

Pacific Northwest drum corps national champions

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text and photos by Carl Latchaw, *Drum Corps World* staff (latchman44@yahoo.com) and Pacific Northwest Drum Corps.com -- specializing in PNW drum corps of the 1960s and 1970s

Ever since national drum corps championships started in 1921 with the American Legion (AL) Senior Championships, the Pacific Northwest has been there in heart and soul.

The first appearance at a national championship for a northwest corps was at the American Legion Nationals in San Antonio, TX, in 1928.



● **American Legion Capitol Post #9** (right) from Salem, OR, placed second in finals. The famous Harvey Seeds Rebels of Miami, FL, took first. Little known to the drum corps community at large, the Pacific Northwest has produced eight national championship drum corps. They are as follows:



● **1932 American Legion Capitol Post #9, Salem, OR** (left) -- American Legion National Senior Champions.

The Legion held its national convention in Portland, OR, in 1932. The drum corps competition attracted corps from as far away as Birmingham, AL. There were 32 corps in preliminary competition with 12 making finals, with Capitol Post #9 coming out on top.

The drum corps of Capitol Post (Capitol Post because Salem is the capitol of Oregon) was active from 1924 through 1933 and 1948 through 1950. They were Oregon State Legion Champions in 1925 through 1927 and 1930 through 1932. In 1928 they placed second at American Legion Nationals in San Antonio TX.



1932 American Legion Nationals, Portland Oregon. AL Capitol Post #9 Salem OR. National Champion Drum Corps. Charles Williamson - First of 1932. AL National Drum Major. Arnie Winter

● **Herbert Irwin VFW Post #1373** (right), Cle Elum, WA, (southeast of Seattle) won the 1934 VFW National Junior drum corps title. The contest was held during the national convention in Louisville, KY, in October 1934.



● **Great Falls ELKS, Great Falls,**

MT -- Elks National Drum Corps Senior Champions, 1947 through

1960. This corps traveled all over the United States collecting Elk's drum corps championship trophies. Our count is 11 championship trophies between 1947 and 1960, plus another three in 1912, 1914 and 1919 for a total of 14 championships. Quite the record. Amazing!



1961 Renton Eagles Sr DABC

● **Renton Eagles** (left), Renton, WA, 1961 Eagles National Senior Champions. The Renton (southeast of Seattle)

Eagles were established in 1954 and were five-time Washington State Eagles Senior Champions. In 1961 they



traveled to Minneapolis, MN, and won the national championship trophy at the Eagles convention.

● **Thunderbirds** (left), Seattle, WA, 1966 All-American Drum & Bugle Corps National Champions. The championship contest was held on August 7, 1966 in Anaheim CA. Four corps were present. The Anaheim Kingsmen (CA), Velvet Knights (CA), Lakewood Diplomats (CA) and the Thunderbirds (WA). The Kingsmen were California State VFW and American Legion State Champions in 1966.

● **Black Watch** (right), Auburn, WA, (south of Seattle), 1978 DCI Class A Champions. The corps was formed in 1971 and ran through 1983. They were a really strong local unit and went on several national tours, placing well nationally as seen by their 1978 championship title.



● **Seattle Cascades** (below left), Seattle, WA, DCI Division III World Champions (equivalent to 2008-present Open Class Champions). The Cascades were formed in June 1966 and are the longest-running drum corps in the Pacific Northwest. Their top accomplishment (in our opinion) was placing 12th at DCI Finals in 2002, the only Pacific Northwest corps ever to make it into DCI finals. They are still active today! (Note of interest: the Cascade Cadets were born from the Thunderbird Cadets; feeder to the A corps that won the 1966 All-American championship above).

● **Oregon Crusaders**, Portland, OR, 2004 DCI Division III World Champions (now Open Class)

● **Oregon Crusaders** (bottom right), Portland, OR, 2012 DCI Open Class Champions. The OC was established in 1999 and ran through 2018. They were a distinct corps from the original Crusaders that existed in the 1970s. The corps had two undefeated seasons, one in 2004 and the other in 2012. Both years they were Open Class DCI Champions. Having one undefeated season is



Left - Seattle Cascades 2000 Division III Championship Medal
Right - Seattle Cascades 2002 DCI Finalist Medal



practically impossible, but going undefeated twice is unheard of, especially in this neck of the woods.

So there you have it. National champions of the Pacific Northwest. We're not as prolific as our neighbors in California, but



we have our moments. They may be far and few between, but we have them.

Stay safe out there folks. It's a mad, mad world.

Long live drum corps! --
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