Title
"A Modest Manliness": The Boy Scouts of America and the Making of Modern Masculinity, 1910-1930

Permalink
https://escholarship.org/uc/item/6s56c7cg

Author
Jordan, Benjamin René

Publication Date
2009

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO

“A Modest Manliness”: The Boy Scouts of America and the Making of Modern Masculinity, 1910-1930

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in

History

by

Benjamin René Jordan

Committee in charge:

Professor Rachel Klein, Chair
Professor Becky Nicolaides, Co-Chair
Professor Frank Biess
Professor Yen Le Espiritu
Professor Rebecca Plant

2009
The Dissertation of Benjamin René Jordan is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically:

____________________________________

____________________________________

____________________________________

Co-Chair

____________________________________

Chair

University of California, San Diego

2009
DEDICATION

I wish to express my gratitude to the fine faculty at the University of California San Diego and its History Department. I particularly want to thank my co-advisors, Rachel Klein and Becky Nicolaides, for their patience and excellent feedback concerning my research project and writing. Fellow graduate students such as Lauren Cole, David Miller, Volker Janssen, Andy Strathman, Sarah Sanders, and Matt Johnson made the difficult task of being a graduate history student into an enjoyable affair.

Steven Price, Archivist at the Boy Scouts of America’s National Scouting Museum and Archive, was exceedingly helpful and courteous during my five months of research. He and the rest of the staff went well out of their way to make my research time pleasant and productive. The archivists and staff at the Library of Congress, National Archives and Records Administration, Herbert Hoover Presidential Library, Honolulu Boy Scout Council Office, University of Tennessee Knoxville Library, and Public Library of Irving Texas also offered invaluable assistance in my research.

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my wife Heather. I would not have made it through graduate school classes or the dissertation process without her endless support and help. She has bravely endured repeated moving, job-changing, long hours raising our children, and uncertainty regarding the future. I can never fully repay her, Jack, and Caroline for their patience while Daddy was busy researching and teaching at “work house.” I also wish to thank my siblings and parents for their love and support throughout my life and university education, as well as Heather’s parents Ken and Nancy for graciously sharing their home with us while I wrote this dissertation.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Signature Page................................................................. iii
Dedication........................................................................... iv
Table of Contents............................................................. v
List of Abbreviations......................................................... vi
List of Figures.................................................................... vii
Vita.................................................................................. ix
Abstract............................................................................. x
Introduction - Modern America and the BSA’s balanced manliness.............. 1
Chapter One - The origins and organizational development of the............. 20  
   Boy Scouts of America
   Chapter Two - “A modest manliness”: The Boy Scout laws.................... 71
   Chapter Three - “Conservation of Boyhood”: Natural resource conservation…… 130  
   and male character
   Chapter Four - African-American and Native American Scouting............. 170
   Chapter Five - The “underprivileged majority”: Rich, poor, urban immigrant,...... 221  
   and rural Scouting
   Chapter Six - Secretaries and straphangers: Women in the BSA and the........ 283  
   Girl Scout controversy
   Epilogue - Scouting into the Great Depression...................................... 327
Endnotes........................................................................... 336
Bibliography....................................................................... 393
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AFL  American Federation of Labor
BSA  Boy Scouts of America
CFG  Camp Fire Girls
ECR  Executive Conference Reports of the Boy Scouts of America
GSA  Girl Scouts of America
IRS  Inter-Racial Service of the Boy Scouts of America
KKK  Klu Klux Klan
LSA  Lone Scouts of America
LSRM  Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial foundation
NAACP  National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
PNA  Polish National Alliance
PSA  Polish Scouts of America
WASP  white Anglo-Saxon protestant
YMCA  Young Men’s Christian Association
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure I.1: New York Times (May 9, 1926): RP1.............................................. 1

Figure 1.1: The Scout Executive (Feb. 1926): 15............................................. 45

Figure 2.1: Scouting (April 1922): 8................................................................. 90

Figure 2.2: Community Boy Leadership (1922), 352........................................ 92

Figure 2.3: Handbook for Boys (1919), 475....................................................... 96

Figure 2.4: “On My Honor”: 70 Years of Scouting in York, 37.............................. 101

Figure 2.5: “Robertson Crusoe Jones” sketch, Boys’ Life (Aug. 1921): 27.......... 110

Figure 2.6: Business merit badge pamphlet (BSA, 1928): cover.......................... 112

Figure 2.7: “Good Troop Records Make for Progress,” Scouting (Oct. 1928): 7........ 115

Figure 2.8: 1913 BSA Annual Report, 25.......................................................... 121

Figure 2.9: H.S. Wainwright painting, Boys’ Life (April 1922): 2.......................... 125

Figure 3.1: A Handbook of Woodcraft, Scouting and Lifecraft (1910), 63........... 136

Figure 3.2: “Our Friends, the Trees in Camp,” Scouting (May 1921): 8............... 139

Figure 3.3: Weekly Bulletin of Boy Scout Activities (Jul. 1, 1925)...................... 141

