

Broadway to Mason City - 1958

All Mason City was agog with anticipation as the 20th Annual North Iowa Band Festival drew near. The town's favorite son, Meredith Willson, would be back home in June to share with his friends the accolades that had been won by *The Music Man*, his smash Broadway hit, that was the talk of the musical world.

The *Mason City Globe-Gazette*, alert to the spirit of the times, dedicated its Band Festival Edition of June 6, 1958, to *The Music Man*. According to one *Globe-Gazette* writer:

Since the first drum roll of "Seventy Six Trombones" resounded on Broadway the night of December 19, 1957, *The Music Man*, Meredith Willson's loving tribute to his native city and state, has piled up the most impressive set of statistics since Joe DiMaggio batted safely in 56 consecutive games.

By May 19, five months after the opening, *The Music Man* had played to 294,930 satisfied customers, and with mail orders piling in at the rate of 500 a day, the box-office is now selling tickets through December 27 . . . The little town of River City, Iowa, has captured the hearts of people all over the country, appealing to ministers of all faiths and children of all ages. Church trains have been organized to come to New York to see *The Music Man*, and theatre parties of standing room have been sold to groups unable to secure tickets.

The financial figures are no less impressive. *The Music Man* grosses almost \$70,000 a week, which is well over three million dollars a year. It has virtually paid back its \$300,000 investment at the rate of approximately \$18,000 a week profit, and will probably pay its backers back \$10 for every dollar invested.

The repercussions of this fabulous success story were felt in every Iowa community—large and small. Mason Citians were especially proud of their gifted prodigy, who over the years had been a veritable one-man Chamber of Commerce in promoting his old home town. Willson's love of Iowa and Mason City did not go unnoticed by others. The following, by Tim Taylor, appeared in part in *Cue* magazine, New York's entertainment weekly.

New York—It has long been the opinion of a substantial block of citizens here and in Hollywood that Meredith Willson's avocation is music, but that his real job for the past 30-odd years has been that of ambassador-without-portfolio from the sovereign state of Iowa.

It's true that Willson has amassed a lengthy list of impressive credits as a musician, composer, conductor, radio and TV performer, and author, but some of us are convinced that his sorties into show business merely camouflage his undercover activities as one-man Chamber of Commerce for the land of the Hawkeye.

During the past few months there has been a notable lack of mentions of Iowa on radio and television, a fact which led to the ridiculous rumor that the wily propagandist and the state house gang in Des Moines had come to a parting of the ways.

5,000 Musicians Take Over "River City"

87. Towns

Represented at Festival

High school bands from 77 North Iowa and 10 Southern Minnesota towns will converge on Mason City Tuesday with horns blaring and drums banging for the 20th annual North Iowa Band Festival.

Including over 5,000 musicians, the bands will begin arriving by bus early Tuesday morning and it will be the wee hours of Wednesday morning before some of the father-bands get back home.

COMING THE farthest to participate in the "Music Man" edition of the festival will be two western Iowa towns, Ruthven and Ayrshire. Both must travel over 90 miles on Highway 18 to get to Mason City for the festival.

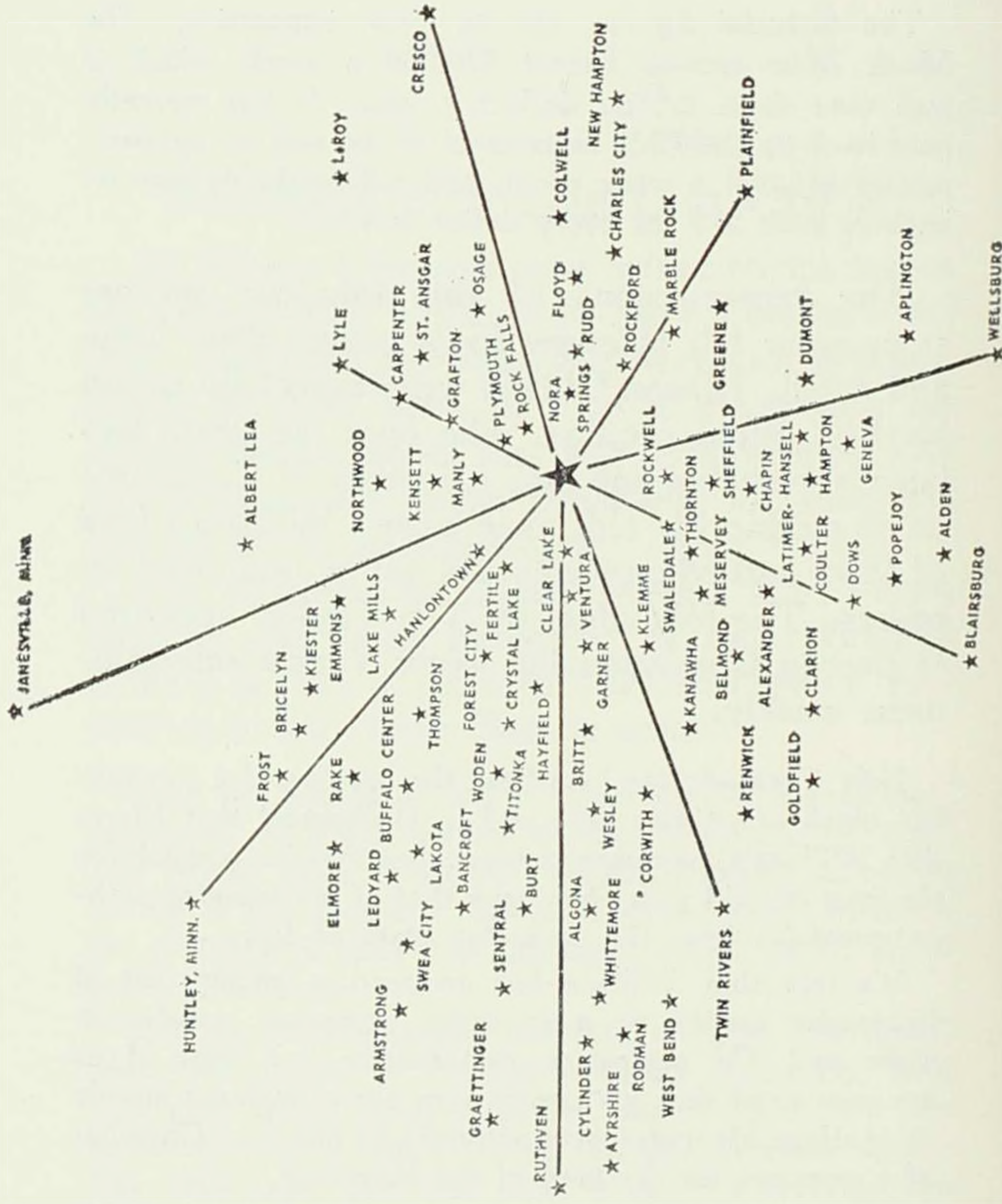
The band coming the farthest distance from the south is from the Grundy County town of Wellburg. This group has been a regular at recent festivals. Another town coming some distance from the south is Blairsburg located on Highway 69.

Another band that will have a long bus ride before it reaches Federal Ave. is the group from Janesville, Minn. This town, making its first appearance at the festival, will have traveled over 180 miles to get to Mason City.

The only other bands making their debut at the festival are also from Minnesota. Huntley will have traveled over 80 miles to march in the parade and LeRoy will have come over 65 miles.

NINETEEN NORTH IOWA counties will be represented by bands at the festival. Kosuth County has the most entries from one county, with 10, followed by Cerro Gordo (not counting Mason City), Franklin and Hancock counties with eight each.

Aside from Mason City the largest town represented by a band at the festival will be Albert Lea, Minn. The largest Iowa city entered is Charles City fol-



But, no. It turns out that Willson has been hard at work putting the finishing touches on his magnum opus, a musical comedy. And guess where all the singing and dancing in this new show which he calls *The Music Man*, takes place?

Yup. Capital eye, oh, you, ay.

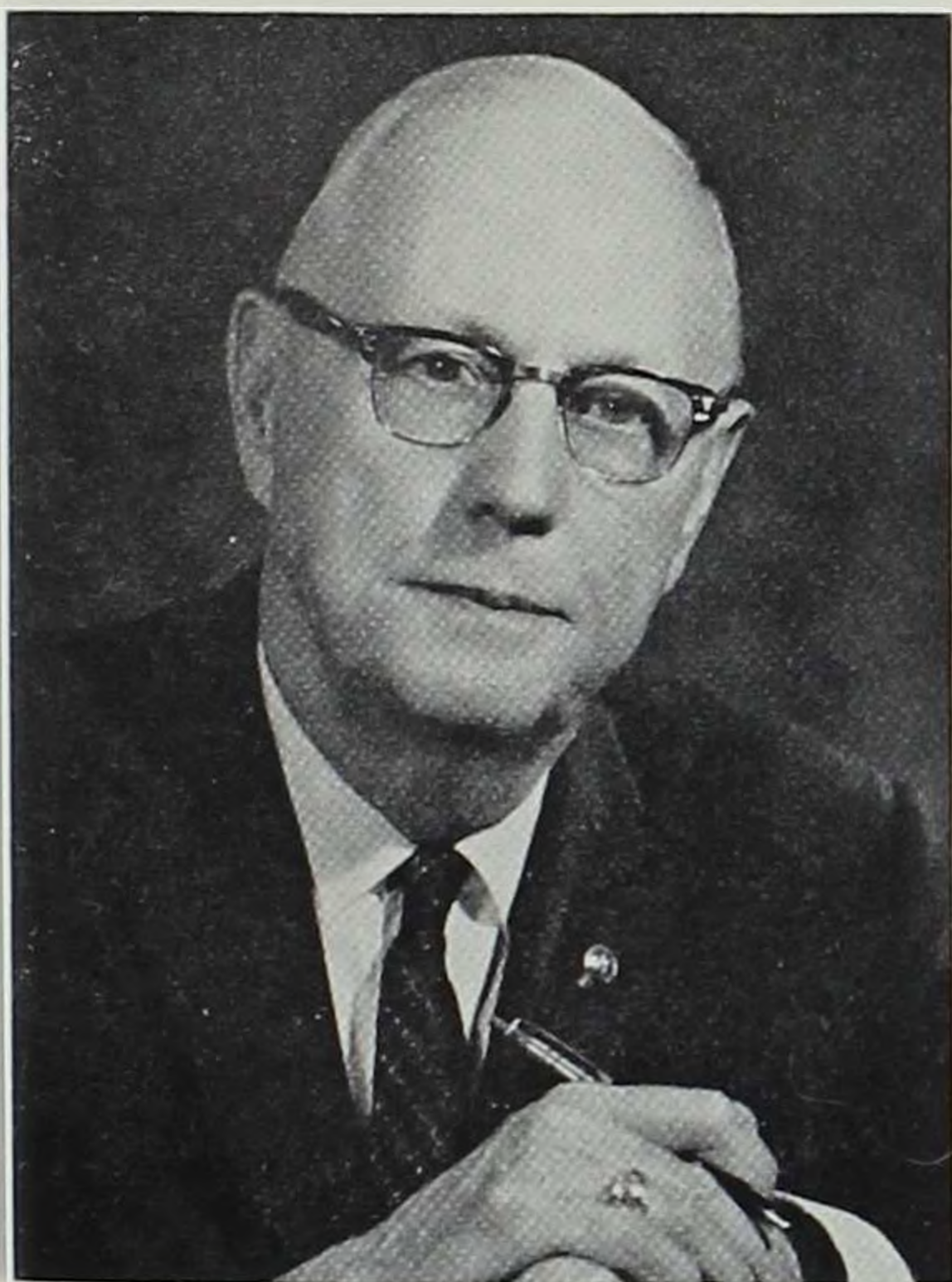
It was with no little pride that the *Mason City Globe-Gazette* noted in its Band Festival Edition on June 6 that 5,000 musicians would take over "River City" in 1958. Fully 87 bands (77 of them from North Iowa towns) would participate in the colorful ceremonies. The bands came from points as far distant as Ayrshire and Ruthven in the West, Blairsburg and Wellsburg in the South, New Hampton and Cresco in the East, and Huntley and Janesville in Minnesota. Nineteen North Iowa counties were represented in this outpouring of musicians, with Kossuth County boasting the largest number of band entries with ten. Cerro Gordo (not counting Mason City), Franklin and Hancock counties stood next with eight bands each.

Mason City bent every effort to make the 1958 Band Festival the most outstanding that had been held in twenty years. Parade Chairman David L. Hirsch, aglow with excitement, had assured the public it would be "the finest, biggest, most spectacular parade in the history of the North Iowa Band Festival." Those who witnessed it were lavish in their praise. The parade included more than 30 floats, 93 marching bands, and shiny con-

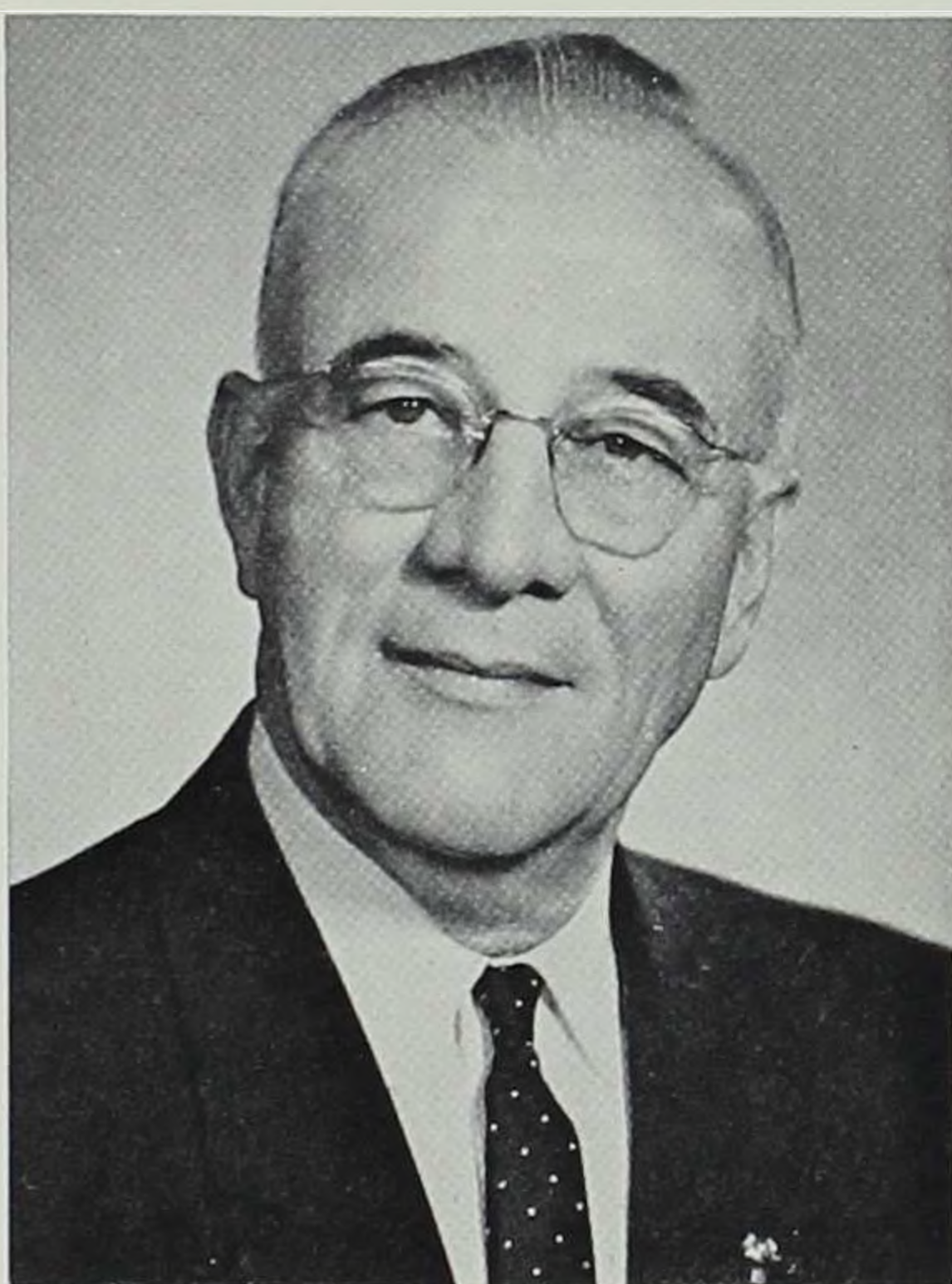
vertibles carrying the 87 queen candidates and a host of distinguished guests, including Governor Herschel Loveless and his wife, Lieutenant Governor William H. Nicholas and his wife, Mayor and Mrs. George Mendon, Meredith Willson and his wife, and bandmaster-composer Paul Yoder of Fort Lauderdale, Florida.

