

Transports of delightful sounds - a photographic exploration of the band wagons of 19th and early 20th century American town bands

Gavin Holman, 25 August 2021

Most photographs of bands of this period show them posed formally in several rows, or perhaps informally in a loose grouping. Occasionally they will be pictured ‘in action’ marching, performing on the street, in a park or elsewhere. It is rare for bands to be photographed in or by their band wagon – in fact only 80 out of over 8,300 photographs examined are of this type, and I show 67 of these here.

Many bands have used all sorts of transports to move them from one place to another, usually from their home to their performance location. However, the band wagons or band chariots that we are concerned with here are those that were specifically used or built for the band to perform in on the move. These are largely of three types:

- a) The ad hoc carriage that had been acquired, and perhaps decorated, for the band’s use on a single occasion, usually with rough wooden benches or hay bales as seats. I have only included a few of this first type - which were probably much more numerous than the others, but rarely photographed or documented.
- b) The purpose-built carriage, upon which the band sat, belonging to the band itself, painted and decorated colourfully, which was used on a regular basis in parades and at special events.
- c) The baggage or tableau bandwagon type, mainly used by circus and sideshow bands, where the band sat on top of a raised, roofed wagon, often gaudy, with highly decorated scenes with gold leaf, on the sides and ends. This latter type of bandwagon is also not included here – they are much better documented in the various circus history journals.

The custom-made bandwagons were usually open topped, had a number of rows of seats for the players, who were sometimes seated at different heights to each other, but all sufficiently above the ground so that they could be seen by people over the heads of crowds. They were usually built by a local carriage-maker, and for a band to be able to afford such a vehicle usually indicated their status, not least their ability to earn sufficient funds to acquire one. This is a similar status symbol to that of silvered instruments, which began to appear in the 1870’s. There was no difference in the playing quality of a silver cornet over a brass cornet, but the former cost more, looked better, and implied that the band was in good financial shape.

The images of the dedicated bandwagons, below, are followed by further photographs of bands on ad hoc wagons and other transports. After these, I have provided some details of other bandwagons for which we do not have a photograph.

