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Albion's Legion Band was Focal Point of Celebratory Programs

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Established in 1920, the Sheret Post #35 American Legion Band operated for over twenty years under the direction of William Melville of Rochester. The Livonia school band director joined the organization on April 18, 1930 and remained as the director into the 1950s.

After the conclusion of World War Two, the band was an active participant in dedicatory programs and memorial parades throughout the county. During the dedication of the statue of the Blessed Mother, Our Lady of Fatima, erected on the front lawn of St. Joseph’s Rectory in May of 1947, the Legion Band led the parade and furnished a beautiful rendition of the national anthem following the ceremony.

This photograph, taken by Fred Holt, shows the Legion Band marching out of St. Joseph’s Cemetery. Annual Memorial Day exercises typically included a parade from downtown Albion, to St. Joseph’s Cemetery, and finally to Mt. Albion Cemetery where veteran gravesites were decorated. Up until the early 1930s, members of the Grand Army of the Republic coordinated Memorial Day activities in Albion as a carryover from the old days of “Decoration Day” following the Civil War. In 1931 the responsibility of planning the Memorial Day program was
passed on to the Sheret Post, under the command of John Kane, who placed W. Edward Ryan in charge of the preparation. The photograph likely shows the band sometime in the late 1930s or early 1940s.

The band was a well respected musical outfit throughout Western New York, regularly travelling throughout the region providing concerts to communities and veterans organizations. The men who filled the ranks of the group were skilled musicians, many playing with other community and ethnic bands before the Sheret Post was established. Isidore DiLodovico, one of the founding members of the band, was a musician with Donatelli’s Italian Band before his service during the First World War. Another founding musician, James Pilato, was the last remaining charter member of the Legion Band upon his death in 1985.

Around 1955/6 the band went defunct until 1986 when it was reorganized under Keith Harvey of Holley. Rho Mitchell remarked that it was the first time in 31 years that the band performed in Albion, returning to Courthouse Square for summer concerts.