Perhaps the most exciting feature of the parade was the "76 Trombones" group led by Willson. This spectacular unit, made up of 208 musicians (including 11 tubas and 11 drums) was selected from 22 of the participating school bands. The bands were arranged in alphabetical order by towns, headed in each instance by a queen candidate riding in a convertible. Those bands with musicians in the feature band followed the others so that their members had time to rejoin their own units before embarking along the parade route. Floats were interspersed between every third or fourth band. The last 12 floats in the procession were the special "Music Man" floats which told the story of Meredith Willson's musical comedy hit in colorful tableaux.

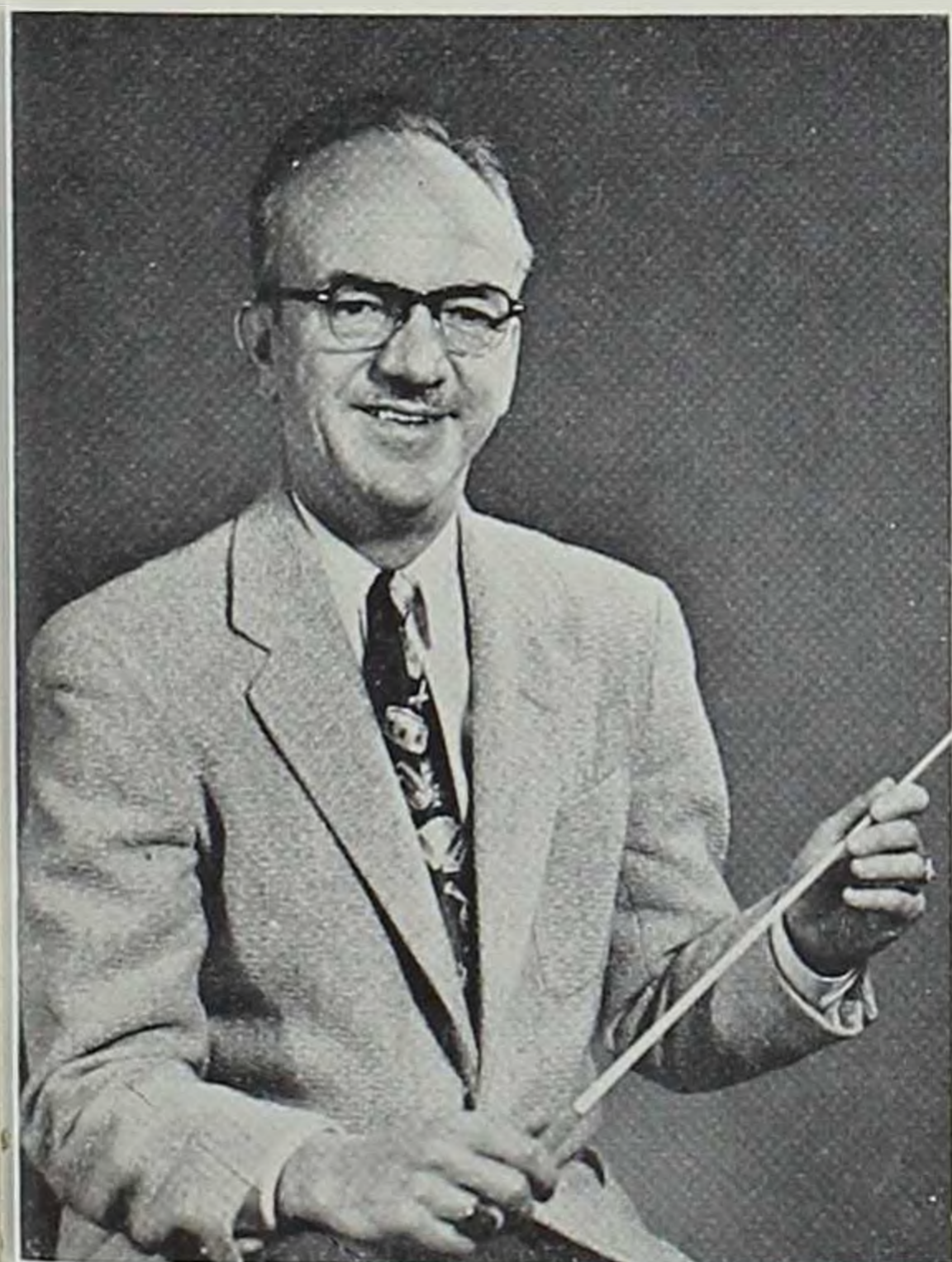
The evening show, always the climax of the Band Festival, was viewed by thousands of spectators. It began with more than 5,000 young musicians marching onto the field and taking their place in the stadium. These were followed by the entry onto the field of Miss North Iowa who in turn was followed by the Miss North Iowa queens



Lester Milligan



Dan G. Klempnauer



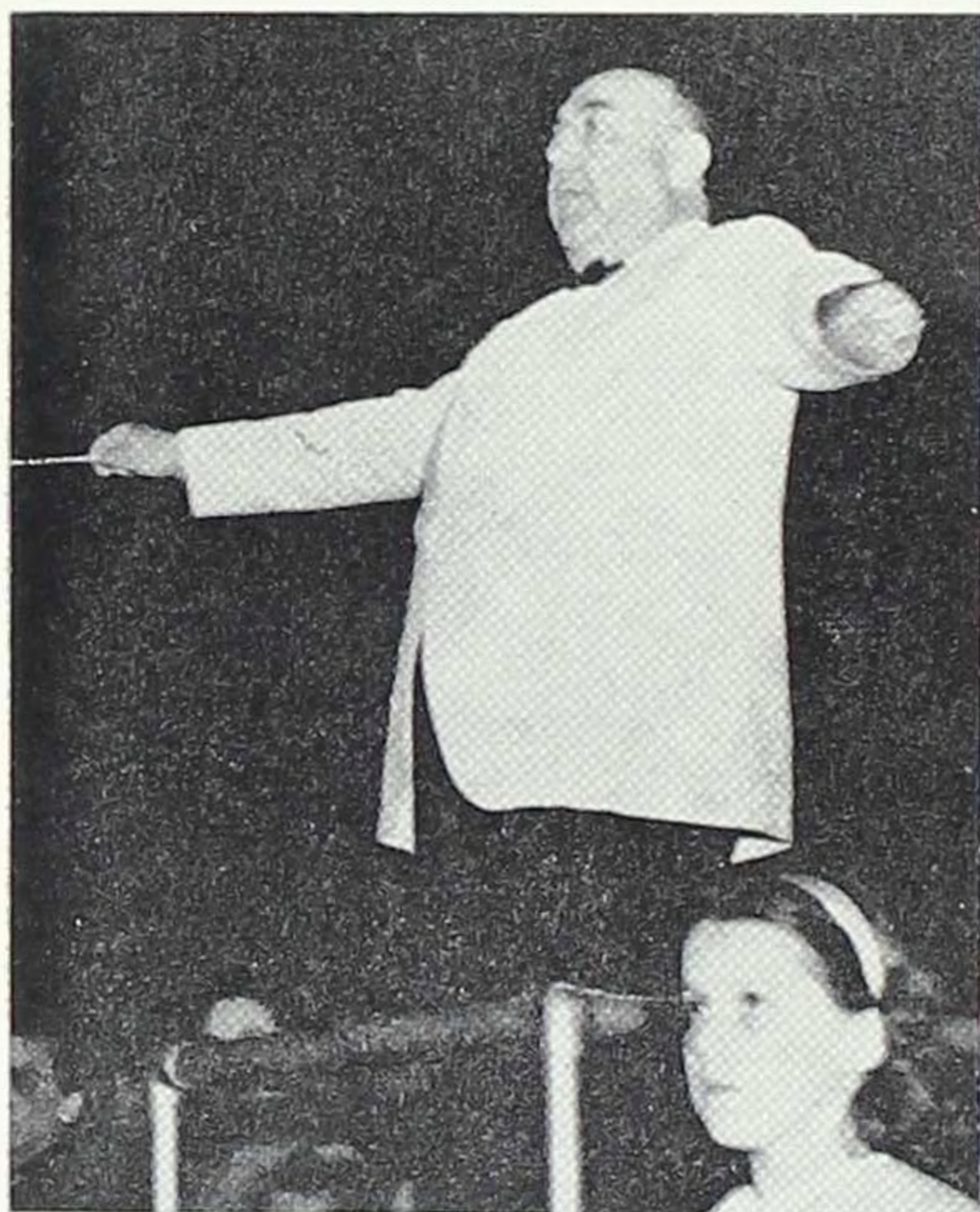
Carleton L. Stewart

Some Founding Fathers of the North Iowa Band Festival

Lester Milligan was chief executive of the Mason City Chamber of Commerce and in this capacity also took the lead in securing and promoting the Band Festival through the years.

Carleton L. Stewart was bandmaster of the Mason City High School band and was president of the Iowa Bandmasters Association when it first met in Mason City in 1936.

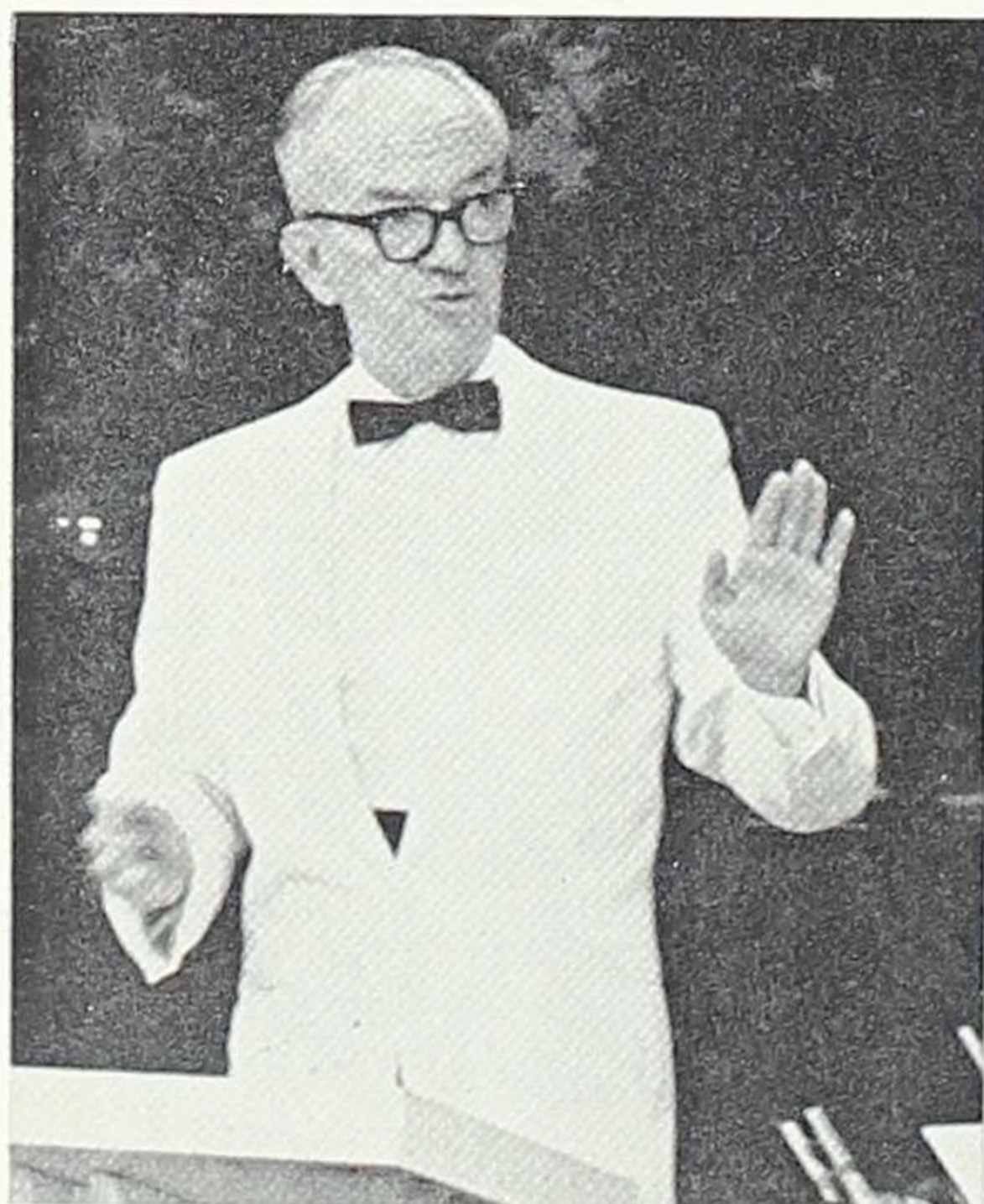
Dan G. Klempnauer was chairman of the conventions committee of the Chamber of Commerce. He was succeeded by William Nichols, Ray Seney, and currently Robert Douglas.



Frank Simon



William F. Santelmann, USMC



Carleton L. Stewart



Cliff Bainum
Northwestern University



Paul Yoder
Fort Lauderdale



Fred C. Ebbs
University of Iowa

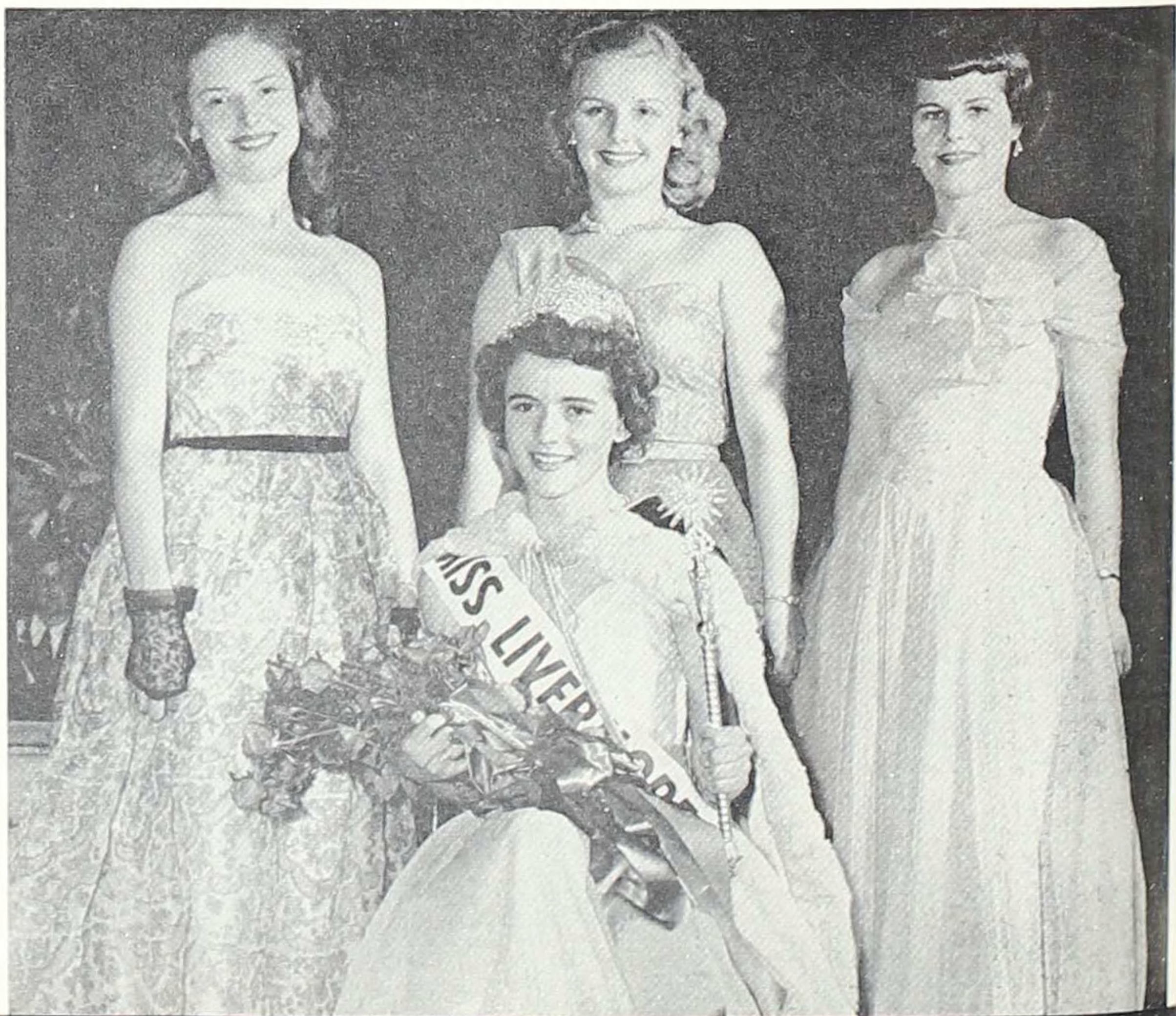
Meredith and Rini Willson greet Karl King of Fort Dodge.





