

*Fun With The Ohio State Fair Band*

*by*

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It is with a great deal of pride and honor that I find myself celebrating my 60th straight year with the All-Ohio State Fair Band.

I feel most fortunate to have been the historian for this organization for the past thirty-four years.

I am presently also serving as the historian for the Ohio State Fair Fifty-Year Club, as well as having served for forty years, as the historian for Cleveland's Playhouse Square.

I've been putting on historic displays for the band, and for the Fifty-Year Club, for many years now.

I first came to the Ohio State Fair in 1950, when I was picked as a musician for the then All-Ohio Boys' Band. My hometown was Ashland, Ohio, and my band director was also the director of that band. He served the fair as band director for thirty-five years, and his name was Dr. Louis E. Pete. (For many years, my hometown of Ashland regularly contributed more than thirty-five members annually to the state fair band.)

Our state fair band has now been around now for eighty-five years. Directors have traditionally tried to get band members from every county, but sadly, this has never happened.

The Ohio State Fair is, to my knowledge, the only state fair comprised of high school musicians from around the state, who are assembled for the purpose of entertaining fair attendees.

Thinking about the history of this band brings back many memories for the thousands of former band participants over the years. The older boys' band had, annually, from one hundred, to over three hundred members, who actually stayed in tents until 1950, before eventually moving to the National Guard building for their quarters. The band held early rehearsals in the Victorian buildings near the 11th avenue entrance to the fair for a week; prior to the fair's opening.

The band marched daily in front of the grandstand, where they also performed a daily concert before the featured stars of the fair performed their shows. They also used to meet the trains when they arrived, from cities like Toledo, Cleveland, Dayton, and Cincinnati.

The band currently does a hundred concerts during the course of the fair, and marches daily at 4:00 p.m., during that same period of time.

The band now stays in the Rhodes Center building and rehearses in that building's auditorium. During the fair these days, the evening concerts are held at the front of this building.

The State Fair Hall of Fame is also located in the Rhodes Center, and honors many present and former directors and members of the band, including Dr. Louis Pete, Dr. Jack Evans, Omar Blackman, Ed Gallagher, Jim Esswein, Joyce Wendell, present band director Donald Santa Emma, and myself, among others.

The band's current director, Donald Santa-Emma, has kept the wonderfully important aspects of the band's heritage in place. He has also made this band into what I believe to be the best high school musical organization in this country, with musical presentations that are truly outstanding at every concert performed.

Last year, Lakewood residents Robert and Gary Rice also presented the band with it's own original march, since

the band never had one of their own.

Every year, it would be my hope that our state of Ohio will receive new visitors and their families to the fair who will come and have a wonderful time, as they see all that our beautiful state has to offer. There is so much to see, and to hear, at the fair!

Come and enjoy!

By the way, people who become members of the Fifty-Year Club have the opportunity to hear the band and youth choir perform in concert at the Celeste Center. They will also have the opportunity to meet C. LaVon Shook, the Ohio State Fair historian, and author of [A History of the Ohio State Fair](#).

Also, if there are any former band members among you having stories, or memorabilia that they would like to share with us, please let me know (216-226-3006) so that I can add this information to the band's historical records. I also hope that present members will take plenty of photos, and also, will plan to keep track of the many new friends whom they'll meet at the fair.

The present is, after all, tomorrow's history.

Above all, as a former band member, please don't forget to come back every year to play in the alumni band, and don't forget to remind other former band members to come along, as well!

See you at the fair!