## The drum corps of Tacoma, Washington

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[Publisher's note: Carl's research of the Pacific Northwest drum and bugle corps scene is extensive and his contributions to Drum Corps World are appreciated. The feature a corner of the United States that once had dozens of corps. Pictured here are a variety of Tacoma organizations as well as a tribute to Dan Anderson.]

Jacoma is located 34-miles directly south of Seattle and is the largest city between Seattle and Portland OR. Like Seattle, it too was built on the timber industry.

Tacoma was incorporated on November 12, 1875, following its selection in 1873 as the western terminus of the Northern Pacific Railroad. It has been the home to many drum corps, six of which we will cover today.

The Spanish-American War Veterans (SWV) John R. Thompson Camp #1 of Tacoma was the first camp

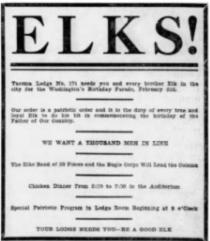
formed in Washington State on March 2, 1900. By 1909 the Washington State Association had added another 13 camps with approximately 1,500 Spanish War veterans. The SWV were an organization similar to the American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, and the GAR (civil war



1921 Afifi Temple Drum & Bugle Corps, Tacoma WA

1928 Tacoma Elks D&BC

**Washington State Champions** 



February 1922

veterans). In 1917 the Thompson camp organized a drum and fife corps comprisied of Sons of Spanish War veterans aged 12 to 14 years old. They performed locally for a decade. In 1933 the camp formed

1931 Tacoma Moos

a Daughters of the Spanish-American War Veterans drum and bugle corps. They went to Los Angeles for the national convention that year and were crowned Spanish-American War Veterans National Junior Champions. Pretty good for their first year out of the

box. They continued entertaining and competing around the PNW for another seven years.

Moose Heart Legion of the World, AKA, "Moose" was another fraternal organization. The Tacoma Moose Legion D&BC were well-known in the 1920s and 1930s. Between 1924 and 1931 they were undefeated in the



1934 Edward B. Rhodes AL Post #2, Tacoma WA

September 1936



Wild West VFW Post #91, Tacoma WA All-Girl DC top All-Boy DC bottom



That's a fine record for any drum corps!
Tacoma Elks Lodge #174 had
a drum corps from 1915 through
1929. They were Washington
State champions in 1927 and
1928 wearing white uniforms

Pacific Northwest and they won the Moose National Drum Corps Championships in 1924, 1925 and 1927, 1928. In 1926 they came in second at nationals.

similar to tuxedos with purple straw hats and were one of the best -dressed corps at the state convention in 1928.

Edward B. Rhodes American Legion Post #2 had a drum and bugle corps from 1927 through the early 1950s. They also had a ladies (AUX) drum corps and a SAL (Sons of the American Legion) corps. Legion posts across the nation formed a huge number of drum corps and this post certainly created their share.

Wild West VFW Post #91 had a senior corps from 1928 through 1949, winning the Washington State VFW

Championships in 1933 and both an all-girljunior corps and an all-boy junior corps in 1936 through 1938.

There were other Tacoma drum corps like the Disabled American Veterans (DAV) Tacoma Chapter #1 corps (1936 through 1942), the Afifi







Parade Rest !! Edward B. Rhodes AL Post #2 Tacoma, WA

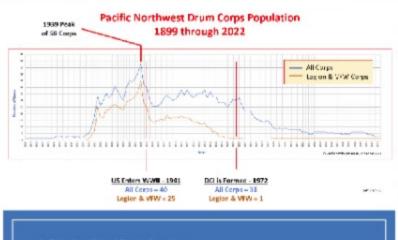


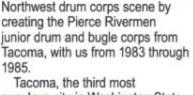


1941 Phyllis Scott Xisabled American Ve Majorette

senior(1921) and the Tacoma Eagles drum corps
(1934 through 1961). As usual, there were more drum
corps out there than we can document. It seems like
every fraternal organization had one. The pinnacle of
PNW drum corps was in 1939 with 58 individual corps
identified existing in that year alone (see graph).

And lastly, we would like to acknowledge Dan Anderson's (a local legend) last gift to the Pacific





Tacoma, the third most populous city in Washington State behind Seattle and Spokane, has nurtured drum corps continuously from 1915 through 1961, then it saw a rebirth of the activity in 1983 thanks to Dan Anderson and his Rivermen.

Dan marched with the Tri-City Columbians and then the Seattle Shamrocks in the 1960s and formed the Auburn, WA, Black Watch (below) Highlanders in 1971 at the age of 22; an amazing feat at any age. Unfortunately, Dan left us in 1985 at the age of 36. He will always be remembered with a smile.

Rest in peace Dan.

Long live drum corps! -- ©Pacific Northwest Drum Corps.com 2025. n