The first queens—Shirley Morgan (1938), Marjorie Smith (1939), and Charlotte Ann Foss (1940), attend to the crowning of the fourth queen—Alberta Joslyn of Clear Lake (1941).

Four queens since 1946—(standing): LaDonna Gleiden (1949), Marilyn Fowler (1946), Shirley Eyler (1948), and seated—Kay Kayou (1950).





Sue Tenold, Northwood, and her retinue in 1957.



Hostesses to the queen candidates in 1960.



Raising "Old Glory" over Iwo Jima.



The Osage centennial occurred in 1956.



Ventura float depicted wild game.



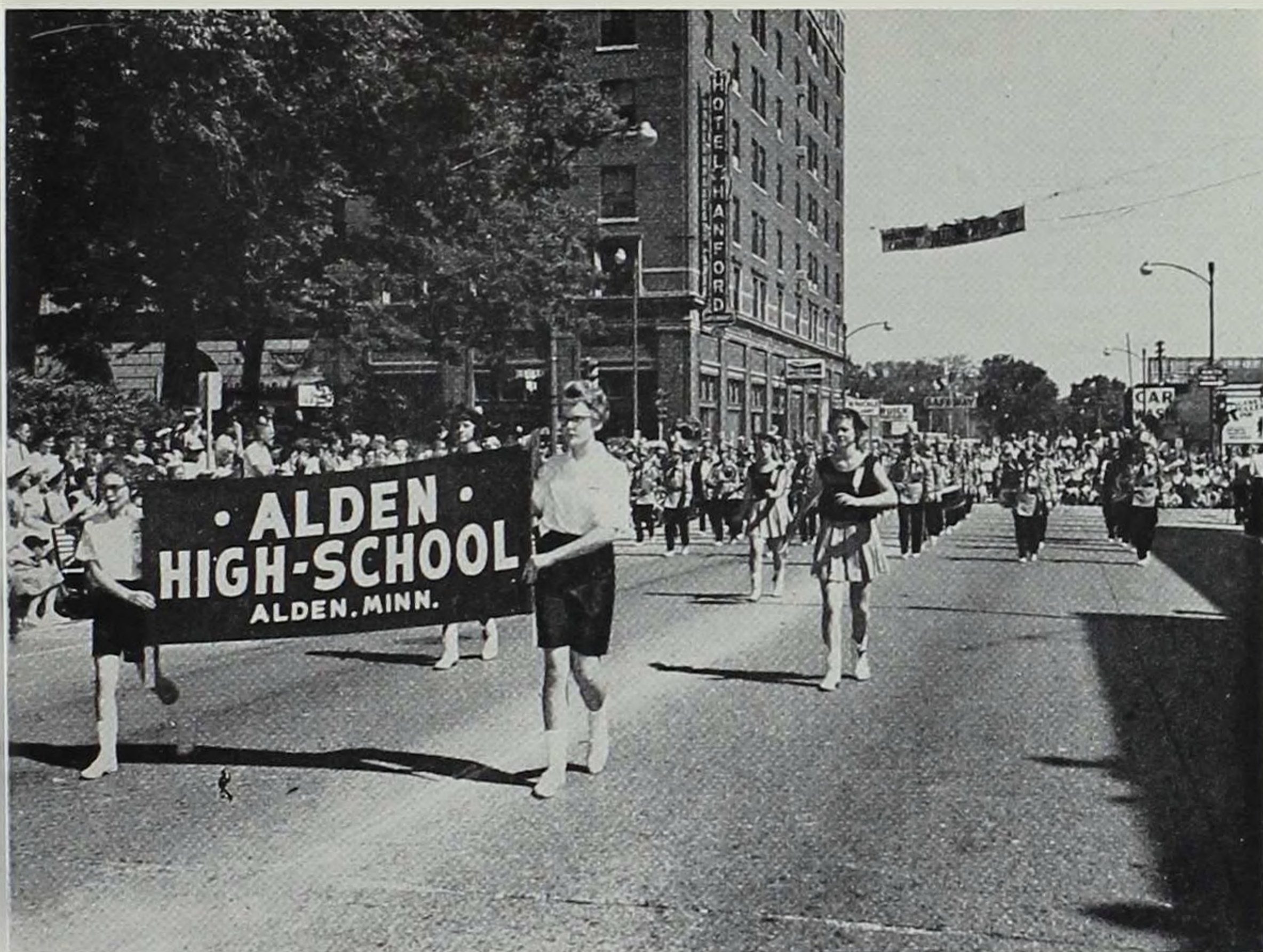
Swimming and boating are great at Clear Lake.



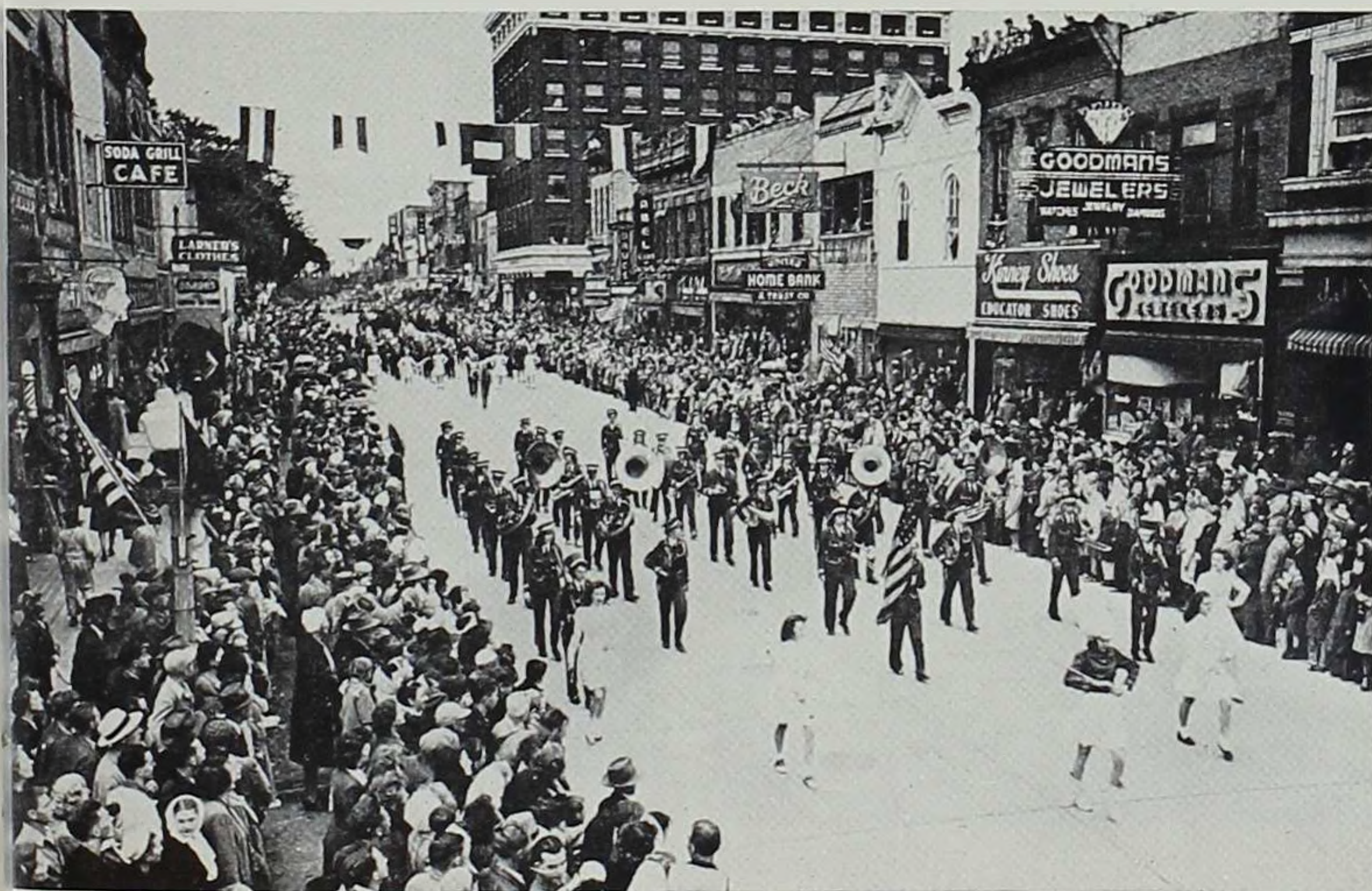
Drum majors and drum majorettes cut fancy figures.



The Britt band always makes a fine showing!



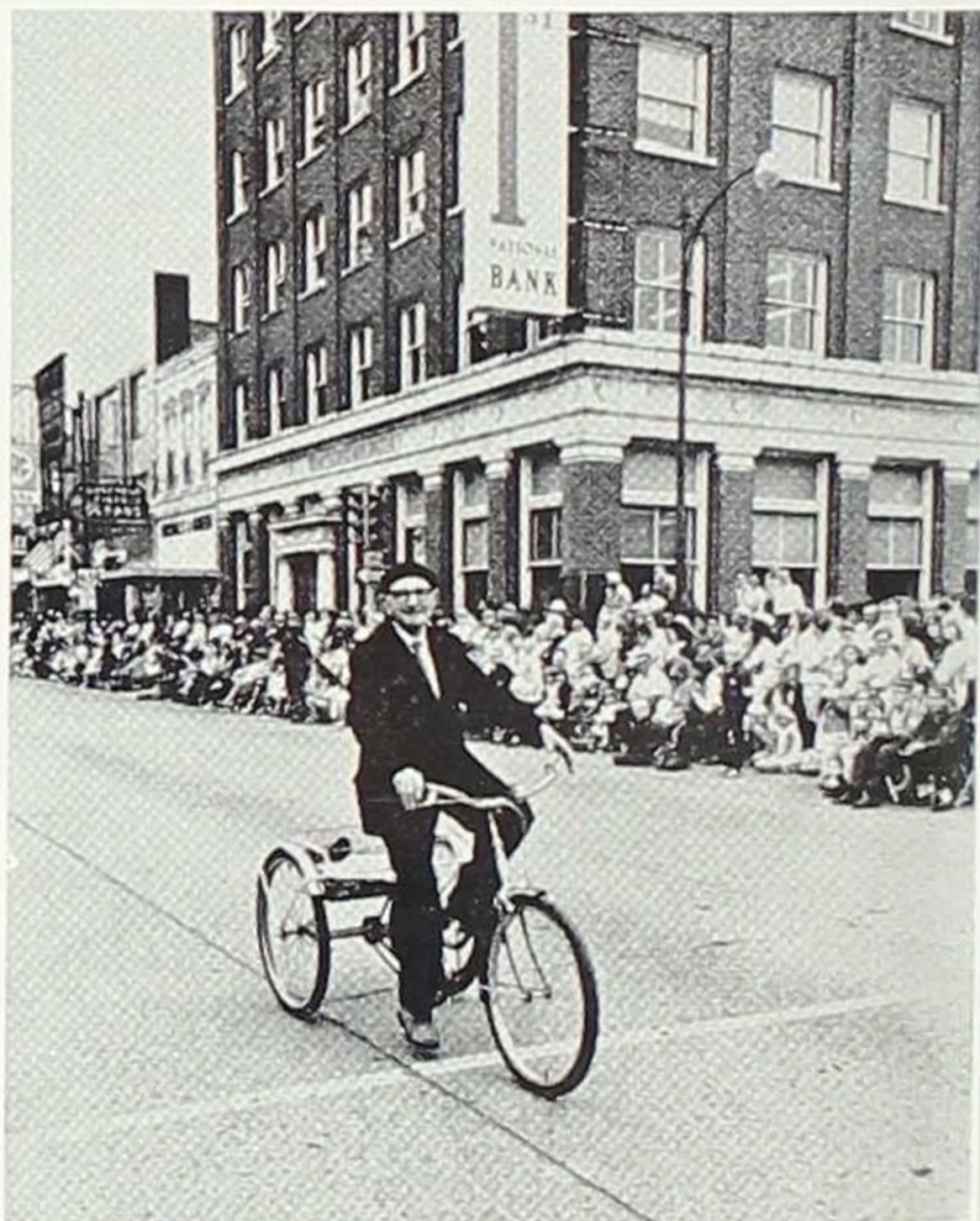
Minnesota bands add color to every Festival.



Thousands watch as 91 bands march on parade in 1952.



Globe-Gazette features Band Festival in Centennial Edition.



W. A. Storer, an early band director, rides in parade at 88.



It can get chilly in June . . .



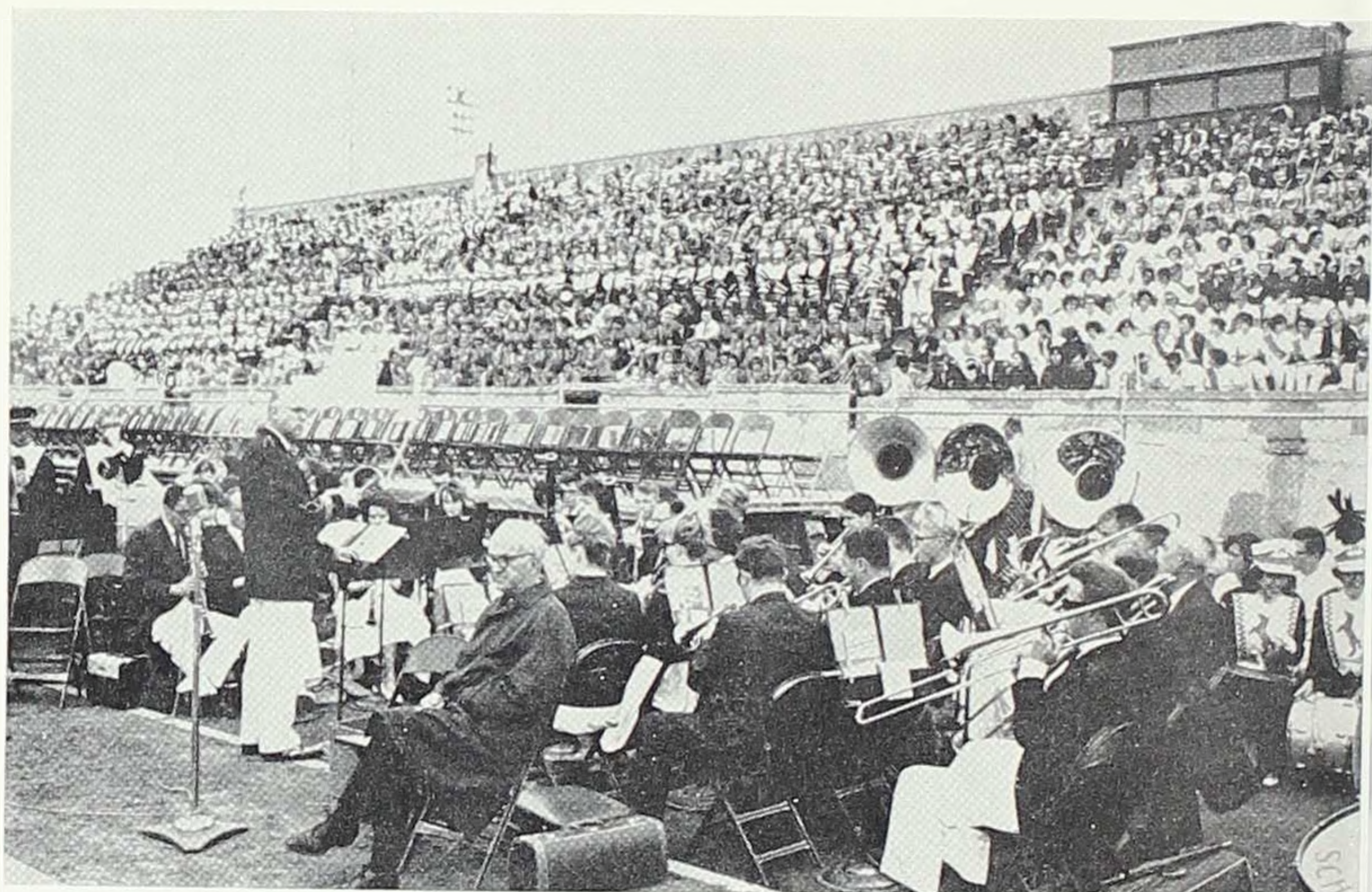
but folks are ready for any weather.



