

Estill Goodwin Foster

1913-1962

*A Brief History
Of One Band Director
Who Made A Difference*

WINGERT-JONES MUSIC INC.

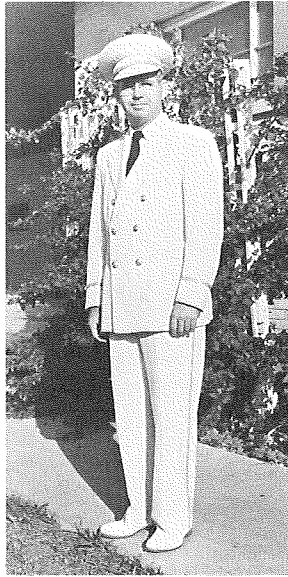
WINGERT-JONES MUSIC INC.,
a music company with a rich tradition,
salutes the rich tradition of TBA
and the heritage of the Bands of Texas.

A brief history of one band director
who made a difference

Estill Goodwin Foster
1913-1962

Inducted into the
PHI BETA MU
TEXAS BANDMASTERS HALL OF FAME

San Antonio, Texas
Monday, July 27, 1992



• Preface •

A Little Bit of History

This is the story of one of the early Texas Bandmasters, whose vision and dedication helped establish the organizational structure and success for which today's Texas school bands are known.

A native of Texas, his personal and musical growth paralleled the evolution of the band profession in his beloved state. Through his devoted teaching, leadership, and counsel; the South Texas Music Camp which he established; and his many contributions to the Texas All-regional/All-State organizational structure, he has touched personally, and will continue to touch the lives of countless thousands of young Texas musicians.

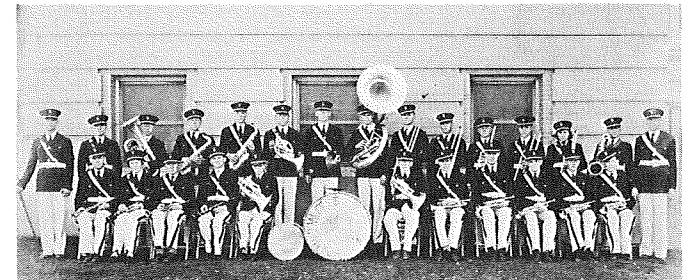
The school bands of Texas, as well as the hundreds of young people he taught are all better off because of his dedication and commitment.

ESTILL G. FOSTER

Estill Goodwin Foster was born in Bishop, Texas in 1913, his parents having moved there in 1910 as one of the first pioneer families to settle in that community. His mother was a piano teacher and she taught the first grade from her arrival in Bishop until her retirement in 1936.

Estill was given a cornet (ordered from Sears-Roebuck for \$9, new) and began playing in the band where he quickly established himself as one of the most interested and most talented band students. Upon graduation from high school he wanted to attend college and become a school band director. He was awarded a "Texas Federation of Women's Clubs" Scholarship Appointment in 1929 at Texas College of Arts and Industries in Kingsville where he was informed that "No one can make a living just teaching band. You will have to major in a real subject and just play in the band, and teach band as an extra activity." So he started to college majoring in history. During his second year at Texas A & I he learned that it was possible to major in a course of study to become a band director at West Texas State Teachers College, so he transferred to that institution where he graduated in 1933, and later received his Master of Arts degree in 1937.

Upon graduation, he taught band in Pampa, Texas, and in 1934 he married Norma Jean Burgess. They moved to Raymondville, Texas



West Texas State Teachers College Band, 1932-33, in Canyon, Texas. Estill Foster is the cornet player seated on the front row, third from the right.

administrator from Bishop, Marvin Deviney, had become superintendent. Mr. Deviney wanted a good band, and Estill Foster gave him one, organizing the band in 1934, and serving there for six years during which the band was awarded every sweepstakes award which was given by the Texas Music Educators (according to the Raymondville newspaper). Here he took students to the national contest for the

first time, and was awarded his first superior rating at a national contest.

