

A Short History of Drum Corps in Pendleton Oregon

By

Pacific Northwest Drum Corps.com

Specializing in PNW Drum Corps of the 1960s and 70s

Background

Pendleton is located in the northeastern corner of Oregon and is the birthplace of the Pendleton Woolen Mills Company, famous for their wool blankets, clothing, and other products. The 1960 US Census lists the population of Pendleton as 14,434; a small-town, with a heavy western (cowboy) vibe.

The First Corps – No known photos

The first known documented instance of a drum corps in Pendleton was June 1925. They were the **Pendleton American Legion Drum & Bugle Corps** (AL Post #23) participating in the American Legion (AL) State Convention in Prineville. We do not know when they were formed, or how long they marched. Most AL drum corps were formed soon after the American Legion Organization was created by congress in 1919 and were of the senior corps variety. We assume both those to be true in this case. The 1925 La Grande Observer (an Oregon newspaper) stated, "...that organization's appearance adds distinction to any event". The last known appearance for this corps was the Fourth of July parade in Walla Walla Washington in 1929.

The Second Corps - No known photos

The second instance of a drum corps was September 1938 at the Oregon State AL Convention in Pendleton. They were the **Pendleton American Legion Junior Drum & Bugle Corps** (AL Post #23) and won the "Buckaroo" trophy for best junior drum & bugle corps. The Portland Oregon "Cooties" won first place for senior drum corps.

The Pendleton American Legion Junior D&BC has been documented from 1938 through 1941. They were described by the LaGrande Observer as "Cowboy clad youngsters". Sweet.

The Third Corps

The earliest record we could find was on July 29, 1956, the **Pendleton Drum & Bugle Corps** performed a five-minute routine during a halftime show at the Shriner's All-Star football game in Multnomah stadium (Portland). The **Pendleton Sr Corps** have been documented from 1956 through 1963. They were a parade corps that also provided half-time shows, and music for a wide variety of local events. Their one documented field competition was at the Oregon State

American Legion Championships in 1963 where they placed second to the Portland Leathernecks.

The Final Corps?

The final instance was in November 1963 when the **Pendleton Rangers Jr Drum & Bugle Corps** were formed. They ran from 1963 through the end of the season of 1973. They were a small, but very talented corps and spun off marching members to the Troopers, Kilties, and Santa Clara Vanguard. A former Ranger member also instructed the Blue Devils drumline.

Conclusion

There you have it. Pendleton spawned four drum corps from 1925 through 1963, with the last one closing shop at the end of 1973. What a remarkable record for a town with such a small population, or any town for that matter.

Some places just capture and hold the spirit of drum corps. Pendleton is one of them.

Will there be another Pendleton Drum Corps in the future? Could be. We'll let you know when it happens.

Long Live Drum Corps!

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[September 2021 - PNWDC.com has been in touch with Pendleton AL Post #23 looking for drum corps data. That particular post has been dissolved. The physical building was sold years ago and the remaining members are close to, or in their 80s. There is no repository of historical data for this post. It is all in the wind.

We also contacted the Umatilla County Historical Society for data. They were unfamiliar with drum corps, but with our assistance, they dug into their photo archives and found seven photos of Pendleton Sr and the Rangers. No photos or documents of either Post #23 corps from the 1920s or 30s were found. If anyone has such data, please contact PNWDC.com. We would love to talk to you.]