

A number of years ago a small group of ex-musicians, some of whom had not touched their instruments for years, unwittingly started a hastily organized hobo band. It was to become one of the most popular musical organizations in the state.

It was in August 1920 that the officials of the Hamilton Manufacturing Company instituted the custom of having a Hamilton Day at the Manitowoc County Fair, which became an annual event until 1924. A bulletin signed by George S. Hamilton, president of the Hamilton Manufacturing Company, informed the employees of the fact that they were to have a day at the County Fair with all expenses paid. Naturally everybody was happy and a number of the more jubilant souls conceived the idea of having an impromptu parade the evening before the gala day. But what is a parade without music and Two Rivers had not boasted of a band for several years. There still were a few old timers, veterans of the old City Band who still owned instruments, and they were prevailed upon to get them out to form the hobo band.

Charles Krause blew his monster tuba with the band and Frank Kracha did the round up of other members. With the proper spirit instilled by pride, the band was ready. Cornets that defied the elements in the woodshed for years, clarinets coated with attic dust, trombones which stood at parade rest next to the broom handle for a decade, and alto horns minus valve caps, all were rarin' to go! This band was the hit of the parade by playing the two classics of the ages, "Hot Time in the Old Town Tonight," and "Hail, Hail the Gangs All Here." The music wafted in the breezes of Lake Michigan and up and down the beautiful city streets until the dents were blown out of the horns, sore lips, tired feet and aching muscles were felt. What a glorious time was had!

Just after this band had finished playing "Hot Time in the Old Town Tonight," for about the 97th time, Mr. George Hamilton stepped into the circle and after complimenting the boys on their efforts, said: "Boys I think this is the beginning of the Hamilton Band." And it was. Several days later another bulletin was posted in the plant which requested all interested men to meet for the purpose of organizing a band. Eighteen men answered the call and Anton Hansen was engaged as the first director. The band met regularly and improved rapidly under his leadership, but the following year Mr. Hansen decided that he had too much work to do and relinquished the baton to Lorenz F. Lueck. The band had grown to be an organization of 50 men and had become an institution in the community.

The Hamilton Manufacturing Company had supplied the band with the best uniforms, paid the director, furnished quarters, and paid the regular members of the band for their weekly rehearsals. The Hamilton Band was one of the most popular musical organizations in the area and played annually for numerous celebrations, homecomings, picnics, parades, and county and state fairs. They played the weekly concerts at Central Park during the summer season. Some concerts were held in the auditorium of the beautiful J. E. Hamilton Community House. The Hamilton Manufacturing Company was proud of its band and the entire city of Two Rivers appreciated all the Hamilton Company had done to maintain the organization, which had won much publicity for the city and earned the title as the best marching band in the state. The company sponsored the band for 42 years.