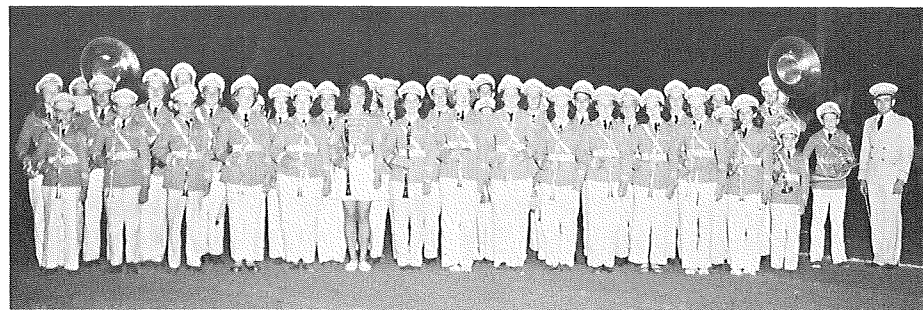
He was recruited away from Raymondville to become band director at Benavides (in Duval County, Texas, where the well known political leader, George Parr,

wanted a good band), and there for the first time he had an assistant. Marvin Deviney moved to Hull-Daisetta School District, and again convinced Estill to leave his position to rebuild his band program. World War II interrupted everything, and after a stint in the Navy, Estill returned to his home town of Bishop to rebuild the band program which had simply ceased to exist during the war.

He arrived in Bishop in the summer of 1946, started from scratch in September, and presented his first concert with the Bishop Band Thursday, December 19, 1946 in the school auditorium. The band included 44 players ranging in age from the second grade (Bobby Foster) to seniors in high school. A December 22 story in the Bishop News stated regarding the end of the fall semester, 1946, that this "is the close of one of the most eventful



A first-division quartet from the Raymondville High School Band, 1939.



The Bishop Public School Band, 1946-1947, the first year of band after the war years during which band at Bishop had been discontinued. The grades of the members ranged from the second grade (the author on the right end of the front row) to seniors. Since there was no need for an instrument budget since most metal instruments manufacturing had been discontinued because of World War II, everyone just helped clean up and repair and polish the old instruments which had been put in storage in the unused band hall for the duration of the war.

periods in school history. . . .With Estill Foster as director, the Badger Band was reorganized and music and choral work broadened. Although made up almost entirely of beginning musicians, the band was ready for presentation in a most successful Christmas concert." That same year they marched in the Buccaneer Days Parade in Corpus Christi.

From this modest beginning the band grew to become a more complete, balanced program with a focus on musical excellence. The band began to compete in the U.I.L. marching, concert and sight reading contests, and Estill became one of the important pioneer leaders in the band movement in Texas, helping establish and refine the first Regional Bands and District Bands, which led directly to the system of selection for the all-state band in Texas today.

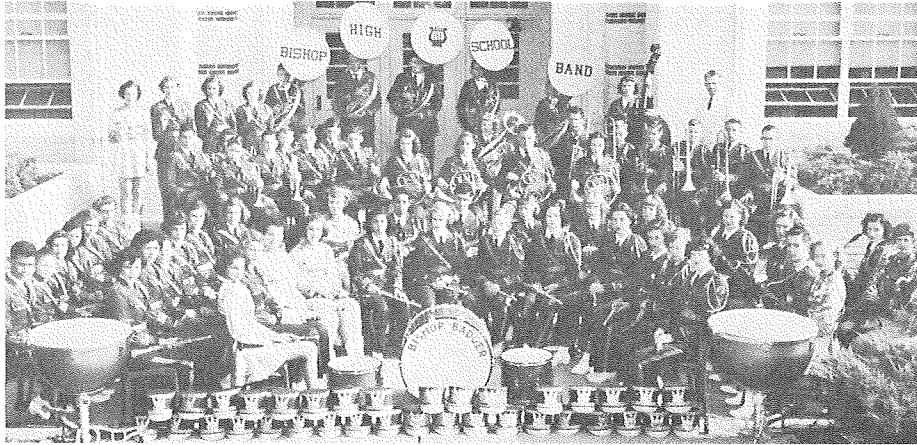


1951 All-Region Band, at Texas A & I College in Kingsville. Seated in front: William D. Revelli, guest conductor (left); and Estill Foster, regional chairman (right). Son Don Foster is second chair trombone and second son, Bobby, is second chair cornet. First chair cornet is Billy Hipp (Dr. William Hipp, now Dean of the School of Music, University of Miami).

