Northport Pipe and Drum Band

http://www.northport-bagpipes.org

Regional Grade 5 band located in western Suffolk Co., Long Island, New York

It was in 1984 that Northport Police Chief (and avid bagpiper) Bob Howard got together with members of the local fire department to create what was hoped would become the Northport Fire Department Bagpipe Band. The first meeting was held at the American Legion Hall just off Main Street. About twenty people showed up, each looking to fulfill a personal dream of playing the pipes and joining a centuries-old music tradition. It wasn't very long, however, before piping basics such as doublings and grips contrived to dampen much of the initial enthusiasm, and fourteen members dropped out of the group. The remaining six decided to press on, abandoning the occupational requirement for membership and opening up the band to any and all interested locals. John Heist, an original member, recalls that inaugural year and the band's first public performance. The six pipers made their way up and down the hills of Eaton's Neck in the annual Fourth of July Parade. Having no real uniforms, they outfitted themselves in Bermuda shorts, sandals and white t-shirts. The Rowan Tree set -consisting of the tune Rowan Tree-was the extent of the band's repertoire. These pipers might not have looked like the Black Watch or played like Shotts and Dykehead, but they possessed a unique spirit that mattered more. The Northport Pipe Band was born. By the following year, the band was ready for more parades-and real uniforms. Each member purchased his own kilt, sporran, hat, belt and hose. (Shirts came from surplus stock of the Lloyd Harbor police.) Equipment was purchased thanks to the generosity of our corporate benefactor - Support Systems Associates, Inc.). A bagpipe instructor was hired (each piper paid three dollars per lesson), and a few more tunes were added. That summer, the Northport Pipe Band marched in four parades. The years passed, and the band's repertoire gradually expanded. A number of instructors came and went, and some pipers dropped out, but even more joined and the band's roster grew. Today, three of the original six members remain: former pipe major Ted Unkel, Bill Howe, and bass drummer Dan Madigan. George Thompson joined soon after the band's inception and is still a member today. More frequently, Northport saw its community pipe band appearing regularly in parades around Long Island. At a pivotal moment in the band's history, Don Goller, a local legend and former pipe major of the Nassau County Police Emerald Society Competition Pipe Band, came on as instructor. Goller brought with him the discipline and expertise the band had been looking to acquire. With a patient yet firm way with his students, he simply pushed the members to reach their potentials, challenging them with more complicated tunes. Goller also invited some of the better players to play in his own Celtic Cross Pipe Band, a new competition-only band he had formed with players from several bands across Long Island. Celtic Cross competed successfully in Grade 4 for three years, providing several members of the Northport Pipe Band with competition experience that proved valuable in raising the overall quality of the Northport band. In the spring of 2002, Pipe Major Mike Dow put the band on the competition field in grade 5. Competition fervor grows and ebbs with personnel, their families and responsibilities. Lately, one of our youngest members, Pipe Sergeant Finn Quigley, is spearheading the resurgence of competition in EUSPBA sanctioned events. As the Northport Pipe Band grows, it continues to set its sights higher. The kilts are pressed, the ghillies shine and the tune list ranges from traditional marches to performance medleys. Thirty-nine members strong, the band regularly performs in parades and other events that literally cover Long Island end to end-from Montauk to Manhattan. It still practices every Monday night at the same legion hall that saw the band's first practice 20 years ago, and it proudly leads the town's Memorial Day and Cow Harbor Day Parades each year. The future holds great promise for the Northport Pipe Band, but its roots will always be firmly planted in the community that gave it its start.

Grouping: Pipeband
City: Northport
State: NY
Zip: 11768
Country: US
Year-Joined: 2012
UL Rank (1 is highest, 4 is lowest): 4

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