

Sterling music – the bands that provided music in a typical small Illinois town, 1864-1910

Gavin Holman, 14 September 2021

Brass bands in the United States started to become popular from the 1830's onwards. Arising from the earlier 'military' bands, which largely consisted of fifes and drums, with other assorted early instruments, the advent of new types of brass instruments, with keys and, later, piston valves, led to the creation of many bands across the country. By the 1850's there were probably up to 3,000 bands across the U.S.A., and the Civil War saw some 500 military bands among the armies (largely on the Union side). These were eventually cut back to save resources and to make use of bandsmen as combat soldiers, although some bands did resign from the army to return to their civilian roles having previously signed up en bloc.

After the Civil War, the appetite for musical entertainment in towns grew, and many more bands were established to meet the demand. Instruments became cheaper and most bands were based around a core of brass players, though there was little in the way of standardisation of instrumentation, with flutes, piccolos, and clarinets often making an appearance in the bands. The town band, or 'cornet band' soon became an established feature of most communities.

Sterling is a city in Illinois of some 15,000 people, about 100 miles from Chicago, on the north bank of the Rock River. Its first resident was Hezekiah Brink, who settled there in 1834, and the township itself was officially established in 1852, incorporating as a city in 1857, by which time there were nearly 2,000 residents.¹



The town of Sterling in 1850

Over the next 60 years various brass bands called Sterling their home.

¹ Bent, Charles (1877) – History of Sterling Township, in: *Whiteside County, Illinois, From its First Settlement to the Present Time*

The Sterling Cornet Band was originally founded as Sterling Brass Band in 1864 by William H. Thatcher and William J. Burns.² The twelve original musicians were led by Samuel Moore, with Frank Cochran being the secretary and treasurer. Some of the members could also play stringed instruments, which came in useful when playing for dances.³ One of its early outings was on Thursday 22 February 1866:

“During the forenoon the Sterling Brass Band, drawn by four of Hoover’s blooded blacks, gaily decorated with 6 x 12 flags, visited the principal parts of town, discoursing national airs.”⁴

This was followed by the band helping to launch a new ice cream parlour in the town on Tuesday 15 May 1866:

“Messrs, Wells & King have neatly fitted up the rooms formerly occupied by Cavert's Art Gallery, and have opened an ice cream and confectionery saloon. They will keep confectionery, fruits, nuts, cakes, &c., constantly on hand, and those who wish to enjoy a delicious plate of ice cream, will always find it there. They opened on Tuesday evening last in grand style, the Sterling Brass Band doing the music in their usual good manner. Wells & King will furnish private parties ice creams and confectionery on short notice.”⁵

In September 1866, the Sterling Brass Band led a procession of the Grand Army of the Republic, under General Kilgour, in the Logan Demonstration at Sterling.

On 26 April 1867, the Sterling Lodge of the Independent Order of Odd Fellows (I.O.O.F) celebrated a national day of public thanksgiving organised by the I.O.O.F. Grand Lodge. Together with other local lodges they held a demonstration, and music was provided by the Sterling Brass Band.

There were twelve members of the Sterling Brass Band in 1867:

William H. Thatcher, Frank Cochran, Fred Hempstead, Gus Mallory, William J. Burns (leader), Mr Nelson, John Holtslander, William Seeley, George Mann, Platt Whitman, Bottsford Holtslander, and an unknown snare drummer.

The Band was re-organised in 1868 with members being:

Samuel Moore (leader), Ad McMullen, Howard Hoss, Charles Mallory, Frank Cochran, Fred Hubbard, Fred Gilbert, Ed Cochran, Gus Mallory and Sam Ladd.⁶

There must have been some issues with the band at this time, as it was re-organised again in May 1869:

“The Sterling Cornet Band has been reorganized, and will henceforth be prepared to do first-class ‘blowing’ for anything that may need their services. The boys can

² *Sterling Daily Gazette*, 12 June 1934

³ *Sterling Daily Gazette*, 20 July 1933

⁴ *Sterling Gazette*, 24 February 1866

⁵ *Sterling Gazette*, 19 May 1866

⁶ *Sterling Daily Gazette*, 12 June 1934

make as good music as any band in the country, and we hope they will be liberally patronized.”⁷

However, the Band was fully functional by 4 July, when it travelled to the nearby town of Erie to help them celebrate, providing music during the day:

“... accompanied by the customary salutes from sundry pieces of artillery and the inevitable manifestations of juvenile patriotism in the line of pasteboard musketry.”⁸

Later, in November, the Band was out ‘serenading’ the townsfolk.

In the early spring of 1870 it was suggested that a military company be formed in Sterling. In fairly short order, the State furnished arms and equipment for up to 100 men and, by the end of the year, the Sterling City Guard had 65 military members (58 in uniform – provided by themselves), 20 honorary members, a brass band and a military band, under the command of Captain Stambaugh.⁹

It is not known whether the Guards Band was a completely new outfit, or whether the Guards adopted the existing brass band. It is more likely that it was the latter since, for the next year or two the Guards Band is mentioned in connection with musical activities in the town, and not the brass/cornet band. In addition, there was mention of the Guards still being in debt for their uniforms in December 1870, whereas a new band, with instruments, would also have been a significant outlay and likely debt worthy of mention.¹⁰

The Sterling Brass Band (Guards’ Band) provided ‘the choicest music’ during the three days of the 15th Whiteside County Fair, in September 1870. They were described as ranking No. 1 in that part of the State, and that their motto was “*Onward and Upward*”. A similar performance took place the following year, at the 16th Fair of the Whiteside County Agricultural Society. This time they were described as the “*Sterling City Guards’ Band – clad in their tasty uniform, enlivening the scene with melody.*”

One type of engagement for the band, other than parading with the militia, was to accompany various excursions from Sterling. This was not an uncommon activity for many small town bands. On 4 July 1870 all the stores in the town closed for the day and a trip to Rock Island was arranged, with several coaches (all covered) being available for the day-trippers. Tickets cost \$2 for the round trip, leaving at 8.00 am and returning at 5.00 pm.

Decoration Day in Sterling, where the townsfolk attended and decorated the graves of the ‘loyal dead’ in the cemeteries, was marked on Tuesday 30 May 1871, with the shops and businesses closing, and a grand procession wending its way through the streets led by the Sterling City Guards Band, which also played the “*Playel’s Hymn*” at the graveside of Major Bushnell. This was repeated the following year in 1872. ¹¹

⁷ *Sterling Gazette*, 15 May 1869

⁸ *Sterling Gazette*, 10 July 1869

⁹ *Sterling Gazette*, 3 December 1870

¹⁰ *Sterling Gazette*, 17 December 1870

¹¹ *Sterling Gazette*, 3 June 1871

Later, in October 1871, the Guards Band crossed the river into Rock Falls to perform a concert for its citizens.



Band and soldiers in Sterling, 1870's – probably the City Guards and their Band

The Guards Band seems to have been disbanded around 1872, as there is no mention of it beyond its Decoration Day engagement. Thereafter the Sterling Cornet Band seemed to take on the role of occasionally accompanying the City Guards on their parades. It is assumed that the Guards Band members took up their civilian guises once more, re-establishing the Sterling Cornet Band. Indeed it was announced that:

“The Cornet band has again tuned up and is blowing away in earnest, in preparation for the public occasions of the season. The boys were out on the street one night last week, and filled the air with melody for a long time.”¹²

The Sterling Cornet Band was actively engaged in the celebrations for the 1872 Independence Day, and led a 90-torch procession of tanners from Sterling to a Grant Club political meeting in Rock Falls, in August.

1872 also saw the formation of the Rock Falls Cornet Band, across the river, with twelve members, including H.M. Coe (president), J.H. Geidner (secretary), and C.C. Lamb (treasurer).

In February 1873, the Cornet Band led a grand street parade to lead the costumed participants in the 5th Annual Masquerade Ball of the Germania Mænnerechor, through the streets to the Wallace Hall.

