

The drum corps of the MacLaren Youth Correctional Facility

by Carl Latchaw, Drum Corps World staff (latchman44@yahoo.com) © PNW Drum Corps.com 2024 and Pacific Northwest Drum Corps.com Specializing in PNW drum corps of the 1960s and 1970s



A boy's reform school was established in 1891 in Woodburn, OR. Since that time, it has gone through several iterations and name changes (just like some drum corps!). In 1951 it was renamed The MacLaren Youth Correctional Facility after William G. MacLaren, a Portland Free Methodist minister known for his charity work with the Pacific Coast Rescue and Protective Society. MacLaren strives to help boys under the age of 18 complete their education, get some vocational training and turn their lives around.

The corps was formed on May 28, 1958 by Hal Beyers, music director at North Marion High School in Woodburn. The idea was to channel the boys' focus and energy into a positive direction with discipline and team building at its core. These are the same goals all drum corps have.

The first known appearance was at the July 1959 Oregon State American Legion Convention parade in Salem. Later that day, at the field competition, they took first place in the junior division over the Sons of the American Legion (SAL) Squadron 136 of Salem, OR (later known as the Flamingos in 1966 and Argonauts in 1975) and the third-place Hawthorne Boosters of Portland (AKA: Hawthorne Hawks in 1963, or just "Hawks"). In the senior division, the Leathernecks from Portland,

OR won out over the Royal Chinooks from Seaside, OR.

MacLaren's last known appearance was June 1968 at the Soap Box Derby parade in Salem.

In between 1959 and 1968 they had an eventful existence as a drum corps. In June 1962 a pair of MacLaren drum corps members stole a car while the corps was attending the Portland Rose Parade and drove down the freeway at up to 100 miles an hour. When they hit Albany, 69-miles later, they stole another car and proceeded south again and were eventually caught at Coburg, OR which is 103-miles south of Portland.

Both the driver, "Smouden" age-15, and the passenger, "James" age 16 were returned to the MacLaren facility. Even with these two missing, the corps still placed first in their division at the parade.

Not your typical drum corps, but part of Pacific Northwest history. Small potatoes compared to some of the hijinks of that other corps from that era. Still, we hope some of these lads turned their lives around. Drum corps has done just that, for many of us. ■



MacLaren Youth Correctional Facility, Woodburn Oregon

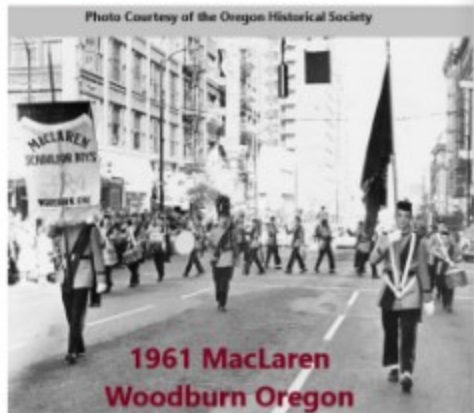


Photo Courtesy of the Oregon Historical Society

1961 MacLaren Woodburn Oregon