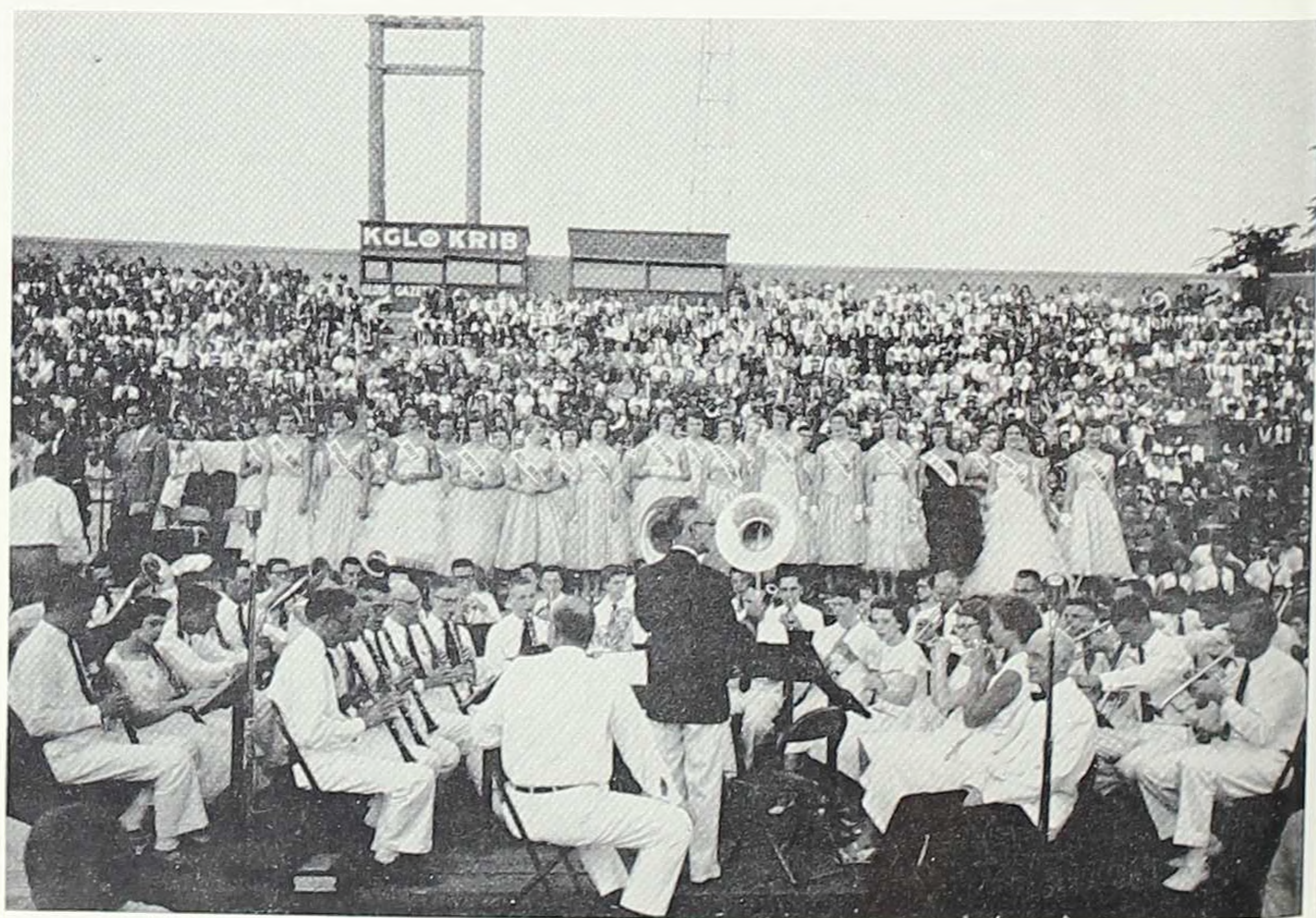
After the parade the crowd disperses.



Some find comfortable spots in the park.



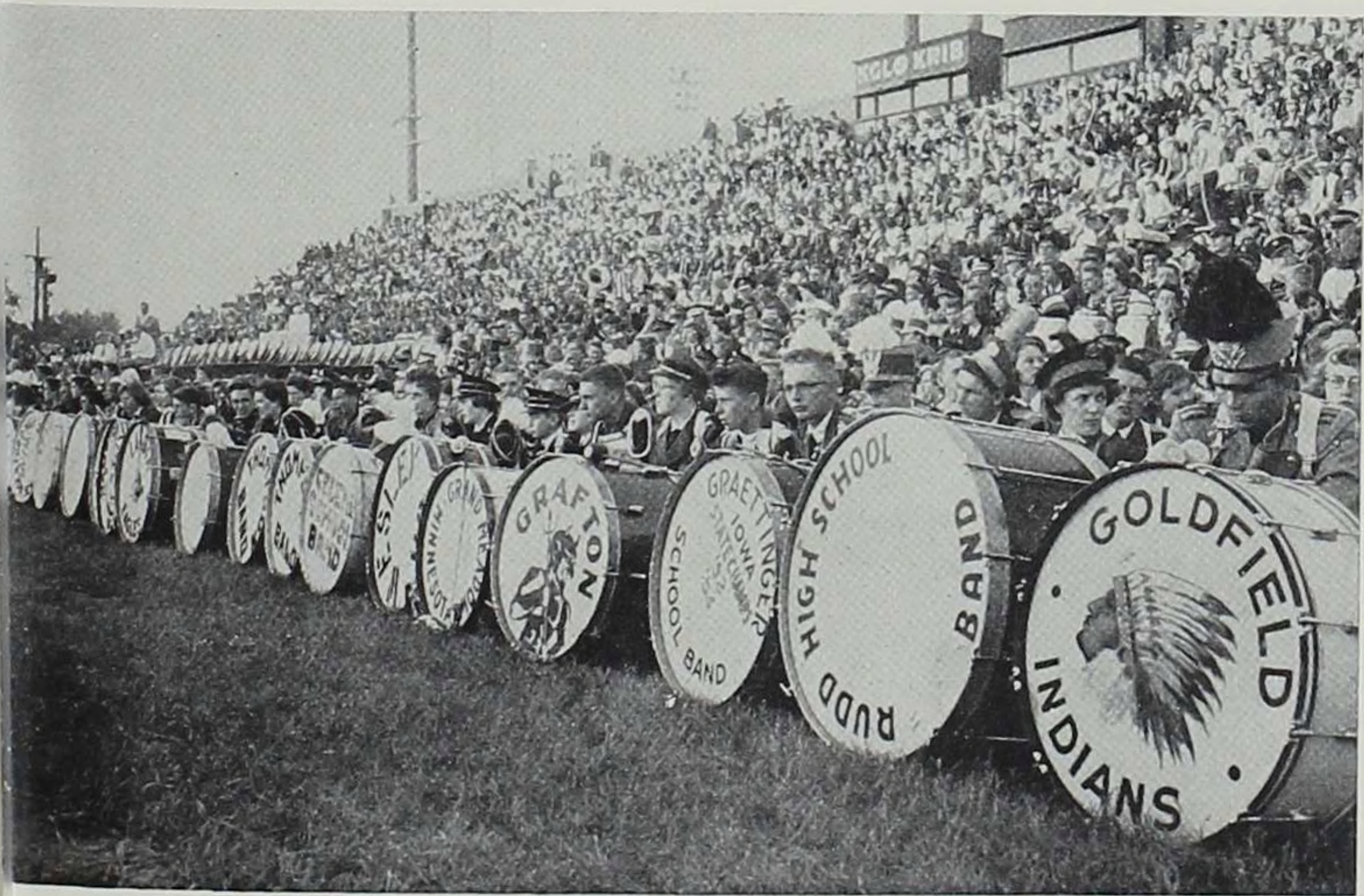
The grandstand fills early for evening show.



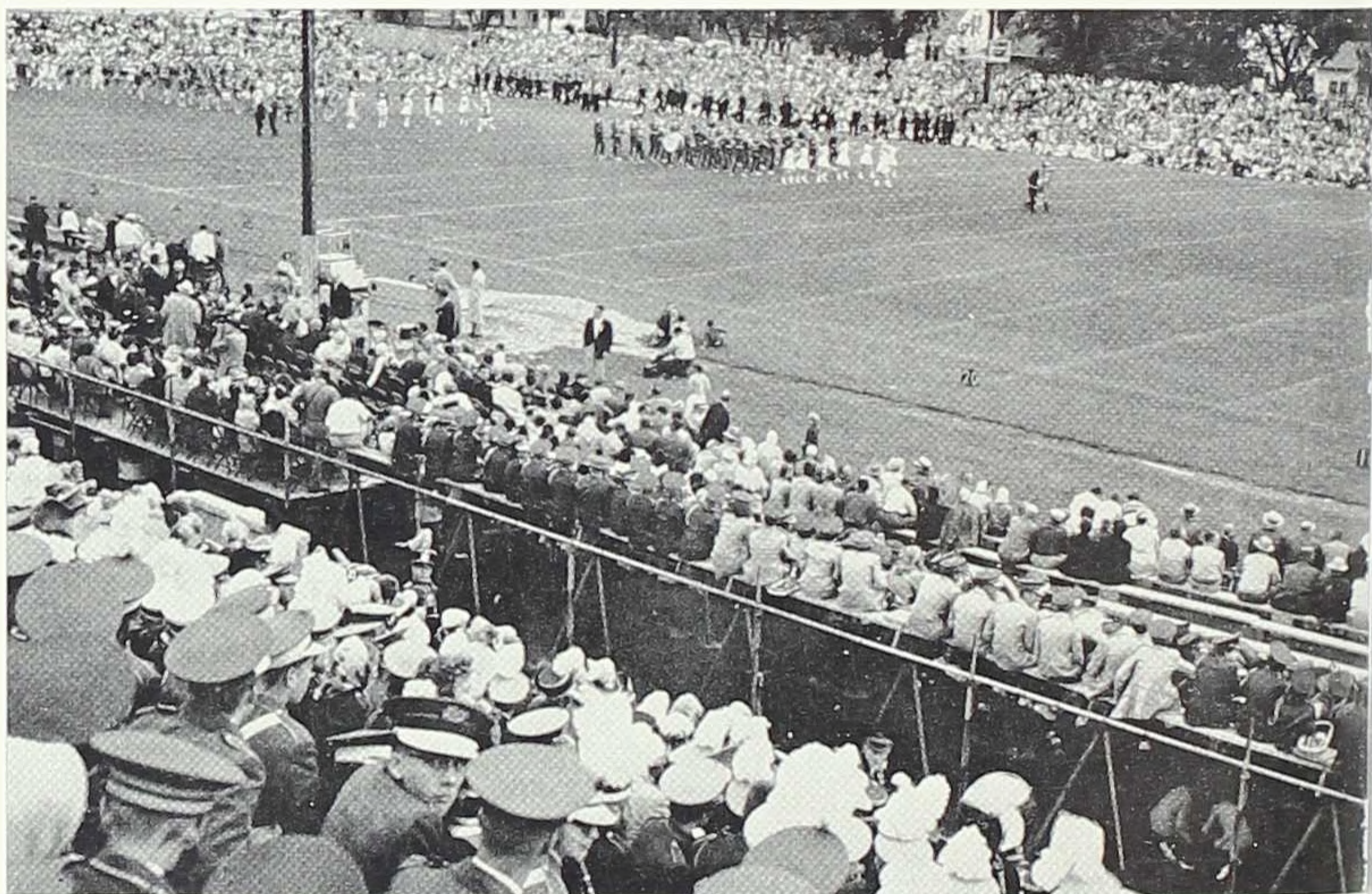
The 1956 queens line up for their introduction.



The drummers occupy the lower seats; the clarinet and piccolo players head for the top.



A band is known by the drum it beats!



It takes a long time for 80 to 100 bands to parade upon Roosevelt Field . . .

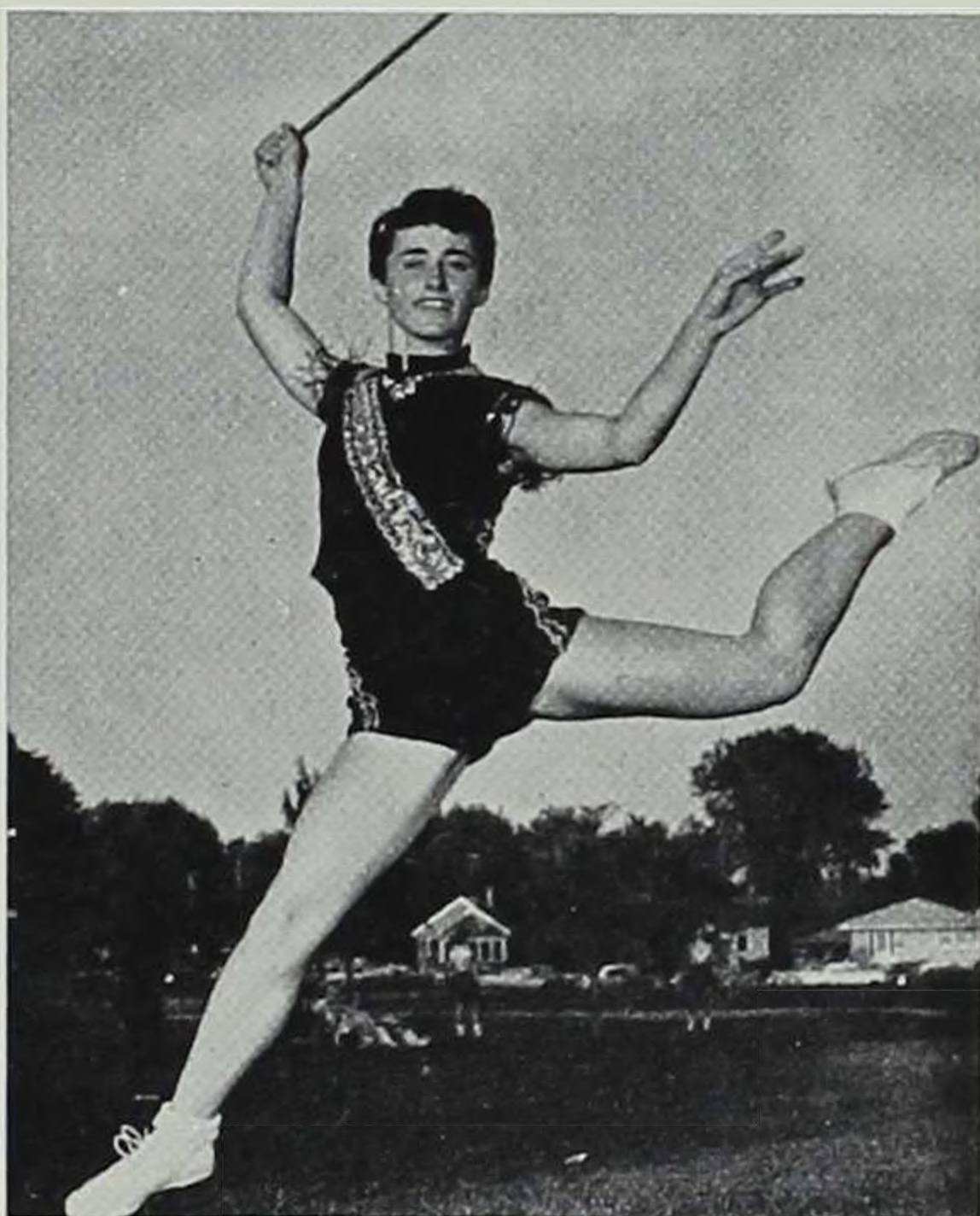


and seat 5,000 musicians in the grandstand!

Missour
man as



Joice Rice



A high stepper in 1956.



Missouri sent Karl and Mary Evelyn Thurman as featured twirlers one year.



