

The Kiltie Band of York

In 1918, Colonel Richard F. Yost was a Military Police Sergeant with the American Third Army stationed in Genoa, Italy. While directing traffic, he heard the skirl of bagpipes, and presently a pipe band came into view on its way to entertain troops in a convalescent hospital. The sound struck a responsive chord in him and he vowed that if he returned home safely, he would start such a band.

It took ten years, but when VFW Post 556, of which he was a member, lost its drum corps, the Colonel proposed forming a pipe band. The idea was accepted by the members, even though there wasn't a Scot in the post or a set of pipes in the city of York! With the help of equipment and uniforms purchased by the Colonel, a piping instructor from Philadelphia, and a lot of very hard work, the Kiltie Band of York was able to perform in its first parade on Armistice Day (now Veterans' Day), November 11, 1928.

For the next eight years the band was busy with VFW affairs and improving their musical skills, and in 1936 the band was adopted by the St. Andrews Society of Baltimore to be its official pipe band. Since that time, the band has also been named the official marching band of the City of York, the St. Andrews Society of the Eastern Shore, the Harford Highland Society and the Association of Susquehanna Scots.

Through its long and storied history, the Kiltie Band of York has played for three World's Fairs: Chicago, New York and San Francisco. On an earlier western tour they played in Portland, Denver, Salt Lake, Vancouver and Victoria, British Columbia. In 1938 the band won the Band Championship at Gettysburg during the 75th Blue and Grey Reunion. They have been the host band at Grandfather Mountain in 1967 and 1968 and were featured in the 1974 Canadian Exposition in Toronto.

They played at the White House Park in 1938, and in 1975 at the Philadelphia Revolutionary Bicentennial Parade. In 2001 the band participated in "Pipefest", a global celebration of pipes and drums in New York City, with Sir Sean Connery as Grand Marshal. The occasion was attended by the band again in 2011, where the bands were massed on the flight deck of the USS Intrepid in New York Harbor.

Today the Kiltie Band is recognized as one of the oldest continuous pipe bands in the country, boasting approximately forty members from the York/Lancaster area, and it participates in about 20 parades and events annually throughout the mid-Atlantic region. Some of the more notable performances include the York and Baltimore St. Patrick's Day Parades; the Winchester (VA) Apple Blossom Grand Feature Parade; the Princeton University Alumni Association P-Parade; the Union County Veterans' Fourth of July Parade; and the Alexandria (VA) Scottish Christmas Walk.

The band is organized as a non-profit charitable [501(c)3] corporation, to preserve the music and history of Scotland and to pass on that heritage to generations to come. While its members receive no pay for performing, all uniforms, as well as drums, are issued to members free of charge. Students enjoy free lessons and the opportunity for interest-free financing for purchasing pipes.

The band is presently under the direction of Pipe Major Christine McEachern. Others who have held this honorable position include: Colonel Yost, James Ayres, Richard Wagner, Gladston "Blackie" Wales, Donald Crawford, Robert Davidson, James C. Britcher and Donna Singley.

Although the band's original charter limited membership to VFW members with foreign war experience (and their sons), membership is now open to people of all ages, with no military experience required. The only requirements are the desire and willingness to learn the pipes or drums.

If you are interested in becoming a part of the Kiltie Band of York, please contact us through our website (contact@yorkkiltieband.org), or call Mr. Joe Coleman at 717-682-0566.