

RILEY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

# The Manhattan Municipal Band plays on

Mary Stamey  
Contributing writer

Sixteen-year-old Charlie wanted to play in a band. Not a rock band or a country band. His preference was for a municipal band. Like others have for many years, he gathered signatures petitioning Manhattan's leaders to form a municipal band. The year was 1919 and he'd heard about town bands across America that played for the public on various occasions. The city of Manhattan adopted an ordinance creating the Manhattan Municipal Band and percussionist Charlie Moorman was one of its first members. The band has played for the public since its debut in 1920, for 97 consecutive years.

The first contract with the band stipulated they play one concert in the winter and 17 during the summer months. The 16-piece band was later required to be available year round. Winter concerts were held in the newly built Community House, while summer concerts were held on the courthouse lawn. In 1922, the band's contract stipulated 25 concerts be performed between Memorial Day and Armistice Day. By 1949, concerts outside of these dates were abandoned. Other than a "Fair Band" contract, drawn in 1951 and disbanded in the 1960s, stipulating that a part of the municipal band perform during the annual Riley County Fair, the band's season has begun on Memorial Day. Since the 1960s, the band season has concluded in mid-to late July.

The first stage for Manhattan's municipal band was a horse-drawn portable stage parked in front of the county courthouse. By the end of the 1920 season though, the concerts were held in City Park because of insects congregating on the electric lights around the courthouse.

The portable stage was replaced in 1930 when the Ministerial Alliance of Manhattan was granted permission to erect a pavilion in the park to be used for church services and other county gatherings such as family reunions, political gatherings and civic group meetings. The City Park Pavilion was home for the band from 1930 until the current facility, the Larry Norvell Band



Manhattan Municipal Band director Larry Norvell and member Brad Blaker during a parade.

Courtesy photo

The band's first stage was a horse-drawn portable stage parked in front of the county courthouse.

Shell, was completed in 2004.

As a city funded group, the Municipal Band was initially governed by a Board of Control who reported directly to the city about length of contract, uniform costs, music purchases, instruments repairs and salaries. Since 2009, the band is under the jurisdiction of the city's Parks and Recreation department.

In the early years, the band spread its goodwill to surrounding towns including yearly trips to Salina, Abilene and Clay Center. Members performed for fashion shows and typing contests. In 1921, the band's 50 members donned new uniforms for the United Commercial Travelers convention in Salina. Two years later, Rotarians, Kiwanians and the Farmers Cooperative held a banquet honoring 130 bandsmen from the high school, the college and the municipal band.

The first uniforms band members wore were borrowed from the college and high school bands: a blue blouse, white trou-

sers and white Sam Browne belts. In the early 1930s, new uniforms were purchased consisting of a French gray coat, red Sam Browne belt, white shirt, black tie, white duck trousers for men, white skirts for women, and white shoes. No substitutes were allowed despite the wool blouse and summertime temperatures.

Bandsman Don Parrish remembered marching in full uniform up Kansas Avenue to the capitol in Topeka for the Alf Landon presidential nomination ceremony July 23, 1936. The temperature was 98 degrees at noon and reached 103 in the afternoon. The wool uniforms lasted until 1956 when they were donated to the high school's drama department. Director Larry Norvell changed the uniform for the 1956 season to a short sleeved white shirt, dark blue or black trousers or skirts and black shoes. Throughout its sto-

ried history, seven renowned directors have led the Manhattan Municipal Band. Larry Norvell holds the records for years of service for 45, 1950-1995, while current director Frank Tracz has served for 22. Biographical sketches of each bandmaster are available at [www.k-state.edu/band/mmb/history.html](http://www.k-state.edu/band/mmb/history.html).

Charlie Moorman finished high school, continued his education, joined John Philip Sousa's band and later many circus bands before returning to Manhattan to teach music in schools in the area. Most bandsmen and women however have not been professional musicians. Doctors, lawyers, teachers, business owners, students, clergy, military personnel, professors, and retired folks comprise the diverse walks of life among band members for 97 years. Their sense of community through music enriches the bigger community es-

thetically, economically and most definitely, socially.

Every performer and entertainer will tell you it is the audience who keeps their efforts and energy alive. The Manhattan audience has not wavered from its support of the Manhattan Municipal Band. In early years some audience members parked close to the pavilion and listened from their cars, honking their horns after favorite songs. With the hospital across the street from the park, honking was later discouraged. The size of the audience has varied from 100 to 600 depending on the year, the occasion and the weather. The audience is the reason

a pavilion was built in 1930 and the current stage erected in 2004.

Patriotic songs have comprised the itinerary of the majority of band concerts in the park. Who among us hasn't sung along to "Yankee Doodle" or tapped our feet to "Stars and Stripes"? Broadway hits, a Top 10 song of a bygone era, classical compositions and sometimes a silly ditty comprise the repertoire of the band over the years. Local vocal talent has also played a role, including solos or Manhattan's Little Apple Chorus. Instrumental solos, duets or entire sections of the band are highlighted. This writer was honored when Charlie asked her to play a xylophone duet with him prior to his retiring from his beloved town band.