Dedicated bandwagons



Adelphians Band, Greenfield, Indiana



Afton Citizens' Band, New York



Amesville Cornet Band, Ohio, 1890



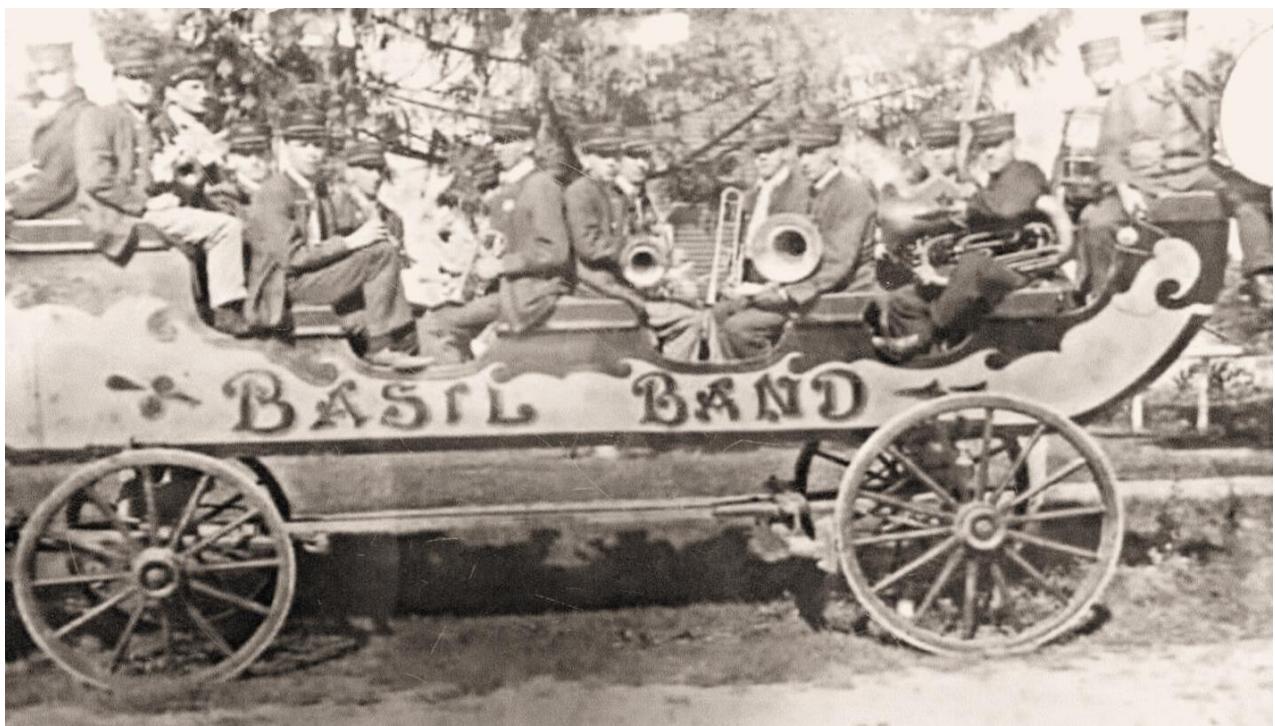
Armada Cornet Band, Michigan, 1878



Bainbridge Cornet Band, Pennsylvania



Barlow's Band, Stratford, Iowa



Basil Band, Ohio



Beaver Dam Cornet Band, Wisconsin, 1860



Bethel Cornet Band, Missouri, 1902



Canyon City Brass Band, Oregon



Canyon City Ladies' Band, Oregon



Charlevoix Cigar Company's Band, Michigan, 1890's



Clayton City Cornet Band, Georgia



Coloma German Cornet Band, Michigan



Copenhagen Cornet Band, New York



*Craig Colony Band, Livingston County, New York
