


Winona Lake Park Bandshell, Winona County

 IN 1915, the Winona Park Board began campaigning to build a suitable, permanent bandstand in Lake Park because the new Winona Municipal Band and its audiences complained that much of the music performed outdoors simply floated up into the air and away from their ears. For nine years, the board tried and failed to win community support to erect a multiuse structure that would combine canoe storage and rental with a second-story restaurant and band pavilion. Finally Frederick Bell, lumber executive, philanthropist, and chair of the park board, decided to privately donate a never-disclosed amount of funds to erect a “pure and simple” bandstand. With Bell’s gift, Winona hired prominent Chicago architects who created an impressive, 42-foot-wide, Classical Revival, stilted half-dome bandshell sheathed in cement plaster, fronted by a Roman arch, and topped with a metal roof. This striking spherical design is almost without peers. The Naumburg Bandshell in New York City’s Central Park may be the only surviving US bandstand that resembles Winona’s.

When announcing the grand dedication in June 1924, Dr. Emil Leight, band board president, proudly proclaimed that their “nine-year dream” was finally realized and that “every possible thought and effort” had been made to ensure the new bandshell was “consistently satisfactory and modern to the last minute.” Except for exterior repainting, minor repairs, and very slight alterations to decora-

tive features, the bandshell remains unchanged since that ceremony.

For the past 100 years on Wednesday evenings from June to August, the Winona Municipal Band has performed from the bandshell to enthusiastic audiences. Many attendees listen from their cars and honk their horns in appreciation, unknowingly defying Fred Bell’s request to acknowledge the musicians only with applause. Throughout its history, the bandshell has showcased hundreds of other amateur and professional band concerts as well as numerous nonmusical events, including sunrise services, political rallies, weddings, commencement speeches, plays, and films. It remains an active venue and currently serves as headquarters for

Winona’s popular Trinona and BK5K races.

In 2023, Winona attained National Register of Historic Places designation for the bandshell’s architectural and historical significance. To prepare for the centennial, the city evaluated the bandshell’s condition and began stabilizing the structure, upgrading lighting, and repairing and painting the exterior. Their goal is to ensure that for the next century, the melodious sounds of the Winona Municipal Band, now composed of 57 members ranging from high school students to 80-year-olds, will continue wafting from the bandshell, followed by clapping hands and honking horns.

—Marsha Neff and Greg Gaut



ABOVE: Winona Bandshell dedication, 1924 (COURTESY WINONA COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY) LEFT: *The Winona Municipal Band playing at a recent concert at the bandshell* (COURTESY MARY FARRELL/VISIT WINONA)



Copyright of **Minnesota History** is the property of the Minnesota Historical Society, and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or users or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission: [contact us](#).

Individuals may print or download articles for personal use.

To request permission for educational or commercial use, [contact us](#). Include the author's name and article title in the body of your message. But first--

If you think you may need permission, here are some guidelines:

Students and researchers

- You **do not** need permission to quote or paraphrase portions of an article, as long as your work falls within the fair use provision of copyright law. Using information from an article to develop an argument is fair use. Quoting brief pieces of text in an unpublished paper or thesis is fair use. Even quoting in a work to be published can be fair use, depending on the amount quoted. Read about fair use here: <http://www.copyright.gov/fls/fl102.html>
- You **should**, however, always credit the article as a source for your work.

Teachers

- You **do not** need permission to incorporate parts of an article into a lesson.
- You **do** need permission to assign an article, either by downloading multiple copies or by sending students to the online pdf. There is a small per-copy use fee for assigned reading. [Contact us](#) for more information.

About Illustrations

- **Minnesota History** credits the sources for illustrations at the end of each article. **Minnesota History** itself does not hold copyright on images and therefore cannot grant permission to reproduce them.
- For information on using illustrations owned by the Minnesota Historical Society, see [MHS Library FAQ](#).