Tuesday nights on the Larry Norvell Band Shell continue to be the home of the Manhattan Municipal Band. Join them each Tuesday evening at 7:30 from Memorial Day through July 18. Bring your family and neighbors. You'll be a part of history! More information about the band's history may be obtained at the Riley County Historical Museum and its website, [www.rileycountysks.gov](http://www.rileycountysks.gov) or the Riley County Historical Society's website, [www.rileychs.com](http://www.rileychs.com).

Mary Stamey is a retired USD383 school teacher and administrator. She is a member of the Riley County Historical Society and has played in the Manhattan Municipal Band and since 1964.

Special Focus June Pricing

Skandia Blinds  
Wesco Fabrics

**DRAPERY WORLD & BLINDS**

317 B Poyntz Ave • Manhattan, KS

Decor Energy Savings Security

785.537.4260  
888.515.9478

**WILCOX CONSTRUCTION**

30 yrs. experience

Shane Wilcox  
Custom Builder

Home: 785-349-2059  
Cell: 785-492-0669

Total Remodeling Jobs  
Exterior & Interior  
Baths & Kitchen

Decks • Stone Patios  
Concrete Work  
Garages & Pole Barns

AND MUCH MORE!

YOUR DREAMS EVOLVE, YOUR COVERAGE SHOULD TOO.

CALL TODAY TO SCHEDULE A FREE PERSONAL INSURANCE REVIEW.

**AMERICAN FAMILY INSURANCE**

Tim Engle Agency, Inc.  
3320 Anderson Ave  
Manhattan, KS 66503  
(785) 539-9200  
[timengleagency.com](http://timengleagency.com)

**ORHO ON-CALL**

AFTER HOURS INJURY CLINIC AT OSMC

NEW WEEKEND HOURS!  
Saturday - Sunday  
12PM-4PM

We understand that most injuries do not happen from 8-5.

**HOURS:**  
Mon-Thu: 5PM-8PM  
Fri: 1PM-8PM Sat-Sun: 12PM-4PM

**WHAT WE TREAT:**

- Broken bones • Strains & Sprains
- Sports injuries • Foot or ankle injuries
- Shoulder injuries • Hand or wrist injuries
- Small cuts or wounds

Expedited referral to an orthopedic surgeon if necessary.

We accept most insurances.

**ORTHOPAEDIC AND SPORTS MEDICINE CENTER**

1600 Charles Place, MANHATTAN | 785.564.4626

City of Manhattan Kansas

2015-2019 CDBG Consolidated Plan - Amended, and Proposed 2017 Annual Action Plan

**Notice of Public Comment Period and Public Hearing**

The Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) 2015-2019 Consolidated Plan-Amended and the proposed 2017 Annual Action Plan provides a basis and strategy for the use of funds allocated to the City of Manhattan by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). HUD is providing the City with funding of \$625,024 for CDBG Program Year 2017.

From June 26, 2017 through July 10, 2017, the documents will be available on the City's website: [www.cityofmhk.com/cdbg](http://www.cityofmhk.com/cdbg); at City Hall in the Community Development Department, 1101 Poyntz Avenue; and at the Manhattan Public Library, 629 Poyntz Avenue. The City encourages all interested citizens to review and comment on the proposed 2017 Annual Action Plan.

**CDBG 2017 Proposed Investment Summary**

<b>CDBG Allocation</b>	<b>\$625,024</b>
Grant Administration	\$108,558
Housing Rehabilitation	\$114,870
Public Services	\$93,750
Public Facilities	\$294,480
Neighborhood Infrastructure	\$13,366
<b>Total Proposed CDBG Program</b>	<b>\$625,024</b>

On Wednesday, July 5, 2017 at 5:30 p.m., a Public Hearing will be held in the City Commission Room at City Hall, 1101 Poyntz Avenue, to answer questions and receive comments regarding the 2017 Annual Action Plan.

Questions and comments may also be submitted in writing to Christina L'Ecuyer, Grant Administrator in the Community Development Department; by phone at (785) 587-2430; or by email to: [lecuyer@cityofmhk.com](mailto:lecuyer@cityofmhk.com).

This meeting is being held in the City Commission Room at City Hall. In accordance with provisions of the ADA, every attempt will be made to accommodate the needs of persons with disabilities. Please contact the Human Resources Department (587-2443) for assistance.

Drives like luxury, feels like savings

With sensible preventative maintenance, we will keep your car running smoothly to help you save money.

**CAR CLINIC, INC.**

[www.carclinicinc.com](http://www.carclinicinc.com)

539-1040 • 209 Sarber Ln. • Manhattan, Ks. 66502

Randolph, Kansas

ANNUAL Independence Day CELEBRATION since 1976

**Saturday, July 1**

Watering Hole • Softball Tournament  
Car Show • Outdoor Market • Soapbox Derby  
Laser Tag • Train Rides • Turtle Races • Parade  
Pedal Tractor Pull • Inflatables • Pork BBQ  
Homemade Ice Cream • FIREWORKS

Full schedule at [www.randolphks.com](http://www.randolphks.com)