

## Hollywood to Mason City - 1962

A wave of enthusiasm swept through Mason City when Warner Brothers announced plans for holding the National Press Preview of their new movie—*The Music Man*—in the Palace Theater in River City on June 19, 1962. Almost everyone was familiar with the typical Hollywood extravaganza, but probably no one dreamed the extent to which Warner Brothers had prepared to go to see that *The Music Man* received good press releases for movie lovers everywhere. What made this news all the more electrifying was the fact that national celebrities would be on hand to participate in the 24th Annual North Iowa Band Festival.

The list of notables who would be on hand included Robert Preston (Mr. Music Man) of both the Broadway production and the movie, and Shirley Jones, beautiful and talented co-star of the movie. Producer - Director Morton DaCosta would also be on hand as would the famous Buffalo Bills quartet. Arthur Godfrey was flying in to Mason City to serve as Master of Ceremonies. To cap it all—Meredith and Rini Willson would be at home to show their friends of stage and screen just how wonderful a town "River City"



## THE BANDS ARE COMING

From Maine to California—yes, literally

Here they are by states, number of students, adults, which includes directors, chaperones, and drivers, and total personnel as now reported, with any special names of bands . . .

	Band Members	Adult Personnel	Total
ALABAMA—			
"Sidney Lanier", Montgomery .	92	15	107
CALIFORNIA—El Cerrito . . . . .	96	88	104
COLORADO—"Demon", Durango	112	17	129
FLORIDA—			
"Terry Parker", Jacksonville ..	90	14	104
GEORGIA—"Blue Rambler",			
Newton county, Covington ....	85	10	95
IDAHO—Weiser . . . . .	78	10	88
ILLINOIS—Lockport . . . . .	113	31	144
INDIANA—"Lincoln",			
Vincennes . . . . .	133	26	159
KANSAS—"Sr. Hi Cowboy"			
Dodge City . . . . .	130	20	150
KENTUCKY—Mayfield . . . . .	133	14	147
LOUISIANA—Bossier City ....	98	18	116
MAINE—"Edward Little",			
Auburn . . . . .	89	12	101
MARYLAND—			
South Hagerstown . . . . .	132	20	152
MASSACHUSETTS—Agawam .	99	12	111
MICHIGAN—Sturgis . . . . .	99	21	120
MISSISSIPPI—Tupelo . . . . .	100	15	115
MISSOURI—Jefferson City ....	160	—	—
NEBRASKA—Gordon . . . . .	75	15	90
NEW MEXICO—"Topper",			
Los Alamos . . . . .	89	17	106
NORTH CAROLINA—Cary ....	90	11	101
NORTH DAKOTA—Milnor ....	74	18	92
OHIO—Carrollton . . . . .	95	8	103
OKLAHOMA—"College High",			
Bartlesville . . . . .	123	15	138
PENNSYLVANIA—Lebanon ...	114	28	142
RHODE MEMORIAL—			
"Veterans Memorial", Warwick	92	9	101
SOUTH DAKOTA—Madison ...	60	8	68
TENNESSEE—"Treadwell",			
Memphis . . . . .	100	14	114
TEXAS—Plainview . . . . .	110	13	123
WEST VIRGINIA—"Stonewall			
Jackson", Charleston . . . . .	104	12	116
WISCONSIN—"Bay View",			
Milwaukee . . . . .	125	28	153
Totals.....	3090	448	3538

### MAIN EVENTS—

**Monday Eve.**—General Community Open House.  
**Tuesday**—Parade, 9 a.m. Picnic at noon. Afternoon band concerts and Queens, Central Park. Mid-afternoon marching band finale, Roosevelt stadium. Nite, GAND FINALE at Roosevelt Stadium.

How do we raise this money? By personal hard selling solitation. Experience in selling some 30 firms who almost unanimously agreed to 4 times their normal Festival amounts, shows that it can be done by sitting down and explaining the "hard facts" of the campaign. It can't be done by telephone, mailing a card, or timidly asking the prospect: "You don't want to . . ."