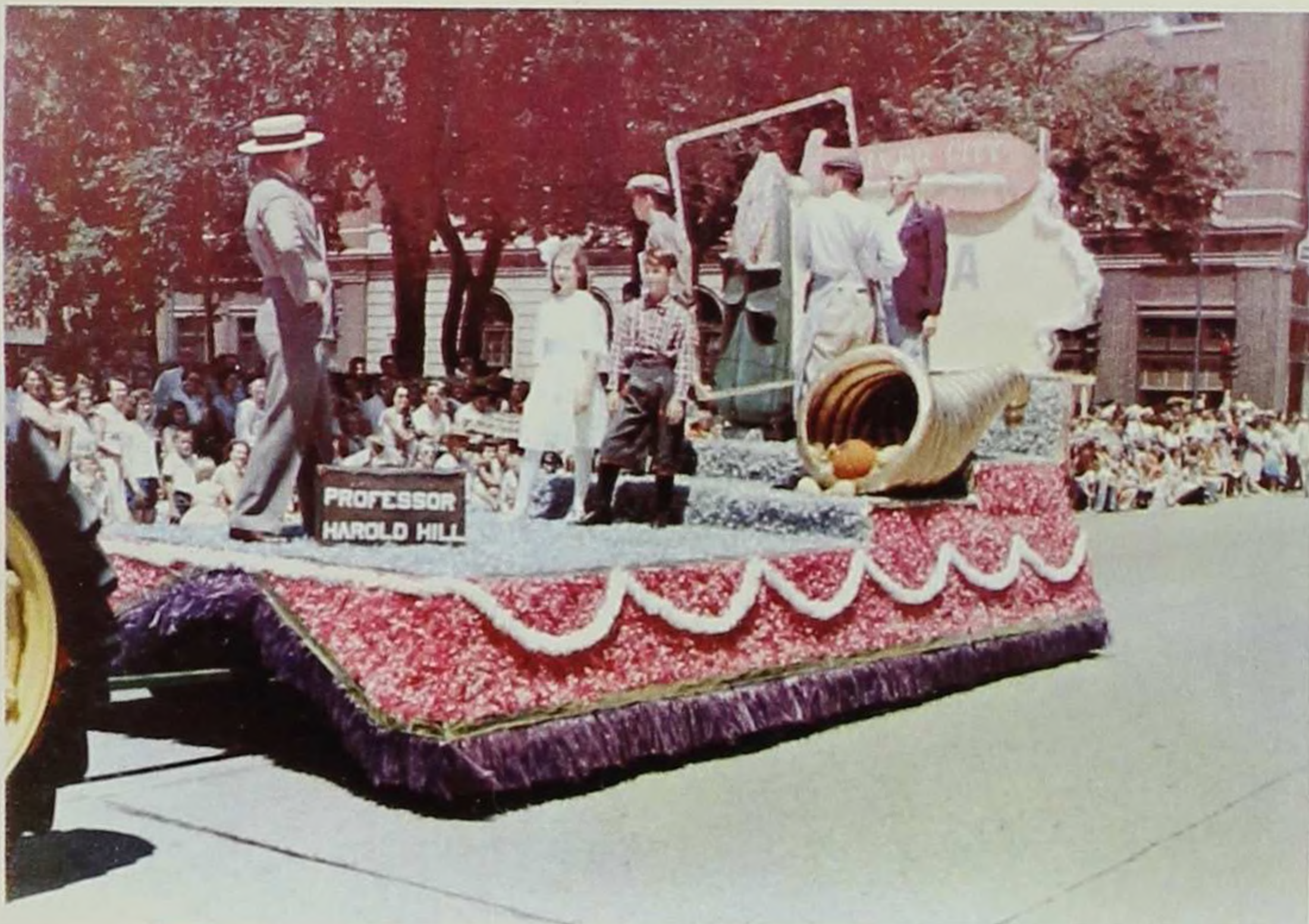
Meredith Willson greets a pretty majorette from Charleston, West Virginia in 1962.



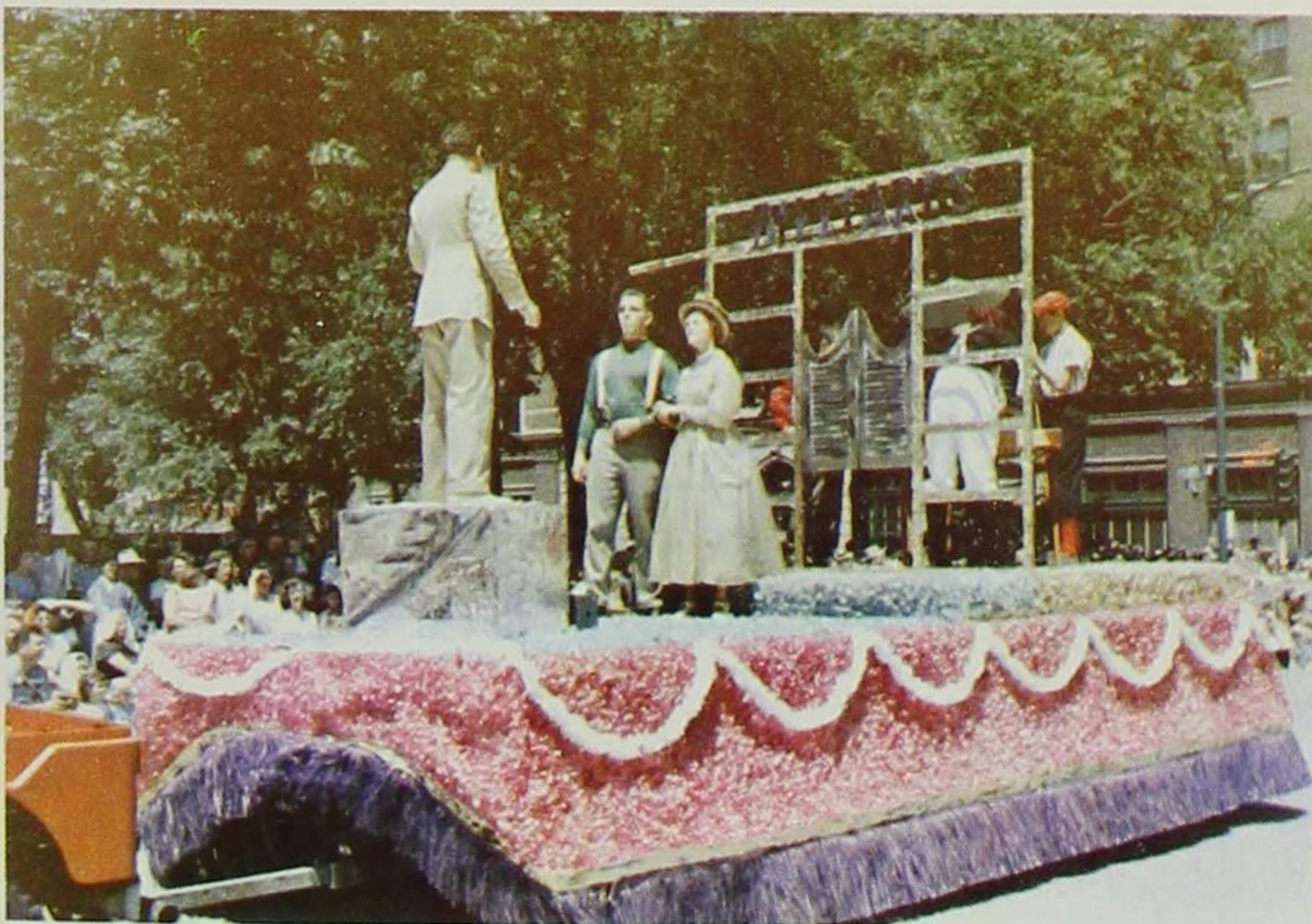
School buses cover acres of ground during Festival.



Bumbershoot proves excellent popcorn receptacle.



