

Historical Chronology of the FAMU Band Program: 1946 – 2006

Compiled by Dale Thomas

1946 William P. Foster became director of bands.

The band consisted of only sixteen members.

William P. Foster organized both a 45-piece marching band and a 50-piece concert band. This marching band was the first and only band to have majorettes.

A band hall, reconstructed from former army barracks, was used for rehearsal by the band. Practice rooms and classrooms were also available for music students.

1947 L. Allen Pyke became an assistant band director.

The marching band consisted of 75 members.

Nationally famous bandmaster Henry Fillmore served as a guest conductor with the marching band at the Orange Blossom Classic in Miami, Florida.

The first concert by the concert band was held under the baton of William P. Foster.

1948 The concert band performed for the Governor's Conference at Wakulla Springs, Florida.

The First Annual Winter Concert by the concert band was held under the baton of William P. Foster.

A varsity band was formed as a preparatory band for membership in the concert band.

The Bachelor of Arts degree in instrumental music was created at the College.

The military or ROTC band was reorganized.

The marching band acquired new band uniforms.

The concert band made its first concert tour to Florida, Georgia, North Carolina and Virginia.

The concert band began a series of radio broadcasted concerts for radio station WTAL.

1949 William Penn became an assistant band director.

The concert band appeared as a guest band in a program sponsored by Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity and presented by Booker T. Washington High School Band in Pensacola, Florida.

The concert band performed a concert sponsored by the Leon County Commission of Tallahassee in the city's band shell. This was the band's first off-campus performance in the city.

Effie B. Carter organized the first band at FAMC High School.

The concert band appeared in the *School Musician* magazine in an article by William P. Foster. The group was noted as "one of the state's best."

1950 The marching band consisted of 110 members and became widely known as the "Marching 100" band.

A "new sound" was used in the early fifties to describe the eighteen-piece percussion section. The section consisted of 4 Scotch bass drums, 4 tenor drums, 8 snare drums, and 2 cymbals.

The symphonic band consisted of 65 members.

George Holland became an assistant band director and director of woodwinds.

James McElroy became an assistant band director and director of percussion and upper brasswinds.

Caulbert Livingston served as director of the string ensemble.

The marching band became the first black band to appear in the Festival of States Parade in St. Petersburg, Florida.

A music festival and clinic was created at the college featuring high school choral and instrumental groups in observance of National Music Week.

1951 The Florida Association of Band Directors held a band clinic at the College.

The Bachelor of Science degree in music was created at the College.

Reginald DuValle became an assistant band director and director of brasswinds.

1952 Clarence Trice became arranger and director of upper brasswinds.

Roland Haines became director of lower brasswinds.

The marching band consisted of 132 members.

1953 The marching band incorporated a dance routine using the music of “*Alexander’s Ragtime Band*” in its halftime show at the Orange Blossom Classic in Miami.

Charles Cox became an assistant band director and director of woodwinds.

Norma Solomon became the first female admitted in the marching band.

The symphonic band’s tour included concerts in states on the east coast as far as New York City.

Both the marching and concert bands were featured in an article in the *Courier* magazine.

The symphonic band and choir recorded an album with the selections, *Battle Hymn of the Republic* and *Colonel Boogey March*. The album was dedicated to Governor Dan McCarty and the members of the Florida Senate and House of Representatives.

1954 William Wheeler became an assistant band director and director of lower brasswinds. He was the first FAMC graduate to join the band staff under William P. Foster.

Phillip Cooper became an assistant band director and arranger.

1955 Robert Thomas became director of lower brasswinds.

Richard Haley became director of percussion.

1956 The marching band was featured in an *Ebony* magazine article entitled, “*Orange Blossom Classic is Top Negro Grid Bowl Game.*”

1957 The percussion ensemble was formed under the direction of James Latimer.

The symphonic band consisted of 68 members.

A University Symphonette was formed under the direction of Bruce Hayden.

1958 Lenard Bowie became an assistant band director and director of upper brasswinds.

DeSayles Grey became director of saxophones.

The symphonic band performed for the northern district of the FABD 12th Annual State Band Festival at the University.

The *Miami-Herald* proclaimed the marching band as “the Marchingest-Playingest Band in the Land.”

