germania Band with the Executive Committee and the Ringgold Band as part of the Second Division.
	evening:	Germania Band presents a concert in Penn Square.
June 10	morning:	Germania Band performs for Reception Committee and railroad guests.
	afternoon:	Cavalcade and Corso Parade features the drum corps of the Germania Band in a large decorated wagon drawn by four horses in the Fourth Division.
	evening:	Penn common featured Germania Band from 8 to 10 o'clock.
June 11	evening:	Germania Band and Independence Drum and Flute corps furnish the music for the opening ceremonies of the Regatta and Serenata.

⁸⁶ A program for the event is given on page 251, Montgomery.

APPENDIX G

TITLES OF PIECES HELD AT THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF PENNSYLVANIA

The Historical Society of Pennsylvania currently holds a collection of 155 works formerly of the Ringgold Band. Consisting of a mixture of part books and loose sheaf parts, fifty-one of the items bear legible titles and notations. In addition the majority of the materials are numbered—ranging from No. 1 to No. 127—but the collection as a whole is inconsistent between parts. Titles and notations as they appear in the collection are:

	Humbug Q.S.	Boys in Blue
	Flipper Q.S.	My Salutation for Reading Quickstep
	Washington Marsch	Jullien's Prima Donna Waltz
	Triumph March	Massahs in the cold ground
	Easter Waltz	No. 18
	"Dollin Around"	Florence Polka
	Waltz	The Introduction to the Opera of "Ernani"
	"Uncle Tom"	"Rest Spirit Rest"
No. 112	Eureka Quickstep	Marksmans Polka
No. 113	Florence Polka	Health Q.Step
No. 114	Amelia Polka	Anders Q.S.
No. 115	War Path Quickstep	Flow Gently Sweet After
No. 116	Major Evans Quickstep	Neptune Q.S.
No. 117	La Traviata Quickstep	Schubert Serenade
No. 118	Allens Quickstep	Amelia Polka
No. 119	Capt Spelmans Quickstep	Rows Mug or Die
No. 120	Sicilian Vespers No. 1	Grafullars, Root Hog or Die Quick Step
No. 121	Sicilian Vespers No. 2	Lucrezia Bozia Quickstep
No. 122	Ever after - Medley	Luenezia Bonfia
No. 123	Waltz from Straufs	borgio
No. 124	Poores Quickstep	Delavan's QuickStep
No. 125	Enchantress Quickstep	Serenade in Don Pasquale
	Frovotore Quickstep	Introduction "Einari"
	Keystone Polka	"Rest Spirit Rest"
	Money Musik Eb Bugle*	Marksmans Polka
	Quick Step Marsillaise	Junior Bachelors Grand March
	Niagara Q.S.	Elixer of Love

Figure 1: Minutes, June 28, 1852


Reading June 28, 1852

Band Organist this evening. by Samuel
Bracefield S. L. Rivers. G. B. Anderson. Frederick
Anderson. And that to Sunders. Motion by E.
Bracefield for S. L. Rivers for president carried
unanimous, Motion by E. Bracefield for F. M.
Sunders for Secretary, approved of unanimous, Motion
by Sunders for E. Bracefield to act as leader
of this band, Motion by Sunders (approved
of unanimous) (Elected) Motion by Sunders
for this to be named the Independent
American Brass Band of Reading, Carried
(Unanimous) Motion by F. B. Anderson for E.
Bracefield to act as treasurer of this Band
approved of unanimous, Motion by E. Bracefield
to appoint a Committee of two to wait on S. Runyon
to ask him to play the Bass Drum, Carried
(Unanimous) F. B. Anderson Committee
Reported favorable S. Runyon accepts the drum
and is considered an active member of this
Band, Motion by E. Bracefield to appoint a Committee
of 2 to draw up Constitution by Sunders Carried
E. Bracefield Wm. Rockwell Committee on Lame
to Report next meeting, July 15, Tuesday, 1852
present & in his chair, Committee on Sunders
F. B. Anderson Reported & discharged, Motion by F. B.
Anderson for S. L. Rivers & Sunders to take the drafts
and make a good Constitution and by laws out of
said drafts, and Report as soon as possible
Carried (unanimous) Motion by F. B. Anderson
that a publication of the Band be made, in
G. B. papers, and Sunders to have it prepared,
Carried unanimous

Attest by F. M. Sunders

Figure 2: Rail Road Advertisement

NEW RAIL ROAD ROUTE.

JUNE:  1859.

FROM HARRISBURG

TO

PHILADELPHIA, LEBANON, READING, POTTSVILLE, WILKESBARRE, TAMAQUA, DANVILLE, ALLENTOWN, MAUCH CHUNK, BETHLEHEM, EASTON & NEW YORK.

BY THE

PHILADELPHIA AND READING RAIL ROAD!

PASSENGER TRAINS LEAVE HARRISBURG DAILY, AT 8 A. M. AND 2.45 P. M.
And run directly through to Philadelphia,
ARRIVING THERE AT 12.50 NOON AND 7.40 P. M.

FARES:

Harrisburg to Philadelphia, in No. 1 Cars,	-	\$3.25
And in No. 2 Cars—in same Trains,	-	2.70

BOTH PASSENGER TRAINS CONNECT AT READING with trains for Pottsville, Tamaqua, Danville, Phoenixville, Norristown, and all Stations on the "Catawissa" and "Reading" Rail Roads.

THE 8 A. M. TRAIN ONLY CONNECTS WITH OTHERS on the "Lackawanna" and "Bloomsburg" and East Pennsylvania Rail Roads for Wilkesbarre, Pittston, Scranton, Allentown, Mauch Chunk, Bethlehem, Easton and New York.
Passengers by this train, at 8 A. M., arrive at New York about 7 P. M. by either route, Philadelphia or Easton.

