



**McHENRY  
MUSEUM**  
& Historical Society



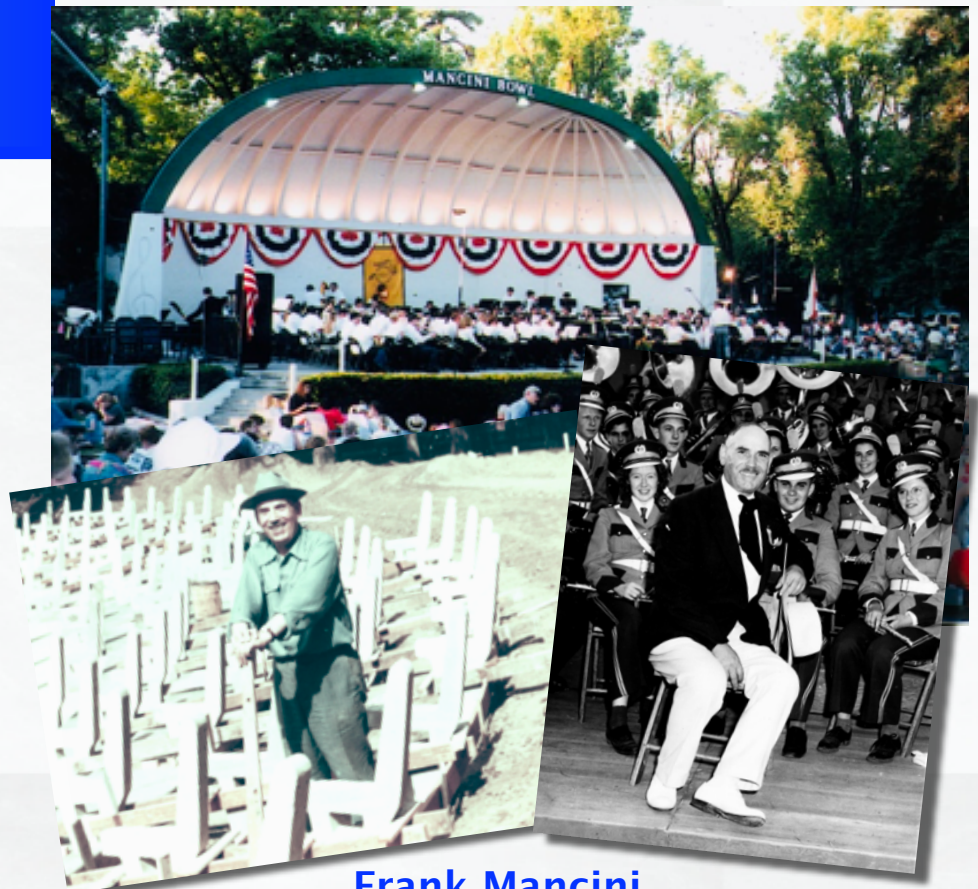
# Newsletter

July 2021

Please call us at:  
(209) 618-5387

## The Local Music of Independence

**It's Summer**, and it's going to be a hot one! However, as the global pandemic seems to be coming to an end, it seems fitting to honor traditions of the season. On June 24, 2021, Modestoans filled the stands and the lawns of Gracecada Park to hear the Summer concert series performed by the Modesto Band of Stanislaus County, known to all of us as MoBand. The series was cancelled in 2020 due to Covid-19, but returns in a fitting year. It was in 1921 when Modesto's Music Man, Francesco Nicolo "Frank" Mancini (1886-1964), accepted a job performing at the opening of the Strand Theatre and never left. The rest is music history. The band itself was founded in 1919 by Professor William Whitman Higgins who organized eleven boys and created The Modesto Boys' Band. Sadly, Higgins died on April 1, 1922, and though the boys tried to run the band themselves, they convinced Mancini to be their director, a title he would hold until his death in 1964. Mancini was always working as the band director for Modesto High School and founded the Modesto Symphony Orchestra in 1931. Mancini was the center of Modesto music.



### Frank Mancini

**Mancini** arrived in the United States from Italy on February 26, 1907. He was born in the small village of Serramonacesca on January 13, 1886. He settled in the San Francisco Bay Area and performed with John Philip Sousa's Band. On May 7, 1917, he married divorcee Lone Kahlow Griggs (1882-1964). Lone joined her husband in Modesto in 1921 and would be instrumental in the success of MoBand. By 1927, the original band became known as the Stanislaus County Boys' Band. As the years progressed women were included in the ensemble. In 1949, Lone Mancini with the help of a group she founded known as the MoBand Mothers helped raised money to build a permanent venue for the band. It was in that year the Mancini Bowl was erected in Gracecada Park and has been utilized ever since. The 1950s set the course for the future arrangement of the band. Frank Mancini had only allowed Junior High and High School Students to perform in MoBand. In the 1950s, adult musicians wanted their own chance to perform, so Mancini organized an adult band.