- 1959 The marching band, consisting of 132 members, made its first recording on a 45 rpm extended play record. The record costs \$1.00.
- 1960 Charles Bing became an assistant band director and director of lower brasswinds.
Thomas Lyle became director of clarinets.
J. Thomas Hester became director of saxophones.
The Delta Iota and Phi Beta Chapters of Kappa Kappa Psi and Tau Beta Sigma were established at the University.
- 1962 Samuel Floyd became director of percussion.
Wendell Logan became arranger and director of trumpets.
Ruffie London became director of saxophones.
Wayman Mickens became arranger and director of French horns.
With the help of dance instructor Beverly Hillsman-Barber, the band learned a dance routine to the music of “*Walk on the Wild Side*.” Dance routines became a regular part of the marching band’s halftime shows.
- 1963 The marching band made its national television debut at the Pro Play-off Bowl on CBS at the Orange Bowl Stadium in Miami.
The marching band appeared in an *Ebony* magazine article entitled, “*The Best Band in the Land*.”
- 1964 The marching band received its first international recognition when it performed for the Kiwanis International Cultural Exchange Program in Nassau, Bahamas.
The marching band consisted of 160 members.
The marching band made its third national television appearance for the NFL Championship Game in Cleveland, Ohio.
- 1965 Shaylor James became director of percussion.
John Daniels became director of clarinets.
An ROTC band with 64 members appeared at the university with Charles S. Bing, Alfred Woodruff, and James Monroe as directors.

1966 The Seven Up Company of St. Louis, Missouri and the Sterling Drug Company of New York established an annual \$1500 scholarship in music in honor of William P. Foster.

J. Alvin Cato became director of French horns.

1967 J. Lee McHugh became director of French horns.

Richard Powers became arranger.

Anthony J. Patterson became director of saxophones.

1968 Aaron Horne became director of saxophones.

The marching band performed at the University of Florida Gator Growl in Gainesville, Florida.

Band Pageantry: A Guide for the Marching Band, authored by William P. Foster, was published.

The marching band made its fourth national television appearance at the AFL All-Star Game on NBC at the Gator Bowl in Jacksonville, Florida.

The marching band appeared in the Paramount News Film entitled, "*Halftime USA.*"

The marching band acquired new band uniforms.

1969 The marching band performed at Super Bowl III at the Orange Bowl Stadium in Miami, Florida.

The marching band performed at the AFL All-Star Game at the Gator Bowl in Jacksonville, Florida.

The Fine Arts Center was named in honor of William P. Foster and well-known African-American artist, Henry O. Tanner.

The marching band performed at halftime for the NFL game between the Boston Patriots and the Miami Dolphins.

1970 Michael Knight became director of French horns.

The symphonic band consisted of between 113 to 120 members.

The University Wind Ensemble, under the direction of Lenard Bowie, held its First Annual Children's Concert. The Wind Ensemble consisted of 45 members.

1971 The flag corps, known as the “Dirty Dozen,” became a part of the marching band.

Elliott Seagraves became the first white student to march with the marching band.

The marching band represented the University of Kansas band during halftime at the KU vs. Florida State football game at Doak Campbell Stadium.

1972 J. Lee McHugh became director of French horns.

The marching band recorded the album, “FAMU Spirit.”

Julian White became an assistant band director.

1973 Lindsey Sarjeant became arranger and director of upper brasswinds.

1974 William McQueen became director of French horns.

Carmena Fennel, Carla Wilson and Debra Hines became the first female band members to march with the marching band.

1975 Gloria Jones joined the staff as secretary.

Joe Bullard joined the staff as announcer and became known as the “Voice of the Hundred.”

The marching band performed at the University of Florida Gator Growl in Gainesville, Florida.

The symphonic band performed at the FMEA Clinic-Conference in Daytona Beach, Florida.

The marching band made its first national television commercial in “*Look Up America*” for Coca-Cola.

Internationally known composer and conductor, Vaclav Nelhybel appeared in a concert, which featured one of his commissioned works, “*Amen Is For Everyman*.” Choral and instrumental groups from FAMU, FSU, and the Tallahassee community performed in concert at the Gaither Gymnasium.

The marching band performed at the Philadelphia Eagles vs. Washington Redskins NFL Game.

The marching band performed at the Miami Dolphins vs. Buffalo Bills NFL Game.

