

## USAF Band of the Golden West History

The United States Air Force Band of the Golden West received its current name on 1 May 1997. However, the band's history dates back to 1941 and throughout the intervening decades it was known as "15th Air Force Band of the Golden West", "Air Mobility Command Band of the Golden West", "America's Band in Blue" and "504th Air Force Band of the Golden Gate".

The US Air Force Band of the Golden West has two proud parents: the 15th Air Force and the North American Air Defense Command (NORAD).



The "15th Air Force Band of the Golden West", originally called "The Air Force Band", was activated on 1 October 1941 at Scott Field, IL. In 1944, from Scott Field the band moved to Camp Shanks, NY before heading to war-torn Europe. The band was re-designated as the "523 Army Air Force Band" and stationed at Le Havre, France and Warton, England (1945). After the war, the band returned stateside to Camp Patrick Henry, VA, and was inactivated on 13 December 1945. On 26 September 1947, just 8 days after the creation of the United States Air Force as a separate branch of military service, the inactive band was re-designated the "523rd Air Force Band". On 1 December 1952, the band was placed under Strategic Air Command at March Air Force Base, CA. On 1 May 1965 it was assigned to 15th Air Force and became known as the "15th Air Force Band". In 1991 the band was officially re-designated as the "15th Air Force Band of the Golden West" and in 1994 it became known as the "Air Mobility Command Band of the Golden West", when it merged with "America's Band in Blue" at Travis Air Force Base.



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"America's Band in Blue" has its own unique history and heritage. In 1959, it comprised the Air Force component of the "NORAD Command Band". During this time, the band made numerous radio broadcasts and television appearances including the "Today Show", the "Tonight Show" and the "Dinah Shore Show". In 1979, the band was re-designated the "504th Air Force Band of the Golden Gate" and moved to Travis Air Force Base, CA. In 1991 it was re-designated as "America's Band in Blue". On 1 July 1994 the band was inactivated with all personnel and equipment reassigned to the "Air Mobility Command Band of the Golden West" at Travis Air Force Base, CA and becoming the only active duty Air Force band west of the Rockies. Changing its name to the "United States Air Force Band of the Golden West" on 1 May 1997, this organization continues to maintain its rich heritage of musical excellence and outstanding Air Force professionalism. In addition to performing for civilian communities throughout the states of California, Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Nevada, Arizona, and Utah, the band supports 13 Air Force Bases, 8 Air Force Reserve Wings, and 6 recruiting squadrons in over 250 annual performances for 1.5 million listeners.



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The 574<sup>th</sup> and 575<sup>th</sup> AF Bands were first to be designated "The Band of the Golden West". Stationed at Parks AF Base, Pleasanton, California from 1952 until the bands were inactivated in 1954, they performed in the San Francisco Bay area under that name.

[Right] Members of the Band of the Golden West from Parks AFB combined with the Air Force bands from March AFB, Edwards AFB and George AFB in rehearsal December, 1952, for the Pasadena Rose Bowl Parade of January 1st, 1953.

Technical Sergeant James McMillen, NCOIC and Drum Major; CWO Harold Hoyt, Commander of the band at George AFB and Bandleader for this combined performance.



[Photo, left] at KPIX 5 Television Studio, San Francisco, in June 1953. The band performed a series of 1 hour concerts titled "On Wings of Song" 6 to 7 pm Saturday evenings throughout the summer of 1953. Performances featured Concert Band, Dance Band, Dixieland Band, Barbershop Quartet and Vocalist and were a favorite with the local community.

Thanks to Chief Warrant Officer 4, USAF (Ret.) James E. McMillen for these photos and notes on the 574<sup>th</sup> and 575<sup>th</sup> AF Bands!