At some point during early 1873, the Cornet Band acquired a new band wagon, costing \$1,800. It was built by Platt Whitman, and decorated by Al McIlroy who

¹² *Sterling Standard*, 20 June 1872

painted the wagon and applied the gold leaf. It was pulled by six gray horses, owned by Hempstead's livery stable. The Band did play for circuses and shows when they arrived in town, and on those occasions would cover the name on the band wagon and play as that of the circus or show.

In August 1873, the Cornet Band attended the Dixon Jubilee, a few miles downstream from Sterling, where they competed for musical prizes. They gained second prize, losing out to the Chicago Light Guards Band, but they did return with the prize for the finest wagon.¹³

By December the Band had perhaps not been as publicly visible as in previous months, as the following rebuttal appeared in the press:

“Not Dead Yet: A report has by some means been circulated that the Sterling Cornet Band had disbanded. We are authorized to say that such is not the case. The band is in good trim and ready for any engagement. Frank Cochran is the Secretary, to whom communications should be addressed; and Samuel Moore is Leader. A band with the reputation of the S.C.B. in such a city as Sterling, and the best wagon in the region, is not likely to break up, or sound ‘the retreat’.”¹⁴

February 1874 saw the Band lead the Germania Mænnerchor costume parade once more and, later in the month, heading a procession to welcome the ‘boys in blue’ for a reunion in Sterling, which included the Freeport Infantry Company. A gala day was enjoyed in the town, and the first mention is made of a “Junior Band” in Sterling. This was organised as a feeder for the adult band, and it was led by William Burns.



GERMANIA MÆNNERCHOR.

The Junior Band helped to make Edgar W. Clarke and Martha A. Clarke very happy, in March 1874, when the couple received many gifts from local Congregational society members, and they enjoyed the Junior Band's *‘delightful music, unexpectedly bursting forth for our pleasure’*. The main Cornet Band, in the meantime, had been serenading the gathering at the Good Templars Hall in an unannounced performance. They followed this with a visit to Dixon in April to take part in the procession for the 55th anniversary of the Odd Fellowship.

The Fourth of July in 1874 was celebrated as normal in Sterling, with the Cornet Band providing the musical entertainment, being regarded as *“the best in the State, out of Chicago”*.

A special concert was held on 21 August 1874 in Lincoln Park, Sterling, to dedicate the new pagoda building – Lincoln Hall. The concert was to be a benefit in aid of the Cornet Band. The evening included a festival supper, ice cream, croquet games by lamp light – *“for those who wish to indulge in such harmless insipidity”*. The event

¹³ *Sterling Standard*, 28 August 1873

¹⁴ *Sterling Standard*, 11 December 1873

was organised by the First Ward, which was a temperance ward. As a result, only the members of the Cornet Band were allowed to “*take a horn*”.¹⁵

Despite the Band’s enjoyment of an alcoholic tippie, they were good friends with the local Templar groups, providing impromptu music at a social gathering of the Good Templars in August 1874, and at another such event in November, where it was noted that the Band had two new instruments – a trombone and a tuba. They rounded off the year in December with an appearance at the Oyster Supper and Festival at the new Baptist Church, where they “*just happened around – as they have a chronic habit of doing, on every pleasant occasion – enlivening the hour with such music as the boys know so well how to make.*”

April 1875 saw the Cornet Band start their season of Saturday evening street concerts, and an appeal to help them obtain some new uniforms:

“The boys desire to get uniforms, and in order to help pay for them they are about to ask the residents of the city to give them a dollar or more each as pay for this service. During last season large crowds were on the street listening to their music. Whenever a convention or meeting of strangers is held in the city the band is always on hand, and without charge, to give thorn a serenade. At all public meetings the band have given their services for a merely nominal sum.”¹⁶

They then took part in the town’s Decoration Day, held their own strawberry and ice-cream festival in Lincoln Park, in May 1875, to show off their new uniforms, wholly supported by the local press:

“The boys, who have done so much to give our citizens good music on the street, and have assisted in all charitable entertainments when asked, without price, are entitled to a good benefit.”¹⁷

The band took out a series of advertisements promoting their services for the first time in June 1875:

“Sterling Cornet Band – This band, second to none in the Northwest, are prepared to furnish first class music for picnics, excursions, public meetings, fairs, street parades, etc. They are provided with a splendid uniform, have the finest band chariot in the state, and with the largest variety and best selection of music are ready to respond to any call for their services. For particulars apply to or address Sam Moore, Leader.”

Further engagements that year included the Band accompanying the Columbia Engine and Hose Company on a reunion held at Amboy, in August, shortly before a photograph was taken of the Band in its wagon, by Mr McLeod, in early September. This was ‘prepared’ and was available for viewing and reproduction by the middle of September. The band wagon itself was eventually sold to the city of Mt Carroll, probably in the late 1880’s.

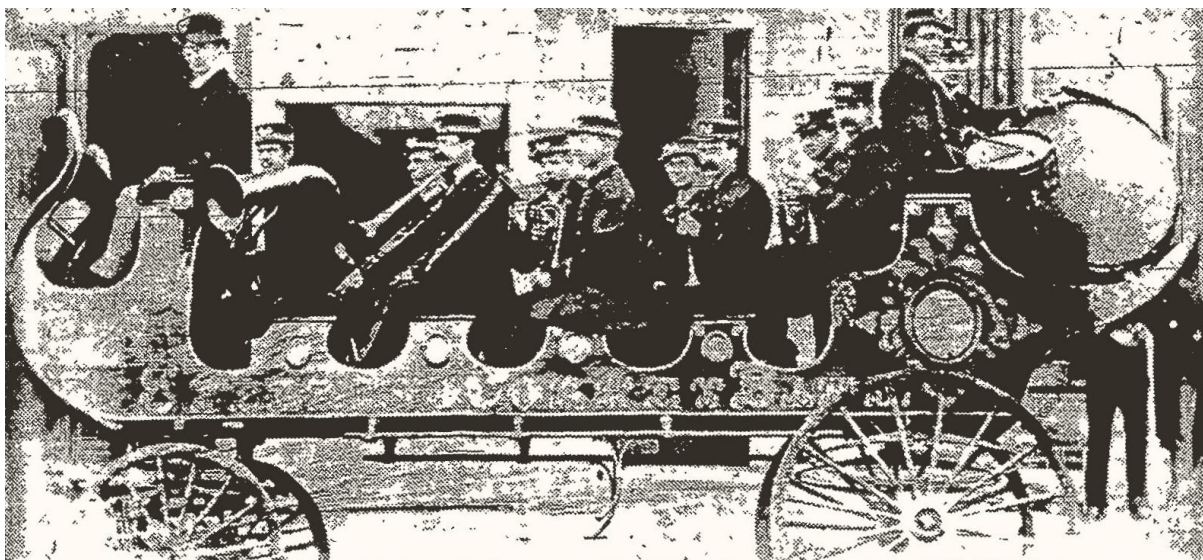
¹⁵ *Sterling Standard*, 20 August 1874

¹⁶ *Sterling Gazette*, 14 April 1875

¹⁷ *Sterling Gazette*, 29 May 1875



Sterling Cornet Band, September 1875 - from left: Harry Hubbard (tuba), Samuel Ladd (trombone), Gus Mallory (baritone), Howard Hoss (alto horn), unknown (cornet), Fred Hubbard (cornet), Frank Cochran (cornet), Samuel Moore (Eb cornet, leader), Ad McMullen (snare drum), and Byron P. Werntz (bass drum)



A different photograph, taken at the same time, showing a wagon driver

Another report, from 1924¹⁸, gives the members in this 1875 picture, from left:

William Bushnell (driver), Gus Mallory & Samuel Ladd (trombones), Fred Gilbert, Ed Cochran, Fred Hubbard, Fred Cochran, Charles Mallory and Sam Moore (cornets), Ad McMullen (snare drum), and Howard Hoss (bass drum)

¹⁸ *The Daily Gazette (Sterling and Rock Falls)*, 3 July 1924

John Eberley joined the band in late 1875. Other members around that time included Asa Darling and Jack Little (drummer).

