

Two decades of oomps and pahs



The 2006 version of the Amherst Town Band. Members will join with former players in an Aug. 29 concert to celebrate two decades of making music.

The Amherst Town Band is celebrating 20 years of making music in the Souhegan Valley and beyond

By Susan Lunt Childress
For The Cabinet

AMHERST — “Pssst—Hey, THE BAND is getting back together!”

Well, actually, the Amherst Town Band never broke up, but it has changed members a lot over its 20-year life span.

A number of those former members — including the band’s founding conductor, Jean Butler — will be joining current members for a reunion and concert on Aug. 29. They’ll celebrate the band’s two decade history of entertaining residents in public concerts and parades ifrom Amherst and Mont Vernon, to Wales in the United Kingdom.

“I’m very touched that we were invited to come back,” Butler said in a telephone interview. Butler said she had no idea what piece she would be conducting, but that she was familiar with the pieces that have been chosen for the concert.

“I told Pat (Anderson), ‘Just

plan your concert, it’ll be a surprise,’” she said.

The band was originally organized in 1986 for an Amherst PTA play. Under Butler’s leadership, it expanded from a small ensemble to a full-size concert band, drawing its membership from Amherst and surrounding towns. Butler led the band until 2002, when she and her husband Irv retired and moved to Florida.

The band’s size will swell with the return of retired players, said band publicist Joe McMullen, from its usual 35 members to 45 or 50 people. Six members have been with the band since its debut in 1986.

“We’re trying to get everyone together,” said McMullen, of the effort to contact former members and invite them to

play. McMullen plays the euphonium, a small tuba, and will perform a duet with a trumpet in the concert.

Musicians returning to their former passion is a theme that resonated with Butler, who conducts two 100-member bands in her new retirement community in The Villages, Fla.

“It’s incredible here. I’m at the other end of what I used to teach in school,” she explained. “When kids came to me and explained they were too busy to keep playing in the band, I would tell them, ‘I know you are going to put your instrument down now, but someday you will pick it up again,’” she said.

“And that’s exactly what they’re doing here,” she said, of the eager retirees, a few of

whom are in their eighties, that comprise her new bands.

For returning members of the band, perhaps a few things, in addition to their former conductor, will seem familiar.

The concert will be held on the Amherst Village Green, which is a favorite venue for many band members. Also the pieces the band will perform will be in keeping with previous performances: some instrumental compositions, classical pieces, show tunes, big band, marches, polkas, and some contemporary pieces.

In addition to selections from the band’s repertoire, McMullen said the 90-minute extravaganza will feature the band’s premier performance of Strauss’s Radetzky March, several pieces conducted by guest conductors, and a duet

performance of “Gentle Annie.”

The band’s current conductor, Pat Anderson, said she was looking forward to the concert. “I love to play on the Amherst Town Green and this is a very special occasion,” she said via email. She had played French horn in the band until Butler asked her to replace her as conductor in 2002. Anderson, Souhegan High School’s chorus director, has been with the band since 1996.

The band has performed at Amherst’s Memorial Day observance and 4th of July celebrations, Christmas concerts at the Amherst Congregational Church, Mont Vernon Old Home Days parade and concert, “Sounds on the Souhegan” summer concert in Milford, NH, and “Concerts on the Am-

If you go

What: Amherst Town Band reunion concert.

When: 6:30 p.m., Tuesday, Aug. 29.

Where: Amherst Town Green or Souhegan High School if it rains.

herst Green” during August, sponsored by the Milford Rotary and Amherst Lions Clubs. The band has also performed twice in Wales, UK, as part of an exchange program with the Milford Haven Wales Town Band.

Butler said she was proud the band has come such a long way, and is still going strong.

“My objective was met in this act,” she said of nurturing the band’s progress. “I’m happy the band is doing so well.”

Fish NH

NEW! 1-DAY

**Plan Your Next Vacation Now –
Install a Home Swimming Pool!**

Imperial HAYWARD

Quality



Amherst Town Band celebrates 20th

Page 10