



The Penn State Blue Band: A Century of Pride and Precision

Sean Patrick Smith, Thomas E. Range II

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From the Preface:

"A hush falls over the 95,000 people in attendance as drum taps measure the seconds in the middle of the field. A whistle blows once, then four times rapidly, and suddenly the drums thunder in a staccato fury. Up from the depths of Beaver Stadium storm the 275 members of The Pennsylvania State University Marching Blue Band as they triple-time onto the field. The only thing louder than the fight song they play is the roar of thousands of football fans cheering them on.

The excitement, the pride, and the tradition of the Blue Band have been experienced by generations of Nittany Lion fans for 100 years. . . . As the band finishes its first century, those memories, stories, and traditions must be preserved for future generations to enjoy. This book attempts to do just that."

This history opens with the story of how marching bands came to be so popular in America, from their early nineteenth-century beginnings at West Point to the tremendous growth of their appeal into the present day. The story continues by explaining how that popularity and the importance of music in student military training at Penn State eventually led to establishment of the Cadet Bugle Corps, the Blue Band's precursor, in 1899.

Ten chapters follow, each devoted to a single decade covering the major events in the band's development over the next hundred years, such as the adoption of the name "Blue Band" in 1923. Interspersed throughout are biographies of its five past and present directors, as well as "Spotlights" that focus on special aspects of the band, including fight songs, marching style, majorettes, silks, "flipping" drum majors, and various band traditions. Also included is a comparison with other prominent collegiate marching bands today. Illustrations from the band's early history to the present enrich the story throughout.

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