Iowa Stubborn



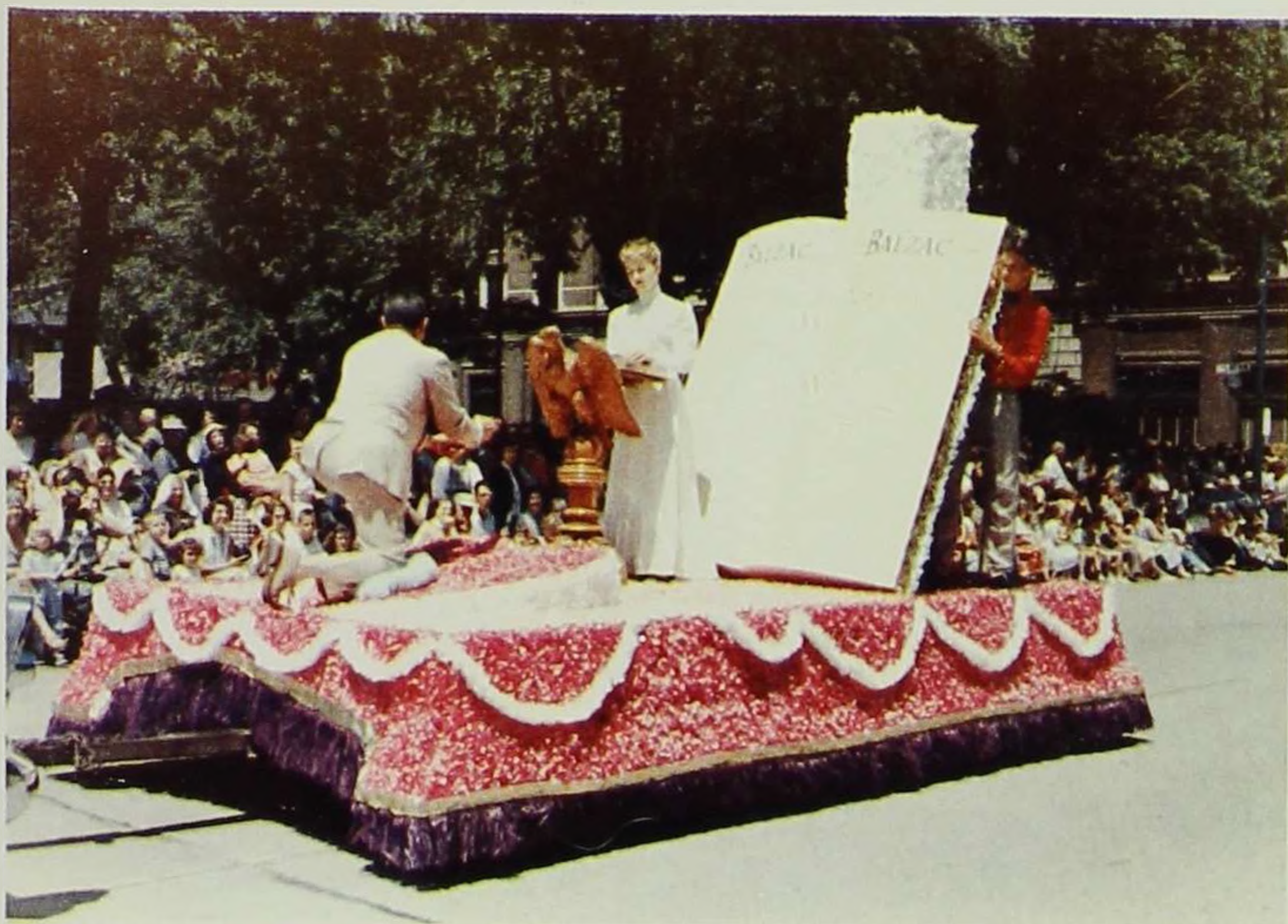
Ya Got Trouble



Seventy-six Trombones



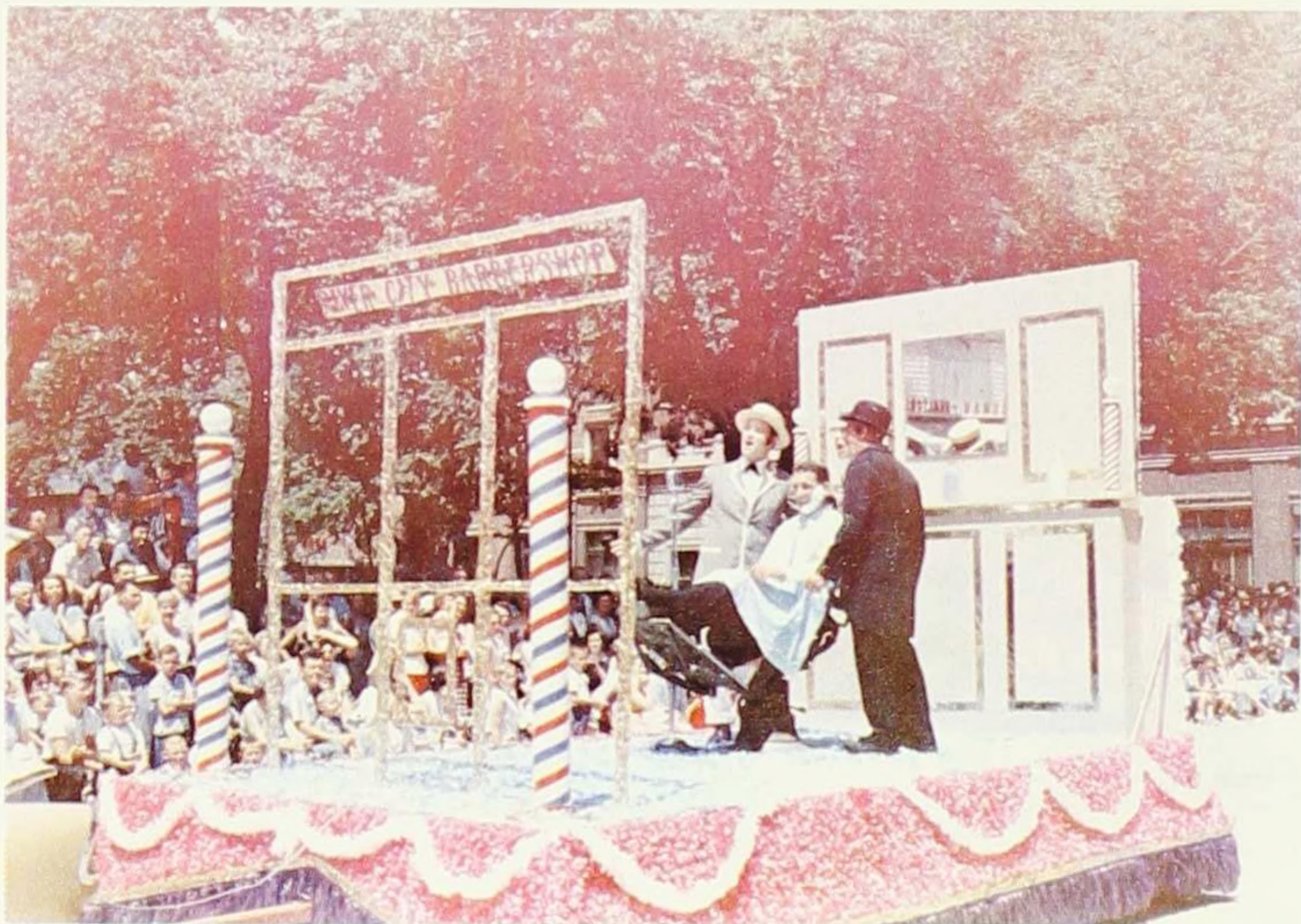
Wa Tan Ye Girls



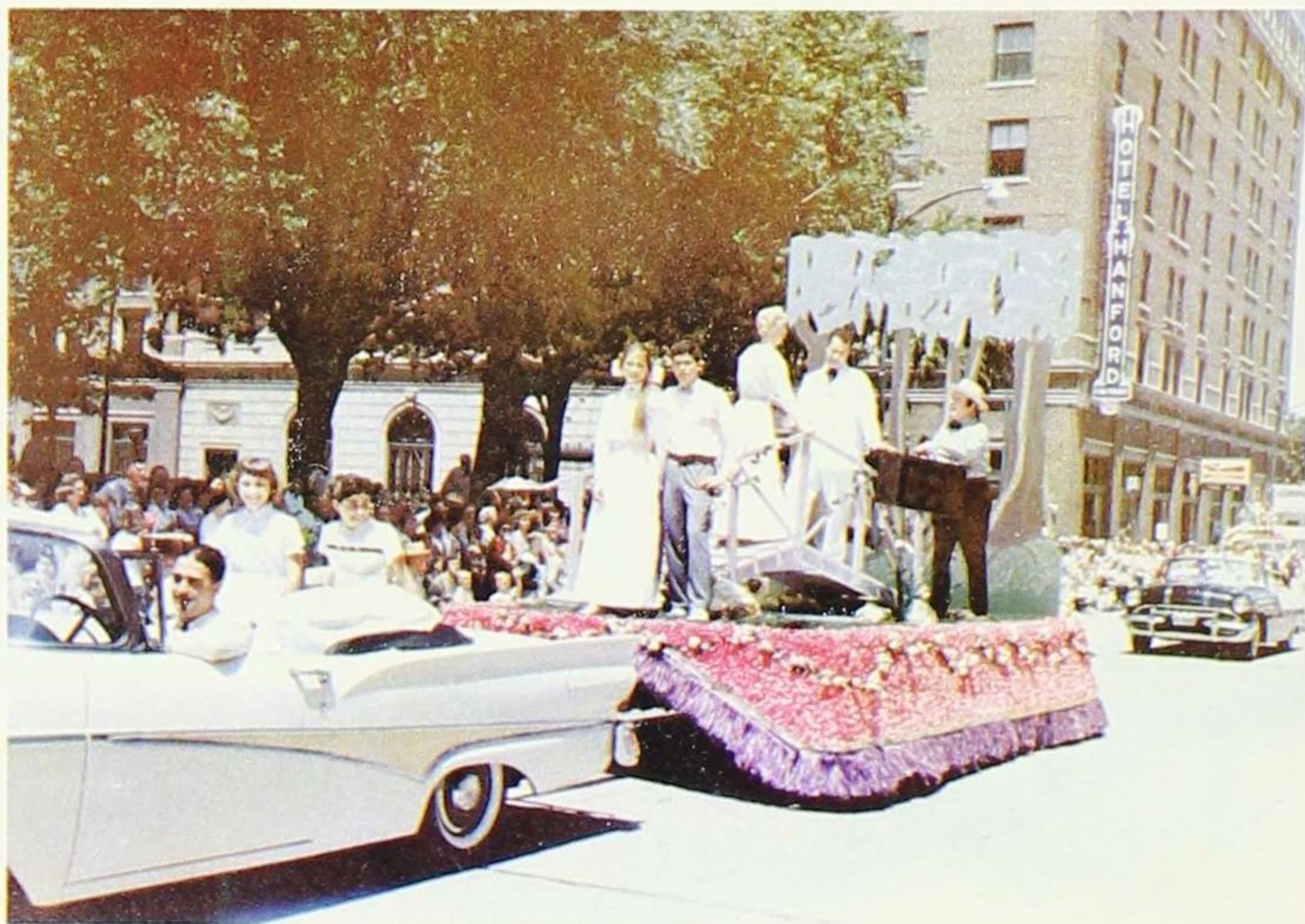
Marian—Madam Librarian



O-ho the Wells Fargo Wagon is a-comin' down the street



Buffalo Bills—Lida Rose



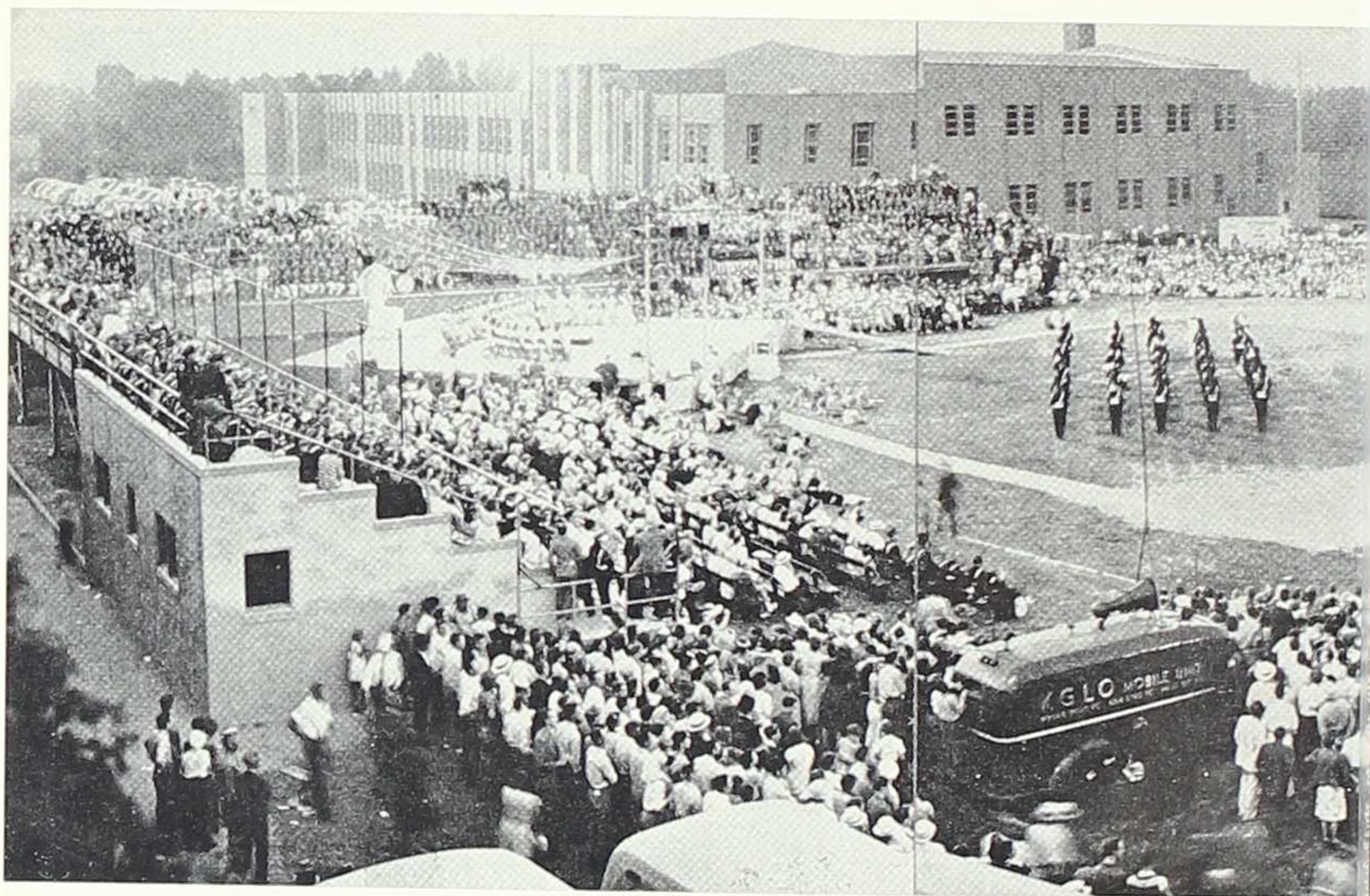
The Footbridge—Till There Was You



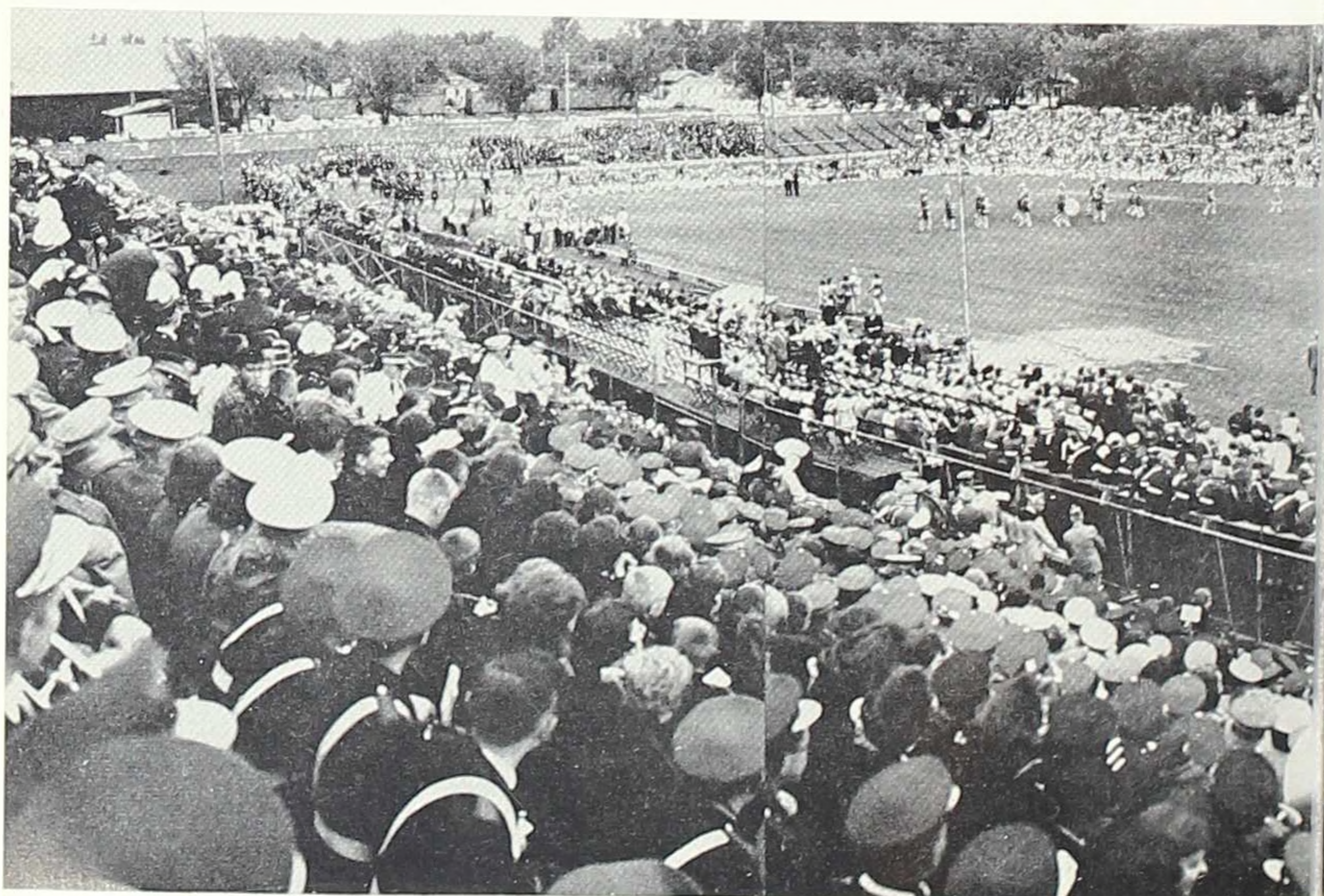
Bil and Cora Baird return home for the Festival.

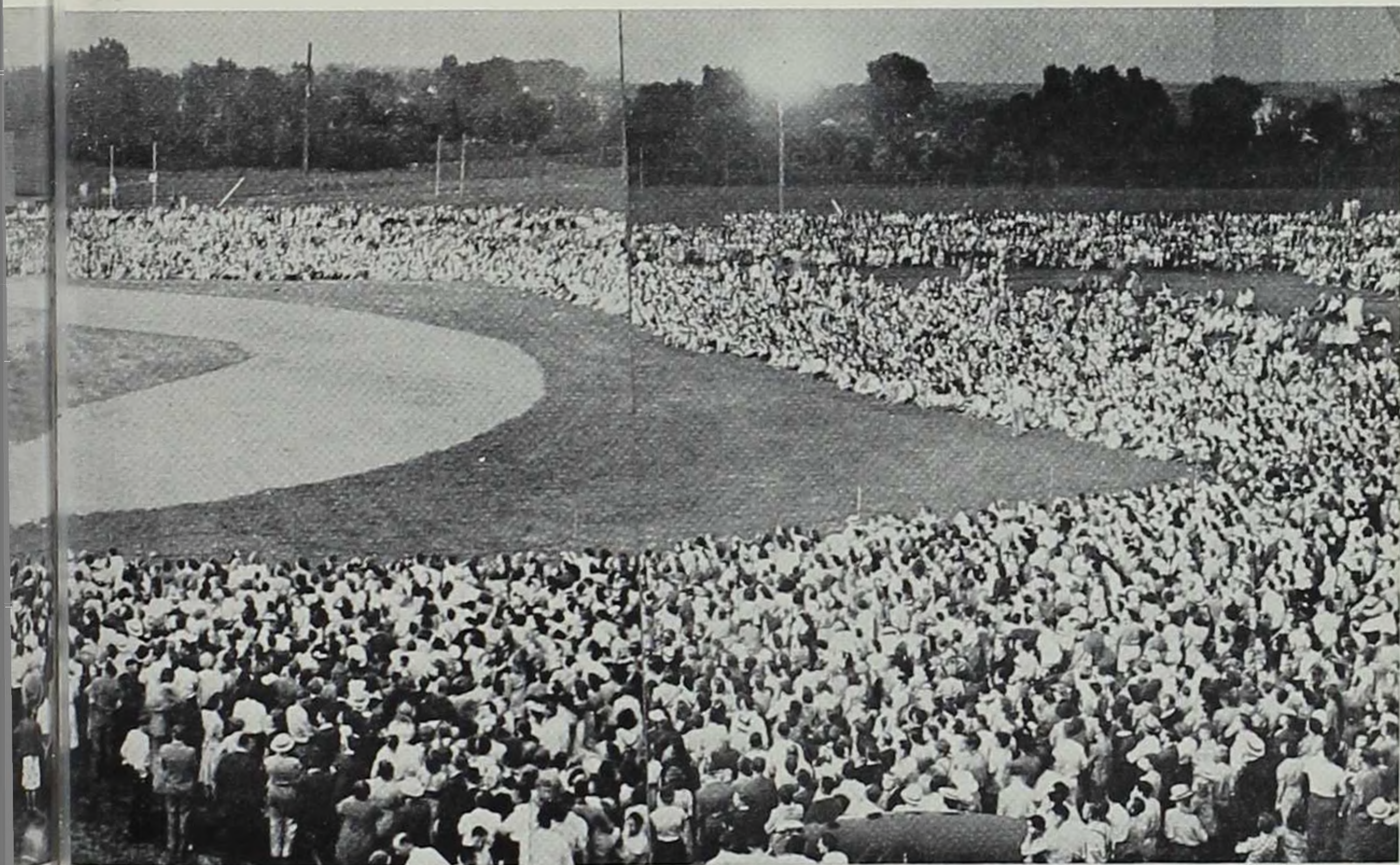


Bandmaster O. K. Conklin of Marble Rock missed only one Festival—because of an operation.