The Bishop Band was one of the most active bands in the state in the Texas solo and ensemble competitions, and in their involvement in the District, Regional and All State Bands. By 1949 the Bishop Band students were entered in more musical events than any other school in Region VII except for the Corpus Christi school system, and they were the only school in the region in which every event had been awarded a Superior rating in Sight Reading. Their concert performance won praise from judge, Col. George E. Hurt, director of the University of Texas Band. Bishop had 15 solo entries that year and received 5-I's, 9-II's, and 1-III. In the April 14, 1948 Bishop News an interesting paragraph reads: "Bobby Foster won considerable attention from the judge of his

event. Bobby played a difficult high school level cornet solo and won a first division. It is doubtful if this accomplishment will be duplicated by another ten year old in the state and possibly the nation this year,' music critics agree."

In February, 1949, Estill was elected to membership in Phi Beta Mu, and in 1950 the band was awarded first division ratings in concert, marching and sight reading, to become the first band in Class B to be awarded the Sweepstakes award in Region 7; and their solos and ensembles were awarded 21 first division medals, 10 entries received II's, 7 entries got III's, and 1 received a IV. The Elementary School Band (Bishop had no junior high at that time) also received a Superior rating. All of these (except the marching contest) happened on a single day with a single teacher (no assistant, and no applied teachers. He was also the school's choir director at this time).



Bishop High School Band 1950-51. This was the first band from a Class B school to be awarded the special Sweepstakes Plaque for 1st Division ratings in Concert, Sight-Reading, and Marching in Region VII University Interscholastic League competition. (Well known Texas band director Joe Alvarado was a member of this band.)

Having been very active in Region 7, he began to work with D. O. Wiley at Texas Tech University, and other band leaders in the state to continue to refine the structure and the organization of Texas Music Educators Association, and the All-State programs. He introduced the "blind audition" process to the district and regional structure (at least in South Texas). [An aside: The year his oldest son, Don, was a senior in high school, Estill was one of the trombone judges at the regional band. After the auditions he went

to find Don and "chewed him out" for not showing up for the audition. He had not realized that Don had auditioned and been selected for first chair.] In 1951-1952 he served as president of TMEA, and [according to Earl Ray from Lubbock (Hall of Fame, 1991)] his convention in Mineral Wells may have been the first one to include a Texas All-State choir.

In 1952 the band won its fourth consecutive first division in marching, competing in Class A even though the school enrollment was Class B, setting the stage for its fourth consecutive sweepstakes award. In the spring, 1953, Bishop placed 21 members in the All District Band with 18 of those musicians being selected to the All Regional Band. . . the largest number from any school in the Region, even though the 9-12 enrollment of BHS was only 125 (graduating 23 seniors).

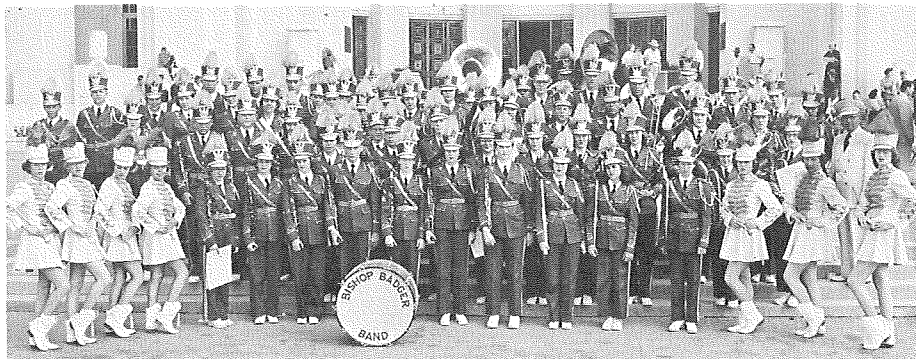
The Bishop Band continued to flourish, dominating the honor bands in that area, and providing leadership, and serving as a role model for a small school program. (The town of Bishop was never much larger than 3,000.)

A true music educator, Foster's emphasis on ear-training and basic music theory, plus instrumental



The 1953 All-Region Band members from Bishop High School. Three of this group went on to State. They were Don Foster, trombone, center, back row; Marilyn Daughtry, oboe, center 2nd row; and Bobby Foster, 2nd from right, 2nd row. Future daughter-in-law, Ruth White, clarinet (now Mrs. Don Foster) is on the left end, front row.

technique development, was his hallmark, and was the basis for the success of his students and of his bands. Among the major influences for these concepts were H.E. Nutt and the Vandercook School of Music in Chicago. He required weekly practice reports, and he required every student to work through a well-rounded



Bishop Badger Band at the Texas State Fair in Dallas in 1955. One band was selected to represent each region, and Bishop represented Region VII.