built about 1905 by Ed Logan and Clarence McNaughton*



Cuthbert Family Cornet Band, Long Beach, California



Downs Young Ladies' Band, Kansas, 1899



Dublin Cornet Band, Ohio



Eagles Band, Denver, Colorado



East Bangor Cornet Band, Pennsylvania



Fairfax Citizens' Band, Minnesota



Fish Haven Band, Idaho



Gibson Cornet Band, Pennsylvania



Greenfield Band, Indiana



Gypsy Citizens' Band, Pennsylvania



Haines Cornet Band, Alliance, Ohio, 1861



Hereford Band, Pennsylvania



Honolulu Ladies Salvation Army Band, Hawaii



Houlton Cornet Band, Maine, 1882



Jacksonville Cornet Band, Oregon



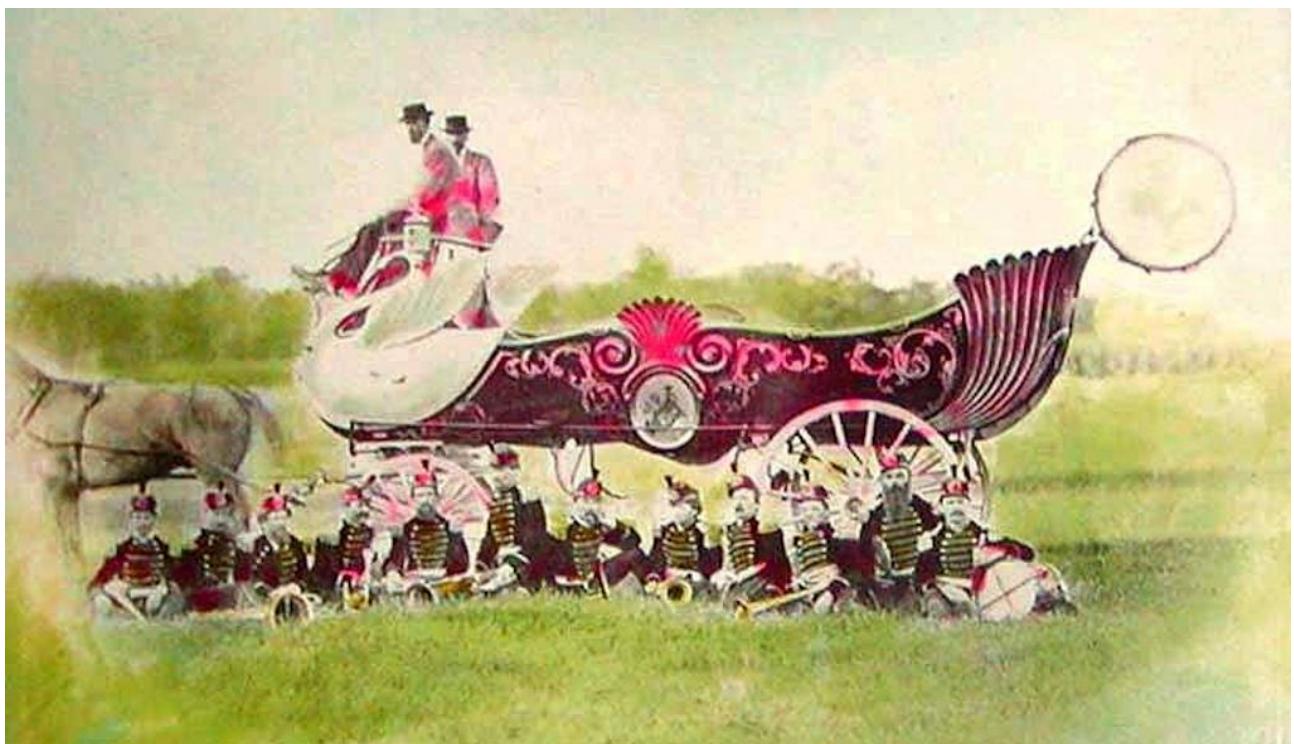
Jamestown Cornet Band, Independence County, Arkansas, 1915



