

# Grandview Park's Historic Band Shell

By Jim Jung

During the spring and summer, the band shell in Sioux City's Grandview Park becomes a center of activity. Many residents are familiar with the structure, but few are familiar with the people and events that caused it to rise during a great and long national depression. Many times Sioux City has been known to beat the odds and the band shell is a good example of just that. The history of the structure has many interesting twists and turns related to its construction.

The band shell is located in the 32 acre Grandview Park which opened in 1908 and was named for the grand view of the surrounding area. The park has a centrally located high ridge around a depression that forms a natural amphitheater. The design of the band shell and the lay of the land amplifies the sounds created within it. Originally, the band shell and surrounding ground were known as the music pavilion.

Poured in place as a single unit, it was one of the most remarkable monolithic structures at the time in the United States. The project required 600 tons of gravel, 4,256 bags of concrete and 52 tons of reinforcing steel.

The events that contributed to the success started on July 30, 1908 when Grandview Park was dedicated. Over the years as band concerts in the park became more popular, the need for better accommodations became apparent. Thousands would stand or sit on the grass as the band performed on a wooden platform and much music was lost to the open air.

Due to the support of citizens, public officials and the Monahan Post band the idea for a new venue began to take a shape in 1930. The Monahan Post Band was organized in 1921 under the local American Legion post. It was named after the first man killed in World War one. They won many awards in the United States and Europe as they traveled. This band later became known as the Sioux City Municipal Band.

At first, plans called for a square old-fashioned building. The city Parks and Recreation Department was willing to assist but had no public funds. The Monahan Post Band agreed to guarantee a construction loan and construction began. However, neighbors, who thought the plan was unworthy of the park, halted construction. The band went about the work of finding another design.

In July 1933, they became aware of plans of a young Sioux City architect named Henry Leveke Kamphoefner who had submitted plans for a band shell to the Paris Society of Beaux Arts and had won mention in the first preliminary trial. Kamphoefner was born May 5, 1907 in Des Moines, Iowa and at the age of 6, his family moved to Sioux City. He became interested in architecture when he enrolled in a high school architectural design course. In addition, a local architect hired him as an office boy and tracer-draftsman. This same architect encouraged him to attend the University of Illinois, which he did and

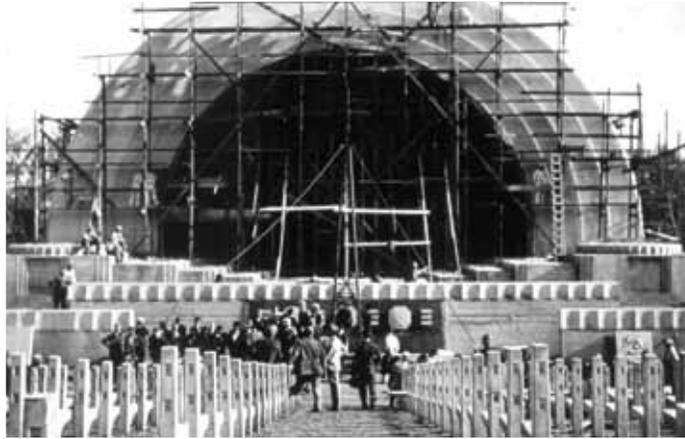


Photo from G.R. Lindblade and Co.



Henry Leveke Kamphoefner

Photo from North Carolina State University archives

graduated in 1930 with a B.S. Degree in architecture.

In 1933, President Roosevelt created the New Deal Program and within it was the Civil Works Administration (CWA), which created jobs for millions of unemployed. Leo Hintgen, former City Engineer was appointed District Engineer for the CWA with offices in Des Moines. The architect, city engineer and city building contractor prepared a CWA application for the band shell project. In the meantime, the manager of the band visited Des Moines twice to plead the case for the project. President

Roosevelt showed his recognition of the efforts when he expressed deep appreciation for the plans. The music pavilion became CWA project 217 and ground was broken March 5, 1934.

A delay in construction occurred with the cessation of CWA and reorganization under the Federal Emergency Relief Program. The CWA was designed to last 2 years but nobody knew the depression would continue so long.

At this point, it is interesting to note that a man named Harry Hopkins, born in Sioux City August 17, 1890, was going to play a part in the project. After his birth, he and his family moved to Council Bluff. In 1931 he was named Executive Director of the temporary Emergency Relief Organization in Washington, D. C. He formed a great friendship with Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt. In 1933, he became Federal Relief Administrator and supervised the Federal Relief Administration, the Civil Works Administration and the Work Progress Administration. He became one of President Roosevelt's closest advisors.

The music pavilion project employed 440 Sioux City men. The entire cost was \$51,236 with \$47,486 coming from federal funds and \$3,500 from city funds. The first concrete was poured October 17, 1935. The construction had provided 57,391 hours of employment for men on relief rolls.

There is much symbolism in the band shell. Kamphoefner chose Iowa City Sculptor Herschel Elarth to design the plaques at the front of the structure. The figure on the left depicts a woman playing a lute and represents the tragic muse symbolizing Wagnerian music. The figure on the right is a faun (a figure in Roman mythology) symbolizing pastoral music. The bands along the great arch represent the sound of music coming from the shell. The drums on either side of the arch give base to the arch and hold in its thrust. The wavy design across the podiums and the front of the stage represent rhythm.

There are many more stories relating to the band shell for several more articles. It is a monument that represents scores of people, a difficult time in history and the spirit of Sioux City as the structure rises into the sky and looks as appropriate as it did at the start.