The Keystone Band was founded in Rock Falls in 1875 by John Kadel, with 10 members:

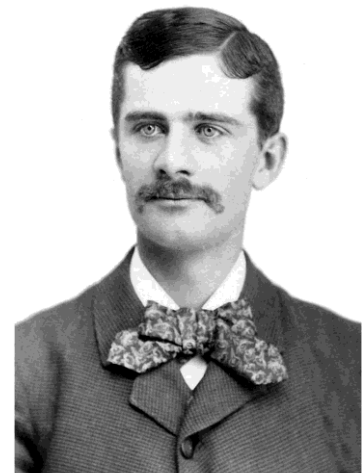
John Kadel (leader), William Kadel, Peter Kadel, C. Mallory, Alex Lyle, Charles Simpson, A.P. Ellis, C.C. Swigert, James Geidner, and Gid McMullen.

Although this band was fairly successful at the time, it did fade for a while before being re-organised in 1883.

1876 saw the Sterling Cornet Band performing at the 4th July celebrations and a masonic picnic at Pennington's Grove in August. The Band's next mention was in February 1878, when they bought a new set of German instruments from Conn & Dupont of Elkhart, Indiana, followed by them leading a procession of the Sterling city fire department on the way to a fireman's tournament in Morrison, in August 1878. In September the nearby town of Erie organised its own cornet band, led by M.M. Potter, which would have given some local competition to the Sterling Cornet Band.

In 1879 there was only one recorded engagement for the Band, at the Galt House, in May, where they provided a quartet of musicians at a banquet to honour two local dignitaries who were leaving the city. The band was 'reorganised' in June 1879, with the members being recorded as:

John Mooney (Eb cornet), Fred Hubbard (1st Bb cornet), Joe Korn (2nd Bb cornet), John Eberley (alto horn), Harvey Troxel (alto horn), Sam Benner (tenor horn), Arthur Hubbard (tenor horn), John Boehm (baritone), Harry Hubbard (tuba), Hi Price (bass drum), and John Williams (snare drum).¹⁹



Harry Hubbard

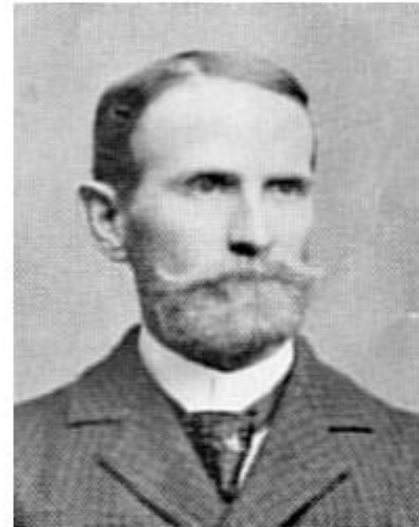
In November 1879 the Sterling Cornet Band amalgamated with the Rock Falls Cornet Band to form the Great Western Band of Whiteside County, with the following membership:

Sam Moore (1st Eb cornet & leader), John Kadle (1st Eb cornet & musical director), John Mooney (1st clarinet), Harry Hubbard (1st Bb cornet), Will Kadle (1st Bb cornet), James Geidner (solo alto & treasurer), John Eberle (1st alto), Clark Lamb (2nd alto), Sam Benner (1st tenor), Peter Kadle (2nd tenor), John Boehm (baritone & secretary), Peter Edlin (Bb bass), Alex Lyle (tuba), Byron P. Werntz (snare drum), Hi Price (bass drum)²⁰

¹⁹ *Sterling Standard*, 11 June 1879

²⁰ *Sterling Standard*, 24 December 1879

This combination of the bands did not seem to last long, their only engagement seems to have been at a social reception at the Mercantile Company's store rooms in February 1880. The Sterling Cornet Band was engaged for the wedding of their drummer, Byron Werntz, to Nellie Richardson, in March 1880²¹. Although the Great Western Band did advertise their services in April 1880, nothing more is heard of them, the assumption being that the Sterling Cornet Band resumed its solo activities.



Byron P. Werntz

The Keystone Band was re-founded in early 1883, leader John Kadel (Kadle), with 20 players from Sterling and Rock Falls, based in Rock Falls, meeting twice a week at Richard Arey's office. The band was sponsored by the Keystone Manufacturing Company. This seems to have replaced the earlier Rock Falls Band, which formed part of the Great Western Band of 1880. Meanwhile, the Sterling Cornet Band continued to serve the city, turning out in August 1883 to the Uniform Degree I.O.O.F. (Foresters) picnic, and the A.O.U.W. Lodges of Sterling and Rock Falls picnic at Oak Lawn Park.



The Keystone Band - [Sterling/Rock Falls Historical Society]

At some point in the autumn of 1883 the Sterling Cornet Band seems to have faded away, since it was announced, in April 1884, that a new Sterling Cornet Band had been formed. A few of the former members had been playing at the city skating rink and were persuaded to reform, seek new members and obtain a new uniform.²² The members in April 1884 were:

²¹ *Sterling Gazette*, 27 March 1880

²² *Evening Gazette (Sterling)*, 11 April 1884

Samuel Moore (leader), John Mooney, Harry Hubbard, Fred Hubbard, Arthur Hubbard, John Eberley, Will Kyle, Sam Benner, Hi Price, and Byron P. Wertz.

During the Sterling Band's absence, the musical slack in the town was temporarily taken up by the new Keystone Band, which subsequently seemed to co-exist harmoniously with the Sterling Band, indeed the Keystone Band played a significant part in the musical life of the twin towns over the next twenty years.

The Sterling Cornet Band went on to perform at the Oddfellows excursion later in April 1884; for the Dickson Sketch Club and the city's Memorial Day in June; Independence Day celebrations, serenading Doctor Brown, and visiting Morrison to perform in their '*uniforms and high silk hats*' in July; competed with the Keystone Band at the Fair, and visited Freeport, in August. One notable event that year was on Saturday 21 June 1884, when George Kline, the 'Old Drug Slinger', complained about the Sterling Cornet Band's actions in his attempts to promote his soap and toilet products:

"... he had engaged an Italian band to play in front of his place, and he intended to make a speech to the crowd on the superior quality of his soaps, perfumes, etc, when the Sterling band, engaged by the Blaine and Logan Club, commenced playing the '*Star-Spangled Banner*.' This drowned the music made by the Italians. A second time Kline's band tried it, but '*Marching Through Georgia*', by the Sterling fellows, again stopped the Italians, and they left. What hurts the Old Salamander is he didn't get a change to make his speech."²³

The original Junior Band had long since ceased, when a new Sterling Boys' Military Band was formed in autumn 1884, with 1 piccolo, 3 clarinets, 2 Eb cornets, 3 Bb cornets, 3 altos, 2 tenors, 1 baritone, 1 Bb bass, 1 tuba, snare drum, bass drum, cymbals and flugelhorn, led and instructed by Mr E.H. Purcell. All the boys were under 18 years old. Their first, benefit, concert was held on New Year's Eve 1884 to help pay of the debt of \$100 for their instruments. This included the Chicago Male Quartette as guest artists.²⁴ This new band took over the management of the roller-skating rink, as well as performing for the skaters, which freed them of debt and started their fund raising for uniforms. The Band provided music at the Second Ward graduations at the Academy of Music in May 1885, at the G.A.R. picnic, made a parade through the town, and attended a band tournament in Morrison, in July 1885. Members of the band in February 1886, at which time they were hoping to have uniforms by the spring, included:²⁵

Josie Rannaly (piccolo), Henry Harris (Eb clarinet), Johnnie Pristine (Bb clarinet), E.H. Purcell (Eb cornet), Bert Crawford (Solo Bb cornet), Charles Howe (1st Bb cornet), Michael Williams (2nd Bb cornet), Fred Lindsley (solo alto), Hugh Gagen (1st alto), Johnnie LaCoste (1st tenor), Johnnie McCarthy (2nd tenor), Tom Phillips (baritone), Henry Williams (tuba), Walter Pratt (snare drum), and Eddie Bourke (bass drum).