FOUR TRAINS DAILY FROM READING TO PHILADELPHIA, at 6 A. M., 10.18 A. M., 12 noon, and 5.06 P. M.
LEAVE PHILADELPHIA DAILY at 7.30 A. M. and 3.30 P. M. FOR HARRISBURG, arriving there at 12.40 noon, and 8.25 P. M.—the noon train connecting at Harrisburg with Passenger Trains for Baltimore, York, Sunbury, Williamsport, Carlisle, Chambersburg, Gettysburg, Lancaster and Pittsburg.

EAST PENNSYLVANIA TRAINS LEAVE READING at 6 A. M. and 12 noon daily for Allentown, Easton and New York.

CUMBERLAND VALLEY PASSENGERS GOING EAST BY THE MORNING TRAIN leave Harrisburg at 8 A. M. and arrive at Philadelphia at 12.50 noon. Passengers by the Northern Central Railroad from Gettysburg, York, Sunbury, or Williamsport, take the 3.45 P. M. train from Harrisburg and arrive at Philadelphia at 7.40 P. M., and at Pottsville at 7.50 P. M.

For beauty of Scenery and objects of interest to the traveller the Lebanon and Schuylkill Valleys are not surpassed by any others in this country.

For tickets to above points and other information, apply to

J. J. CLYDE, General Agent,
HARRISBURG.

Figure 3: Ledger Title Page

Title page inscription which begins the ledger containing the constitution, by laws, minutes of the band.



Figure 4: Ledger Title Page, Bookseller's Mark

This is the booksellers mark on the inside of the cover.



Figure 5: Ringgold Band with unnamed fire company



Figure 6: Ringgold Band with Schuylkill Fire Company, 1904



Figure 7: Ringgold Band with Friendship Fire Company, 1914

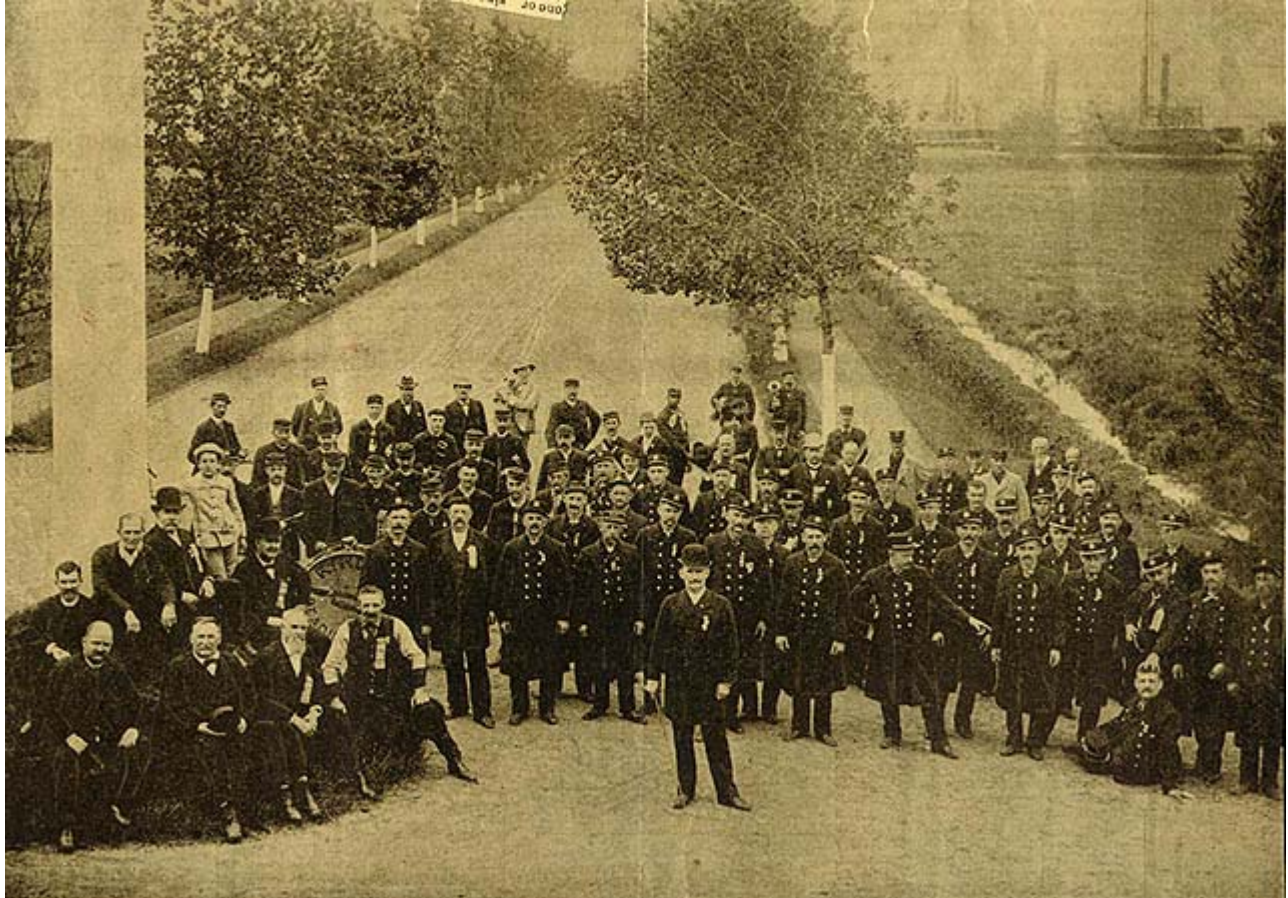


Figure 8: Ringgold Band with Liberty Fire Company



Figure 9: Rainbow Fire Company photo, 1889

“The members of the Rainbow Fire Company in Fairmont Park in Philadelphia May 11, 1889.”



