

This Marching Band Hat is a tangible reminder of the bold musical traditions that flourished within Christiansburg Institute, despite the discriminatory forces of Jim Crow Era in Virginia. The band performances created by CI students were not merely spectacles; they were dynamic expressions of resilience, talent, and cultural pride. The high-stepping tradition, with its intricate choreography and lively syncopations, became a signature element that distinguished the CI Marching Band from others on the parade routes of Blacksburg, Christiansburg, Radford, and beyond. During a time of segregation, the CI Marching Band resonated with a unique energy that captivated both white and Black audiences. Alumna Mary Mills (Class of 1945) recalled, "Oh gosh, people used to line the street for our marching band. To this day, now if you see someone that's been members of it or if you got on your school jacket or something, they'll say, oh I just remember that band. I mean it was fantastic."