During the spring of 1886, Professor Purcell was taken ill, and his place was taken by Fred Hubbard, to maintain the Boys' Band in its performances at the roller-skating

²³ *Evening Gazette (Sterling)*, 23 June 1884

²⁴ *Sterling Standard*, 25 December 1884

²⁵ *Evening Gazette (Sterling)*, 1 February 1886

rink. To encourage visitors to the rink, a fine cornet was offered as a prize by the Band for the champion skater, in March 1886. Although the rink season closed in April, it appears that the boys managed to keep it open during May but, sadly, Mr Purcell retired from the Band at the end of May, and it appears that was the end of the Boys' Military Band.²⁶

The Sterling City Band made an appearance in the autumn of 1886, parading through the streets in September, much to the annoyance of the local Salvation Army and its sympathisers, whose meeting was disrupted. Mr J. Ward, of Lena, Illinois, joined the City Band in November 1886.

The next band to arise in the town was the Sterling Germania Band. This was formed in early 1887 by a number of Germans, who purchased their instruments, and engaged Professor Purcell as their teacher. Their initial members were:

David Eberly (solo Bb cornet), Jacob Hamblock (1st Bb cornet), Mathew Cole (1st alto), Peter Hendricks (2nd alto), George Hay (1st tenor), Michael Thomas (2nd tenor), Will Donnelly (baritone), John Thomas (tuba), Jacob Schryer (Bb clarinet), George Thomas (piccolo), Henry Werres (Eb clarinet), and E.H. Purcell (Eb cornet & leader).²⁷

In early November 1887, the Germania Band reorganised, still with Professor Purcell at the helm, and it was renamed the Sterling Cornet Band. The members at this time were:

Professor Purcell (Eb cornet), Dave Eberle (solo Bb cornet), Jake Hemblock (Bb cornet), Charles Christ (tuba), John Donnelly (baritone), Marty Boose (1st tenor), Peter Hendricks (2nd tenor), Matt Cole (1st alto), John Grady (2nd alto), George Hay (Eb clarinet), Jake Shoemaker (1st Bb clarinet), Joe Schryer (2nd Bb clarinet), John Shoemaker (bass drum), and John Hutton (snare drum).



Central Park, Sterling

²⁶ *Evening Gazette (Sterling)*, 12 May 1886

²⁷ *Evening Gazette (Sterling)*, 28 April 1887

One of the new Sterling Cornet Band's first engagements was at the Mænnerechor masquerade ball, in February 1888, only for Professor Purcell to resign the leadership of the Band in March 1888. However, the Band survived his departure, with Sam Moore assuming the leadership - giving a concert in front of the Academy, and a dance in the Mænnerechor hall, in March; a dance at the Masonic Temple and also received their new uniforms, in April; playing at the ball game between the Paw Paw Club and the Park Nine, and at Decoration Day, in May; a Republican ratification, and a parade of some of the 6th Regiment for their exhibition drill, in June; playing in front of the Armory, giving an open air free concert in Central Park, welcoming Company E of the 6th Regiment back from its encampment, in July; accompanying 25 soldiers of Company E to the Young Women's Christian Temperance Union social, giving a dance in the Wallace Hall, parading with the local Democratic marching club, playing for the Republican meeting at the Armory - where 'silver-tongued Fannie' explained why she had abandoned the Prohibition Party to return to the Republicans - in August; accompanied the Sterling democrats to a meeting at Morrison, and held a dance, in September; accompanied a Democratic excursion to Dixon, led a procession of Democrats to Central Park, serenaded Mr & Mrs Edward J. Cochran at their wedding, played at a Democratic rally in Tampico, in October; playing a mournful tune when Louis Oitmans pushed Jacob Eisele through the streets in a wheelbarrow - the result of a bet, serenading Attorney Walter Stager, Captain Moses Dillon and Jacob Eisele on one evening, made use of their new instruments to serenade townsfolk on the streets, in November; playing for the G.A.R. campfire, and the Broadway Church fair, in December.

In November 1888, Mr E.C. Brown, working from 10 East Third Street, announced he was the best photographer in Sterling, being the successor to Mrs Houser.²⁸ Brown was born in Lee county, Illinois, in 1864, living there until he was sixteen when his family moved to Iowa. He learned his profession at Jefferson, Iowa, and worked in Mendota, Illinois, for two years. He came to Sterling in the spring of 1888, opening his gallery shortly thereafter. This helps to date the photograph which he took, on the right, of two cornet bandsmen, to mid-1888 or later (though probably not later than 1900). It is not known which band they belonged to as their uniform, with its distinctive leaf-pattern embroidery, does not match any of the uniforms on known photos of Sterling bands.



The Sterling Cornet Band's old instruments were sold off in a raffle, the winner being Mr E.G. Church, and he put together a band which, in its first rehearsals on Christmas evening, 1888, caused neighbours to call in the police to quell the horrendous sound. They then went around various homes to 'serenade' the owners, one of whom invited them in and gave them cigars in an attempt to get them to cease playing!²⁹ These intrepid musicians were:

²⁸ *Sterling Standard*, 1 November 1888

²⁹ *Evening Gazette (Sterling)*, 27 December 1888

James Ryan, drum major; Thomas Ryan, cornet; Bert Crawford, solo alto; Charles Buell, 1st tenor; John Ryan, 2nd tenor; J.P. Lawrie, trombone; U. Ryan, bass; Fred Buell, clarinet; Elmer Crawford, bass drum; Frank Tracy, cymbals, and Joe Ryan, snare drum.

This scratch band only last a month or so, because Mr Church presented the instruments to Post 274 of the G.A.R. in Rock Falls, in February 1889, for them to sell in aid of the soldiers' monument fund.³⁰ The G.A.R. members who 'accepted' the instruments were:

"Comrade Parker was tendered the position of musical director. Drum Major - B. M Doty. 1st Eb Cornet - Thomas Diller - a born leader, and very popular with the girls. 2nd Eb Cornet - J.V. McCarty - celebrated for his musical knowledge, and readiness to drop in when the leader's lip gets overtaxed. Clarinet - A.H. Hershey - has a very sweet "expression" when he whistles. Piccolo - T. Culver, who can improvise some remarkable musical strains, although not in the habit of straining himself very often. Solo Alto - A. Bayliss, strikes a happy medium between the high and low notes. 1st Alto - W.N. Harrison. 2nd Alto - P. Kereven. Two Slide Trombones - Shelt Osborne and Moses Dillon, that's the long and short of it. What notes one can't reach the other can. Baritone - N.G. VanSant. The musical director was first cognizant of Nick's musical ability by hearing him come out strong on the opening ode. Tuba - L.L. Johnson. On account of his modesty he was accorded the largest amount of brass to carry him through. Bass Drum - J.W. Niles. Side Drum - Abe Miller."



The Keystone Band, c. 1888

³⁰ *Sterling Standard*, 7 February 1889

The Keystone Band bought a new Higham tuba for their player, Alexander Lyle, in March 1889. They had been playing in front of the post office when gradually the other players ceased to play, leaving only Alex Lyle. The leader, John Kadel, - addressed him, saying his playing was not up to the standard and that the rest of the boys could not play with him. Before Lyle became too upset, he was told that perhaps the instrument was to blame, and was presented with the brand new tuba – everyone enjoying the joke played. Byron P. Werntz had also recently been presented with a new snare drum.³¹

The Sterling Cornet Band continued their performances around the town in 1889, starting with serenading Herman Kohl on his birthday on 1 January. Joseph Korn was appointed leader for the season in May. John Hemblock, who married Sue Smith in July, was a member of the Band. The Band rehearsed in a room in the Farwell block, and had it redecorated; they led a procession of Foresters from the station to the G.A.R. hall; led a parade of the Sterling and Rock Island ball clubs through the streets, in July 1889. The Band gave a dance at Warner's Hall, Prophetstown, parading the streets beforehand, in October. They finished off the year by playing at the skating rink - which had only 43 pairs of roller-skates to hire out, in December – being engaged for three nights a week.

The Keystone Band gave a dance at the Armory in February 1890, resplendent in their new uniforms, consisting of a dark blue sack coat, trousers and navy cap. The coat was decorated with gilded lace and around the cap was a gilded band. The fifteen uniforms were purchased from Henderson & Co. of Philadelphia, and a check of \$50 was received from the Keystone Manufacturing Company to help pay for the suits.

