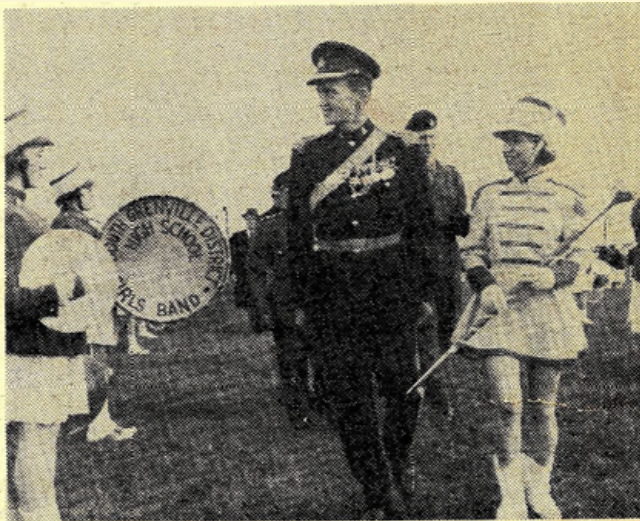


# Majorettes In Prescott

By The Prescott Museum & Visitor Centre

Prescott's history of women-led marching bands dates to 1947 at Prescott High School. After several decades of a successful marching band program for male students, by the 1940s, there was growing interest among female students in participating in their own marching band. The idea was first brought to the Prescott High School's board of directors in 1947 by Mr. Cousins. The band operated alongside the school's cadet corps.

Through the remainder of the 1947 school year, a group of students alongside Mr. Cousins raised roughly \$570 in donations from bake sales and collection efforts to purchase 3 drums and a dozen bugles. Mr. Alf Gudin instructed the drummers, and Mr. James Moylan, leader of the Prescott Citizens Band, instructed the buglers.



Military officer inspecting the Prescott High School Girls Band Circa 1940s.

By the following school year, the band had expanded to 33 members, including a drum major, four majorettes, brass drum, tenor drum, eight side drums, one cymbal and 16 trumpet players. Led by the drum quartet of Mary Lou Tobin, Betty Hewitson, Bev Sine and Liz Lyons. Making their official inspection debut on May 17th, 1948, hundreds of spectators gathered at Fort Wellington to watch the presentation. After a special majorette performance, the band, under the guidance of conductor Alf Gaudin, performed a rendition of The Inspection Waltz.

By 1950, the Prescott High School girls' band went through major changes as they prepared to enter their first marching band competitions that school year. Through school concerts, canvassing and baking sales, the club raised around \$600 for the purchase of new uniforms, equipment and transportation services. The group's first win came on February 21st, 1951, at the Rotary Music Festival in Kingston. Their reward was an undisclosed cash prize for the club and a chance to perform as an opening act for the 1951 "Festival of the Stars" concert in Kingston. It was during the early 1950s that the girls' band experienced its largest increase of members, with roughly a dozen majorettes and 40 band members by 1952, a total they maintained for much of the decade.



**Lead majorette - Jewel Arnott**

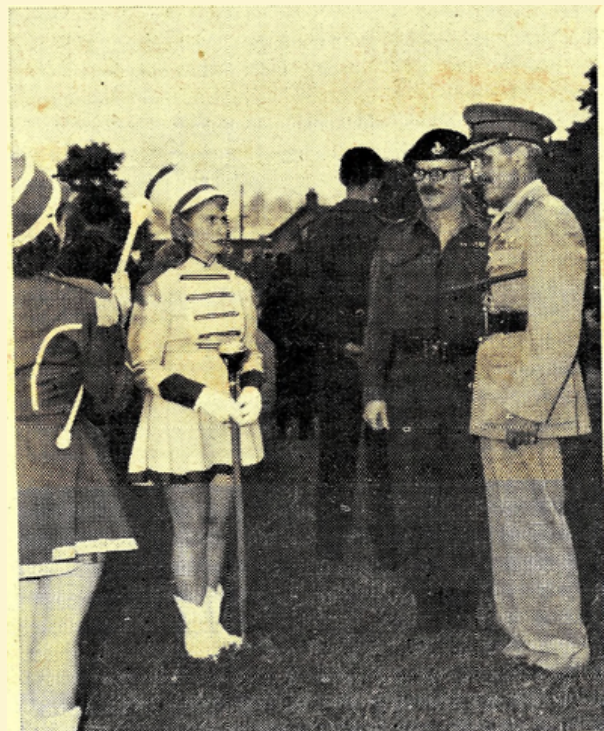
Jewel Arnott, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. G. F. Arnott, R.R. 2, Cardinal, is the new South Grenville Girls' Band lead majorette. She has succeeded Mary Browner, who graduated this spring. Jewel is seen here leading the band in their parade at Spencer-ville Fair, Saturday. The Girls' Band and leader Walter Hofmann have had a busy and successful summer at local fairs, and will be featured at home football games this fall. — Staff Photo



**MUSIC FESTIVAL CHAMPIONS.** Prescott High School Girls' Trumpet and Drum Band members added further to their laurels during the year by capturing First Place Award in their division at the Rotary International Festival of Music held at Kingston during February. The Band was awarded the shield pictured before the bass drum and were presented with a cheque for \$50.00. This photo, made last week, shows the girls, L to R, front: Joan Merritt, Pauline Dubois, Cyrilla Bonneau, Ann Relyea, Dorothy Henry, Nora Wilson, Elizabeth Lyons, (Leading Majorette), Bev. Taylor, Lorna Clarke, Jean Hamilton, Dorothy Blad, Elizabeth Lidsay, Helen Urquhart. Centre: Mr. Alf Gaudin, (Instructor), Virginia Pearson, Barbara Reynolds, Leona Brimson, Kay Fetterly, Doreen Smith, Mary Hamilton, Barbara Dubrule, Beverly Bain, Betty Carole Dennis, Carole Blad, Eleanor Kelly, R. A. Cousins, (Principal), Back: Geraldine Sterrett, Gertrude Typhair, Sylvia Ross, Mary Isabelle Creegan, Patricia McLean, Shirley Hall, Mary Henry, Dorothy McGinley, Marie Seguin. Photo by Lloyd.

