

# The drum corps of Astoria, Oregon

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**A**storia is a port city in the northwestern corner of Oregon. It was Founded in 1811 as the fur trading-post of John Jacob Astor called "Fort Astoria." It is the oldest city in the state and is the oldest American settlement on the west coast. Its average population has been approximately 10,000 since 1930. The city's nickname is the "Sunset Empire."

Interesting factoid: Astoria was home to Bumble Bee Seafoods, famous for Bumble Bee tuna. Established in 1899, they canned salmon in Astoria until the last cannery closed in 1980.



Astoria Centennial Drum Corps - 1911

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The first drum corps we are going to cover was formed in 1889 and was



called the Astoria Drum Corps. They did the typical drum corps activities of the day and disappeared by 1891. A marching member named Fred Brown was 17 at the time. Remember Fred.

In 1911 the Astoria Centennial (Boy) Scouts (Jr) D&BC was formed with the aforementioned Fred Brown, now 38, as their founder and drill master. As you have guessed, this corps was formed to celebrate the 100th anniversary of Astoria's founding in 1811. The Scouts promoted Astoria all over Oregon and Washington state by marching in parades and playing at special events. The corps ran through 1924.

1926 found the Astoria American Legion Post #12 (AKA: Clatsop Post #12) forming their own drum corps. They had an organized drum corps from 1926 through 1940 and again from 1948 through 1958. They competed at the 1936, 1937, 1939 and 1949 through 1957 Oregon State American Legion championships, usually placing in the top three.



Centennial Boy Scout DC - ca1920

**Astoria  
Anchor Girls**



ca 1940

The Astoria Yacht Club was formed in 1894 and immediately created the Astoria Regatta. Why? Because that's what yacht clubs do, they race. Why not, right??

In 1934 the Yacht Club created the Anchor Girls (Sr) D&BC (1934-1942) to be Astoria's good-will ambassadors to events all throughout Oregon and Washington. They were the Yacht Club's "Auxiliary" as the yacht club at that time was a fraternal organization.

In 1937, the club created the Royal Chinooks "Marching Club" (1937-1965 with various periods of inactivity), an all-male equivalent of the Anchor Girls. In 1953 the Royal Chinooks became a Sr. D&BC, still sponsored by the Yacht Club,

now called the Royal Chinooks of Clatsop County. The RC competed through the state and entered the Oregon State American Legion Championships in 1958, '59, and 1960, placing second to the Leathernecks of Portland, all three times. "Royal Chinook" is a salmon that inhabits the Columbia River that borders Washington and Oregon. "Chinook" is the name of the local Indian Nation comprising of five tribes that have lived in the area for more than ten-thousand years.

These two corps are the only ones in the Pacific Northwest that were created by a yacht club. To our admittedly limited knowledge, these are the only two on the west coast or anywhere else that we have found. Very interesting. Many other fraternal clubs created / sponsored drum corps, so why not a yacht club? Some of you east-coasters do some digging and

let us know if any of your yacht clubs spawned drum corps over there. Are we unique?

In 1960 the Astoria Mariners (Jr) D&BC were formed and sponsored by the

July 4, 1963

**Astoria Mariners D&BC**  
@ Astoria Regatta Parade



**They Boomed Out 1st Prize**

July 30, 1958



The Royal Chinook drum and bugle corps is justly proud of the new design on their brass drum head, showing the Astoria-Megler bridge and a King Chinook salmon, the artistry of Arvid Wenzela, and of the first place award for drum corps in Seattle's Miss Oregon pageant parade Saturday. Leo Soucie, manager of the corps, holds the bronze plaque which designates the first place honor.

forementioned Clatsop AL Post #12. They were Oregon State VFW Jr. Champions in 1961 and Oregon State American Legion Junior Champions in 1962 and 1963, and were the Oregon State Eagles Jr. Champions in 1962. Also, in 1962 they traveled to Las Vegas for the American Legion Nationals. They were the last active drum corps in Astoria when they closed their doors in 1965.

In July of 1966, the City of Astoria put out the call for any organizations interested in reviving a city-wide drum corps. Both the Chinook and Mariners organizations sent delegates to the meeting. As a result, in July of 1966, the Sunsetters Junior D&BC (named after the city's moniker, "Sunset Empire") were born. Both the Sunsetters and



**Royal Chinooks  
February 1959**

**TEN-SHUN**—The State of Oregon's Drum and Bugle Corps, the Royal Chinooks, stood at attention as Vice President Nixon was escorted to the Astoria Armory by Mayor Harry M. Steinbock (right) at Astoria, for a ceremony in which a new 4-cent stamp commemorating Oregon's 100th birthday anniversary was announced. Nixon later visited Salem and Portland. He is to fly to San Francisco Sunday.



small-town drum corps in Astoria, OR. What an interesting history. Drum corps are an important component of any town lucky enough to have one. Remember people – get out and support your local drum corps!

Long live drum corps!

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the Mariners shared staff and marching members. The Royal Chinooks and Clatsop AL Post #12 donated their instruments to the new corps. Bill Perkins (the Mariners former drill instructor 1960 - 1965) was the Chairman and Director of the Sunsetters. The corps marched through the end of the 1972 season.

1976 saw Bill Perkins as the director of the Longview-Kelso (Jr) "New Mustangs". Bill even brought the old Sunsetters' green and black uniforms from Astoria for the "New Mustangs" to wear. In 1977 The New Mustangs changed their name to "The Who?" and in 1978 changed it again to the Marauders (middle left), David Rice, 1994), with Bill continuing as their manager. The Marauders had a successful corps and ran through the 1994 season. Longview-



**1962 Oregon State American Legion Jr. Champions**

Kelso, Washington is 50-miles directly east of Astoria and 50-miles north of Portland OR.

There you have it, the highlights of 83 years of



**January 1970  
Sunsetters @ Salem (OR) Optirama**