Note this photograph features a number of non-uniformed guests. In particular, the gentleman holding a baritone horn center back, and the bass drum with an imprint of “RIN...” Could this be another occasion in which the RINGgold band was engaged to help celebrate?

Image reprinted from the Historical Society of Berks County Pennsylvania archives with permission.
<http://www.berkshistory.org/rainbow/images/rainbow4.jpg>

Figure 10: John Hook, director



Figure 11: Minutes, March 29, 1853

Reading March 29th 1853
Tuesday March 29th minutes of last meeting
read and adopted President in the chair thirty
members present, motion to pay M^r. Smucker
which was carried, motion to pay M^r. Bellebaum
for music which was carried, motion by
JW Souder to put leave them five dollars in
the treasurer which was received by Serenading
which was carried, motion to fine every member
twelve & a half cents if not here when roll call
no excuse taken except sickness or out of town
which was carried, motion for adjournment
carried, motion By E. Braefield to reorganize which
was carried unanimously, E. Braefield appointed peripatetic
motion to adopt a resolution, namely, Resolved that
a note of thanks be tendered to Cap^t. James C^t. Night for his
liberal donation to the band, and entered on the minutes
also a Committee appointed to inform him of the same, Comm^{tee}
R. S. Ransom JW Souder carried, motion for adjournment Carried
Attest R. S. Ransom Sec

Figure 12: Ringgold Band Program, Mineral Park, 1891



Figure 13: *Minutes*, October 18, 1901

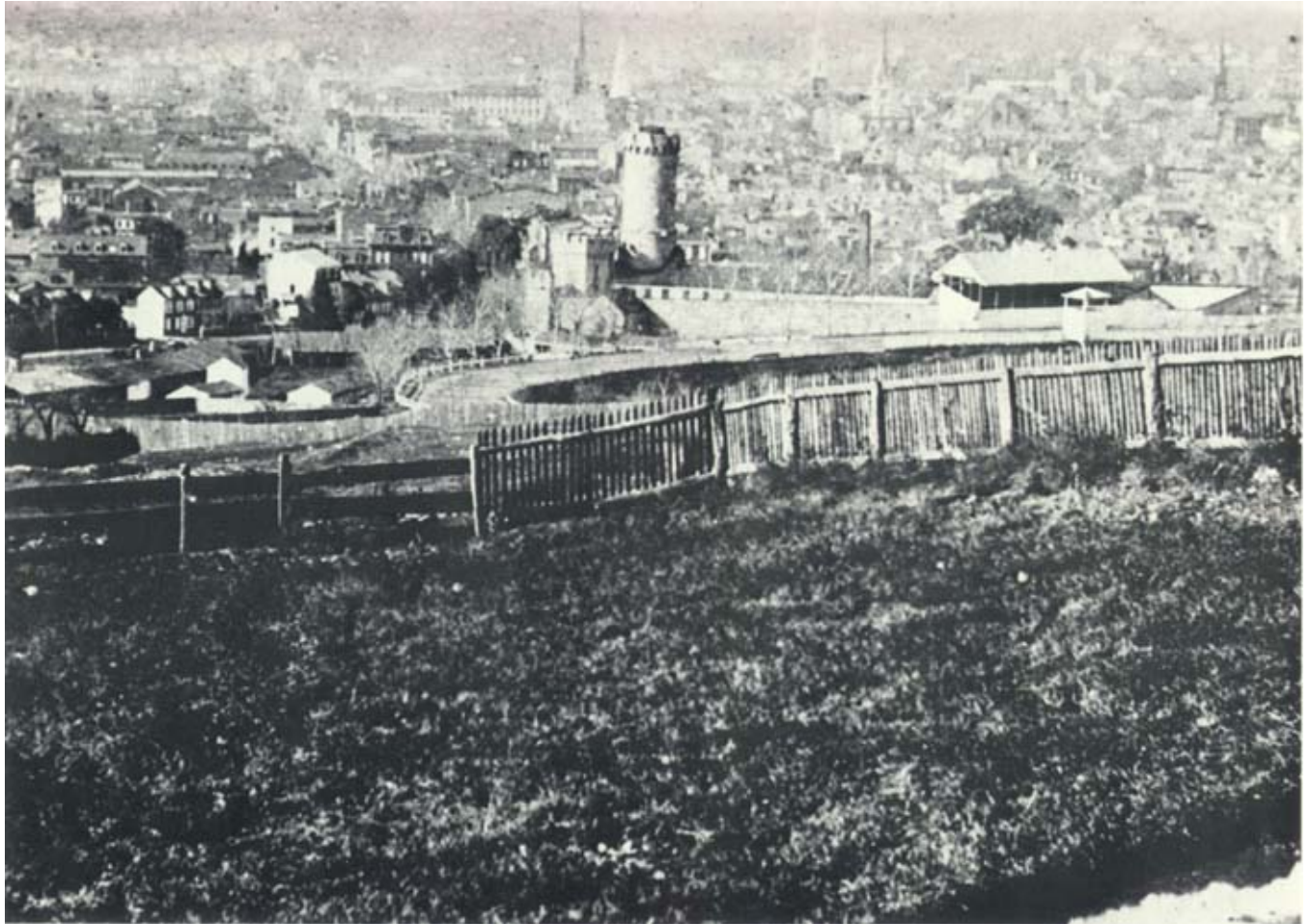
2nd floor Barbey Bldg. Penn St.
Reading Pa Oct 18 1901

The committee consisting of the above named members of the Ringgold Band met a corresponding committee of the Germania Band, composed of M. A. Althouse, J. B. Mueser, M. Kephellman, Geo W. Flatt and J. A. Hepler, to discuss ways and means of consolidation of the two Bands, thereby giving the Citizens of Reading a good large Band and continue the reputation of the Ringgold Band.

