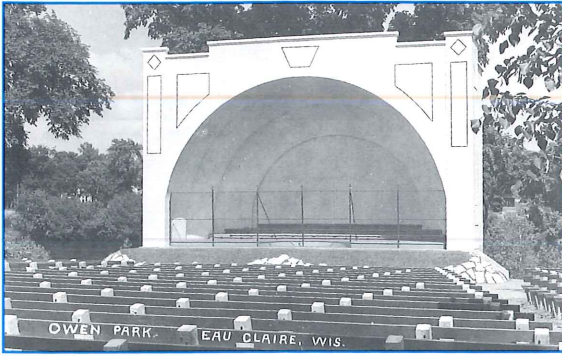




Eau Claire's
Historic
Donald
Boyd
Bandshell



Eau Claire, WI



Bandshell, 1930s

Donald Boyd Bandshell

The Donald Boyd Bandshell is located in Owen Park, an 11 acre park on the west bank of the Chippewa River, near downtown, Eau Claire. The park was donated by lumber baron John S. Owen in 1913, as part of his effort to make Eau Claire “a city of parks.” Owen Park quickly became a popular location for recreation and social gatherings among Eau Claire citizens.

“Greatest Musical Traditions”

In 1912, the Eau Claire City Council approved the establishment of a community municipal band, which would play free concerts throughout the the summer. Little is known of the municipal band before it came under the direction of Donald “Sarge” Boyd in 1929.

Boyd came to the area that same year to take a position as the high school band director. Shortly after, he assumed the position as municipal band director, heading one of the City’s “greatest musical traditions.”

In June of 1932, the Eau Claire Municipal Band chose the picturesque Owen Park as a perfect location for their summer concert series. Boyd’s enthusiasm and commitment to the band overflowed into the community, bringing the band to new heights in musical accomplishment and popularity. Within four years, Boyd increased the size of the band from 30 to 75 musicians.

Side View of Bandshell



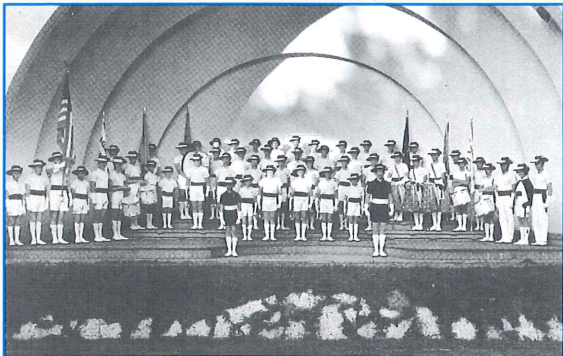
Back of Bandshell



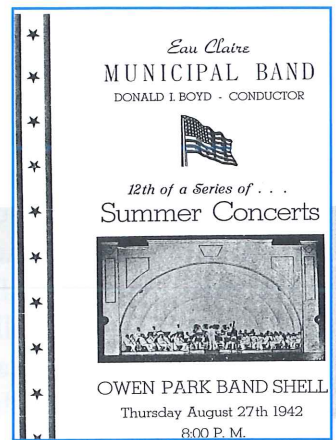
Bandshell Beginnings

In response to the band's popularity, in 1935, city engineer, Alex Garnock, drew up plans for a permanent bandshell at Owen Park. Garnock believed that the City could petition the Work Progress Administration, a federal relief program that provided jobs for unemployed persons in public works projects, for funding. On April 5th, 1937, his plan was finally laid out and approved in WPA Proposal No. 6616.

In his proposal, Garnock justified the bandshell, writing, "The City at this present time has no bandshell, but has an excellent City Band organization attracting good attendances." His plan called for the construction time of 111 man months, and the skills of over 40 carpenters, ironworkers, bricklayers, painters, and other skilled workers. The total cost of the project was \$10,000, with \$4,000 coming directly from the City. The bandshell represented the latest in musical "sounding boards," complete with elaborate electrical effects, dressing rooms, and permanent seating for 1,500. Upon its completion, Boyd called the structure "a lovely thing indeed."



1942 Municipal Band Program



Boyd and the Band

After the construction of the bandshell, the popularity of the Eau Claire Municipal Band grew under the constant direction of Boyd. The band continued its summer concert series every Thursday evening at 8:15 p.m. to crowds of up to 4,000. For the next 40 years, Boyd continued to direct the band, and during that time, he increased the quality of the band, introducing new and difficult musical selections to their repertoire. From standard overtures, symphonies, military marches, and modern pop tunes, the band played a wide range of material, gaining the reputation as one of the best municipal bands in the State.

“The band keeps me young and as long as the people like our music, we’ll keep at it.”

-Donald “Sarge” Boyd

Performance at Bandshell

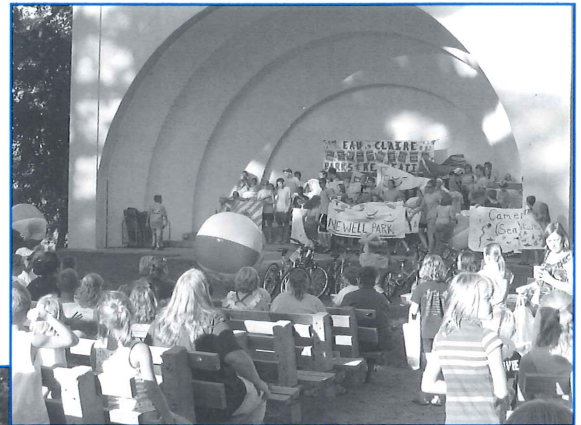
A Special Place

In 1992, the City dedicated the bandshell to the man who made it famous, renaming the structure the Donald Boyd Bandshell. Over a decade later, the bandshell was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2003. In 2004, the City followed suit, approving its local landmark status. Its landmark status secures the structure for decades to come, not only as the home of the Eau Claire Municipal Band, but also as the site of many community and park events, public ceremonies, and school band concerts.

Although Boyd is now gone, the structure serves as a testament to his profound influence on the City. Today, it is rare to find a citizen who has not spent a warm summer's evening in that picturesque park, listening to the smooth sounds of the Eau Claire Municipal Band. The band still plays its summer concert series at the bandshell, which has shown little signs of wear over the years, keeping Boyd's tradition alive for yet another generation of Eau Claire citizens to enjoy.



*Eau Claire Municipal Band
Performance, 2007*



*Parks and Recreation
Summer Event, 2008*





Donald Boyd Bandshell, 2007

Prepared By:

Helen Young

for the Eau Claire Landmarks Commission

Acknowledgements:

Eau Claire Leader Telegram

Eau Claire Landmarks Commission

Eau Claire Parks and Recreation Department- Photos

Eldbjorg Tobin- Chippewa Valley Museum- Photos

John Curtis- Photos

Watermarked Photos:

Cover- Bandshell Sign at Owen Park

Inside Fold- Bandshell and Seating

Inside Fold- Municipal Band Performance, 2007