Jollytown Band, Pennsylvania



Knightstown Silver Cornet Band, Indiana, 1868



Knightstown Silver Cornet Band, Indiana

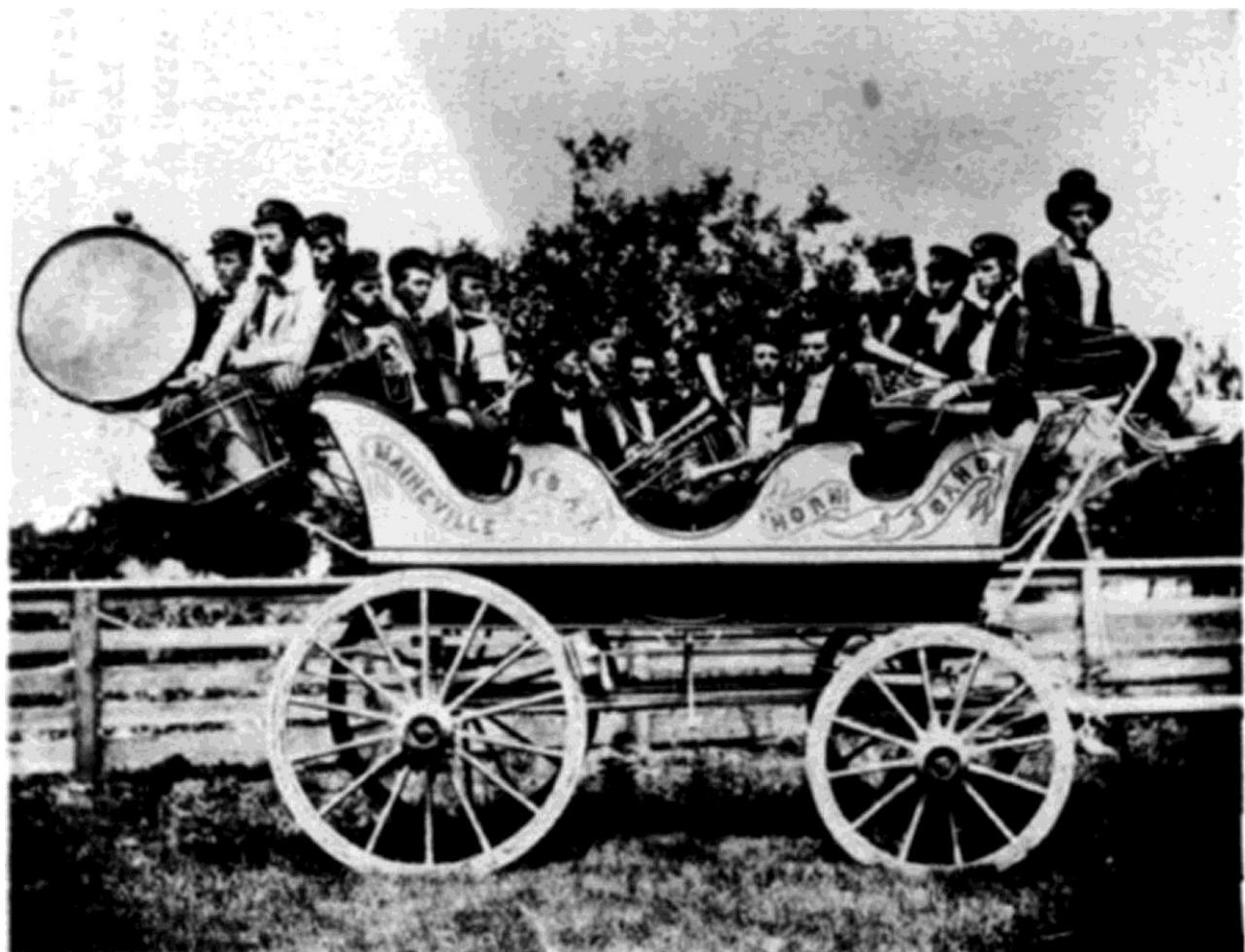


Published For Nye Sight Seeing Autos, Santa Barbara, Cal.