After a general discussion of the question and a thorough ventilation of ideas by both committees, it was finally agreed that the members of the Germania Band should join the Ringgold Band as individuals (not as a Band). The office of "Conductor" of the Ringgold Band being vacant, Mr Althouse was assured that he would be

Figure 14: Penn's Common photo

“This rare view of the Penn's Common fairground, taken in the mid-1870's, looks northwestward from about the present-day intersection of Hill Road and Clymer Street. Notice to what extent the racetrack stands above the fairground buildings to the left. Notice, too, the 159-foot-long grandstand along the western length of the track.”



One of two parks in Reading, Penn's Common was bore a central role in the social life of Reading citizens. The Ringgold Band performed here regularly.

Image reprinted from the Historical Society of Berks County Pennsylvania archives with permission.
<http://www.berkshistory.org/rainbow/images/rainbow4.jpg>

Figure 15: *Letterhead Ringgold Band, c. 1910-1920*

Note the dual purpose letterhead with the addition of *Germania Orchestra* as well as the motto which reads “Music furnished for all occasions.”

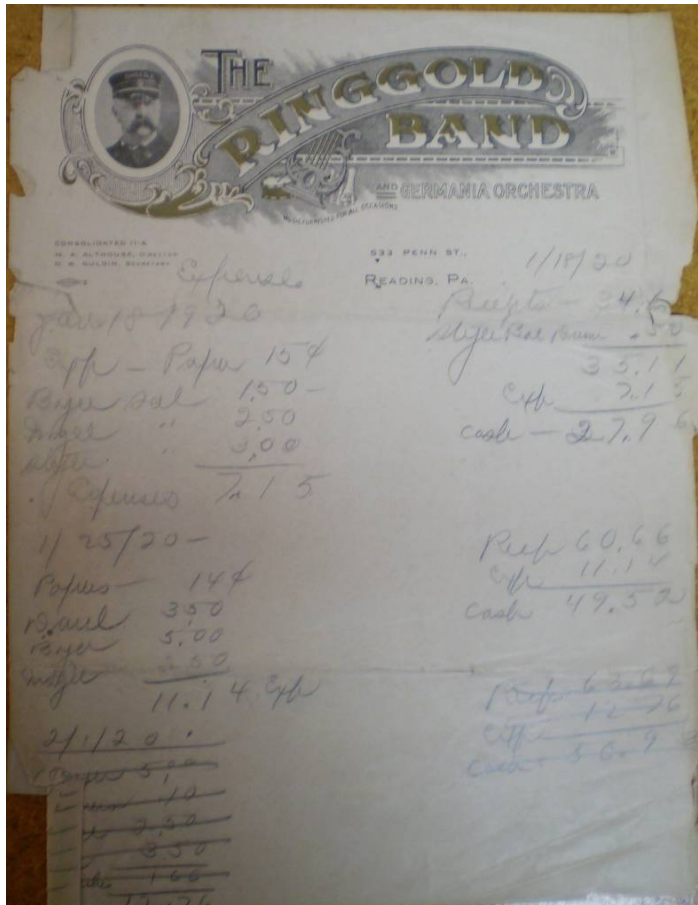


Figure 16: Ringgold Band Program, December 7, 1915

<p style="text-align: center; font-size: 1.2em;">Alma M. Faust</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>TEACHER OF PIANO</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Virgil Method Used</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">224 NORTH TWELFTH STREET</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Graduate of Virgil Conservatory, N. Y.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">RECITALS GIVEN</p>	<p style="text-align: center; font-size: 1.2em;">A. M. High & Son</p> <p style="text-align: center; border-top: 1px solid black; border-bottom: 1px solid black;"><i>Merchant Tailors</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">824 PENN STREET</p>
---	---

PROGRAM—Continued

2. Piccolo Solo, "Through the Air".....	Damm
John Wummer.	
3. Suite Espagnole, "La Feria".....	Lacome
I. Los Toros. II. La Reja (Serenade). III. La Zarzuela.	
4. (a) Idyl, "Canoeing".....	Pryor
(b) Intermezzo, "Gretchen".....	Martin
5. Selection, "Ziegfeld Follies 1915".....	Hirsch
6. "Slavonic Rhapsody".....	Friedemann

Dr. W. P. FACE - - Moved to 1154 Perkiomen Avenue

<p style="text-align: center; font-size: 1.5em;"><i>Auylers</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Bon Bons and Chocolates</p> <p style="text-align: center;">FOR SALE BY</p> <p style="text-align: center; font-size: 1.5em;"><i>Keen's</i> Drug Store</p> <p style="text-align: center;">947 PENN STREET</p>	<p style="text-align: center; font-size: 0.8em;">Sporting Goods Both Phones Motor Washers and Supplies</p> <p style="text-align: center; font-size: 1.2em;">WILLIAM NOLL</p> <p style="text-align: center; font-size: 1.1em;">Bicycles, Motorcycles and Sundries</p> <p style="text-align: center;">FISHING TACKLE</p> <p style="text-align: center; font-size: 0.8em;">Have Your Bicycles Repaired By an Experienced Man</p> <p style="text-align: center;">N. W. Cor. 10th and Oley Streets Reading, Pa.</p>
---	---

