

## Kennedy Park Bandstand/Gazebo

### Architectural History

A bandstand, more recently called a gazebo, has stood in Lewiston's Kennedy Park for 143 years. The two successive structures have been on the long crosswalk near the Soldier's Monument about midway between the flagstaff and the path leading to the Civil War monument, as indicated by the map in the Sanford-Evert Atlas of Androscoggin County and in nineteenth century stereo-view photos.

The first bandstand was constructed in 1868, soon after the Franklin Company deeded the park to the Town of Lewiston. Almost every year until 1932, the city paid for summer band concerts, including local bands such as Johnson's Cornet Band, Montcalm Band, Lewiston Brigade Band, Dominican Band, and St. Cecelia Boys Band.

This original bandstand was moved in 1925 and reconstructed on the Lincoln Street Playground, which was opened that same year.



*City Park bandstand, 1868–1925  
Lincoln Street Playground, 1925–1937*

Band concerts continued for a few years, but then it was simply a play area for the children. When Mayor Levesque was informed that the bandstand was unsafe, it was razed suddenly in July 1937.

In the meantime, the current bandstand was constructed in 1925. In mid-August, the *Lewiston Evening Journal* reported completion of the new facility and included a picture. [“New City Park Bandstand Ready for Music Makers,” *Lewiston Evening Journal*, 18 August 1925, 12.] The architect for the new bandstand was Evan O. P. Desjardins of Lewiston. [Attribution under drawing, “Children’s Parade to Dedicate Bandstand,” *LEJ*, 9 July 1925, 4.] On the roof were “pressed zinc ornaments in the form of a lyre and scroll,” open to permit the green roof to show through as a background. A seven-foot finial, twenty inches at the base, was topped by a light. The brackets joining the roof and the columns would exhibit the letter “L.” The ceiling was composed of eight panels, each with a light, and meeting an octagonal centerpiece with a central light. The wooden floor was covered with galvanized iron. “A seat of heavy plank will be built around the sides of the stand, capable of holding about 45 people. The floor is to be painted gray, the ceiling blue with cream colored ribs and the roof green. The remainder of the trimmings will be cream colored.” [“Ornamental Work of Bandstand Ready,” *Lewiston Daily Sun*, 31 July 1925, 16.] The newspaper picture reveals that this bandstand had a porch-style balustrade with elaborate, light-colored balusters. At the top of the steps are gates of the same style.

Contractor Louis Malo, who had won the bid for construction at \$1,907.00 without painting and wiring, began work on July 8, 1925. [“The sub-contracts were let to Davis & Evan, carpenters; to J. Nazaire Theriault, painting; A. & R. Simpson Co., wiring; Hahnel & Hoffman, metal work.” “... Collapse,” *LEJ*, 8 July 1925, 12.] The *Journal* inaccurately reported that the

bandstand “has cost the Lewiston taxpayers the neat little sum of only \$1000 dollars ... because the Lewiston contractors have taken a profound interest in the structure and have given efficient and expeditious work here.” [“... Ready for Music Makers,” *LEJ*, August 18, 1925, 12.] However, Mayor Wiseman later quoted the bid figure of \$1,907, not including the wiring. [“Four Concerts Next Week,” *Lewiston Daily Sun*, August 21, 1925.] The City’s annual report for 1926 listed an expenditure of \$2,058.55 for the bandstand, which presumably would be the bid amount plus the cost of wiring. [63<sup>rd</sup> Annual Report, 1926, page 125.]



“New Band Stand at Lewiston City Park,” *Lewiston Evening Journal*, August 18, 1925.

The new bandstand was inaugurated with a band concert on 6 August 1925. The Brigade Band of twenty-five pieces, directed by Arthur N. Pettingill in its thirty-eighth season, provided the entertainment, with additional solo performances by soprano Miss Malo and baritone Mr. Tremblay, as well as the Harmony Four. [“Band Concert tonight,” *Lewiston Daily Sun*, August 6, 1925, 14].

In 1972, an expenditure of \$2,017 for capital outlay in the park was made, “mainly on the restoration of the bandstand.” [Annual report for 1972, p. 13]. This probably was the occasion of

the replacement of the balustrade with fancy, beveled wrought iron because some one thought this would provide a more “antique” or Victorian appearance. These were recycled from the balcony in the auditorium in the Lewiston City Building, which was constructed in the early 1890’s. This has fooled those writers who accepted this feature as part of an alleged 1881 construction, for which there is no evidence. Additional changes were replacement of the lattice work between the supporting posts with concrete blocks. The steps are a commercial, pre-cast concrete. Only one of the fancy zinc decorations on the roof remains in place.