**Hard Fact No. 1** is that we accepted this project—it's ours, a community responsibility. Thirty other towns are raising from \$2,000 to \$12,000 each to send their bands to Mason City. Can we do less than our share to make the affair a success?

**Hard Fact No. 2** is that the proposal, as outlined on the inner pages (lifted from the 1961 annual report of the chamber) was accepted by a representative group of 45 men and women chamber board, band festival, industrial committee folk . . . without pressure . . . with Quincy of Warners out of the room . . . and by a unanimous vote. We believe any similar group in Mason City would have likewise accepted such an opportunity-challenge.

**SO . . . here's how!** Personal calls on prospects RIGHT NOW. Failure to get cards out has hurt several recent MC campaigns. Ask for home office approval promptly, where needed so that all subscriptions may be reported at the dinner Monday evening, March 5.

**DO NOT MAIL** or return cards to Chamber office. Bring to March 5 dinner for reporting CASH? yes, if they want to give it, but don't take \$5 now, when you can get \$20 between now and June. Pledges should be paid by June 10 at the latest.

**Prizes? Yes.** Drawings for tickets good for each: 10 such double tickets for seats for morning parade, afternoon marching contest, night show . . . and FIVE PAIRS for the Press Preview of the MUSIC MAN PICTURE. These last named, incidentally, will be more precious than gold or radium!

Let's show the community, the state and OURSELVES that here's one campaign we can complete in 2 weeks. LET'S GO.

Your hosts for the receptions:

Monday, Feb. 19—Richards Music Corp.  
 Monday, March 5—Warner Brothers.



actually was, and what grand people (albeit a little stubborn perhaps) those Iowans actually were, once they got to meet them.