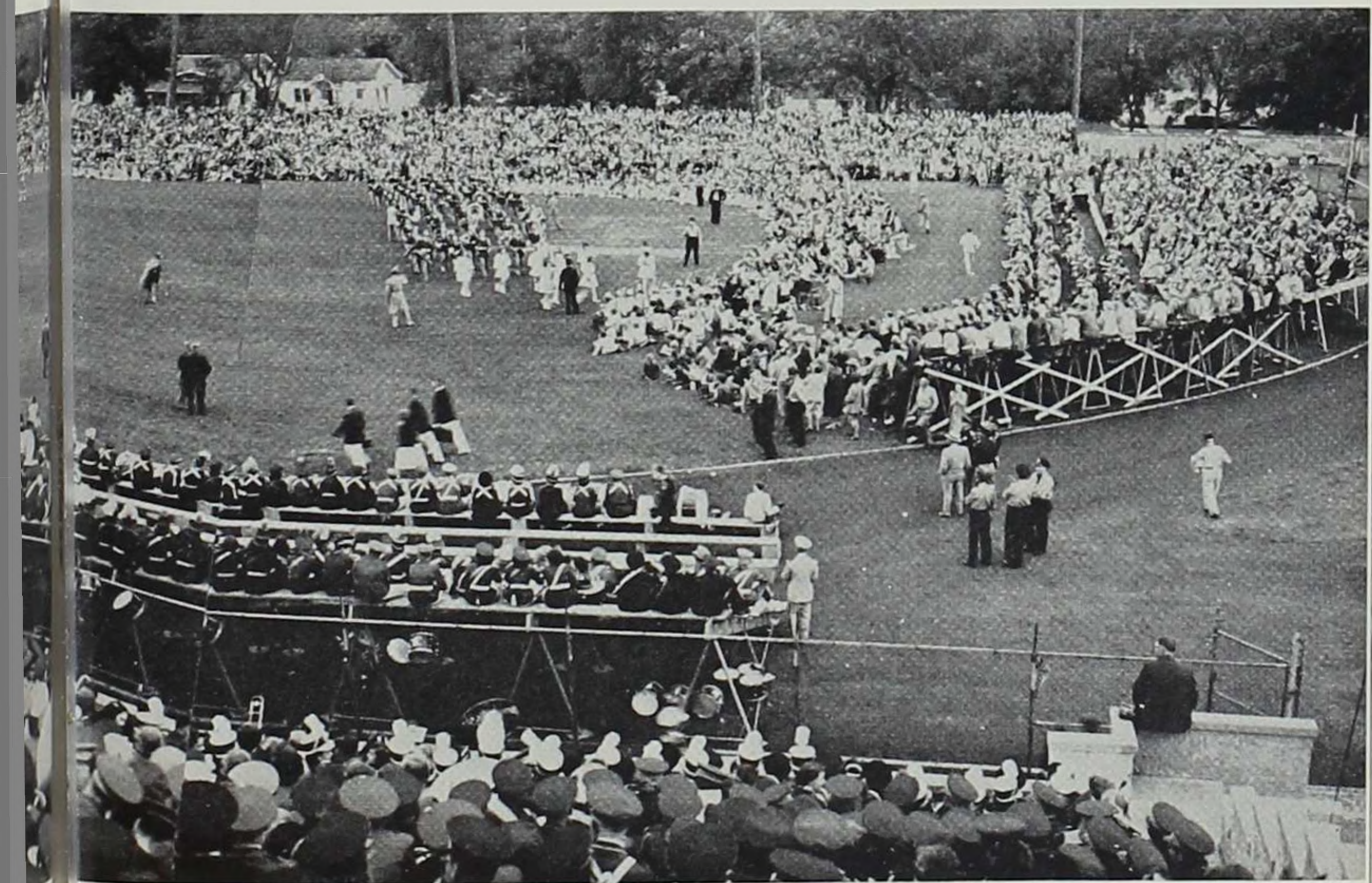


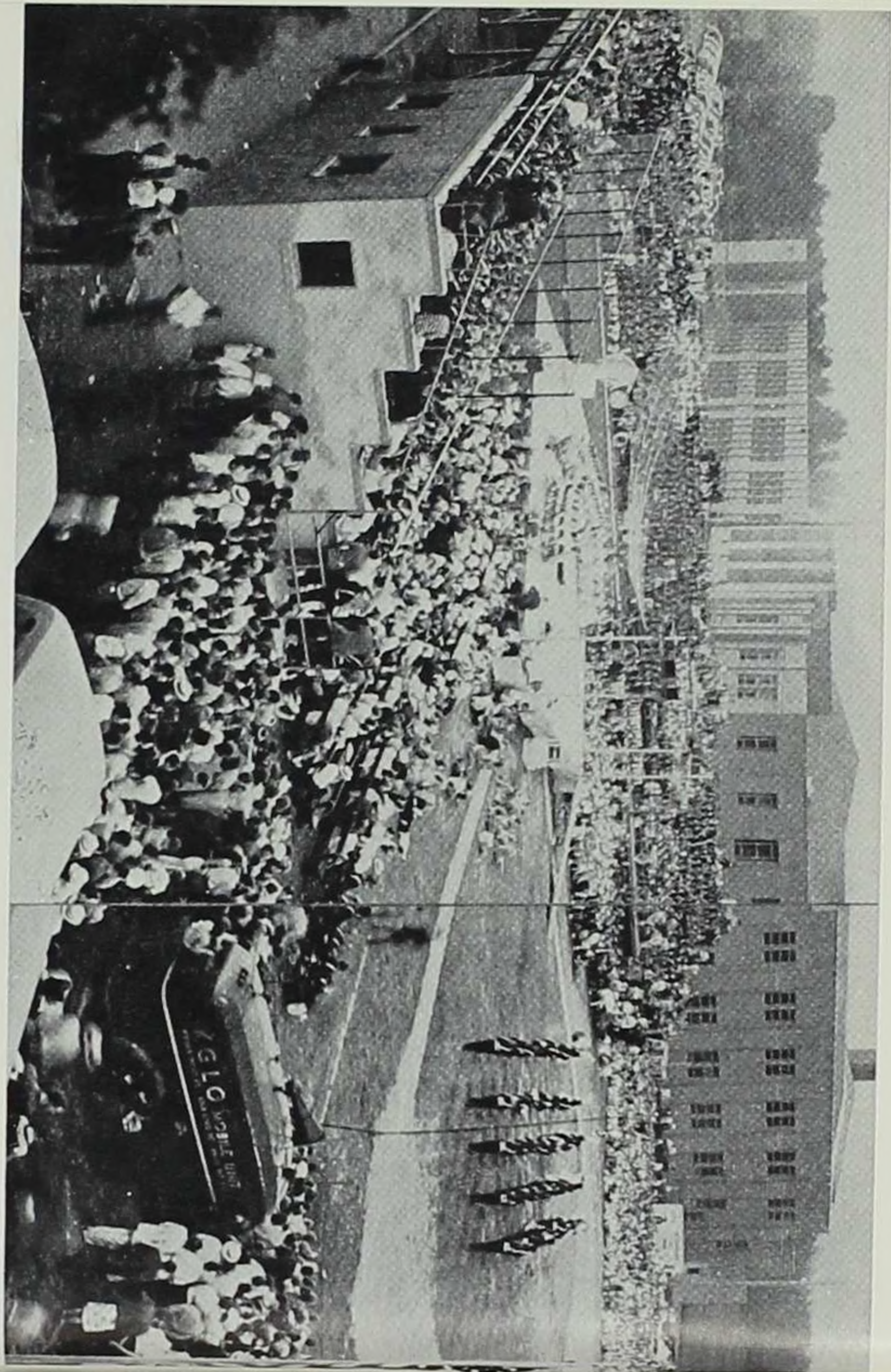
Thousands view the mass band program, the coronation of the Queen of the North



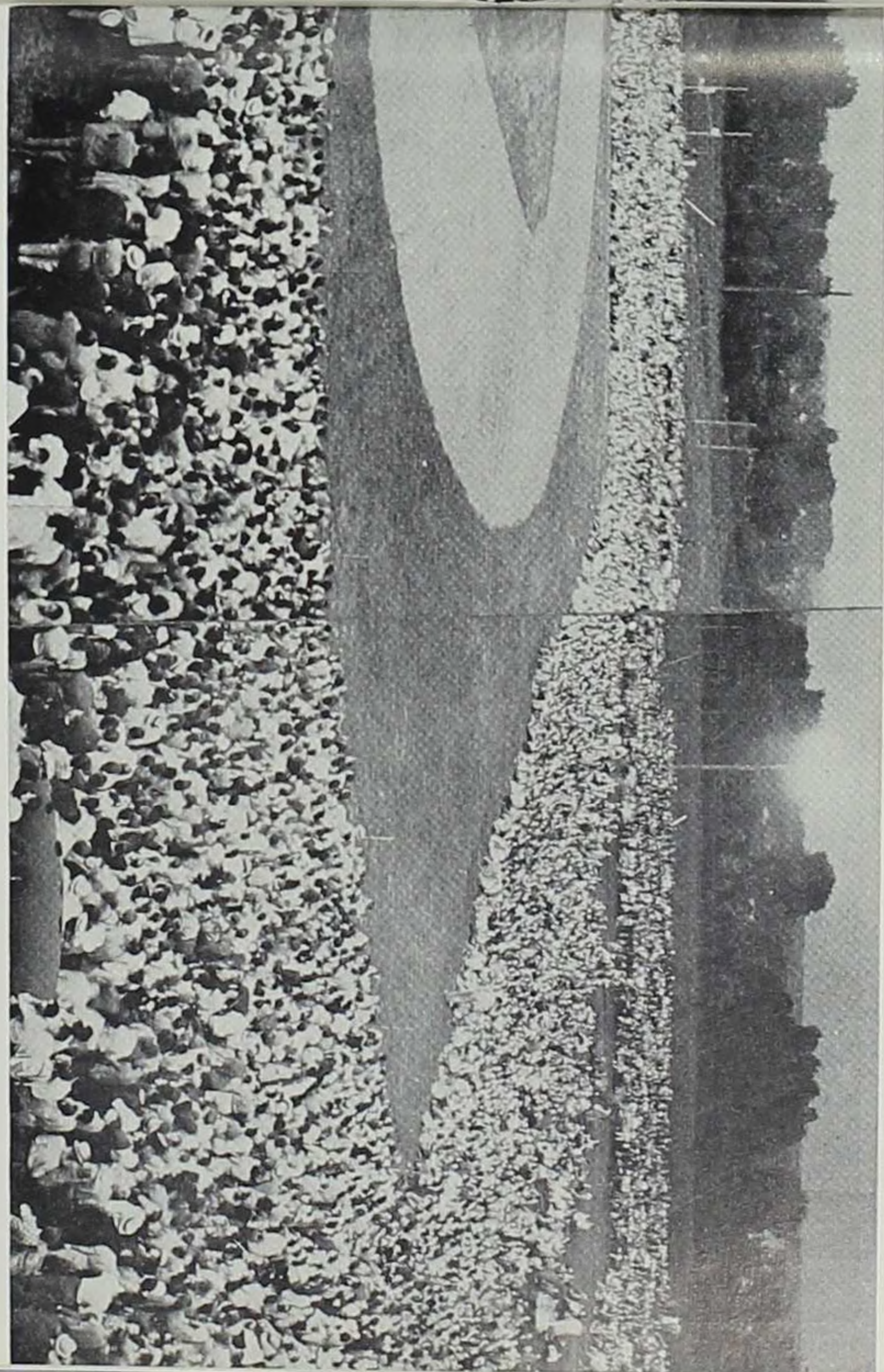
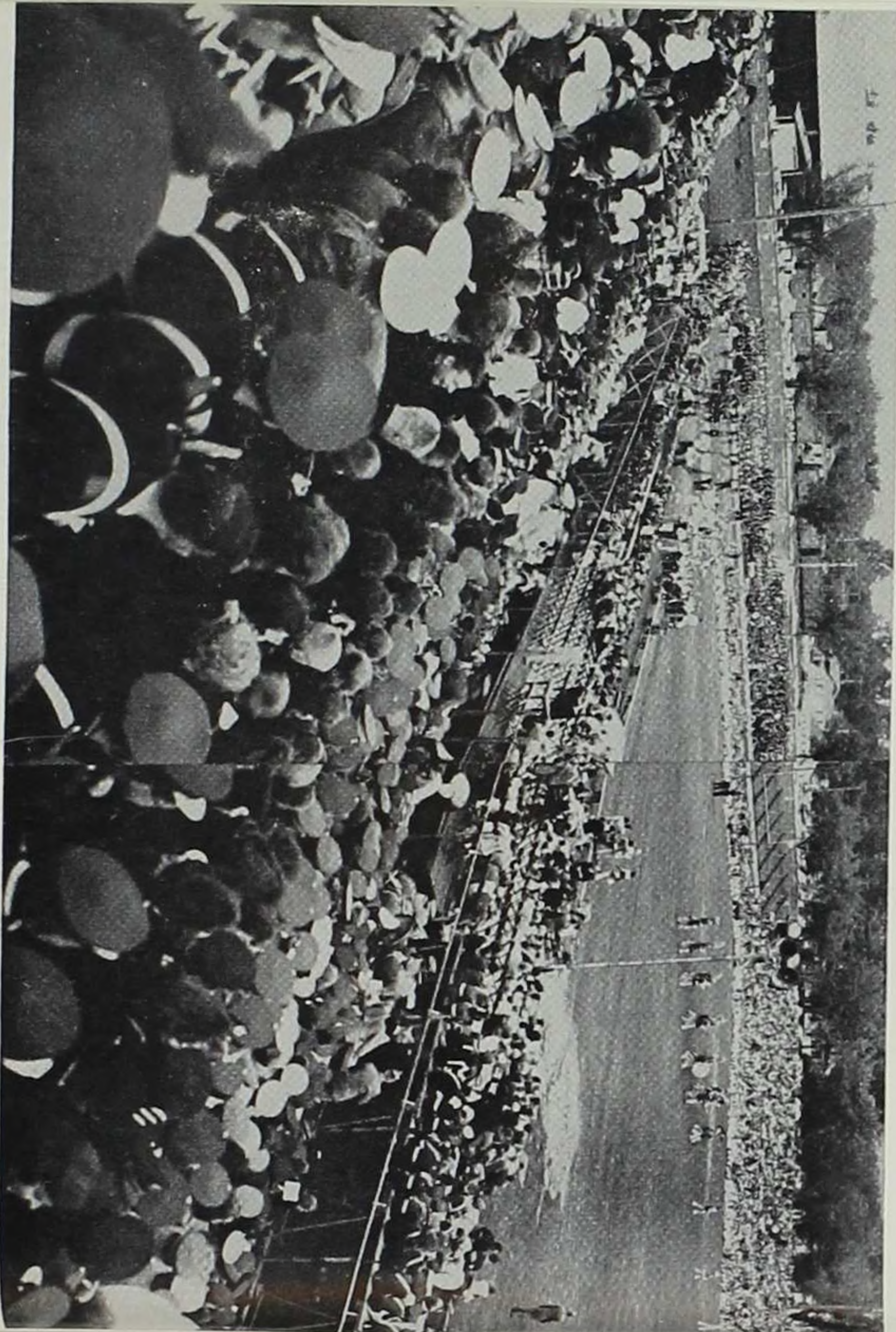


Iowa Band Festival, and other entertainment. The bottom picture shows the 1954 crowd.

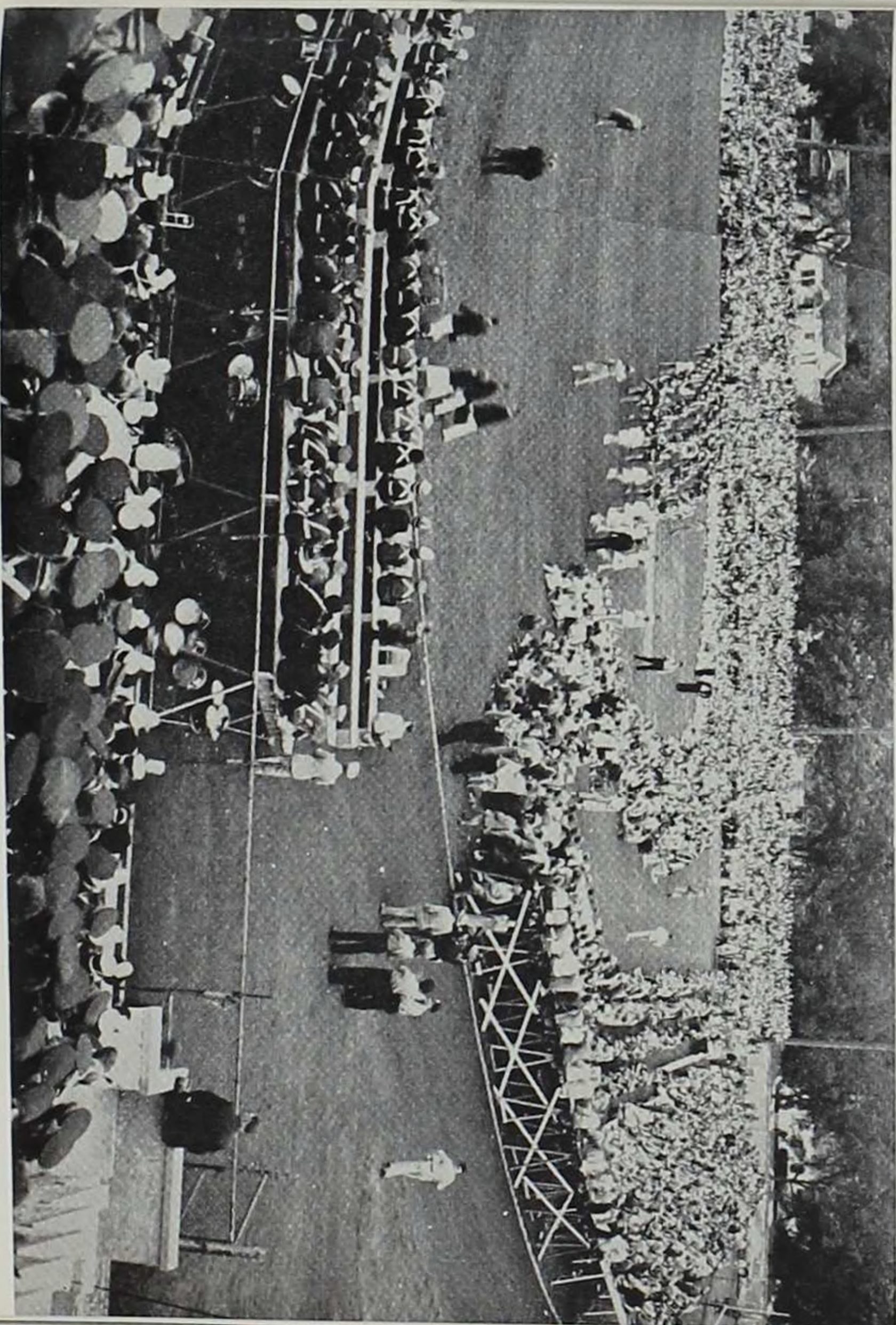




Thousands view the mass band program, the coronation of the Queen of the North



Iowa Band Festival, and other entertainment. The bottom picture shows the 1954 crowd.





The presentation of the new Miss North Iowa is eagerly awaited.



The 1955 annual luncheon for the queen candidates was a happy affair.