The Sterling Cornet Band continued their skating rink performances through into March 1890. Further appearances that year included parading the streets with “Colonel Frank”, the Indian medicine man and his company of comedians, in April; giving a dance in the Wallace Opera House, in May; serenading Than Bentley as part of the surprise party arranged by this friends, in June; taking part in the 4th July procession, with the Keystone Band, and providing the musical lead in a procession of equestrians for their races and performances at the Driving Park, in July; providing a serenade to Mr & Mrs L. Boos, a band member, at his home in Rock Falls, in September; and playing for the skating rink, on various dates in December.

1891 seemed to have been a quiet year for the Sterling Cornet Band, being mentioned only once – giving a ball at the Mænnerechor hall in November – while the Keystone Band was quite active in both Sterling and Rock Falls.

July 1892 saw the band providing music for the Epworth League of the First M.E. Church lawn and ice cream sociable, and the Band provided their first open-air concert of the year to a large audience in Central Park. Their last reported engagement that year was at a ‘hop’ at the Mænnerechor hall on 23 November.

1893 started with the Band giving their first spring concert in Locust Street, on 4 March, coincidentally on the same day as the Keystone Band's first concert of the year. An ice-cream social on 11 July, where the Band provided musical

³¹ *Evening Gazette (Sterling)*, 15 March 1889

entertainment, was followed by a Young America celebration on 15 July, the Band was one of several attractions, including the Salvation Army, Cummings Brothers Concert Company, and the 'Illinois Kidney and Liver Cure' "*filling the air with all sorts of noises, harmonious and discordant.*"³²

Early in August 1893 the Band was reorganised and renamed "*The Peerless Band*", a name it would retain for the next 13 months. Their first engagement under the new name was providing music at a reception for Bishop McKim, who was departing for Japan, on Tuesday 29 August. They followed this by giving a ball at the Armory on 31 August after performing on Chester's corner during the day and, despite the fact that their handbills stated that "*... no pains will be taken to preserve order,*" the event went off with no trouble. The very next day, 1 September, they travelled to perform in Tampico, parading the streets in the afternoon and giving a performance in front of Union Hall at 7 o'clock before giving a concert inside. Back in Sterling the Band provided music for the grand opening of the refurbished Music Academy on 14 September, and a performance before a show at the Academy on 18 September.

On 11 November, the comedy "*Braving the World*" was staged at the Academy as a benefit in aid of the Peerless Band – the Band itself paraded the streets beforehand to promote the evening. The Knights of Pythias were headed by the Peerless Band in the funeral procession for James McKim on 24 November, having previously held a Thanksgiving Eve masque ball at the Armory on 22 November. The Band's last act in 1893 was to organise a Mid-Winter Fair, to raise funds, running from 25 December to 1 January – with a grand ball to close the event. The Fair included many items to buy, games, refreshments, and music by the Band. After all expenses had been paid, they raised \$330.53 from the Fair.

The next step for the Peerless Band was to form a social club, in early 1894:

"The Peerless Band Social Club is the outcome of the band of that name. The club has now about twenty members and is increasing rapidly. The object of this organization is to provide a place where young people of a musical turn of mind can meet and enjoy a social hour. In furtherance of this object they have furnished the front room of the Kanally block, with nice carpets, furniture, including a piano, and have several different kinds of social games; while the rear room is used as a practice room for the band boys. Temporary officers have been appointed, and in the near future a meeting will be held for the adoption of by-laws and constitution and the election of permanent officers."³³

The Sterling Citizens Band was formed on Thursday 15 February 1894. A meeting was held in the old band room on the third floor of Farwell Hall building, and Martin Luther Boos (1869-1924) was elected president and Joe Korn, leader. It was stated that no one could become a member of this organization unless they were a citizen of Sterling. However, it was noted in early March that "*... a great many Rock Falls boys are also members.*" The Band met every Monday and Thursday for practice. However, it did not seem to last very long. It gave a concert in front of the Armory on 14 August, but nothing more was heard of it.

³² *Sterling Standard*, 20 July 1893

³³ *Sterling Standard*, 1 March 1894

A.J. Bowser was the leader of the Peerless Band, and in March 1894 he had just finished composing a new march, which he called “*Co. E. March*”. Later, in April, there was a complaint that the Keystone Band was enticing members of the Peerless Band to join their ranks across the river in Rock Falls. However, Byron Wertz, manager of the Keystone Band, wholly refuted any such charge, as the Keystone Band had plenty of volunteers and did not need to seek musical talent from elsewhere. Peerless Band entertained the audience at the debate between representatives of Jordan and Woodlawn at the Academy on 7 April, following their Band Social on the previous evening at which 30 couples had an ‘*elegant time*’. On 26 April the Band travelled to Prophetstown with the Keystone Band and some 250 trippers to enjoy a day’s entertainment in the town, which included the bands marching through the streets.

Mr Bowser resigned from the Peerless Band in early May 1894, due to his moving to Mansfield, Ohio. In July it was suggested that a series of band concerts in the town might be subscribed to, but this idea does not seem to have been taken up. The Band provided music at a Lutheran Church social on 17 July. E.B. Patrick, the leader of the Peerless Band, resigned his position in mid-August and he was snapped up by the Keystone Band.

On Monday 3 September 1894, the Peerless Band was formally disbanded, and a new band association was formed, called the Sterling City Band, which used rooms over Fernberg’s clothing store for their practice room. Initial members were:

John Wagner (manager), John Stevens (leader), Joe Korn (assistant leader), Richard August Gustave ‘Gus’ Breiding [1864-1918] (secretary & treasurer), Ben Korn [1860-1938], Harry Hubbard, Arthur Hubbard, John Eberle, Matt Flock [1873-1961], John Hutton [1868-1920], and Jacob Hemblock.³⁴



Sterling City Band, 1900

³⁴ *Sterling Standard*, 6 September 1894

The fate of this new band is not known, as no further mention has been found, although there is this photograph of the band, above, taken in 1900.

The Sterling Cornet Band makes a reappearance in August 1895, entertaining the guests at the wedding of Frankie Richardson to Tillman Rutt. Later, in October 1895, someone played a joke on the Band:

“They met in their rooms for rehearsal and while practicing someone took a spike and a piece of wire and tied it across the latch of the door in such a way that it was impossible to open it. After the rehearsal was over the band boys made an effort to get out, but had it not been for the assistance of a passerby, they might still be up there, tooting away on their instruments for their amusement, or meditating upon how the trickster would be punished when he was caught There is fire in the eye of every member of the Sterling Cornet Band today and woe to the man that tied that stick to the door, if he is ever discovered.”³⁵

By September 1896 the Sterling Cornet Band had 14 members, led by Martin Boos, and rehearsed in rooms above Kennally’s store. In October they led a procession of Democrats in their demonstration and also played selections for the Republican rally.

The year 1896 was a pivotal one for the Keystone Band. It was agreed that the Band would be mustered into the Illinois National Guard as the Sixth Regiment Band. The band members were required to enlist in the Guard, the band would have the number of players increased to 25, and a grant of \$250 would be made for uniforms, their band room, and fuel, etc.³⁶ The new uniforms would be the fourth set of uniforms for the Band since its original inception in 1875. The Keystone Band members who enlisted on 17 July 1896 were:

John Kadel (Eb cornet and president), J.J. McKee (Bb cornet and librarian), J. Hitzelberger (Bb cornet), B.P. Wertz (side drum), Tom Philips (French horn), Ed Dayton (alto horn), Fred W. Forbes (trombone), Alex Lyle (tuba and treasurer), John Limerick (trombone), Fred Hubbard, Harry F. Hubbard (double Bb bass), Arthur G. Hubbard (euphonium), John Chalmers (French horn), Lyle Atkins (bass drum), Frank E. Howe (clarinet), Andy Huber (saxophone), Frank Whitman (trombone), Henry Williams (piccolo and flute), John Prestin (clarinet), Hiram Shumaker (clarinet), Will Palmer, Guy Lyle (utility man), and C.M. Fox (Bb cornet). The Drum Major being Captain Shields, of Dixon.³⁷

The Keystone Band continued its civilian music activities throughout its attachment to the regiment, the first being their accompanying a Baptist outing up the Mississippi on the steamer “*Mary Morton*” on 5 August. One of its members, C.M. Fox, bought a new cornet, costing \$90, which ‘embodies many points that partakes of the nature of a dandy’. B.F. Korn joined the band during the autumn of 1896 on alto horn.