La Monaca Band, Santa Barbara, California



Lehi Silver Band, Utah – bandwagon constructed in 1891



Maineville Sax Horn Band, Ohio, 1860

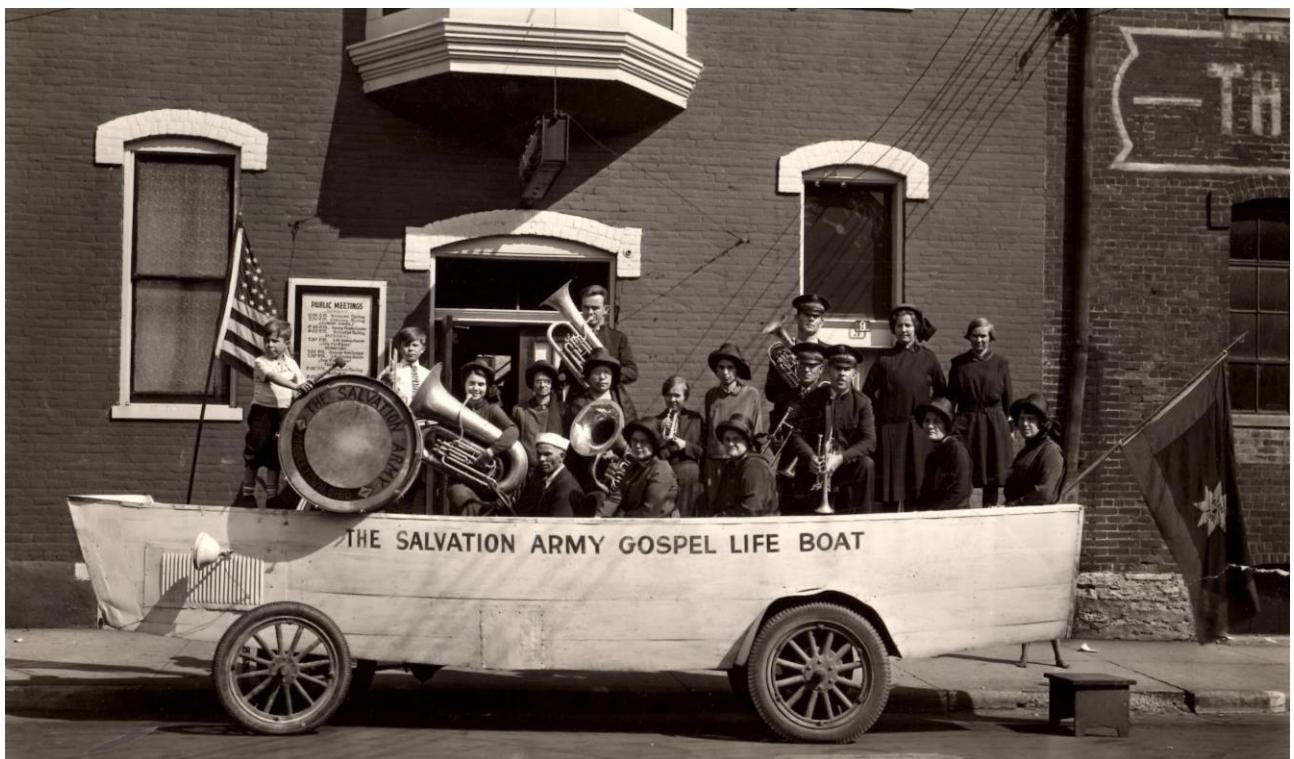


Mantorville Cornet Band, Minnesota, 1891



Mason City Band, Mason City, Iowa

Mason City Band, Iowa



Middletown Salvation Army Band, Ohio, c. 1920



Midway Brass Band, Utah



Monroe Brass Band, Georgia



Moroni Brass Band, Utah



Mulberry Cornet Band, Indiana, 1890



Nesslein Cornet Band, Perry, Missouri, 1897



Nocona Girls' Band, Texas



Paddy's Run Cornet Band, Ohio, 1888



Postville Brass Band, Iowa



Plymouth Band, Michigan, 1869



Randolph Ladies' Band, Wisconsin, 1908



Red Oak Band, Iowa



Rollersville Cornet Band, Ohio



Rothrockville Cornet Band, Pennsylvania, 1898



Salem Silver Band, Utah, 1894



San Marcos Citizens' Band, Texas



Scranton bandwagon, Pennsylvania, built in 1912



