

Strike Up the Band... Again!

by Marion M. Dumond

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(Note from Marion M. Dumond: "I'm sorry I'm not able to produce the article on the **Fantinekill Monument**, newly-restored and in its glory, for the December issue, but a personal calamity involving window washing, a step ladder, and a loss of balance, resulting in a horrible vertical fracture of my right tibia (plus other issues) has me unable to complete my research or get near my computer at this time. I hope my history-minded friends will enjoy this article I wrote for the Ellenville Public Library & Museum several years ago. The recent death of Joe Rauner, of Clayton's Band fame, makes this particularly appropriate timing. Joe's uniform was one of the bases for the Clayton collection now so beautifully displayed in and near the second floor bandstand at **Terwilliger House**.")



A permanent exhibit at the end of the second floor hall of **Terwilliger House** (photo above), the *Ellenville Public Library & Museum's* local history museum, commemorates the nearly eighty-year history of **Clayton's Military Band**, a magical musical memory of early twentieth century Ellenville. Its preparation and construction created another historical event, the 1985 reunion known as *Remembering Clayton's*.

Clayton's Military Band was organized by Tom Clayton (photo, top right, with side whiskers), an English-born knife-maker who came to Ellenville to work at the *Ulster Knife Company*. He had served with the band of the 14th Infantry during the Civil War and was admired as both a musician and a skillful artisan. The June 13, 1884, *Ellenville Journal* said, "A new band was organized in the village on Monday evening. It is to consist of twelve pieces, and will be trained and led by Mr. Clayton."

By September, the paper reported that the band was making fine progress and was practicing marching on the **Greenfield Road**. Torches were used at night so the marchers could find their way.

Open-air concerts began in the summer of 1886 and were immensely popular from their inception, leading to construction of a bandstand at the head of **Bogardus Street** on land owned by the *Terwilliger House* hotel. After the *Terwilliger House* burned and the *Wayside Inn* was under construction, the stand was moved to the vacant lot where the **Scoresby Clubhouse** was erected, and eventually to the *Ulster County Fair Grounds* off **Yankee Place**.

The name varied through the years: *Clayton's Cornet Band*, *Clayton's Band*, and finally, at its incorporation in



A photo of **Clayton's Band**, taken at the *Ulster County Fair* in Ellenville, September 15-18th 1891. Front row, from left: George Brady, Bernard Saunders, Howard Dutches, Lou Clayton, Frank Brady, TOM CLAYTON, Irving Carmen, William Booth, Herman Wells; middle row, from left: Ben Russell, John Ryan, Will Harris, Fred Suckley, Will Haskins, Will Carmen, Charles Brady, Case Frear; back row: George Warner, Steve Mance.

1916, *Clayton's Military Band* (photo below, at *Wayside Inn steps*).

Tom Clayton died in 1908, but he had trained his men so well that the band continued successfully under the direction of a variety of leaders: Adam Rosenberger, James Russell, Diebold Dellers, Floyd Howe and Harry J. Smith.

Perhaps the most unique member of the band was George Reichert, who played for more than fifty years. He was taught by Tom Clayton, who would walk to Napanoch, give George and one or two others a lesson, and then walk back to Ellenville – for sixty cents a lesson.

Clayton's Band was part of every important occasion: parades, ceremonies, the *Ulster County Fair*, plus the summer concerts. Even band rehearsals (photo, next page, top left) were a community event, with residents coming out to watch *Clayton's Band* march down **Market Street** to **Liberty Square**.

Band membership involved time, work, and expense, as instruments were costly, uniforms had to be purchased, trips required financing, and outside players had to be hired if someone local didn't play a specific instrument. ➔