Around this time, Frederic Belcher Hubbard, cornet player in the Band, also led the Schubert Symphony Club, a family musical group in the city.

³⁵ *Sterling Standard*, 24 October 1895

³⁶ *Evening Gazette (Sterling)*, 26 June 1896

³⁷ *Evening Gazette (Sterling)*, 18 July 1896



Schubert Symphony Club

Professor F.C. Nixon, former leader of the Iowa State Band, was appointed leader of the Keystone Band in September 1896, to help the band's development to meet its new military requirements, in addition he added a double bass Bb, two trumpets, two French horns and a number of clarinets to the Band. However, he only remained with the band for a month or so, before he left, tempted away by a better offer elsewhere. John Kadel resumed the band's leadership at the end of October, before Joseph Korn took over the leadership later in the autumn. By December, Korn had won the admiration of the Band, such that they presented him with an ebony baton, trimmed in nickel, suggesting he could conduct better with it.³⁸

Meanwhile, the Sterling Cornet Band, with 14 players, was involved, providing music, for the Republican Demonstration in the city on 6 October, and later for the Democrats Demonstration on 21 October, where they share the musical duties with the Spring Creek Band of 16 players and the Illinois Refrigerator Band, all helping to enliven the 10,000 people on the streets.

The Keystone Sixth Regiment Band opened their 1897 activities with a concert at the Fireman's Bazaar, on 1 February, when they played the march "*El Capitan*" (Sousa), medley overture "*Jolly Night*" (F. Beyer), overture "*The Maiden at her Spindle*" (Suppé), schottische "*Daphney*" (Claus), and the march "*Little Napoleon*". In March, the drummer Lyle Atkins moved to play alto horn and a new bass drummer, Ownie

³⁸ *Sterling Standard*, 24 December 1896

Williams, joined the Band. John Kadel also moved from cornet to solo alto horn. In April 1897 the Band finally received their official military uniforms, and C.M. Fox resigned, as he was moving to Aurora. Guy Lyle was elected Drum Major in May 1897, at which time Professor Nixon, who had returned to Sterling, took up leadership of the Band.



Keystone Sixth Regiment Band, December 1896

The Keystone Band at this time consisted of:

Henry C. Williams (piccolo), Hiram C. Schumaker (Eb clarinet), John C. Prestin (solo clarinet), Frank Howe (clarinet), William E. Ferris (clarinet), Ben Korn (clarinet), William C. Prestin (clarinet), F.B. Van Horne (clarinet), Fred Dayton (clarinet), Roy Rutt (clarinet), J.J. Hitzelberger (solo cornet), Fred B. Hubbard (solo cornet), Joseph Korn (first cornet), Jesse J. McKee (first cornet), Charles M. Fox (second cornet), John G. Limerick (trumpet), John J. Kadel (first horn), John A. Chalmers (second horn), Lyle Atkins (third horn), Thomas Phillips (fourth horn), Frank B. Whitman (first trombone), William M. Palmer (second trombone), Arthur Hubbard (third trombone), Andrew Huber (baritone saxophone), Fred W. Forbes (euphonium), Edward Dayton (tuba), Harry F. Hubbard (tuba), Alexander Lyle (Bb bass), Byron Werntz (side drum), B.F. Williams (bass drum).

The summer of 1897 was a busy time for the Keystone Band, giving concerts in Central Park, accompanying various excursions and playing at the Academy. A Central Park concert on 28 July consisted of: march *"The Brilliant"* (Steenebrugen), overture *"Nabucodonosor"* (Verdi), *"Advance and Retreat of the Salvation Army"* (Orth), selection *"The Princess Bonnie"* (Spenser), characteristic *"The Mill by the Brook"* (Ellenberg), medley *"Latest Songs"* (Beyer), and grand march *"G.A.R."* (Weigand). Miss Helen Culver, from Sterling, who had been abroad learning her vocal arts, gave a concert in August, at which the Band supported her solos and

played the following items on their own: overture “*Semiramide*” (Rossini), “*Andante from First Symphony*” (Beethoven), and “*Grand Festival March from Tannhauser*” (Wagner).

In November 1897, ten of the members of the Sixth Regiment Band, organised a roller-skating rink at the Armory, running on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday evenings, and Saturday afternoons. These band members would also supply music when the rink was open.³⁹ The Band, as a whole, started a subscription list to raise funds to insure a series of band concerts in the summer of 1898, the aim being to obtain 500 subscriptions of \$1.20.⁴⁰ Plans were also being made to start a boys’ band, tutored and led by Professor Nixon.



The Keystone Band

In April 1898 the Keystone Sixth Regiment Band went to Camp Tanner at Springfield, where the members were pressed to formerly enlist in the government service. All but two, John Prestin and Fred Forbes, declined the offer, and they returned home to Dixon and Sterling. Those who returned were: Frank Howe, Hiram Shoemaker, Jesse McKee, J. Hitzelberger, C.M. Fox, Alex Lyle, Ed Dayton, Guy Lyle, W.M. Palmer, Frank Whitman, J. Chalmers, Thomas Philips, Andy Huber, B.P. Werntz, Lyle Atkins, Henry Williams, John Limerick, and James Rice (Drum Major). John Prestin was charged with establishing a new Sixth Regiment Band, and went about his task to provide music for Company E, Sixth Regiment, of the Illinois National Guard at Sterling, getting together some 15 players by the end of May 1898. This band would be a formal military band, with the members fully enrolled as

³⁹ *Sterling Daily Standard*, 12 November 1897

⁴⁰ *Evening Gazette* (Sterling), 15 November 1897

soldiers, as opposed to the more informal arrangement previously in place with the Keystone Band members.



The Sixth Regiment Band (Sterling), c. 1902

This new military band dipped in and out of regimental service over the next 12 years until, finally, becoming a civilian band in 1910 – Sterling Military Band.

A new band was established in Sterling in the summer of 1905⁴¹. This was the Banda Verde, and it gave its first public appearance on Friday 4 August 1905 at a lawn social for St Mary's Church in Sterling. The Band's uniform was agreed to be the international band uniform cut, of dark green material with black braid trimmings, a small golden "S" on the front lapel of each collar, and with caps of Liberatti/Sousa style. The contract to supply the uniforms was given to the Obermiller Brothers of Sterling. W.P. Cochran was elected the manager of the Band, and it was engaged to play three days at the Great Northwestern Fair on 29-31 August 1905. It played on the streets for two hours, then went into the fair grounds to provide music throughout the day. The Band was a member of the American Federation of Musicians. The founding members of the Band were:⁴²

James Jarvis (director & clarinet), C. Seaberg (cornet), Josh Harrison (cornet), August Karl (cornet), Frank Hendricks (cornet), Arthur Hubbard (trombone), Al Dirr (trombone), William H. Harrison (trombone), Charles Allen (trombone), John Lewis (tuba), Frank Grubb (tuba), John Baird (alto), Wash Miller (alto), L.B. McNitt (alto), Frank Hussley (baritone), Clyde Hendricks (clarinet), Guy Ruberight (clarinet), Joe E. Hamblock (clarinet), Gus Woodyatt (clarinet), Austin Mercer (piccolo), T. Nice (drums), and Mahlon E. Stark (drums).

The Banda Verde soon became popular, giving a charity concert in Central Park, which included the march "*Oh Fair Dove, Oh Fond Dove*", playing on the lawn of Mrs Randolph, providing music for the speedway races, and free concerts in the business district of Sterling, in September 1905.

