

# Pacific Northwest drum corps buses

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

© Pacific NW Drum Corps.com 2024

In the mid-1960s few local corps owned buses. Most corps were small and the shows / parades were local. People carpooled, parents drove or they used school buses. If the show was across state, then they chartered interstate coaches, like Greyhound buses. By the late-1960s corps got bigger and they traveled farther to get to shows, so owning buses made financial sense.



Back in the day, corps purchased used interstate coaches manufactured the 1940's and 1950's. Most buses held around 40 people, so a 120-member corps had three buses, or two buses with an odd assortment of cars. The wealthy corps had buses that were the same make, mode and year. The rest of us had a rather eclectic fleet of vehicles.

It took years for us to get around to painting our buses the same color, which went a long way to making our corps look more cohesive and professional. Money was tight in the 1970s, just as it is today.

The earliest known photo of any local corps with a bus are the Baker Scouts (right) Junior D&BC from Baker, OR. Fresh from winning the Oregon State Elks Drum Corps Championships in 1958, the bus in the photo is a rental unit from Greyhound. It's a 1958 GM 4104 bus.

The first local corps (that we know of) to own their own bus was the Pasco, WA, Columbians, today known as the Tri-Cities Columbians. Here is a 1962 photo of their early-1950s



1958 Baker Scouts  
Baker, Oregon



1962 Pasco Columbians  
Pasco, WA



1973 Tri-Cities Columbians

Ford school bus (left). Juxtapose that with their 1973 corps photo (right) taken in Marion, OH, showing their matching 1956-1960 FlixBus VL-100 buses. I absolutely love this photo. Classic Columbians.

Pre-1974 Bellevue Sentinels (WA)



In the current millennium, the Seattle Cascades have gone back 58 years to their roots and charter their tour buses. Cheaper to charter than to own these days. Seems like the PNW has gone full-circle transportation wise.

One thing we probably don't see any more is human powered buses. Included are two examples; one of the Seattle Shamrocks (right) pushing one of their 1947 or '48 GM-3751 or 4151 "Silver Sides" bus and the Sentinels from Bellevue, WA,

doing the same maneuver. The Shamrocks got their first bus in 1969. The Sentinels (above) purchased their first bus, "Old Mac," in 1966.

Sixty-odd years later and we still get wistful when we smell diesel exhaust. Ahhhhhh . . . the magic of drum corps!

Long Live Drum Corps! ©Pacific Northwest Drum Corps.com 2024. ■



1969-1974 Seattle Shamrocks