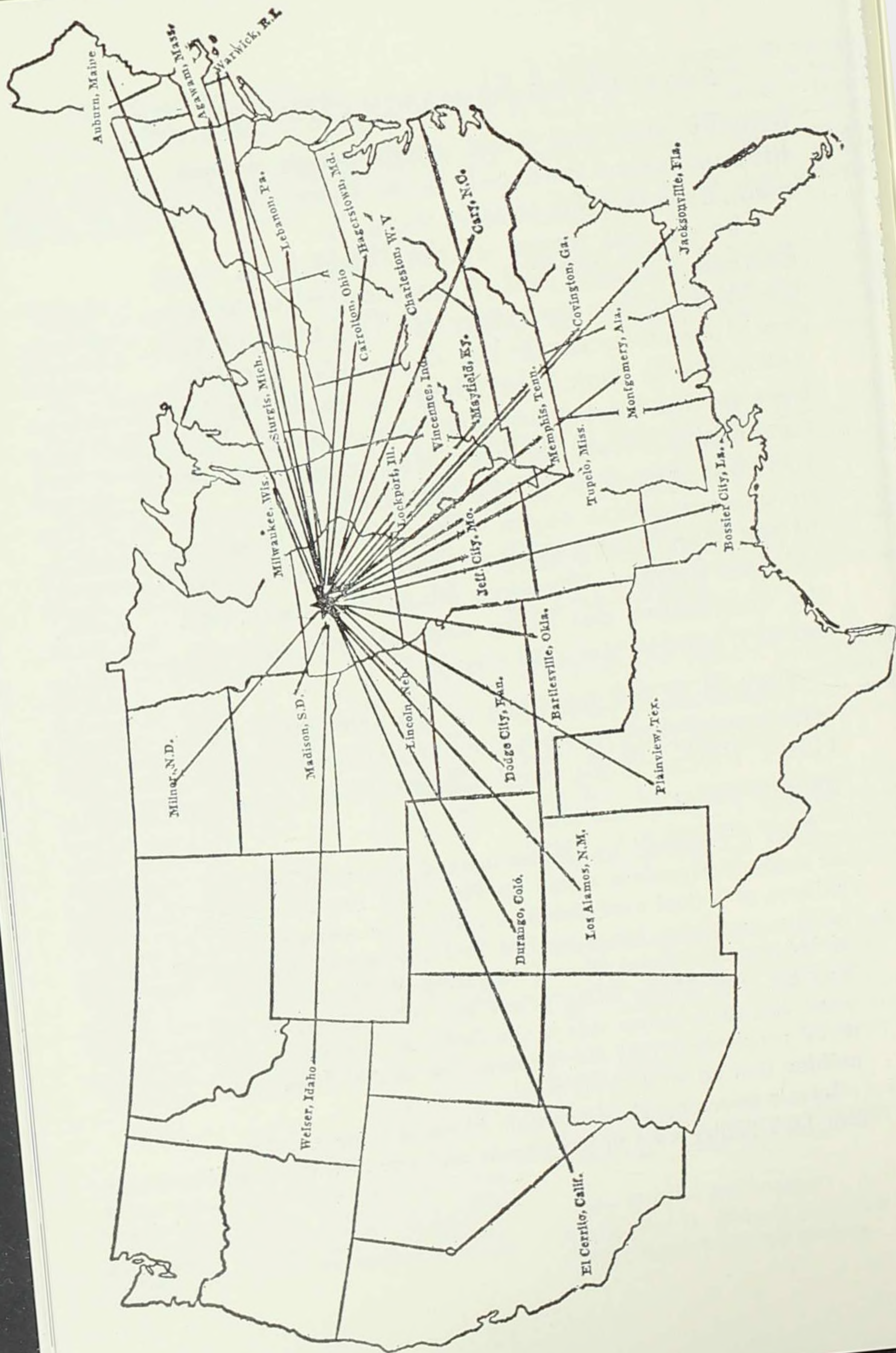
The general format of the North Iowa Band Festival naturally had to be changed to fit into the Warner Brothers program. This time not only the Mason City bands but all the Iowa and Minnesota bands were to play hosts to bands that had been invited from every state in the Union. That competition would be keen was attested by the fact that more than \$13,000 in prizes—plus a national tour—were to be offered in the National Music Man Marching Band Competition Festival. Warner Brothers, Richards Music Company, and the Greyhound Bus Lines were primary supporters of a spirited national contest.

Typical of the reactions of the celebrities who represented the press are the keen observations of Hazel Flynn, *Hollywood Citizen-News* motion picture editor.

Over a thousand trombones instead of just 76 split the air over Mason City today as this town threw a lollapalooza of a dual celebration . . . The first national competitive marching band festival and the world premiere of Warner Brothers' film of Meredith Willson's Broadway hit, *The Music Man*. They had a band festival for years in this area but this is the first time it took on national proportions and also became *The Music Man* competition tied up with Hollywood. . . .

Iowa's governor, the honorable Norman Erbe and Senator Jack Miller rode in the parade and attended the pre-







miere which was held in the Palace Theater and staged with Hollywood eclat. Searchlights pierced the night sky and glamorous stars and civic and political notables were in attendance. . . .

The welcome was warm and appealing in its sincerity. The Chamber of Commerce, of which Jack MacNider is president, had been working on the organization of this event along with Warner Brothers officials, for 14 months and they did a noble job. The citizenry turned out in a body to pay tribute to their erstwhile fellow-townsmen and his party as well as members of the press from all over the United States and Canada who were covering the event. They made us all have a royal time.

Everybody in town co-operated and the population (30,000) was swelled to nearly three times its size as folks poured in from neighboring areas to share the fun. General Hanford MacNider, Retired, one of Mason City's and Iowa's leading citizens and Mrs. MacNider, threw a huge dinner party for the guests and celebrities at their beautiful estate at Indianhead. And everyone else helped with the food and comfort of the visitors from the ladies who prepared the picnic lunch boxes to the teenagers who drove the transportation cars for the officials and guests, also the boy scouts who acted as bell hops and baggage smashers. Others took the band boys and girls into their homes . . .