⁴¹ *Sterling Daily Standard*, 3 August 1905

⁴² *Evening Gazette* (Sterling), 30 August 1905

One lady, who could not remember the name of the Band, started calling it the “Malta Vita” Band, after a brand of breakfast food, and it soon became a popular nick-name for the Band. The Band’s rehearsal rooms were in the second floor of the Stambaugh building. A benefit concert on behalf of Thomas Philips, an old bandsman of the Keystone Band, was held by the Banda Verde in Central Park in October 1905 – this event, together with other benefits, raised over \$100 which allowed Philips to travel to and to recover his health in Albuquerque, New Mexico. By this time the Band was already planning for the Christmas season, and they intended to hold an indoor county fair for an entire week, with the Band providing musical entertainment to the visitors.

On Tuesday 17 October 1905, the Banda Verde was made a permanent organisation, with president W.P. Cochran, vice-president Mahlon E. Stark, secretary E.E. Holdridge, and treasurer John Baird, with the intention of increasing the playing membership to 32 by spring of 1906.

The new Y.M.C.A. building in Sterling was opened on Wednesday 29 November 1905, with the Banda Verde providing music.

The Banda Verde’s Indoor White City and Holiday Musical Festival was held in the Armory from 11 to 16 December 1905, and it included the Waterman Ladies’ String Trio. Part of the activities of this fair was a contest for young ladies, the proceeds of which would be donated to the city firemen to help fit out their new quarters in the city hall. Even at this busy time, the Banda Verde were making fresh plans to raise funds for the creation of a public hospital in 1906.



Banda Verde, 1906

The first evening concert at the Indoor Fair, included the following pieces by the Banda Verde – march “*Tecumseh*”, overture “*Down the Mississippi*”, serenade “*Cupid’s Charms*”, march “*The Vampire*”, grand potpourri “*Oh Fair Dove, Oh Fond Dove*”, march “*The Trumpeters*”.⁴³ The concert on 15 December included: march

⁴³ *Sterling Semi Weekly Gazette*, 12 December 1905

"Tammany", overture *"Jolly Robbers"*, selection *"Forty-five Minutes from Broadway"*. Following the closure of the fair, the Banda Verde gave a concert at the Congregational Church on 24 December, which included the pieces: *"Eventide"* (Ripley), *"The Wayside Chapel"* (Wilson), and *"Serenade"* (Miller).

At the beginning of 1906 the Banda Verde presented James Jarvis with an ebony baton, trimmed with silver, and with a handle of grilled ivory. The Band's first engagement of the year was a sad one – the funeral procession of Thomas Phillips, who had not long returned from his recuperation in Albuquerque. On a brighter note, the Band received a Higham baritone horn, from England, which cost \$100, to be played by F.V. Huster, and a Bb Buffet clarinet from Paris. This was followed by a benefit concert on 6 March for those affected by the flooding in West First Street, and the addition of a new cornet player, John McGraine, who gave a selection at the concert.

The Sterling Military Band, recently released from its regimental association, took part in the carnival organised by the Morrison Refrigerator Band at the armory hall in Morrison, on 1 March 1906, playing a concert, with the pieces: march *"Mandator"* (Vandercook), overture *"Orpheus"* (Offenbach), clarinet solo *"Valse Caprice"* (Margis-Berger), selection *"Babes in Toyland"* (Herbert), characteristic *"On Tiptoe"* (Hosmer), characteristic *"In Kansas"* (Brooke), trombone solo [Al Derr], march *"Yankiana"* (Holzman).⁴⁴ It followed that with a concert at the I.R.F. band carnival at Morrison, on 3 March, where they gave a free concert after marching up Main Street in their blue uniforms. The Band also took part in the benefit concert for the flood victims on 6 March.

12 March 1906 saw the arrival of Richard Yates in Sterling, on his senatorial campaign trail. Both the Sterling Military Band and the Banda Verde took part in the procession and provided music during the visit.

The Sterling Military Band was engaged to play for the Odd Fellows celebration on 26 April.

The Banda Verde gave its first concert in Central Park in mid-April. Collections made the previous autumn had raised enough money to pay for ten concerts, of which only two had been held, leaving eight to be given during that coming season. Prior to the first concert they played through the streets of the city, accompanying the new Alderman, John L. Janssen, on 17 April. Later that month the Band was augmented by the arrival of Henry Funk, a French horn player, who was the proprietor of the Sterling Mattress works in East Third Street, aged only 21.⁴⁵

The Central Park concerts were a great success, on 22 May some 22,000 people were in the park, listening to the music of the Banda Verde. Later in the month Josh Harrison bought a new Besson cornet and L. McHitt a new alto horn, to play in the Band. The opening of the Central Park, on the Interurban trolley line between Sterling and Dixon, took place on 9 June, with the Banda Verde providing music for nearly three hours for all the invited visitors. Lester Hendricks, an excellent cornet soloist, joined the Band in June.

⁴⁴ *Evening Gazette* (Sterling), 1 March 1906

⁴⁵ *Sterling Standard*, 5 June 1906

July 1906 saw the Banda Verde accompany the Mystic Workers Lodge to the train station for their excursion to Madison, Wisconsin. The Old Settlers' Annual Picnic at Lyndon Grove, on 16 August 1906, was entertained by the Band. In September the Band played for the local firemen, and bought two new kettle-drums, to be played by Richard Kannally and Mahlon E. Stark. James Burnich received a new Conn cornet in October, in time for the Band to serenade the crowd attending Leslie Shaw, the Secretary of the Treasury on his visit to Sterling. Sadly this event did not pass peacefully, as stones were thrown at the Band from an alley as it passed on the march, two hitting James Jarvis and badly bruising Frank Huster's leg. The Band continued its march and went on to play its concert.⁴⁶ This event was widely reported and commented upon in the local press, which led Alex Lyle, of the Sterling Military Band, to write, offering a reward of \$50 for the apprehension of the culprits – however he also insinuated that perhaps the act did not take place and that the Banda Verde was merely “grandstanding”.⁴⁷ However, the month ended on a good note, with the arrival in the Band of Kenneth Lyman, a noted clarinet player.

The Banda Verde, continued its social and philanthropical activities in November 1906 with their plan to open a School of Music in the city, teaching harmony, brass and reed band instruments, violin, cello, drums and piano. The general aim was to improve the musical life of the city and take the pupils, once they showed sufficient ability, into the Banda Verde or the Academy Orchestra, as appropriate. The School was to be located at 202 First Avenue, where the Banda Verde had its hall. The Band itself played for the skaters at the Armory on 22 November, and split into small groups to provide music for the Dixon Club dance, a dance at Erie, and the skating rink all on 29 November. The year ended with the Band performing in Dixon in December; holding their annual meeting with the election of T.R. Nice (president), Mahlon E. Stark (vice-president), C.S. Morris (secretary), William H. Oppold (treasurer), and J.D. Boyer, J.W. Jarvis, and F.E. Andrew (directors); their Christmas entertainment on 24 December; and the receipt of William Cochran's new King trombone, and an oboe – allegedly the first ever to be played in Sterling.⁴⁸

The Sterling Military Band was also engaged during the year, playing for the Methodist Summer Festival in June; for the visit and demonstrations of the Order of the Knights of the Globe, in August; and for the Springfield State Fair for two days, and the visit of Attorney General W.H. Stead to Rock Falls, in October.

The Sterling Military Band provided music for the meeting of the Fraternal Order of Eagles, also the annual celebration of the Odd Fellows and Rebekahs of Whiteside County at Prophetstown, in April 1907; entertained the crowds at Decoration Day in May. Following the disappointing performance of the Moline Band as the Sixth Regiment Band previously, the position was once again offered to the Sterling Military Band, which it accepted in July 1907, receiving \$400 annually in addition to expenses.

The new Sixth Regiment Band in 1907 consisted of:

⁴⁶ *Evening Gazette* (Sterling), 27 October 1906

⁴⁷ *Evening Gazette* (Sterling), 29 October 1906

⁴⁸ *Sterling Daily Standard*, 20 December 1906

John Prestin (chief musician), Thomas Flynn (drum major), Jacob Hitzelberger (principal musician), Andrew Huber, August Karl, Fred Buck, Harry Haug (sergeants); John Decker, Fred Fraser, John Hutton, William Halverson, Joseph Karl, Ludolph Holz, Alex Lyle, J.J. McKee (corporals); Maurice Almy, Charles Buck, John Elssesser, Fred Hubbard, Frank Howe, Frank O'Connell, William Palmer, John Wenk, James Williams, Byron P. Werntz, William Oppold, and Milton Cruse (privates).