Seventh

Figure 17: Constitution of the Independent American Brass Band

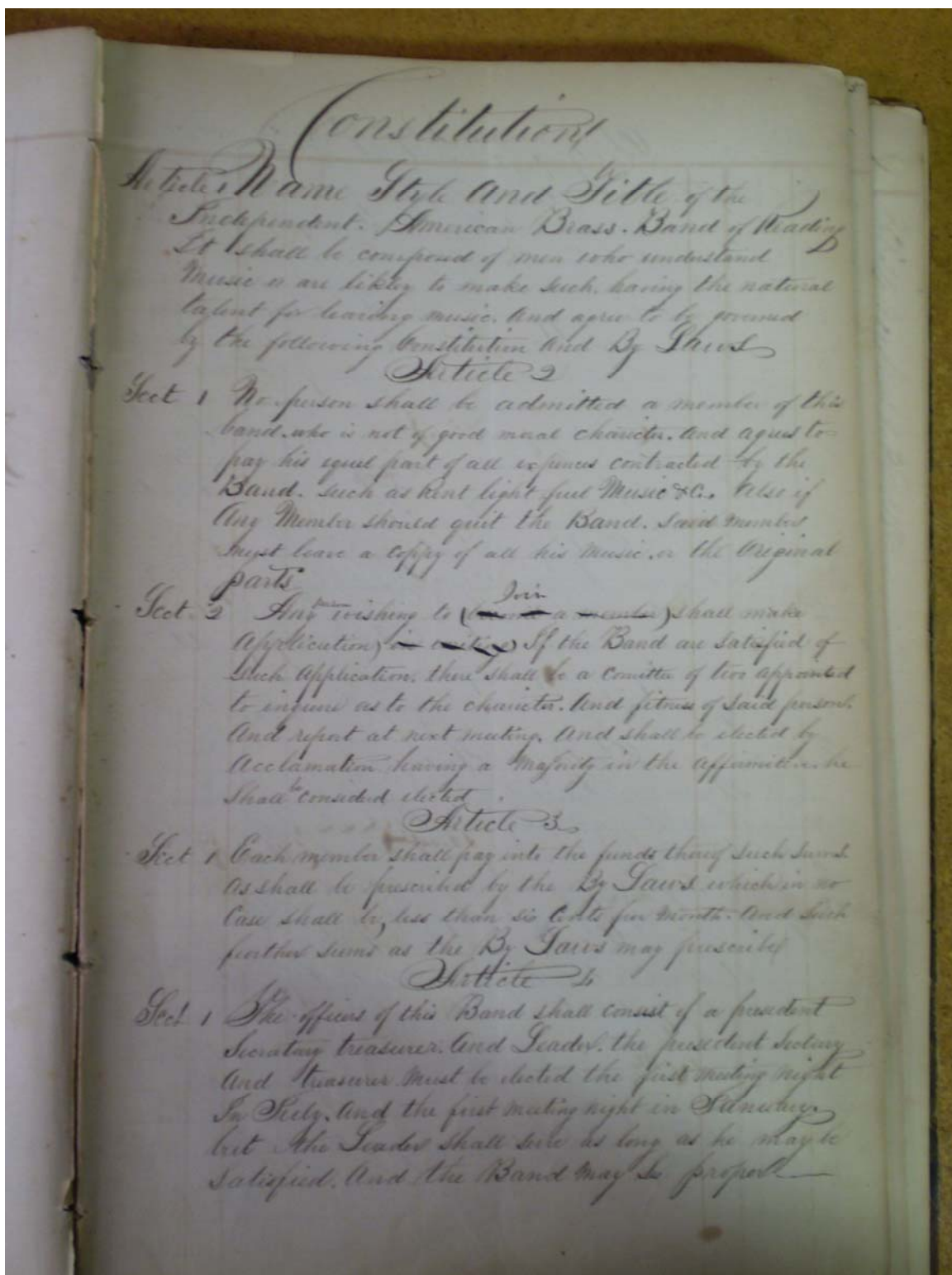


Figure 18: Minutes, February 16, 1853

Thursday Ev Reading February 16th 1853

Band met as usual, a good attendance. President in the chair, Minutes of last meeting read and rejected. ^{the unconstitutional} ^{a dissenting} ^{proposed} The cornett question was then brought as before, and discussed at considerable length. Mr J. H. Latz. Expressed his opinion as follows, That he & H. L. would like to see either W. A. Rochold, or P. M. E. on the cornett. Because. He would like to see, Harry Crocelius, in the Band and, if neither, W. A. R. or P. M. E. would not get the cornett, Harry would, get disgusted, and would perhaps leave the band or in other words, it would look as if we wanted to shove him out, W. C. E. then in order has a opinion of a different nature. (those of Business) for which reason, he said he would like to see P. M. E. have the cornett, & reason because P. M. E. could not attempt to a 1st instrument and could not parade at all times with the band) J. W. Souders, remarked that the W. A. R. spoke as if to shove H. Crocelius out of the Band; said he did not care how it was settled. But said that if W. A. R. would, change instruments, He would pledge his word the he would take an Eb Bugle, Mr. Hook, said he would take Cymbals or Cornett, & H. C. Ement would take Bap Drum, Mr. Phil Britty

Figure 19: Ledger, Ringgold Band, 1915

48		Ringgold Band Assn	
1915		Apr 1915	
Apr	4/7	Pd Fenstermaker salary	600
	4/7	" Boyer salary	200
	4/7	" Mrs Darlington cleaning	300
	4/7	" Paper	12
	4/7	" Paper towels	40
	4/14	" Fenstermaker salary	600
	4/14	" Boyer salary	200
	4/14	" Darlington cleaning	300
	4/14	" Paper & supplies	39
	4/21	" Fenstermaker salary	600
	4/21	" Boyer salary	200
	4/21	" Darlington cleaning	300
	4/21	" Paper	12
	4/28	" Fenstermaker salary	600
	4/28	" Boyer	200
	4/28	" Darlington cleaning	300
	4/28	" Soap supplies & unit price list	100
	4/28	" Toilet paper & towels	65
	4/28	" Paper	12
	4/30	Heller Caf. Cigar Apr	✓ 1375
	"	Butyman Cigar Apr	✓ 875
	"	Reading Brew Co Beer Apr	✓ 11450
	"	Lib His Cigarettes Apr	✓ 192
	"	Bachman Petrels	✓ 270
	"	Burkey Co Cigars Apr	✓ 360
	"	1 Fruit Well Co Regnus Apr	✓ 875
	4/6	Pd Styer commission	25
	4/6	Pd Boyer comm	200
	4/28	Pd Return comm	50
			203 50

Figure 20: *Minutes*, December 7, 1901

with *Reading Times* clipping on merger from December 27, 1901.