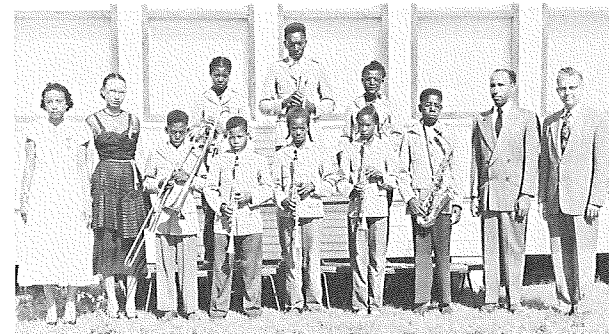
“basic training” program which was represented by his “progress charts”—charts where students “checked off” their basic requirements as they were learned each week. By the time his students had completed their senior year in high school, they had completed a course in basic theory knowing all the major and minor scales, the chromatic scale for the range of his/her instrument, could transpose and read different clefs, and sustain a note on their instrument for 60 seconds. They had also completed a regimented and well-rounded study/practice program in one of the standard technique books (Arban or Klose) and performed both in solo and ensemble competition. The percussionists knew all 26 rudiments. And, at least once every week the band was expected to sight-read at least one new piece of music (and then to rehearse it to work out any major difficulties that happened when they first read it).

As a result, his bands were noted for their balanced sound and musical finesse, and they were consistently known for their sight reading ability.

He taught his students “music” and did not just “have a band.” He expanded their world into a world of music most would not have ever experienced without his influence. He sponsored trips to symphony concerts, operas, and other musical performances by renowned musicians. He would take a bus load of students to San Antonio to hear the opera, and he regularly took several bus loads of students to Corpus Christi to hear the Corpus Christi Symphony. When any of the other top bands in South Texas performed concerts he was always there with students to listen and to learn.

For several years during the 1950's he took a bus load of students to Del Mar College in Corpus Christi each Saturday so the students could take private lessons with professional teachers.

In 1954 he was honored by being selected to Who's Who in Music, was running a very successful music camp in Corpus Christi in the summers, and was managing a very successful music store in Bishop in addition to his teaching. At the end of the 1956 school year he resigned from



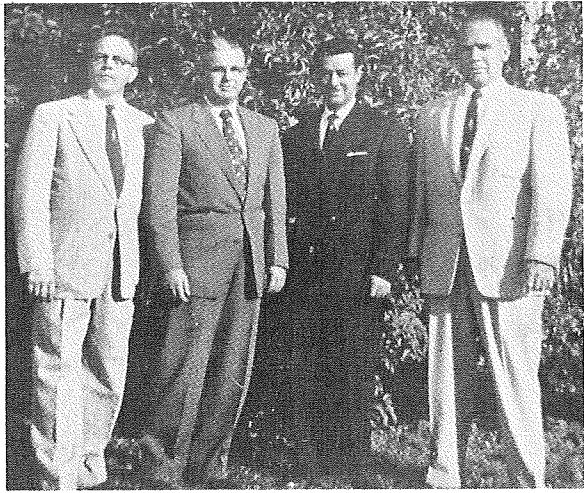
With segregation still a factor in many school districts in Texas, there were “separate but equal” schools (which were clearly not equal) for non-white children. In many districts these children were never given the opportunity to be involved in instrumental music programs. Estill Foster became aware of this problem, and began band classes in the Bishop Colored School while continuing to be the only instrumental teacher in the District as well as the high school choir director. This picture shows Estill, the Principal, and the two teachers with the class in 1953.



Estill established South Texas Music Company in Bishop to meet the needs of the band students in the area. There was no music camp for the students in South Texas, so in 1956 he established the south Texas Music Camp on the campus of the University of Corpus Christi, which was on the site of the old Naval Air Station. The camp ran for two 2-week sessions: the first two weeks for junior high and the second two weeks for high school. The cost was \$10 per week for tuition, and \$10 per week for room and meals.

to his teaching. At the end of the 1956 school year he resigned from Bishop, and accepted a position in the Kingsville schools (only 6 miles away), where he continued to teach at the junior high level until his death July 22, 1962 in his home in Bishop.