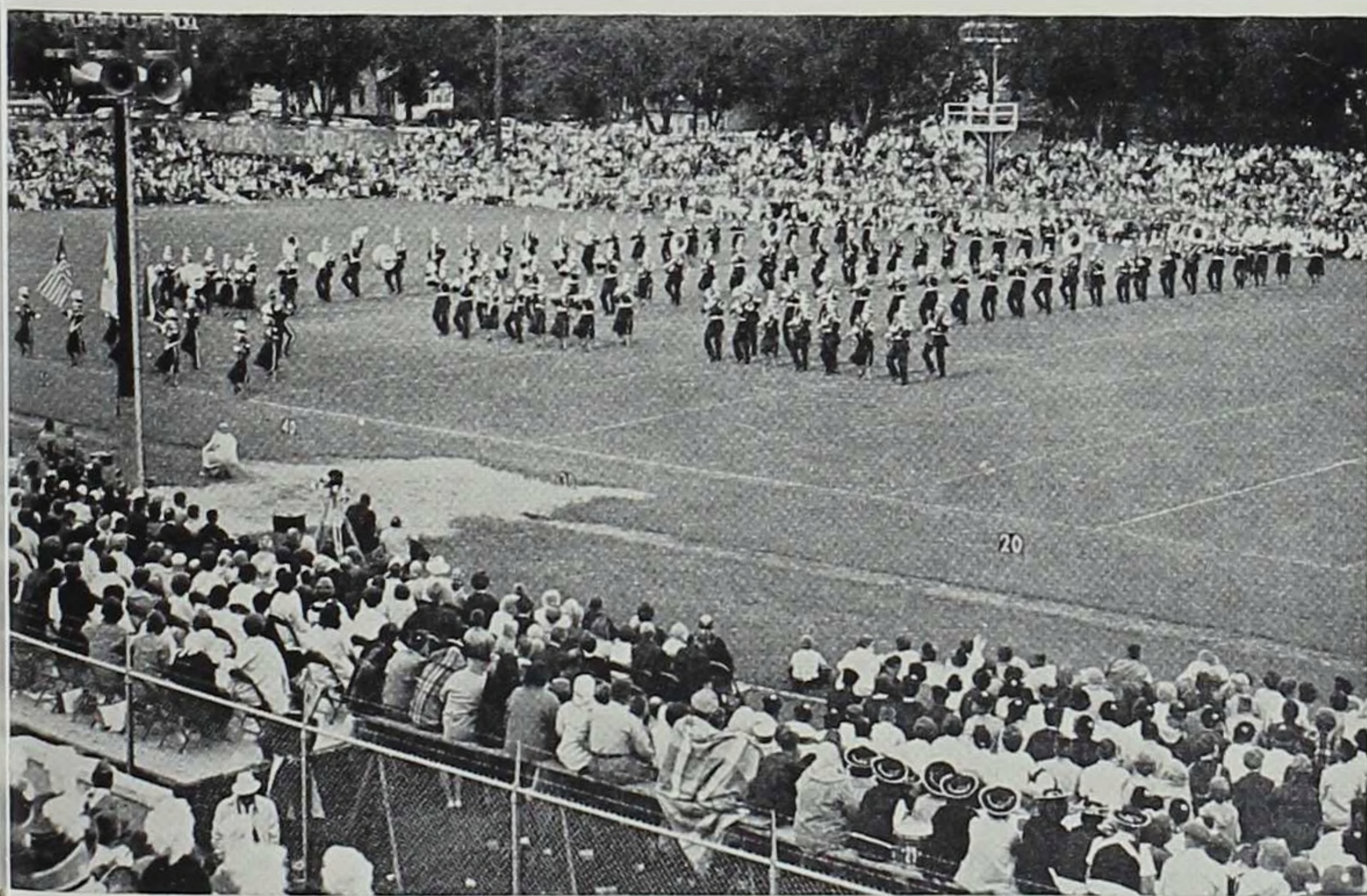
In 1958 Meredith Willson led the colorful parade.



In 1968 Willson watched the 81 competing bands pass in review.



Rain or shine (and it almost always shines) the stands are packed.



The prize-winning champion Lockport (Illinois) band performs on the field for an appreciative audience in 1963.



The Lockport band parades down Federal Avenue in 1962.



Another view of the champion Lockport band on parade.



The famous Mason City "Rusty Hinge" quartet was the inspiration for Meredith Willson's creation of the "Buffalo Bills" in *The Music Man*. Here the "Hinges" meet the "Buffalo Bills" for the first time in 1962.



The "Rusty Hinges"—Dr. Ray Kunz, Earl M. Dean, Fred Shaffer, W. Earl Hall—occupy a float in the 1958 parade.



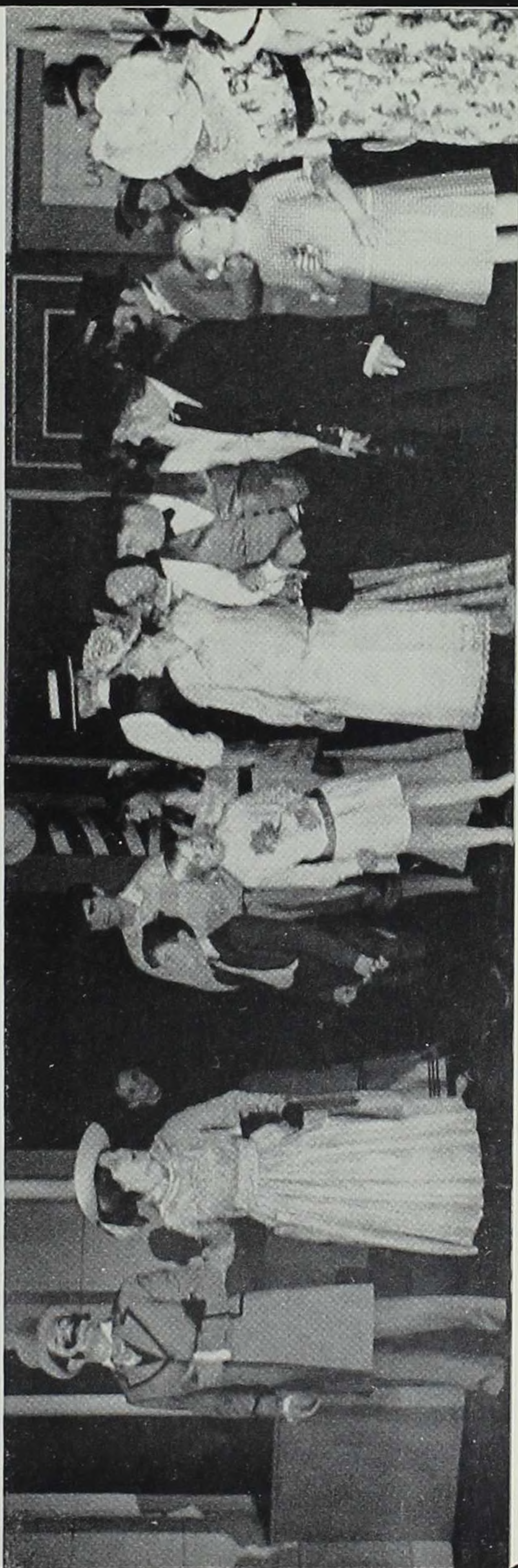
Meredith Willson greets Hollywood stars on their arrival at the Mason City airport in 1962.



Willson detects a sour note as Robert Preston, star of *The Music Man* on stage and screen, attempts a few notes on the trombone. Producer-director DaCosta and Shirley Jones enjoy Robert Preston's efforts.



(Top) Scene I: Rock Island train scene—July 4, 1912. (Bottom) Scene 2: Center of town. Song—"Iowa Stubborn".

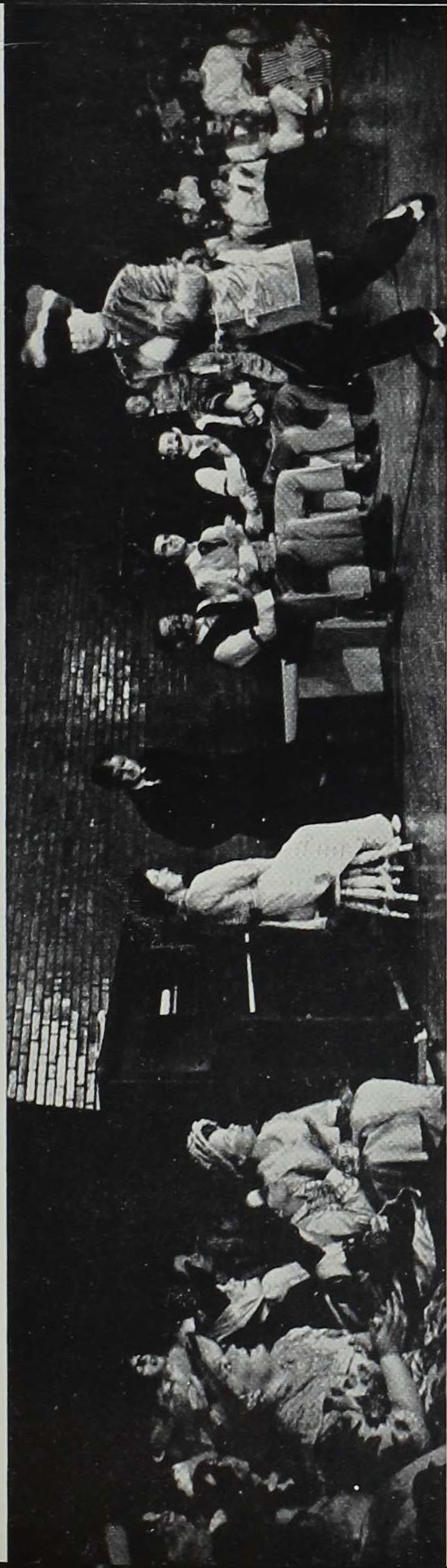




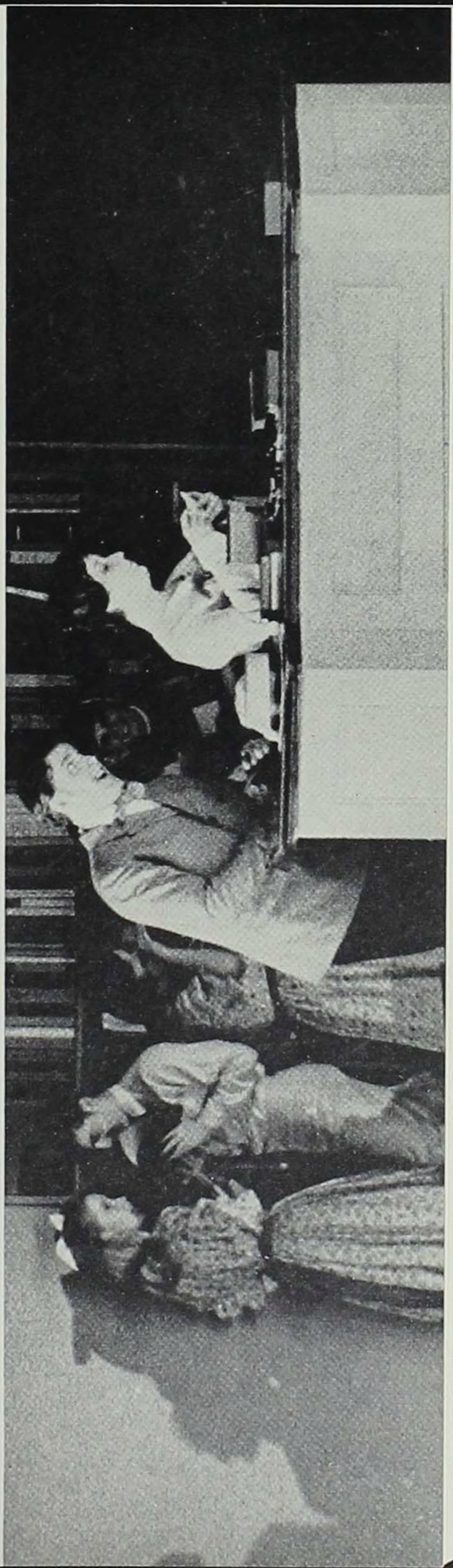
The Music Man says River City is in for "Trouble".

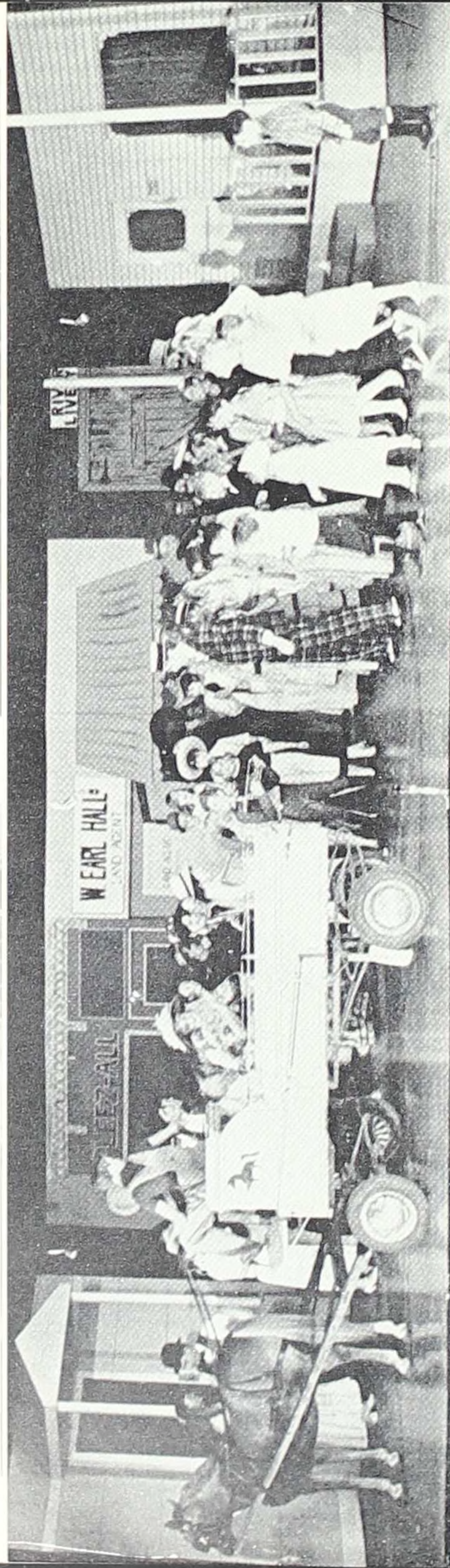


"Pick-a-Little, Talk-a-Little, Cheep, Cheep, Cheep."



(Top) Professor Hill sings "Seventy-Six Trombones" in Madison gymnasium. (Bottom) Interior of Madison Library--
"Marian the Librarian".





(Top) The "Wells Fargo Wagon" arrives in River City. (Bottom) Marian, Amaryllis, Winthrop examine the newly arrived cornet.





(Top) "Shipooopi". (Bottom) Boys Band.





Meredith and Rose Mary Willson greet crowd in 1968.

Petersen discusses with Willson his Band Festival picture layout for *The Palimpsest*.



of other years and these in turn by the 87 queen candidates for 1958.

Enthusiastic and prolonged applause greeted the renditions of the massed band concert at night. The fine performance under the direction of Guest Conductor Ralph Yoder was a thrilling experience for all who attended the Band Festival.

The long day of music, parades, and concerts came to a close with the crowning of Miss Jan Clark of Bancroft who, as Miss North Iowa, would reign as queen until her successor was named in 1959. Miss Clark was the 18th girl to be chosen Miss North Iowa during the 20 years of the festival. The custom had been inaugurated in 1938 but three World War II years had intervened in which no Band Festival was held. During this period 1,211 queen candidates had competed for the honor of Miss North Iowa.

During the 20 years the North Iowa Band Festival had been held, 1,324 visiting high school bands had marched down Federal Avenue to the applause of thousands. More than 65,700 players had participated in these Band Festivals and many times that number of friends, relatives, teachers, spectators, fathers, mothers, yes and sweethearts, had beamed with pride and joy as their loved ones passed in review. For the success of the Band Festival is due in no small degree to the encouragement given the young musicians along every step of their career.

An unusually astute observer, who had attended many Band Festivals, has expressed his feelings as follows:

The person who misses the Band Festival misses the color, the crowds, the girls; the music, the bands, the girls: the marching, the laughter, the girls; the cheers, the hot dogs, the girls; the fun, the queens, and the girls.

All this is true, and perhaps a bit more might be added. The tremendous success would not have been possible without an unquenchable community spirit, whole-hearted cooperation, dependable teamwork, the enthusiastic participation of neighboring towns, and the sheer love the young Iowans have always had for music in all its varied forms.

WILLIAM J. PETERSEN

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