Seneca Cornet Band, Kansas



Sonora Band, California



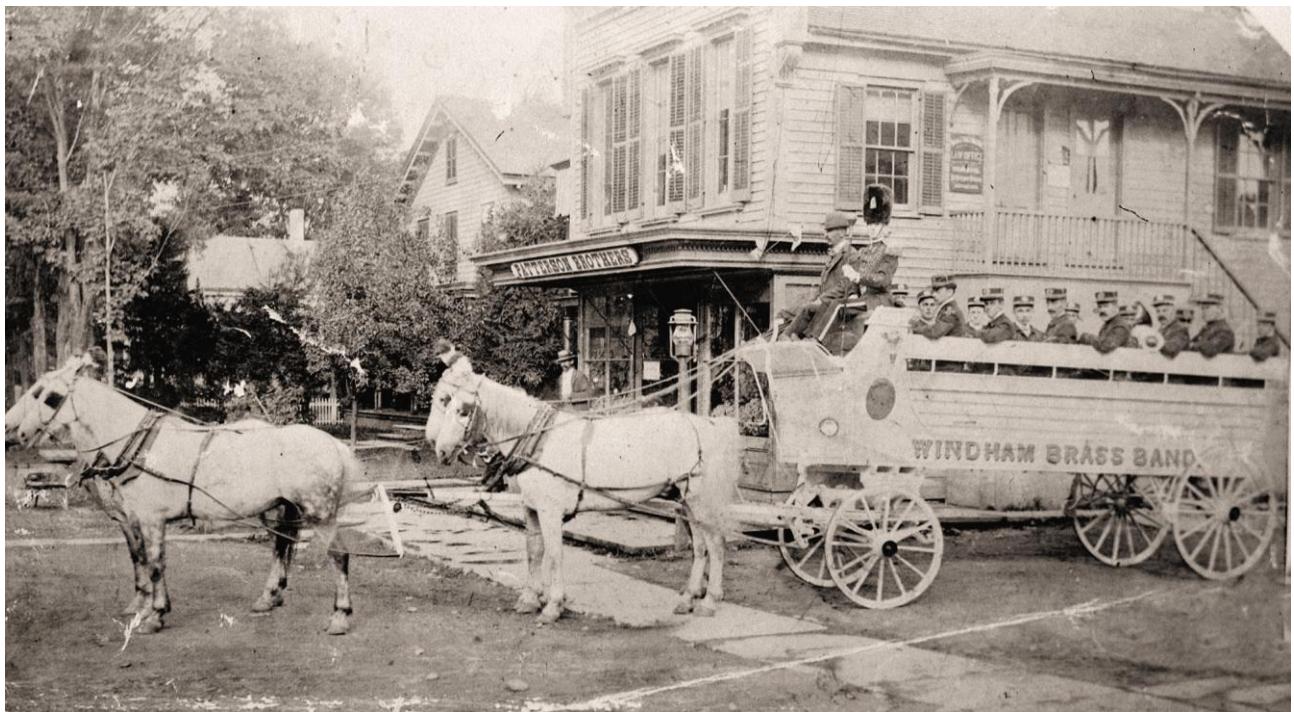
Springville Cornet Band, New York



Sterling Cornet Band, Illinois, 1875

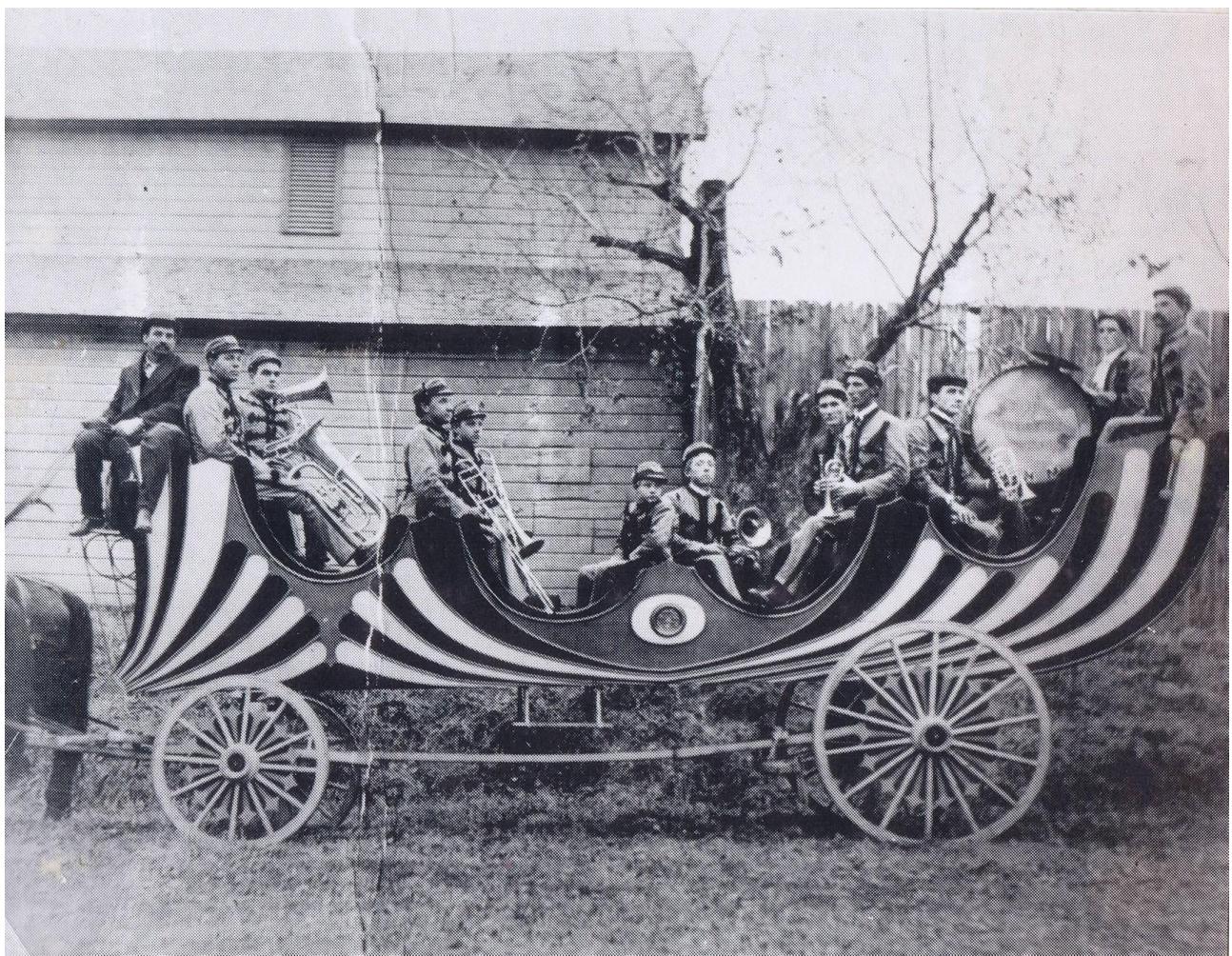


Wakefield Band, Kansas



Windham Brass Band, New York

Worth Cornet Band, Missouri - Hurley Dye had formed a small band in Friend. When the town of Friend decided to move to Worth, he organized the new Worth Cornet Band and built an ornate bandwagon for the band to travel in. Gilbert Gladstone (horn) became the band leader for 15 or so years, after Hurley left, until the band disbanded. The photograph below was taken in front of a livery in Grant City. The driver was Bill Schuster, and the band members left to right: Arthur McReynolds, Ira Barnes, Roy Dye, Gilber Dye, Arthur Walker, Jim Dye, Gilbert Gladstone, Hurley Dye, Ed Lattimer and Charley Eighmy.