Estill Foster was among the past presidents of TMEA who were honored at a general meeting of TMEA in Dallas, where he was recognized at that time for having been active in TMEA activities since it grew out of the former Texas Band and Orchestra Association about 20 years earlier. In a newspaper story at that time



The camp brought many outstanding teachers, clinicians, and students together. Pictured above left to right are: Harold Luhman (then band director at Robstown), camp audio-director; Estill Foster, founder and director; the renowned trumpet soloist, Raphael Mendez, guest clinician; and Lt. Col. W. L. Gregg, (then band director at Kingsville High School) camp coordinator.

it was noted that "He has probably served the organization of music educators in Texas in more capacities than any other man in the state. Among the offices he has held are: local chairman at the District level; almost every office except secretary at the Regional level (Chairman, Vice Chairman, Band Chairman, Vocal Chairman of Region VII, and Orchestra Chairman of Region IX); President of the state organi-

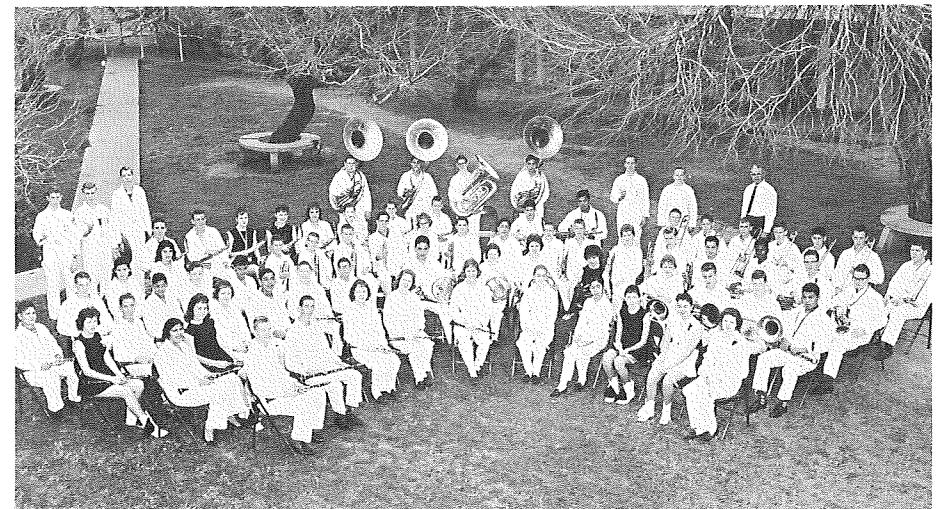
zation; and for two years manager of the educational exhibits at the State convention.

Estill Foster was a kind man, and a caring man. He had a devotion to teaching and to the students with whom he worked. He left a legacy to music education, to young people, to his community, and to his profession that continues to be reflected in school bands and the band movement and profession today, not only throughout Texas and the country through his former

Estill is shown at the Corpus Christi airport meeting woodwind clinician, Dr. Arthur Best (Clarence Best??) as he arrived for camp, June 1956.

students and colleagues. He was a true pioneer in the band field, and his legacy will live on.

A picture from the Corpus Christi Times shows a young Eddie Galvan working with a clarinet section at the South Texas Music Camp. Other well known band directors working with the camp included Jack Arnold (George West H.S.), Gene A. Braught (Weslaco H.S.), Marion Busby (Taft H.S.), Loyd Cook (Ray Miller H.S., Corpus Christi), John Farris (Alice H.S.), A.J. Fassino (Industrial Consolidated School), Byron Felder (Mathis H.S.), Sam Gutheridge (Sinton H.S.), Loren Hall, Ivan F. Horn (Freer H.S.), Bill Justus (Baker Jr. H.S.), Shirley Justus (Corpus Christi Symphony), Frank Long (Premont H.S.), Jimmie Luigi (Aransas Pass H.S.), Harold Lutz (Robstown), W.W. Odom (Flour Bluff H.S.), Stanley Pencil (Mathis H.S.), Jack Rumbley (Alice Jr. H.S., later Alice H.S.), Bryce Taylor (Three Rivers H.S.), and Doug Wiehe (Beeville H.S.).



1959-1960 Memorial Junior High School "A" Band, in Kingsville, Texas. This band received a first division rating playing the original version of Stars and Stripes Forever as their "warm-up" march. Rolando Molina, the present director of the Kingsville High School Band, was a member of this band.