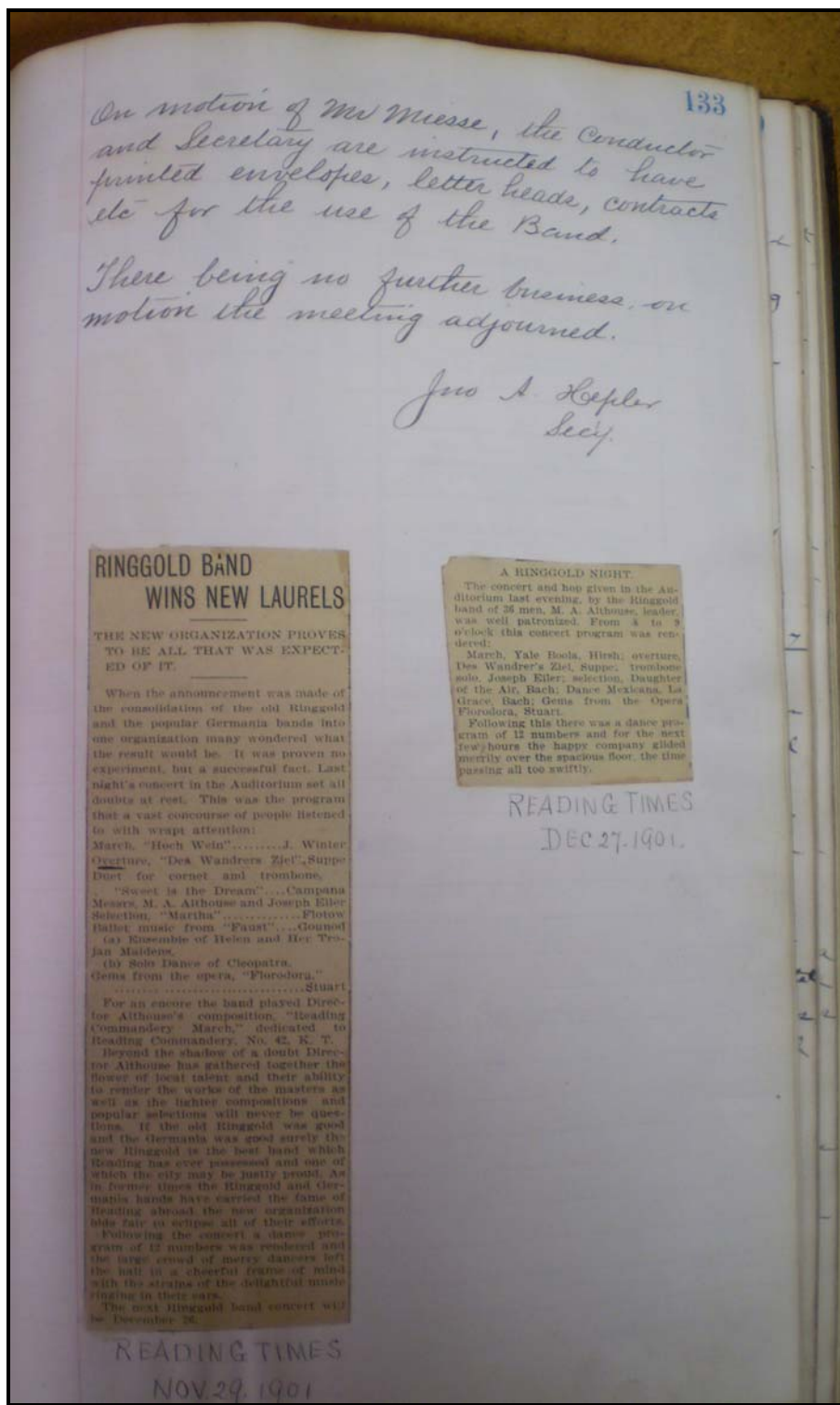


Figure 21: Ringgold Band in Atlantic City, 1904



Figure 22: Ringgold Band in Atlantic City, 1930



Figure 23: Cover, *Live Wire March* by M. A. Althouse

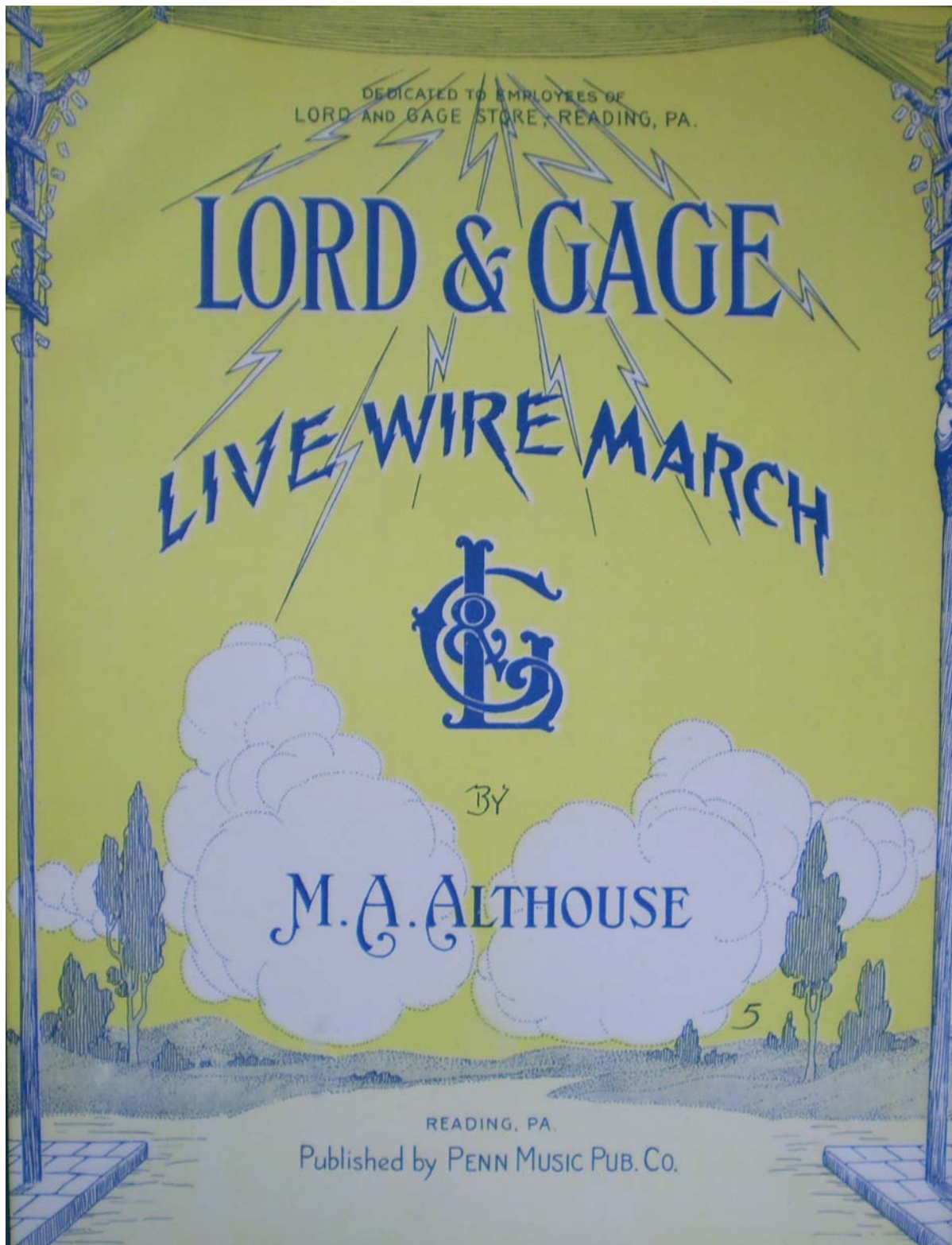


Figure 24: Ringgold Band Programs, 1894-1895



Figure 25: *Minutes*, March 23, 1853

5

Reading March 23rd 1853

Tuesday March 23rd minutes of last meeting read and adopted President in the Chair, motion by S. L. Reaves to have that two dollar counterfeit bill destroyed which was carried, motion to refund the five dollars which we received by serenading to those which was along at the time which was laid over, Motion to authorize the Secy to get a roll book, and enter the names which was carried, Committee of Joseph H. Lotz neglecting their duty to report, The band thinking the applicant worthy of membership, was duly elected a member of this Band, Motion to go serenading on Saturday which was carried Money paid over to Treasurer Eleven dollars & 10 cents motion for Adjournment

Figure 26: Ringgold Band Serenade



Figure 27: Ringgold Band Photo, 1885

Members of the Ringgold Band as they appeared in 1885.



(Credit: Earl L. Fisher)