Worth Cornet Band, Missouri



Young America Band, Jackson, Missouri



Ypsilanti Cornet Band, Michigan

Ad hoc bandwagons



Alton Brass Band, Missouri



Ashland Brass Band, Oregon



El Reno Band, Oklahoma



Estherville Band, Iowa, 1909



Fort Lupton Band, Colorado



Graniteville Military Band, South Carolina



Greenfield Cornet Band, Massachusetts



Manti Cornet Band, Utah



Mapleton Brass Band, Utah



Morgan Brass Band, Utah



Virginia City Brass Band, Montana, 1888



Unknown band



Unknown band



Unknown band, Colorado



Unknown band



Unknown band



Unknown band



Unknown ladies' band, 1916



Example of a tableau bandwagon – Rice and Dorman's Circus Band, 1919

Some notes on other bands with their bandwagons

- Abilene Town Brass Band (Texas) - Founded in 1886 by 12 players, including: T.A. Lipps, Pete Kauffman, Adolph Heyck, Dave Kauffman, J.T. Tarpley, Will Woodward and Turner Lesslie. Conductor J.H. Lucas appointed in 1889, when it was called Abilene Light Infantry Band, and it purchase new uniforms, instruments and a bandwagon. M. P. Kavanaugh was band instructor in 1891. Known as Abilene Firemen's Silver Cornet Band in 1896, Abilene Citizens' Band in 1904, with conductor H. N. Holderness. Still active in 1910, conductor Luther Lane.
- Berlin Brass Band (Pennsylvania) - Active in 1863 to 1866. Members in 1865 were Gershom B. Heffley (leader), William Heffley (2nd soprano), H. Meyer (solo alto), D.H. Fisher (1st tenor), C.A. Heffley (baritone bass), J.G. Gardill (Eb bass tuba), M.A. Zorn (snare drum), J.L. Zorn (side drum & cymbals), W.A. Powell (driver of the band wagon)
- Carter's Cornet Band (Niles, Ohio) - Active in 1872, when a band wagon was purchased for the band. Took part in the first brass band convention at Greene, Ohio in October 1872
- Cedar Falls Brass Band (Iowa) - Active in 1857 to 1871. Leader H.C. Overman in 1860-1866. In August 1860 they commissioned a new band wagon to be constructed, costing \$300 (this was subsequently traded for the Orton Brothers Circus bandwagon, in October 1865, receiving \$100 in addition for the swap). It was reorganised in 1864
- Corvallis Cornet Band (Oregon) - Active in 1887, with members: Loren Mason, cymbals; N.P. Briggs, drums; driver of band wagon; E.A. Milner; White; Ed Anderson, clarinet; L. Wilson; Dave Irvine, horn; Jess Houck, alto; Wayman St. Clair; J. Mason; N.R. Barber
- Mettler's Banda Familia (Gaffney, South Carolina) - It was recognised for many years as the champion family band of the county, in Gaffney, South Carolina. It performed, in its own bandwagon drawn by six beautiful spotted Shetland ponies, at the Lawrenceburg Fall Festival, Indiana, in September 1931. Over the years they travelled from coast to coast, from lakes to gulf, with circuses and shows, culminating with the Bantley All American Show playing at the Cherokee County Fair in Gaffney, in September 1937. Mary Mettler played mellophone, little brother Gene was known as the world's youngest animal trainer. There were five children, including George Mettler
- Mt Sterling Silver Cornet Band (Ohio) - Active in 1868. Leader D.F. Binder in 1870 when the band purchased a new band wagon costing \$600
- Odessa Cornet Band (Delaware) - Active in 1868. Had a band wagon built in 1870
- Onalaska Ladies' Brass Band (Wisconsin) - Active from 1886 to 1890. Consisting of 13 ladies, the conductor was Will Schall. The band was famous for "their vivacious ability, toe-teasing harmony and natty uniforms". The uniforms had come from Chicago, and were of green broadcloth with black braid across the front of the jackets fastened with "frogs"; on the shoulders were epaulets trimmed with black fringe and on the green mortarboard caps were black braid and black tassels; the

skirts of the uniforms were short, reaching just to the tops of the high shoes. The ladies sat on the city band wagon (left over from an earlier band) - which had seats along the sides and two raised seats at the back with steps to climb up to reach them. Either two or four horses were used to draw the wagon. The ladies were: Lula Aiken Gleason, Lottie Molton Goyette, Katherine Perro, Ada Pooler Knudtson, Anna M. Aiken, Della Newell Aldrich, Fanny Felzer Osborn, Jennie Aiken Schall, Mamie Felzer, Matilda Otterson Herlocker, Cara Otterson Horner, Edna Nesbit Newell, and Carrie Gleason.