It was wonderfully-planned co-operation from the community as a whole. . . . The sort of thing that shows what even smaller cities of this country can do when their facilities for visitors are overtaxed.

Each of these bands was sent here by its hometown which had to raise from \$5,000 to \$7,000 for the purpose with the help of their local theaters and chambers of commerce. Take \$5,000 and multiply it by 30 and you'll get an idea of the money involved. Add this to the



# THE 24th NORTH IOWA BAND FESTIVAL

## The Music Man Marching Band Competition Festival

Sponsored by the Mason City Chamber of Commerce

TUESDAY, JUNE 19, 1962

Presenting Great Challenges—Housing, Hospitality and Finance!

The Budget is \$35,000, arrived at by experience with former festivals, best estimates of committees. This is a conservative budget figure and it will in all probably be exceeded. Many items will not "jell" until the actual event.

### This Budget Now Looks Like This

North Iowa Band Festival .....	\$ 7,000*
Advance mailings .....	2,500
Three meals for 3,600 band personnel ..	12,600
Programs (no advertising) .....	2,400
Hotel, meals and entertainment for special guests .....	5,500
Extra bleachers, platforms .....	2,500
Postage, printing, miscellaneous .....	1,500
Campaign .....	1,000
	<hr/>
	\$35,000

Warner Brothers and Richards Music Corp., our two principal co-sponsors, are putting in substantial amounts. Warner's present budget is \$75,000 and they expect it may run up to \$100,000. If they bring a picture personality here who is at work elsewhere, they must pay salary for the time involved. Richards and associated companies have offered prizes for the 5 best marching bands valued at \$15,000 . . . and have already spent nearly \$10,000 on ads in music journals and the advance mailing pieces which went to 22,500 bands over the United States.

Movie People and Press, Radio and TV representatives and writers will be our guests while here as is the custom at premieres. When a community accepts such an event, they accept these responsibilities. Impressions of these guests will make or break us!

The Press Preview will be at the Palace theatre, which is Warner Brothers' Mason City outlet. It will be entirely at their expense and of Central States Theatre Corporation.

\*Normal Band Festival Cost has been \$9,000, but the Iowa-Minnesota bands (hosts, this year) are giving up mileage this year. The total budget is thus around 4 times the amount subscribed for the North Iowa event in previous years.

How many people will come to Mason City? The 30 out of state bands have a registered total of 3,090 students, and 448 adults. See back page. Many parents and friends are coming at their own expense and motels and hotels are already committed for the 2 nights with reservations from every state. Jefferson City, Mo., wrote that 60 to 80 people usually went along with the band "on their own", wanted an entire motel in Iowa and Minnesota, which will not be competing. will bring around 5,000 band members, plus queens and local community leaders.

A big business day? For some, yes. For others, no—a slow day. North Iowa Festival has never been sold as a direct one day of heavy general business. Those closest to it maintain that it had been a steady builder of "return trips" to Mason City.

Preview tickets will be for distinguished guests, plus 4 to each out of state band, 2 to each Iowa and Minnesota band. There will be many other personalities here such as noted composer-director of the massed bands, Paul Yoder; the judges of the marching bands, Fred Ebbs, SU; Gerald Prescott, Minnesota; Karl L. King, noted director-composer, Fort Dodge. Few, if any, tickets for Mason City people. After all, we're HOSTS.

48 states invited, how come 30 bands? There were 123 entries from 34 states, and many more requests since from bands which missed mailing or ads. Some were disqualified or simply fell out. Now it's THIRTY—and that's enough. Invitations to the 48 (Iowa-Minn. excluded) were calculated RISK . . . but the town and everything for miles around will be full with the third . . . it will take some doing.