### Selected Historic Events

Countless events have been associated with the two gazebos that have stood in Kennedy Park. Throughout the latter part of the nineteenth century and through the twentieth century they were the focal point for political rallies, musical events, and festivals. Presidents, candidates for president, and state and local politicians used it as a venue to address crowds that came to hear them speak. As recently as 2008, Democratic National Chairman Howard Dean appeared in the gazebo at a pre-election rally. Band and other concerts have entertained local residents and tourists. Festivals have included the Franco-American Festival during the 1970s and 1980s.

Some of the most memorable occasions have been the visits of national political figures. The following are some of the most significant that



*Senator John F. Kennedy, Senator Edmund Muskie, senatorial candidate Lucia Cornier, and congressional candidate John Donovan, November 6, 1960.*

were associated with the current gazebo, constructed in 1925.

Clearly the visit that has taken on mythic proportions is that of Senator John F. Kennedy. He attended a campaign rally the night of November 6 to 7, 1960 in Lewiston City Park just before his election as President. He was held up by enthusiastic crowds in New Jersey and finally flew into the Auburn-Lewiston Airport. Meanwhile at Lewiston City Park, Senator Edmund Muskie and Democratic candidates and leaders had kept the crowd entertained. There were also several bands to keep things lively. Kennedy arrived just before midnight on November 6, 1960. 14,000 people were on hand for the scheduled time of 9:00 P.M., and more than 8,000 remained despite the freezing temperatures. ["Sen. Kennedy Gets Rousing Vote Of Confidence In His Textile City Appearance," "Kennedy Gets Uproarious Greeting by Enthusiastic Supports [*sic*] in Visit Here," "Carnival Air Prevailed at the Rally," *Lewiston Evening Journal*, November 7, 1960.]

As an interesting aside, on Monday, November 7, the Republican vice-presidential nominee Henry Cabot Lodge came to Lewiston City Park at noon for a rally of 3,000. ["Lodge in

Lewiston: Says America Needs Experienced Captain," "Estimated 3,000 Crowd Hears Lodge," all in *Lewiston Evening Journal*, November 7, 1960]

The Park was named for Kennedy on December 3, 1963, right after the assassination. ["Lewiston Renames Park for President Kennedy," *Lewiston Daily Sun*, January 29, 1964.] To lose the gazebo from which he spoke would deprive current and future generations of the context for the park's name.

A few years later, an incumbent president came to speak at the gazebo. President Lyndon B. Johnson arrived by limousine to address 12,000 people at Kennedy Park in the late afternoon on August 20, 1966. He was accompanied by his wife Lady Bird and his daughter Lynda Bird and a host of officials. This was part of a five-state tour. The Maine portion of Johnson's trip began with his arrival at Brunswick Naval Air Station and a motorcade to Lewiston. (In the past, the Dairy Queen in Topsham advertised, "LBJ Ate Here.")

Johnson's speech focused on concerns about government spending and inflation and on the need for "a great society," the theme of the domestic policy of his administration. After the speech, Johnson plunged into the crowd to shake hands with members of the enthusiastic crowd. A local reporter noted that the "newspaper crowd"



*President Lyndon Johnson, his wife Lady Bird Johnson, and daughter Lynda Bird Johnson greet the crowd, August 20, 1966.*

traveling with the President said, "Lewiston's welcome was the biggest turnout in the entire northeast tour." ["President Johnson's Visit To Lewiston Is Huge Success" and "It Was A Big Day For 'The People'" *Lewiston Evening Journal*, August 22, 1966. "Thousands Hear Johnson Address at Kennedy Park," *Lewiston Daily Sun*, August 23, 1966.]

Other notable figures who spoke at the gazebo are Democratic National Chairman James A Farley, Senator Edward Kennedy and Senator Hubert H. Humphrey. Farley was a powerful member of the Franklin Roosevelt administration who campaigned for Democratic candidates in 1938. ["Democrats Pleased with Farley Visit," *Lewiston Evening Journal*, September 2, 1938.] Senator Edward Kennedy of Massachusetts came three times between September 1978 and January 1980 in what was a prelude to his challenge to President Jimmy Carter for the Democratic nomination. One of those was a rally November 3 at Kennedy Park on behalf of U. S. Senator William Hathaway. ["Kennedy Visits Again; Cohen Camp Cries Foul," *Lewiston Daily Sun*, Nov. 4, 1978; "Sen. Kennedy Lights up the Park" and "And sparks fiery response from Mayor Caron," *Lewiston Evening Journal*, November 4, 1978.] On October 13, 1964, as the Democratic vice-presidential nominee, Humphrey spoke from the bandstand to a crowd estimated at 5,000. He invoked Kennedy's name. ["Humphrey Gets Warm (Wet) Lewiston-Auburn Welcome," *Lewiston Evening Journal*, October 14, 1964.]



*Kennedy Park Gazebo, 2009*



*Preparations for Humphrey Visit, Lewiston Evening Journal, October 9, 1964.*

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