- Paddy's Run Cornet Band (Shandon, Ohio) - Founded in February 1887. In November of 1887, the band decided to purchase a bandwagon, as they tired of crowding into a huckster wagon. They selected a model for their wagon and placed their order in early January 1888 with the Haverkotte Company in Cincinnati. The band continued into the 1890's. Some of those in the band include: Ed Reece, John Walther, Jr., Thomas Scheel, A.A. Patton, William Robison, Ralph Clark, Raymond Evans, Henry Pfeffer, Walter Davies, and Alex Guthrie.
- Petersburg Brass Band (Indiana) - Active in 1867, 1868. The band were presented with a new band wagon in April 1868 "for campaign purposes"
- Progressive Cornet Band (Ste. Genevieve, Missouri) - Active in 1883, leader Edward Seyssler, when it was reported they were "as busy as bees, getting ready for their Grand Picnic in Grobe's Grove on the 4th. New pieces are rehearsed, a band wagon is being painted in fine style, their new and tasty parade uniforms are receiving the finishing touches, and mammoth posters are scattered all over the country"
- Rock Hill Cornet Band (South Carolina) - Founded around 1876, with 12 members made up mostly of Main Street merchants with John Gary Anderson playing the bass drum. It had its own band wagon painted in gold and yellow much like a circus cart. Band members rode on top the wagon which was pulled by either 2 or 4 horses. Still active in 1909
- South Lansing Brass Band (New York) - Founded in early 1884 as South Lansing Brass Band, it later became the Lansing Cornet Band. It boasted eighteen instruments, with Bert Ozmun as leader and William Burns, business manager. The uniforms of the band comprised dark trousers, cream colored shirts, blue caps and white Morocco pouches. A four-horse team transported the outfit in an up-to-date bandwagon. Members of the band were J. J. Bower, William Burns, Ellis Manning, Frank Bower, Lafayette Jacobs, Will Robinson, "Mick" Quinn, Will Seamon, John Starks, Wesley Humphrey, William H. Miller, Morris DeCamp, William DeCamp, Frank Giltner, Hope Detrick, Dave Robinson, Albert Humphrey, Will Searles, Bert Ozmun, and William Duckenfeld.
- St Charles Brass Band (Idaho) - Founded in 1895 by Solomon Tremelling. The members of the band faithfully held band practice on the day or evening it was scheduled, practicing in their homes. A light wagon used as a bandwagon was colorful with its high driver's seat and bench seatboards fastened on the sideboards of the wagon box, extending out over the wheels far enough to prevent the bunting decorations from being torn off by the wheels while the wagon was in motion. The gay bunting decorations and the high driver's seat created a regal air to the band-wagon. The brass band participated in all activities in the valley and in surrounding

Rich, Caribou, and Lincoln Counties and Star Valley. The band played and rode in parades, at outdoor games, picnics, re-unions, holiday functions, political meetings and even at folk dances when a dance orchestra was not available. The band never made a practice of playing at funerals, but as a tribute to their beloved leader, they played at the graveside of Rebecca Tremelling, wife of Soloman Tremelling.

- Strahorn Brass Band (Elkton, Maryland) - Active in 1871, at which time they had a band wagon drawn by six horses dressed in "regalia"
- Tallmadge Cornet Band (Ohio) - In 1854, a group of men, desirous of a "different style of music," formed an association to create a brass band in Tallmadge. Subscribers in the community paid between \$0.25 and \$10.00 to purchase brass instruments and a drum. Originally, there were eight band members. They were given the instruments, and E. Hull was hired to give instructions for \$35.00 and board for a term of twelve lessons. He was subsequently hired for another twelve lessons. Through diligent practice, the band became quite good and received invitations to play throughout the Western Reserve, receiving fees from \$25.00 to \$43.00 per engagement. The band became so popular it was able to commission a bandwagon to ride in parades. Disbanded in 1866. Conductor D. Marble in 1859
- Ulster Brass Band (Pennsylvania) - Active in 1859. Still active in 1866. It procured a handsome band wagon in 1860, manufactured for them by A.P. Stevens of Athens, PA. Leader William Dittrich in 1860-1866
- Weston Cornet Band (Vermont) - Active in the 1880's to the 1930's. The red Concord coach, which was used by the band as its bandwagon, is housed in the Weston Historical Society Bandwagon Museum, at the Historic Millyard, Weston
- Winters Brass Band (Runnels County, Texas) - Focus of social life during Winters' early years, the band played throughout the area for box suppers, old settlers reunions, and political campaigns. Charles Grant organized the group in 1901 (several years after the town was incorporated) and conducted when it played for the coming of Winters' first railroad in 1909. Grant served as bandmaster for fifteen years. Sunday afternoon concerts were presented in the bandstand (then located in Tinkle Park), and members traveled in a bandwagon drawn by four white horses to play in small towns nearby. Favorite tunes were "The Anvil Chorus," "Stars and Stripes Forever," and "Poet and Peasant." New uniforms, blue with gold stripes, cost \$14 in 1905. After 1920, the retired members helped the city school organize a band by lending some of their instruments to the students.

For information about the circus style of bandwagons, see:

- Circus Historical Society - <https://circushistory.org>
- Windjammers Unlimited, The Circus Music Historical Society - <https://www.mywju.org>
- Barnum and Bailey - *Two Hemispheres Band Wagon* – B.J. Palmer, 1944
- Brubaker, Mike - The Bandwagon - [temposenzatempo] - 6 July 2012
- Conover, Richard - *The Fielding Bandchariots: Reflections on the Golden Age Between Rome and Ringling* – the author, 1969
- Kathleen - *Jump on the Bandwagon...or Circus Wagon...or Bandchariot...?* - Carriage Association of America [www.carriageassociationofamerica.com]