

A History of Oak Harbor's bands  
By JEW NEWY

Several decades ago a young man arrived in Chicago where he was exposed to the lights and sounds of the big city, nothing like he had ever known before. Barney Nienhuis was enthralled with everything, attended band concerts in the chataqua, mingled with the crowds, walked the streets and heard the Salvation Army band as it stood on the corners. He saw poverty he could not fathom and wealth he could not comprehend.

Twenty-eight year old Barney had arrived by train for a period of time from the west coast for a variety of reasons; family business, pleasure, as well as education and culture. In the cold winter months of 1908, he knew he would be ready to return to the milder climate, away from the wind and snow that Chicago was already famous for, back to the serene, pastoral island in Puget Sound where all God's children feared and worshiped their maker. His missions would be accomplished and ready to return to home and family.

He considered often as he laid in bed in the big city that fall of 1907 what this metropolis offered its citizens, comparing them to the offerings of little Oak Harbor to its citizens. Corruption, crime, poverty, sinful dens-- thank the dear Lord above, friends and family back home didn't have to be exposed to this. But the sounds of people together, enjoying picnics in the park, softball games and listening to band concerts, Oak Harbor didn't have. And Barney knew he would miss these when he returned West. If only there was a band back home.

As he walked past a music store window one morning, the sun danced on a piece of delicately curved tube of highly polished brass. His eyes soon focused and he saw what appeared to be Gabriel's trumpet itself. Memories of his younger days in a band back in Michigan flooded his mind, and without thinking, went into the shop and bought the golden horn. He enlisted the help of a trumpet teacher in the store to teach