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Frank Mancini worked with the band until his passing on November 15, 1964, his wife lone followed her husband in death twenty days later on December 4, 1964. For the next several years the band went through several conductors and other changes. In the 1970s the band became one which was all inclusive. MM&HS spoke with current conductor of MoBand George Gardner who has been with MoBand since 1965. Gardner is always amazed how well MoBand works. Musicians play with the band well into their nineties.

MoBand holds no auditions and has no criteria other than you must play a band instrument and are at least a graduate of the eight grade. Anyone who walks in the door and can play is welcome. Gardner said it is always an odd quirk how there is never too many of one instrument and the band always works. MoBand normally holds six free concerts in the park from the week school concludes until the end of July, this year there are four. They rehearse on Mondays and Wednesdays and are in the park ready to play Thursday nights.

**MoBand will be performing Thursday  
July 1<sup>st</sup>, July 8<sup>th</sup>, and July 15<sup>th</sup>**



George Gardner (Center)



Concert's in the Park  
1970s



Concert in the Park taken June 24, 2021

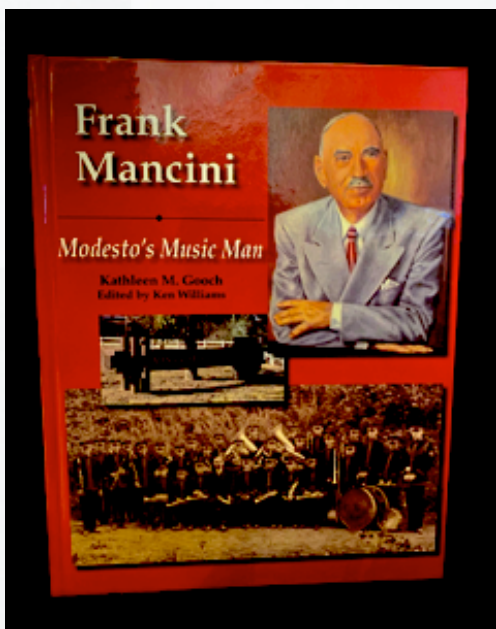


Frank  
Mancini



lone and Frank Mancini

\*Information for this article comes from a phone interview with George Gardner June 23, 2021  
\*Other information comes from *Frank Mancini: Modesto's Music Man* by Kathleen Gooch (2007),  
and *Touchstones: Life and Times of Modesto* by Ken White et. all (2017).



Most information from this article comes from *Frank Mancini: Modesto's Music Man* by Kathleen M. Gooch (2007).

Available for purchase in the Museum Store.

## Updates

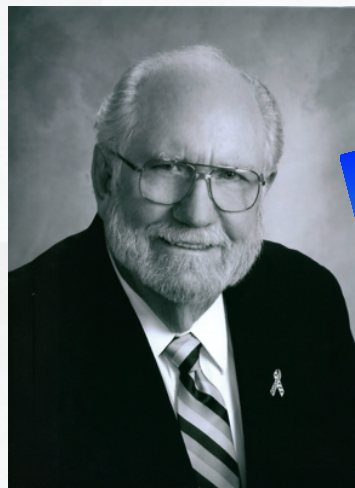
- The Museum Remains closed due to Covid-19.
- The tentative plan for re-opening in the end of July.
- The MOU between the MM&HS and the City of Modesto is under review with hopes of final completion by the end of Summer.
- Membership Renewals for the 2021-2022 year for the MM&HS will be mailed as soon as the Museum opens.
- Memberships can be renewed or purchased via the Museum website at:

[www.mchenrymuseum.org](http://www.mchenrymuseum.org)

- We will be having an August Newsletter which will feature an article on the 85<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Sciabica Olive Oil.



The 3rd of July?



Alfred (Al) Menshew  
Nov 15, 1931-Oct 9,  
2020

Historically, The Fourth of July Parade for the City of Modesto falls on the day of the week the Fourth of July falls, this year it falls on a Sunday, which it has several times including 45 years ago in 1976 during the Bicentennial. This year the parade and fireworks show will take place on July 3, 2021. The parade will begin at 9:30 am and a fireworks show at John Thurman Field in honor of beloved MM&HS member Al Menshew, gates open at 5:00 pm. Stay cool and enjoy the holiday!