Figure 28: Cover, *Hotel Penn March* by M. A. Althouse

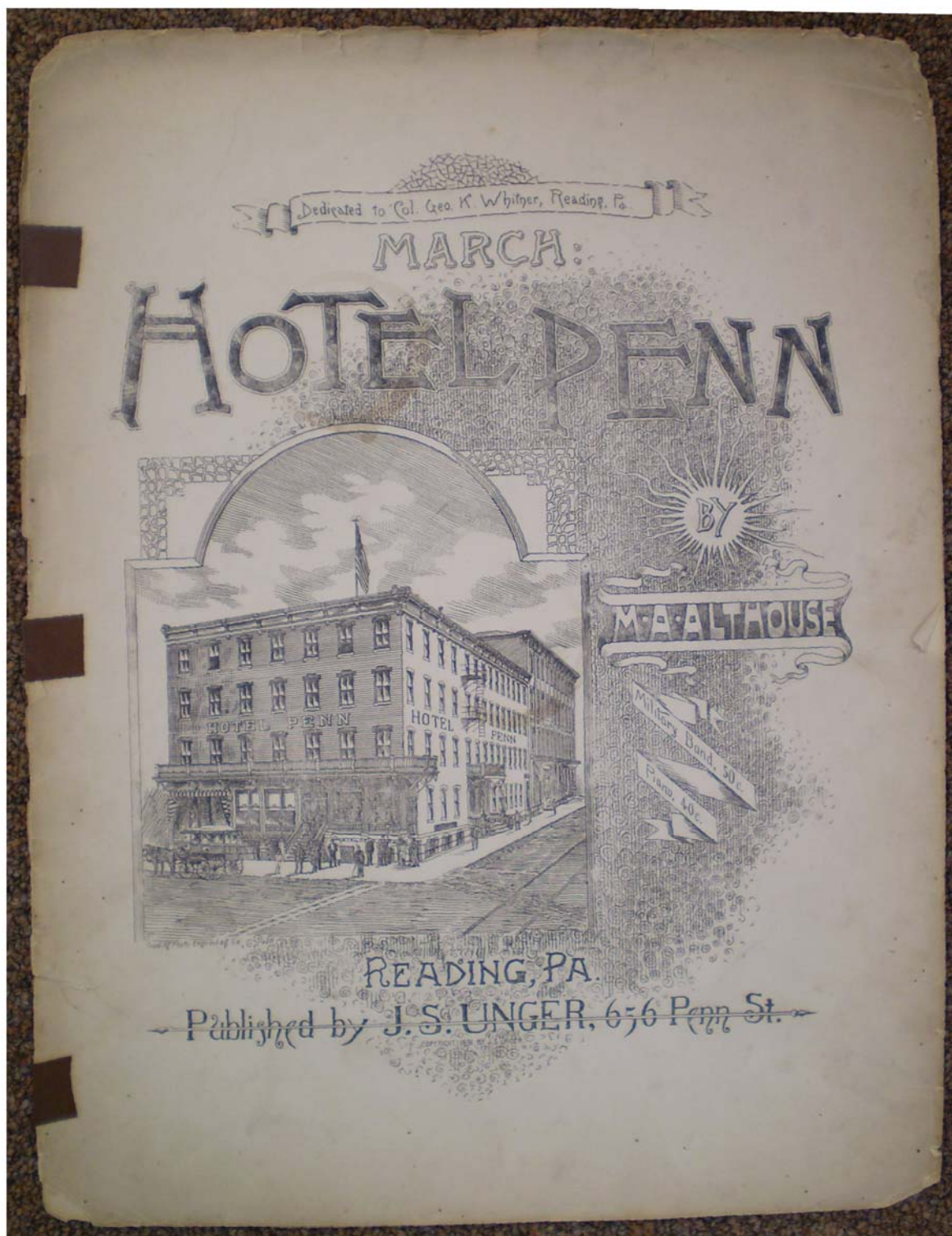


Figure 29: Cover, *Penn Wheelmen Two Step* by M. A. Althouse

DEDICATED TO THE
PENN WHEELMEN
READING, PA.

March PENN WHEELMEN Two Step



COMPOSED BY
M.A. ALTHOUSE.

PIANO SOLO 40
MANDOLIN SOLO 20
2 MANDOLINS 40

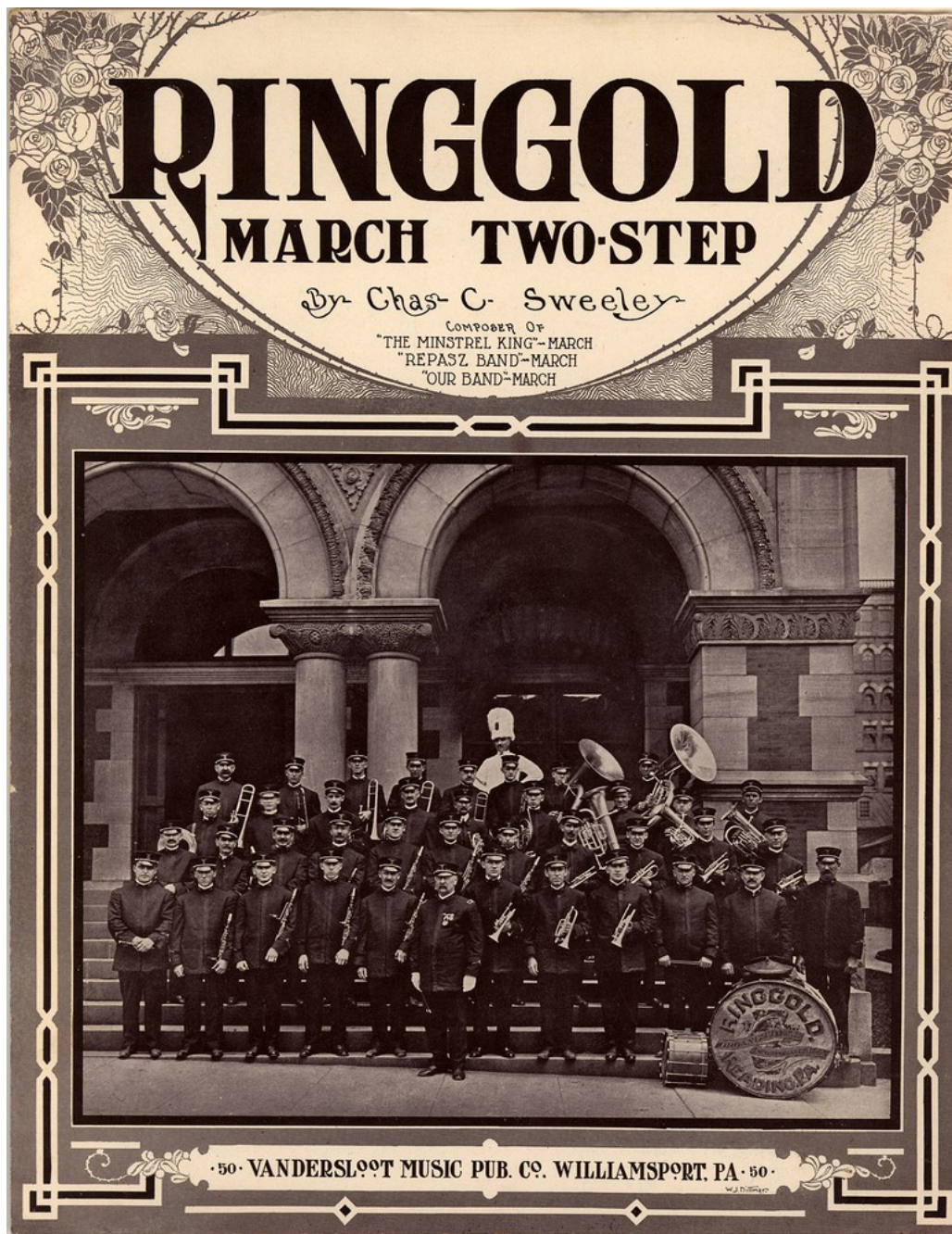
MANDOLIN & GUITAR 40
2 MANDOLINS & GUITAR 50
MILITARY BAND 50

READING, PA.
PUBLISHED BY J.S. ALTHOUSE & Co.

Copyright 1895 by J.S. Althouse & Co.

Figure 30: Cover, *Ringgold March Two-Step*

Sheet music cover with a photo of the Ringgold Band circa 1911.



Credit: Historic American Sheet Music, "Ringgold Band March Two-Step," Music B-905, Duke University Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library

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