

## Animal House

Hollywood comes to Cottage Grove! And, did it ever.

The year was 1977 and Main Street was alive with sound crews, actors, cameras and spectators. Universal Studios turned the community into a sound stage depicting college life in the sixties.



A breakout role for Kevin Bacon, here he is in the diner scene filmed in Cottage Grove.

Using the University of Oregon as the backdrop for the fictional Faber College, this **satirical** film became a box office success. The story was partially based on experiences of writer Chris Miller at Dartmouth College in the sixties, and was originally published in National Lampoon Magazine in 1974 as a short story, "Night of the Seven Fires." The US Library of Congress added the movie to the National Film Registry calling it "culturally, historically and **aesthetically** significant".

Over the years, Cottage Grove has hosted both a 25<sup>th</sup> and 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations complete with toga parties. The Chamber of Commerce currently owns the replica of the Deathmobile. The filming closed Main Street for four days and used the Armory for many indoor scenes. Several local sites can be seen in the movie such as the Rainbow Motel, downtown Main Street, Armory, Drive N Save, a laundromat, and of course, The Dexter Lake Club.

The opening scene begins on the UO campus with two freshmen arriving at college attempting to pledge the Omega Theta Pi house only to be **rejected**. Stooping to a much lower standard, they are accepted into the rowdy Delta Tai Chi house only to discover Dean of Students, Wormer, detests the fraternity. John Belushi's character, Bluto, leads the Delta's



Mashed potatoes help kick off the infamous food fight scene.

into complete chaos, moviegoers see mayhem in the president's office at UO Johnson Hall, a food fight with an **iconic** mash potato scene at the UO Erb Memorial Student Union (EMU), toga parties, and the inspiration and creation of the Blues Brothers from Saturday Night Live at the Dexter Lake Club.

Although Otis Day and the Knights were highlighted at the Dexter Lake Club scene with their rendition of "Shout" and "Shama Lama Ding Dong" it was blues band members Curtis Salgado and Robert Cray who inspired John Belushi to create the Blues Brothers as part of Saturday Night Live.

Cottage Grove became the star of this film during the final Homecoming parade scenes. It rained heavily the night before shooting so a burner tractor was used to dry the street and chaos once again prevailed by morning.



Filming Parade Scenes on Main Street

The iconic Deathmobile erupted out of a cake float labeled "Eat Me". Belushi swung across Main Street. Smoke bombs hurled off rooftops. A fake fire hydrant exploded. Gallons of water erupted into the air. And the marching band took a wrong turn into a brick wall, all while the director tried controlling the crowd who were supposed to show terror, but more often than not end up laughing at the antics.

More than 40 years since filming, Animal House remains part of the fabric of Cottage Grove. Many still smile at the memory, others just shake their heads.

#### Discussion Points

1. This film is celebrated in Cottage Grove, but largely ignored by Eugene, where most of the filming took place. Why might one town celebrate the film while the other doesn't?
2. Using context clues, what is a "burner tractor"?

#### Vocabulary

Aesthetically: a pleasing appearance or effect

Iconic: widely recognized and well-established

Rejected: not given approval or acceptance

Satirical: irony, or sarcasm used to expose or poke fun at human characteristics or social norms