- 1976 The marching band performed at the University of Florida Gator Growl in Gainesville, Florida.
- The first Marching “100” Band Alumni Reunion was held in Tallahassee during Homecoming.
- 1977 The symphonic band performed at the 43rd ABA Convention in Sarasota, Florida.
- The symphonic band performed at the Southern Division MENC Convention in Atlanta, Georgia.
- A Joint Resolution from the Florida House of Representatives and the Florida Senate was presented to William P. Foster.
- 1978 The symphonic band performed at the CBDNA Southern Division Biennial Convention in Atlanta, Georgia.
- The marching band performed at the first NCAA Division I-AA National Championship Game at the Pioneer Bowl in Wichita Falls, Texas.
- 1979 The symphonic band appeared in a historic joint concert with the U.S. Army Band “Pershing’s Own” in Constitution Hall in Washington, D.C.
- Marion Barry, Mayor of Washington, D.C., proclaimed February 24th as “FAMU Band Day.”
- 1980 The marching band made its second national television commercial for Welch’s Grape Soda.
- The symphonic band performed at the MENC National Convention in Miami Beach, Florida.
- 1981 The marching band appeared in a “60 Minutes” documentary on CBS.
- 1982 The symphonic band performed in a joint concert with the U.S. Army Band Herald Trumpets and Brasswind Quintet in Lee Hall Auditorium.
- 1983 The marching band appeared in a segment on the U.S. Information Agency TV Satellite File for World Wide coverage.
- The marching band made a commercial for Tallahassee’s NBC Channel 40.
- The marching band made a commercial for WFSU television program “*1800 Seconds.*”

The FAMU and FSU Marching Bands performed in a marching band extravaganza at the Tallahassee-Leon County Civic Center.

The marching band performed for Super Bowl XVII in Tampa.

The symphonic band performed at the CBDNA Convention in Atlanta, Georgia. Sir Vivian Dunn, Principal Director of Music for the Royal Marines of the United Kingdom, served as guest conductor.

The marching band was featured in a “20/20” documentary on ABC.

The marching band was featured in a “*P.M. Magazine*” documentary on CBS.

1984 Donald Beckwith joined the staff as equipment manager and director of the flag corps.

The marching band performed at the Summer Olympics in Los Angeles, California.

William P. Foster and the marching band appeared in an article entitled, “*The Greatest Halftime Show in America*” in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*.

Ebony magazine featured William P. Foster and the marching band in an article entitled, “*William P. Foster: A Fabled Director and His Band.*”

1985 The marching band was presented the Sudler Intercollegiate Marching Band Trophy. The marching band became the fourth recipient and the first and only HBCU band to receive the trophy.

Leander A. Kirksey, former band director, was presented an award at the halftime ceremonies honoring his musical accomplishments.

William P. Foster was enshrined in the Florida A&M University Sports Hall of Fame as a supporter of athletics.

1986 The 15th Anniversary Celebration of Walt Disney World featured the marching band in a nationally televised special.

The 99th U.S. Congress honored William P. Foster and the marching band in the Congressional Record.

1987 William P. Foster and the marching band appeared in the book, “*America Is My Neighborhood*” by Willard Scott of the NBC *Today Show*.

The symphonic band performed at the Centennial Gala Concert at the Tallahassee-Leon County Civic Center.

The marching band performed at the opening ceremonies of Joe Robbie Stadium in Miami, Florida.

- 1989 The symphonic band performed at the 55th ABA Convention in Tallahassee. A One Million Dollars Eminent Scholars Chair was named in honor of William P. Foster.

The marching band appeared in an article in the *Black Perspective in Music*.

The University of North Carolina recognized the marching band as “one of the top ten examples of Excellence Among Black Americans.”

The marching band acquired new band uniforms.

The Governor of Florida and the Mayor of Tallahassee proclaimed March 12th as “William P. Foster Day” in the State of Florida and in the City of Tallahassee.

A major news story about the marching band was broadcasted on the Voice of America, the International Radio Station of the U.S. Government.

The marching band was selected by the French Government to be the official U.S. representative at the Bicentennial Celebration of the French Revolution, better known as Bastille Day in Paris, France.

The marching band’s participation in the Bastille Day Parade was carried on live, worldwide television and seen by millions. Front-page articles about the band appeared in newspapers such as the *International Herald Tribune*, *the New York Times*, *the Miami Herald*, and *the Tallahassee Democrat*.

The city and county governments staged a program in downtown Tallahassee in honor of the marching band for its performance in Paris, France.

Governor Bob Martinez issued a proclamation declaring July 18th as the “Florida A&M Marching 100 Day.”

- 1990 Summer Band Camp began at the University.

The marching band performed for the Magic Johnson All-Star Charity Basketball Game in Los Angeles, California.

Sports Illustrated magazine listed the marching band as “The Best College Marching Band in the Country.”

- 1992 Kim Jackson joined the staff as secretary

- 1993 The marching band represented the State of Florida at the first Inaugural Parade of President Bill Clinton in Washington, D.C.

