

The St. Johnsbury Band started rehearsals in January for its 190th season and worked on new music that had just been purchased. The band ceased operations due to COVID-19 on March 16, 2020. The 2020 Memorial Day Observance was the first one in over 100 years that the band could not participate in.

The band researched and presented a list of safety protocols to the State of Vermont and requested the use of the Courthouse again for rehearsals. The safety protocols were approved and limited rehearsals resumed June 8, 2020. Rehearsal attendance was between 8 and 16 participants, all of whom followed the safety protocols. The balance of the band considered themselves or family members to be at high risk and supported the band in other ways.

The Building and Services Department of the State of Vermont is to be commended for their willingness to review the proposed safety protocols because it would have been easier to simply say “no” which would have ended all the rehearsals and forced the cancellation of the season. Instead they worked with us to keep everyone safe and allow us to try to put a season together.

Band members, officers and Board members all volunteer. Our expenses after the COVID shutdown were limited to the essentials like liability insurance and our P.O. Box. Our concert series was limited due to State mandates on assembly. All out of town performances were cancelled due to COVID.

Our first concert was Monday August 3rd from the parking lot behind the Courthouse. The concert was not advertised, just an announcement on the band’s Facebook page and KATV’s community bulletin board. People were encouraged to listen from their cars. All the people who came to the parking lot to see the concert were compliant with our requests to wear masks and social distance. Both Gary Aubin, Music Director and Kirsten Harter, Assistant Music Director conducted the concert. Some band members who did not feel comfortable with inside rehearsals participated in these outside concerts.

Emboldened by the public’s compliance with mask wearing at our August 3rd concert we planned another for August 17 from the Courthouse steps on Main Street. (The bandstand could not be used because of social distancing requirements.) This concert was advertised in the Caledonian Record along with an article Susan Gallagher submitted about our August 3rd concert and the first concert of the season in 1920 while the area was still dealing with the Spanish Flu.

Band member Nola Forbes did some research in the Caledonian Record archives and found that R.B. Hall’s march “S.I.B.A.” was performed at this concert in 1920 so we performed it for 2020. To thank our front line medical workers of today the band performed the “American Red Cross” march by Louis Panella/Ralph C. Jarrett written in 1918 honoring the front line medical workers of the day.

This concluded our 190th season. Many thanks to our Music Directors, band members and the citizens of St. Johnsbury who have supported the band over the years and the State of Vermont which allowed us the use of its facilities in very difficult times. We look forward to a more active season next year and hope to resume rehearsals in 2021 when permitted.

For more information or to join the band please visit our website or contact us.

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