

HISTORY OF CUB SCOUTING

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THE BEGINNING OF SCOUTING

Scouting's history goes back to the turn of the century to a British Army officer, Robert Stephenson Smyth Baden-Powell. While stationed in India, he discovered that his newer men were different now due to decades of urbanization and were not the adaptable recruits he had experienced throughout his career. Baden-Powell realized he needed to teach his men basic life skills, so he wrote a small handbook called *Aids to Scouting*, which emphasized resourcefulness, adaptability, and the qualities of leadership that frontier conditions demanded.

After returning from the Boer War, where he became famous by protecting the small town of Mafeking for 217 days, Baden-Powell was amazed to find that his little handbook had caught the interest of English boys. They were using it to play the game of scouting.

Baden-Powell had the vision to see some new possibilities, and he decided to test his ideas on boys. In August 1907, he gathered about 20 boys and took them to Brownsea Island in a sheltered bay off England's southern coast. They set up a make-shift camp that would be their home for the next 12 days.

The boys had a great time! They divided into patrols and played games, went on hikes, and learned stalking and pioneering. They learned to cook outdoors without utensils. Scouting began on that island and would sweep the globe in a few years.

The next year, Baden-Powell published his book *Scouting for Boys*, and Scouting continued to grow. That same year, more than 10,000 Boy Scouts attended a rally held at the Crystal Palace; a mere two years later, membership in Boy Scouts had tripled.

AMERICAN ORIGINS

About this same time, the seeds of Scouting were growing in the United States. On a farm in Connecticut, a naturalist

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and author named Ernest Thompson Seton was organizing a group of boys called the Woodcraft Indians; and Daniel Carter Beard, an artist and writer, organized the Sons of Daniel Boone. In many ways, the two organizations were similar, but they were not connected. The boys who belonged had never heard of Baden-Powell or of Boy Scouts, and yet both groups were destined to become Boy Scouts one day soon.

But first, an American businessman had to get lost in the fog in England. Chicago businessman and publisher William D. Boyce was groping his way through the fog when a boy appeared and offered to take him to his destination. When they arrived, Boyce tried to tip the boy, but the boy refused and courteously explained that he was a Scout and could not accept payment for a Good Turn.

Intrigued, the publisher questioned the boy and learned more about Scouting. He visited with Baden-Powell as well and became captured by the idea of Scouting. When Boyce boarded the transatlantic steamer for home, he had a suitcase filled with information and ideas. And so, on February 8, 1910, Boyce incorporated the Boy Scouts of America.

The "unknown Scout" who helped him in the fog was never heard from again, but he will never be forgotten. His Good Turn is what brought Scouting to our country.

After the incorporation of the BSA, a group of public-spirited citizens worked to set up the organization. Seton became the first Chief Scout of the BSA, and Beard was made the national commissioner.

The first executive officer was James E. West, a young man from Washington who had risen above a tragic boyhood and physical disability to become a successful lawyer. He dedicated himself to helping all children to have a better life and led the BSA for 32 years as the Chief Scout Executive.

Scouting has grown in the United States from 2,000 Boy Scouts and leaders in 1910 to millions strong today. From a program for Boy Scouts only, it has spread into a program including Tiger Cubs, Cub Scouts, Webelos Scouts, Boy Scouts, Varsity Scouts, and Venturers.

