

Fraternal Order of Eagles Drum & Bugle Corps of the Pacific Northwest

by Carl Latchaw, Drum Corps World staff (latchman44@yahoo.com) and (PacificNorthwestDrumCorps.com)

We all are familiar with American Legion and VFW drum corps, but at one time there were a multitude of drum corps sponsored by other fraternal organizations. Among them were the Fraternal Order of Eagles (FOE or Eagles), Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks (BPOE – Elks), Loyal Order of Moose (Moose), DeMolay (named after the last Grand Master of the Knights Templar), Shrine (Masonic Order), and the Knights of Pythias.



Some of these organizations had their own shows and gatherings, and some, like the Eagles and Elks, had statewide and national conventions with drum corps competitions. They also competed with other drum corps in parades and events.

In this article we're going to delve into the Fraternal Order of Eagles (FOE) or Eagles drum corps.

The Fraternal Order of Eagles was founded on February 6, 1898 in Seattle, WA. Their "Posts" or "Lodges" are called "Aeries" which is an eagle's nest, or technically any nest of a bird of prey. Today the Eagles have approximately 1,800 aeries spread across the U.S. and Canada and the ladies have another 1,400 auxiliaries.

The Eagles national conventions were held each year from 1899 on. Washington State conventions started in 1906 and ran through 1922 before drum corps competitions were added. Prior to that, "smokers" were a popular main event for entertainment. "Smokers" were unsanctioned amateur boxing matches.



1906 First Washington State Eagles Convention

The Seattle Cascades held a smoker as a fund-raiser in 1966. From today's perspective, that's kind of an odd fund-raising choice. Times change.

The first known documentation of an Eagles drum corps appearing in Washington State was at the Eagles National Convention held in Spokane, WA, in 1915. It wasn't a drum corps competition, but a cash award for the corps that had



May 1925 - Spokane Eagles DC



1908 Washington State Eagles Convention - Spokane

traveled the farthest to attend the convention.

Side note: John Phillip Sousa and his band were in attendance and played every day at the convention. Cool. Want to build your chops? Play his relentless martial-style music. It'll give you a real workout.

The first Eagles drum corps competition in a Washington or Oregon State Convention was in 1923 at the Anacortes,



November 1943 - Coos Bay Eagles Jr D&BC

Klamath Eagles Win Many Trophies At Salem



July 1947 - Klamath Falls Eagles Sr D&BC

WA, convention where the Ballard (Seattle) Aerie beat out Bellingham, WA, and Everett, WA, for first place. The Ballard Aerie still exists. We know them locally as the home of the Ballard Eagles Drill Team, founded in 1961 and still collecting trophies to this day.

Eagles drum corps boomed in Washington State in the early- to mid-1920' with at least 10 being formed. The creation of Eagles drum corps was coincidental with the creation of the American Legion in 1919. I imagine there was a rush to have a drum corps for your organization. It was the hot new thing!

In 1954 the Renton, WA, Eagles Senior D&BC was formed. They won the Washington State Eagles senior title from 1956 through 1961. In August 1961 they traveled to the Eagles National Convention in Minneapolis, MN, and won the Eagles national drum corps title.

Down in Oregon they had two outstanding Eagles drum corps. The first was the Klamath Falls Eagles Senior corps. They were founded in 1930 and won Oregon State Eagles Senior competition in 1937 and every year from 1939 through 1947. Pure domination.

The other corps were the Coos Bay Eagles



October 1947

Klamath Falls Eagles Aux D&BC



1948 Olympia, WA



1956 - Renton Eagles D&BC



1950 Walla Walla Eagles D&BC



1950 - Walla Walla Eagles D&BC



Junior D&BC. They were formed in 1938 and won the Oregon State Eagles junior title ten times in 15 years. That's 66% of the time. Pretty darn good.

By our count, Washington

had 18 Eagles drum corps (one junior) between 1923 and 1961, and Oregon had 14 Eagles corps (five junior) between 1930 and 1963. Given the smaller populations during that period, 32 drum corps from one organization over a 40-year period is not bad. Remember these are tiny drum corps by today's standards -- roughly 20 to 25 members.

The last Pacific Northwest Eagles drum corps found on record was the "Region-2" Eagles senior, drum corps from Oregon. Named "Region-2" because they drew members from multiple aeries



Eddie Cotton; Center-left (unconfirmed light heavy weight champion) fought 81 times in his career, winning 56. He retired from boxing in 1967. After his boxing career ended, he worked for the Boeing Company as a tool and die maker. He was a member of the Washington State Boxing Commission. Cotton also owned a restaurant in Seattle which bore his name.

The manager of Mr. Cotton was George Chemeres; center-right, the father of John Chemeres, a Cascade Cadet.

Proceeds from the smoker went to buy uniforms for the Cascade Cadets.



around Salem OR. They were formed in 1958 and were the last Eagles drum corps at the



Oregon State Eagles Convention in 1963. From our research, this was the very last Eagles drum corps show anywhere in the Pacific Northwest.

There you have it. A brief overview of our Eagles drum corps brothers in the Pacific Northwest from 1923 through 1963.

The Fraternal Order of Eagles have existed throughout the United States since 1898, so they probably had drum corps in your area, Rocky Mountain High for DCI

Long Live Drum Corps! Pacific Northwest Drum Corps.com. ■