The club continued to participate in many music competitions, winning championships in Brockville, Kemptville and Gouverneur, New York. This success earned them special guest appearances at several major fairs / events in the area, such as the Cardinal Labour Day Weekend Festival, the Delta Fair and the Spencerville Fair (with the group attending the latter yearly from 1950 until their dissolution). In Prescott, the club was actively involved in several yearly events such as the annual Loyalist Day celebrations, Christmas parades, and Remembrance Day celebrations.

Like many of the other clubs at Prescott High School, the Prescott High School girls' band's decline occurred after the opening of South Grenville High School in 1958. Due to an influx of students, in 1954, a decision was made to construct a new school on Edward Street, north of the railway tracks. Now operated by the South Grenville District High School Board of Directors, the board made the hard decision to cut several programs once offered at Prescott High School. One of these programs was Cadets, which operated at the school from 1918 to 1958. At the Cadets' final inspection, the group was joined by a 46-member girls band paraded under Drum Majorette Margie Barton.



Majorette speaking to Military Officers Circa 1950s

Renamed the South Grenville District High School Girls Drum and Trumpet band, the club remained active for much of the 1960s, albeit on a smaller scale than its predecessor club. Like many other Ontario High Schools of the era, by the 1970s, SGDHS slowly began to phase out its marching band clubs in favour of co-ed music programs, while many of the Majorettes participated in the school's dance club. This club's closure helped birth the Prescott Majorettes.



### ***Parade people***

The Prescott Majorettes, from left to right: first row, Gillis Lepage, Connie Stevens, Paul Toshack; second row, Joan Kowalkowsky; third row, Paula Labrash, Shelly Saunders, Kim Toshack, Lisa Pitre; fourth

row, Cindy Himes, Dorothy Davidson, Laurie Gibson; back row, Jennifer Labrash, Danielle Saunders, Debbie Labrash. Missing: Candy Kain, David Bernier, Kevin Bernier.  
- staff photo -

Founded in the 1970s, the Prescott Majorettes was a traditional Majorette baton performance club operating in Prescott through the 1970s and 1980s. Open to school-aged children from the ages of 6 and up, the group had an average of 20 members annually during its lifetime. Filling the space left after the dissolution of the PHS girls' band, the Prescott Majorettes participated in many local events such as Christmas parades, Loyalist Day events and regional Majorette competitions. The group adopted their own chant called the "We Are the Prescott Majorettes", written by the Pidgeon family.

## **“We Are The Prescott Majorettes”**

Chorus:

We are the Prescott Majorettes,  
And we will always do our best,  
We will march in all kinds of weather,  
We are the Prescott Majorettes.

Verse 1:

Nor rain nor storm,  
Will make us frown,  
We will never let you down,  
We will march in all kinds of weather,  
We are the Prescott majorettes,

Chorus:

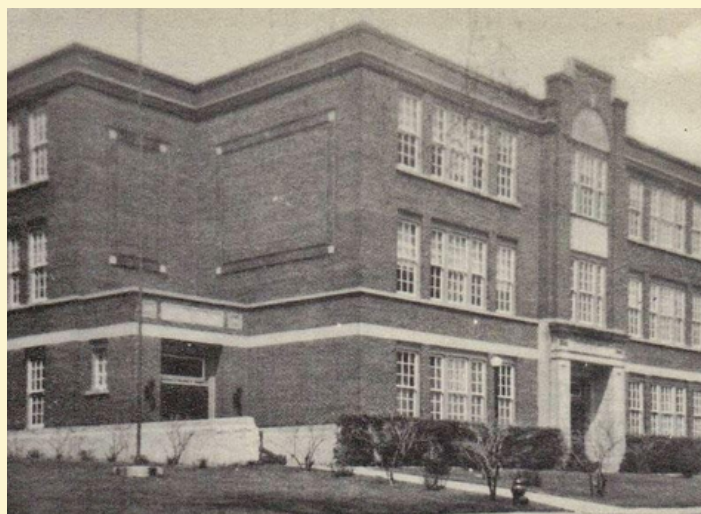
We are the Prescott Majorettes,  
And we will always do our best,  
We will march in all kinds of weather,  
We are the Prescott Majorettes.

Verse 2:

Come rain or hail,  
We'll never fail,  
We will always do our best,  
We will march in all kinds of weather,  
We are the Prescott Majorettes.

Chorus:

We are the Prescott Majorettes,  
And we will always do our best,  
We will march in all kinds of weather,  
We are the Prescott Majorettes.



The Prescott Municipal Building



Example Prescott Majorettes Logo

The group was led by Karen Pidgeon, who served as the long-time director of the club. Adopting the same green and yellow colour scheme as a homage to the SGDHS girls' band, each outfit was estimated to cost \$18. By the late 1970s, the club expanded to a co-ed club with the addition of boy flag bearers. As a member of the Town of Prescott's department of recreation, the club shared a facility in the old gymnasium at the Prescott Municipal building. The group carried the legacy of marching in Prescott up until the late 1980s, when the practice of Majorettes fell out of popularity across Canada.

**The Prescott Museum & Visitor Centre**  
**Open Wednesday - Saturday, 11-5**  
**202 King Street West, Prescott, ON**