What will we do for these out-state bands? Immediate campaign to house them in private homes, plus 2 breakfasts. A few prefer their own—one each at P. M. Park, Methodist Camp, Lake Shore Hotel and one at a MC grade school with own sleeping equipment. Also furnish Monday and Tuesday night dinners, Tuesday lunch and recreation Monday and Tuesday nights and Tuesday afternoon . . . likely a tea dance at Sur. Iowa-Minnesota bands will have Tuesday noon luncheon, theatre and swim privileges, are giving up their small mileage checks to help us finance the larger affair.



\$40,000 (minimum) that the affair cost Mason City and the \$100,000 which Warner Brothers put in the kitty, and you will get some idea of what the national marching band festival competition and world premiere of *The Music Man* cost.

But the cost in money is secondary to what this celebration and premiere involved in human values. The northern Iowa-Minnesota area opened its heart and gave even hard boiled newspaper men and women a terrific thrill. For who could watch young America marching proudly and playing stirring music, and a whole town going out of its way to support them and offer hospitality without being moved?

Did I say parade? Well, have you ever watched 121 bands march by? It went on for hours. . . . Big bands, little bands, bands wearing every color of the rainbow. . . . Playing every kind of a selection from "Stars and Stripes Forever" to "When the Saints Go Marching In" . . . and especially the score from *The Music Man*. . . .

They had pompon girls galore and strutting shakowearing leaders. Pretty girls were everywhere for also in the parade were nearly 100 candidates for the title of "Queen of North Iowa," supplemented by many floats and displays of veterans' and like organizations.

After the parade everybody repaired to Roosevelt Field for the actual marching competition and the judging which went on until after sundown. Then came the premiere itself at the Palace. . . .

In between all the above somewhere there was a picnic lunch in the beautiful park with the Barber Shop Chorus Society of Mason City entertaining, the crowning of Miss North Iowa and the presentation of band awards. Then there was a big supper party after the premiere hosted by Technicolor and Technirama which company is especially proud of its work on the film.



Me? I'm tired but I can tip you off to the fact that the audience went wild over the movie.

I doubt if Mason City or Willson will ever forget this day. Nor will this writer, if only because she got to see the corn growing again, sat under huge dark green shade trees and on velvety lawns and smelled the wonderful scent of the meadows and clover in the area where she was born. . . . The great Middle West . . . and when this disciplined and talented young America proudly paraded with heads high playing beautiful music, much of it patriotic, something said to us "Don't worry . . . all is well with our youth."

The enthusiasm of Hazel Flynn, a veteran motion picture editor, was echoed by many others. Meanwhile, Iowans themselves burst forth with adulation for Meredith Willson. The whole country, as a matter of fact, seemed to heave a sigh of relief and exclaim, how fortunate we are that a clean, wholesome musical could still be a Broadway hit and become an outstanding movie attraction.

What of the marching bands and those prizes? First place, with over \$10,000 in band instruments, went to the Lockport Township High School Band, an outstanding unit that had won many state and regional contests in Illinois, and that had been judged best at the New York World's Fair in 1940. The Lockport group performed so beautifully that they were invited back to be the featured band at the 25th North Iowa Band Festival in 1963.

Since several of the bands had traveled long



distances, from points as remote as the Atlantic and the Pacific, it is worth noting the rank taken for the next four prizes.

2. Bossier City, Louisiana, High School Band
3. Lebanon, Pennsylvania, High School Band
4. Plainview, Texas, High School Band
5. Montgomery, Alabama, Sidney Lanier High School Band.

Mason Citians could relax following the departure of the Hollywood stars from their midst. Some wondered whether the North Iowa Band Festival would ever be the same, let alone the town itself. True, there were dreams of a real "River City" to be erected in the west half of Central Park, but such dreams are not always realized. Time alone would tell whether the elixir provided by *The Music Man* would actually bring this about. One thing was certain! Everyone was looking forward to the next North Iowa Band Festival—which would be the 25th. And there was no doubt in anyone's mind that there would be a 30th, a 40th, and a 50th. For music is an important part of the very existence of Mason City.

WILLIAM J. PETERSEN