Banda Verde, meanwhile, continued their concerts around the town, and played at the races at the Sterling Speedway in July 1907. Carrying on their promotional work, they organised a 'Kirmess' fair and entertainment for the children of Sterling, with the children being tutored in the music and dances, which took place at the end of July.⁴⁹ Further events involving the Banda Verde included the North Western Fair in August; the Grace Episcopal Church Harvest Rainbow Festival and the wedding of Floyd Fry and Lulu Steadman, in September; Mahlon Stark and William Oppold resigned from the Band; Daniel Munn was elected manager of the Band, and the Band performed at the opening of the Illinois and Mississippi Canal in October.

The Banda Verde played at the Armory skating rink during March 1908; a baseball bazaar at Dixon in May; and ten weekly engagements on behalf of the Rock Falls merchants, starting on 23 May, to help bring people to that city. The Sixth Regiment Band would take on the subsequent ten weeks. In the meantime, the Banda Verde also solicited subscriptions from the business houses of Sterling, to fund six concerts there during the summer, leaving six empty dates for the Sixth Regiment Band, should it wish to take them up.⁵⁰ 4 July was a particularly busy day for the Banda Verde, performing in the street of Sterling from 8 o'clock in the morning until 6 o'clock in the evening, after which the Band went to Rock Falls to play a concert.



Banda Verde, c. 1907

⁴⁹ *Sterling Standard*, 23 July 1907

⁵⁰ *Evening Gazette* (Sterling), 28 May 1908

The Rock Falls merchants increased their advertising in June 1907, engaging the Rock Falls Juvenile Band to play as well as the Banda Verde, at different points in the city, on their concert evenings. The concert on 27 June in Rock Falls consisted of: march “*Semper Fidelis*” (Sousa), rag “*The Simler*” (Wenrich), overture “*Haut Ton*” (Vandercools), march “*Under Arms*” (Hayes), intermezzo “*Topelra*” (Jones), waltz “*Viseour of Paradise*” (Bennett), march “*Guarde du Corps*” (Chambers), selection “*Indian Maiden*” (Fulton), Mexican serenade “*Lella*” (Chambers), overture “*Down the Mississippi*” (Laurens), march “*The Outpost*” (Heed), serenade “*Eventide*” (Ripley), march “*Shoulder Arms*” (Rose), march “*Minstrel King*” (Norton), national air “*Star Spangled Banner*” (Keys).

In July, the Banda Verde Rock Falls concerts also were accompanied by foot races and other ‘features of an entertaining nature’. On 15 July the Sterling merchants held a grand picnic in Central Park for their clerks and families, where the Banda Verde entertained the crowds.

Both the Banda Verde and Sixth Regiment Bands played at the Great Northwestern Fair at the Mineral Springs Park, Sterling, in August. Banda Verde played at the Harvest Carnival in September, and several times at the skating rink in December 1908. These engagements were the last recorded for the Banda Verde as an independent organisation. Some time between 1909 and 1910 its members merged with the Sixth Regiment Band.

In July 1910 the Sixth Regiment Band was released from its military duties, as its term of enlistment expired, and once again became the civilian Sterling Military Band, led by Jacob Hitzelberger.⁵¹ It then proceeded to give various concerts in Central Park during the summer of 1910, and provided musical entertainment at the ‘Society Circus’ Hospital Benefit organised by the Women’s Club in Sterling in October 1910.

The Sterling Military Band continued its operation in the city over the next eighteen years until, in 1928, the city voted for a band tax and adopted the band as the Sterling Municipal Band, led by Jacob J. Hitzelberger, which is still going strong in Sterling, 93 years later.

The Great Northwestern Fair

Mineral Springs Park
Sterling, Illinois

Aug. 25, 26, 27, 28

Three Big Days

Good Races

Balloon Ascensions

Lady Will Make Three of Them

Base Ball Games

Three Days---10:30 a. m.

Automobile Races

Shoot-The-Chutes

General Good Time For All

Two Bands

Banda Verde and Sixth Regiment Band

Street Car Service

Direct to the Grounds

⁵¹ *Evening Gazette* (Sterling), 22 July 1910



Sterling Military Band, c. 1915



Rock Falls Band (later the L.O.O.M. Band, director J.W. Jarvis)

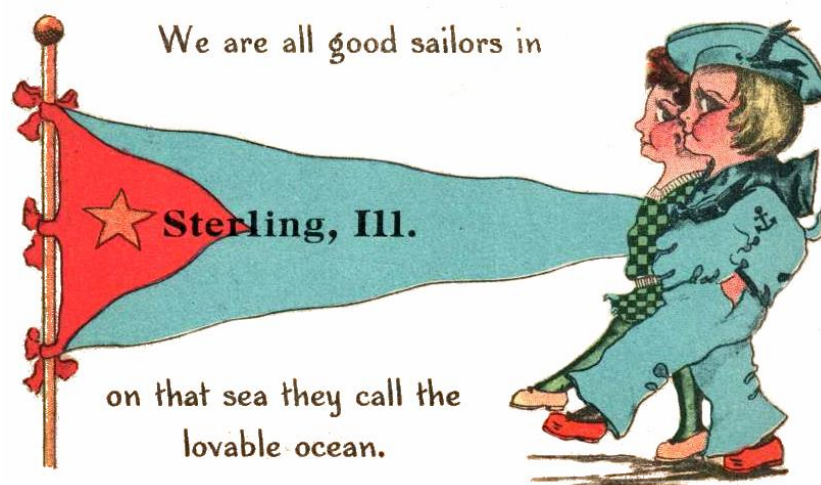


An unknown band in Sterling

Timeline of Sterling bands

- 1864 Sterling Brass Band founded
- 1868 Sterling Brass Band re-organised
- 1869 Sterling Brass Band re-organised
- 1869 Sterling Brass Band renamed Sterling Cornet Band
- 1870 Sterling Cornet Band adopted as Sterling City Guards Band
- 1872 The Guards Band reverted to Sterling Cornet Band
- 1872 Rock Falls Cornet Band founded
- 1873 Sterling Cornet Band's band wagon was acquired
- 1874 Sterling Junior Band formed
- 1879 Sterling Cornet Band re-organised in June
- 1879 Sterling Cornet Band amalgamated with Rock Falls Band to form the Great Western Band of Whiteside County
- 1880 Great Western Band and Sterling Cornet Band resumes activity
- 1883 Keystone Band founded in Rock Falls
- 1883 Sterling Cornet Band disbands
- 1884 New Sterling Cornet Band formed
- 1884 Sterling Boys' Military Band formed
- 1886 Sterling City Band formed
- 1877 Sterling Germania Band formed
- 1887 Sterling Germania Band renamed Sterling Cornet Band
- 1893 Sterling Cornet Band renamed Peerless Band
- 1894 Sterling Citizens Band formed – fades away later in 1894
- 1894 Peerless Band disbanded in September
- 1894 Sterling City Band formed in September
- 1895 Sterling Cornet Band reappears

- 1896 Sterling Cornet Band and Keystone Band amalgamate. Also known as Sterling Union Band
- 1896 Keystone Band appointed Band of the Sixth Regiment, Illinois National Guard
- 1898 Keystone Band released from regimental duties and new Sixth Regiment Band established with fully enlisted soldiers as players.
- 1905 Sixth Regiment Band discharged from regimental duties and is renamed Sterling Military Band in January 1906
- 1905 Banda Verde formed in Sterling
- 1907 Sterling Military Band became the Sixth Regiment Band again in July 1907
- 1909 Banda Verde merges with the Sixth Regiment Band
- 1910 The Sixth Regiment Band was mustered out of the National Guard to become Sterling Military Band once again
- 1928 Sterling Military Band adopted by the city, becoming Sterling Municipal Band



Further reading on Illinois bands and USA brass bands in general

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See also

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