The marching band performed for the debut of the Florida Marlins Baseball Team at Joe Robbie Stadium in Miami, Florida.

William P. Foster and the marching band appeared in the book, "*Black College Football, 1892-1992: One Hundred Years of History, Education, and Pride*" by Michael Hurd.

- 1994 Marty Robinson joined the staff as director of trumpets.

Dale Thomas joined the staff as instructor-music librarian.

The symphonic band consisted of 115 musicians.

The symphonic band performed for the First Annual President's Concert in Lee Hall Auditorium.

ESPN2 produced a thirty-minute documentary on the marching band that was aired in 1995.

The marching band percussion section and four drum majors performed at the Kennedy Center Concert of the Americas for President Bill Clinton in Miami, Florida.

- 1995 The marching band consisted of 329 musicians.

The marching band performed for President Bill Clinton's visit to Tallahassee.

The jazz band performed at the Montreux Jazz Festival in Switzerland, the North Sea Jazz Festival in Amsterdam, EuroDisney in Paris, the Brienz Jazz Festival in the Swiss Alps, and Verbier.

The Florida House and Senate recognized William P. Foster for 50 years of service and outstanding achievements to the State of Florida.

- 1996 William P. Foster and the marching band were inducted into the Afro-American Hall of Fame for Fine Arts. The marching band became the first student organization to be inducted into the Hall of Fame.

Wallace Clark joined the staff as director of clarinets.

The marching band participated in festivities marking the 25th Anniversary of Walt Disney World in Orlando, Florida.

- The marching band performed for Hillary Rodham Clinton's visit to the campus.
- William P. Foster was honored at the Homecoming halftime ceremonies marking his 50th year of service to the University.
- William P. Foster was presented \$50,000 for band scholarships from Joe Adams, manager of singer Ray Charles, during commencement ceremonies.
- 1997 The marching band represented the State of Florida at the second Inaugural Parade of President Bill Clinton in Washington, D.C.
- A commemorative band book, *America's Band of Legend: A Pictorial Collection on Bands at Florida A&M University 1892-1996*, compiled by Dale Thomas, was published.
- The Marching Band appeared on a *Florida Crossroads* program entitled, "The Marching 100" which aired on Florida public television stations.
- The Foster-Tanner Fine Arts Center Band Hall was completed.
- The Bachelor of Science degree in Jazz Studies and Commercial Music received approval.
- 1998 William P. Foster, "The Law," stepped down as director of bands and chairman of the music department after 52 years.
- Julian E. White became director of bands.
- Charles Bing became associate director of bands.
- Dennine White joined the staff as director of piccolos.
- Shelby Chipman joined the staff as assistant to the director of bands.
- Longineu Parsons joined the staff as director of trumpets.
- Robert Adams joined the staff as clerk.
- 1999 The Marching "100" Alumni Band Association was reorganized by Victor Gaines.
- 2000 Shepiro Hardemon joined the staff as choreographer and director of the flag corps.
- The marching band recorded its first CD.

- 2001 Johnny Williams joined the staff as instructor-music librarian.
- 2003 The marching band was selected as one of ten bands to participate in the Honda Battle of the Bands at the Georgia Dome in Atlanta, Georgia. The band received a \$10,000 grant for its scholarship fund.

Diron Holloway joined the staff as director of saxophones.

- 2004 The marching band was selected as one of ten bands to participate in the Honda Battle of the Bands at the Georgia Dome in Atlanta, Georgia. The band received a \$10,000 grant for its scholarship fund.

John Robinson joined the staff as director of clarinets.

The marching band acquired new band uniforms.

- 2005 The marching band was selected as one of ten bands to participate in the Honda Battle of the Bands at the Georgia Dome in Atlanta, Georgia. The band received a \$10,000 grant for its scholarship fund.

The marching band performed at Super Bowl XXXIX in Jacksonville, Florida.

Chato McCormick joined the staff as director of lower brasswinds.

- 2006 Twenty members of the marching band performed at the 48th Annual Grammy Awards with Kanye West and Jaime Foxx in Los Angeles. The show was broadcasted nationally on CBS.

The *Atlanta Journal Constitution* named the marching band the “Best Band.”

Julian White, Shaylor James, Lindsey Sarjeant, and the late Charles Bing were enshrined in the Florida A&M University Sports Hall of Fame as supporters of athletics.

Note: This historical chronology highlights several years of information and is not intended to be a definitive and comprehensive history on the FAMU Band Program. Any omissions, misspellings, or inaccuracies are unintentional. Please forward any corrections and major additions to the attention of dale.thomas@famuedu.