



Ashford's Babcock Band performs at the celebration of Connecticut's Old State House renovation in Hartford on May 15, 1996. The Band Director seen on the top of the trailer (right-hand side) is Louis Chatey.



Babcock Band members performing in Ashford's traditional Memorial Day festivities in 2012.



The Babcock Band in the mid-1930s

Top Row: Doris Kosalee, Mary Winski, Connie Goodwin, Amy Elson, Tessie Sanga Seles

Middle Row: Judy Wilson, Dot Barlow Hazen, Helen Kosa Simpson, Shirley Goodwin Gardner, unidentified, Sylvia Rubin Meduna, Violet Buck

Lower Row: Earl Pool, Larry Goodwin, Charles Bebbington, Arthur Goodwin, Betty Goodwin, Harvey Buck, Mildred Barlow Barrett, Leon Gardner, Rev. Chapall

# All About Ashford

Est. 1714

## The Babcock Band



The nation's oldest civilian cornet band, performing since the Civil War!

**All About Ashford** is a service provided by the Babcock Library, 25 Pompey Hollow Road, Ashford, CT 06278

In November 1862 the residents of Ashford voted unanimously at town meeting to gratefully accept two bequests from the estate of Archibald Babcock, late of Charlestown, MA. One bequest of \$3,000.00 was dedicated to the establishment of a "free" library for the town of Ashford. Another gift of an identical amount established a Cornet Band for the town.

Thus was born the Babcock Library and the Babcock Cornet Band, both of which are alive and healthy today along with the two endowment funds still managed by the town!

Unfortunately, little is known about Mr. Babcock himself except for one intriguing fact: he left Ashford in the 1850's at the time of the gold fever in California and evidently struck it rich!

In the 1890s the Lyon and Healy musical instrument manufacturing company of Chicago, IL conducted a survey of bands in the United States. That survey certified Ashford's Babcock Band as the nation's second oldest band behind the Dodworth Band of Providence, R.I. Shortly thereafter the Dodworth group dissolved, leaving the

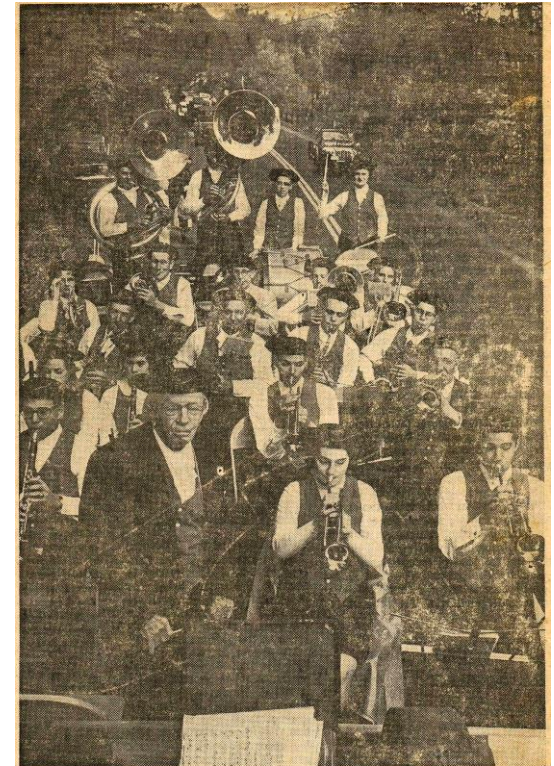
Babcock Band as the undisputed oldest civilian band in the U.S.

In October 1922 the Babcock Band celebrated its sixtieth anniversary with a day of festivities highlighted by an address by notable Ashford resident William H. Platt. Here is how Mr. Platt described the Band's formative years:

"Soon after the acceptance of the trust fund, everyone who could buy, borrow or hire a horn was invited to join. Those who could read music played by note; those who could not played by ear; those who could do neither made what noise they could. Cats, screech owls, and bull frogs all left town. Dogs crawled under the barn or ran away to the woods every time the band played."

Fortunately the Band has improved considerably since then, especially during the 49 year tenure of notable band leader Albert E. Lyman from 1919 until his death in 1967. The Babcock Band is a regular feature at Ashford town events such as Memorial Day, Family Day, and town anniversary

celebrations. The Band also performs in numerous statewide events.



ON THE MARCH: Albert Lyman, 88, of Columbia leads Ashford's Babcock Band as it plays a rousing march Saturday during a parade celebrating the town's 250th anniversary. Named after Archibald Babcock, the band is the oldest in the nation. It was started during the Revolutionary War and continued with Babcock's help in the 19th Century. Babcock, who wanted "a band of music" in Ashford, gave the town \$3,000. Lyman has been with the band for 47 years (Courant Photo by Herman Marshall).

Hartford Courant 1964

Rehearsals are normally scheduled on Sunday evenings at Knowlton Memorial Hall in Warrenville during the weeks prior to a town event. New players are always welcomed.