Figure 3.4: Scouting (May 1, 1918): 13.............................................................. 155

Figure 3.5: Scouting (Aug. 1, 1918): 16.............................................................. 155

Figure 3.6: New York Times (June 15, 1924): X11.............................................. 158

Figure 3.7: Conservation merit badge pamphlet (1920): cover............................ 163

Figure 3.8: 1925 BSA Annual Report, 46-47..................................................... 163

Figure 4.1: Boys’ Life (Nov. 13, 1919): 26; and 1919 BSA Annual Report, 61........ 176

Figure 4.2: Boys’ Life (Feb. 1922): 22................................................................. 210

Figure 4.3: “Indian Bonnet For Governor,” Boys’ Life (Oct. 1926): 23................. 212
Figure 5.1: 1915 BSA Annual Report, 113……………………………………... 254
Figure 5.2: Norman Rockwell sketch, *Boys’ Life* (Oct. 1915): 20……………… 260
Figure 5.3: Frank Rigney sketch, *New York Times* (Aug. 9, 1925): XX13…….. 270
Figure 6.1: *Saint Nicholas* (Feb. 1923): 387……………………………………... 283
Figure 6.2: 1917 BSA Annual Report, 127………………………………………... 289
Figure 6.3: *Handbook for Scoutmasters* (1922), 211…………………………... 295
Figure 6.4: *The Washington Post* (Jan. 29, 1911): MC7………………………… 298
Figure 6.5: *250 Million Scouts*, 129e…………………………………………... 301
Figure 6.6: *New York Times* (Oct. 23, 1921): 39………………………………... 319
VITA

1995    B.A., History, Bard College

2001-2003 Teaching Assistant, Department of History, University of California, San Diego

2003    M.A., History, University of California, San Diego

2007-2008 Visiting Instructor of History, Kenyon College

2008-2009 Johnston Visiting Professor of Gender Studies and Environmental Humanities, Whitman College

2009    Ph.D., History, University of California, San Diego

PUBLICATIONS


FIELDS OF STUDY

Major Field: Modern United States History
Professors Rachel Klein and Becky Nicolaides

Studies in Gender and Sexuality History
Professor Rebecca Plant

Studies in Modern German History
Professor Frank Biess
ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

“A Modest Manliness”: The Boy Scouts of America and the Making of Modern Masculinity, 1910-1930

by

Benjamin René Jordan

Doctor of Philosophy in History

University of California, San Diego, 2009

Professor Rachel Klein, Chair
Professor Becky Nicolaides, Co-Chair

This dissertation examines an enormously influential organization that gave shape to normative American assumptions about the relationship between gender, race, citizenship, and the environment in the early twentieth century. The Boy Scouts of America [BSA] garnered a broad range of popular and government support for promising to teach a universal model of character and leading citizenship to all boys. However, many officials doubted that non-white, working class immigrant, and rural boys were capable of such training. Administrators justified allowing local councils to discriminate against “undesirable” groups as permitting “self-determination” in local matters.
This research revises one of the central tenets of Progressive Era gender history. A number of works incorrectly use Scouting as the key proof for a flawed argument that native-born white, middle class men’s ideal of manhood shifted to a virile self-reliance that idealized “primitive” non-white races. Virile primitivism, however much it may have shaped men’s fantasies, was of little practical use in an urban-industrial society. The BSA actually garnered support from across the socio-economic spectrum for its articulation of a new vision of balanced, “modest manliness.” Scout manliness hedged pioneer-like virility with Victorian self-control and the expert management, scientific efficiency, and hierarchical loyalty that native-born white, middle class men needed to adapt to the corporate industrial workforce and to reinforce their dominant position in an urbanizing social hierarchy. Girls and non-white boys worked to overcome their obstacles to participation in Scouting.

Environmental historians studying the early twentieth century have emphasized the battle over public land usage between utilitarian natural resource conservationists and pristine wilderness preservationists. Attention to the BSA points to the power and popularity of a third vision. BSA leaders insisted that forests should be set aside because they were rich with masculine history and provided an arena for reordering an increasingly diverse, feminized society. Natural resource conservation taught boys modern virtues like expert management and scientific efficiency. BSA officials encouraged members, as future leaders, to apply conservation’s categorization of species based on productivity to the differential treatment of human groups based on character capacity. Scouts learned to manage human resources by conserving natural resources.
Introduction

Modern America and the BSA’s balanced manliness

Figure I.1 New York Times (May 9, 1926): RP1.

The 1926 annual meeting of the National Council of the Boy Scouts of America in Washington D.C. marked the maturation of the organization’s power and influence in American society and government. Figure I.1 captures an event from the first day of the meeting in which two thousand Boy Scouts called personally on President Calvin Coolidge, the Honorary President of the organization, at the White House. Afterwards, the boys held a grand rally on the Ellipse just to the south – at which they demonstrated a variety of Scout skills such as constructing lookout towers, setting up camp, and performing First Aid for the eager public. Representatives from nearly seven hundred
local Scout councils from every state and territory of the union, members of the national office staff, and prominent at-large members met for two days to praise the organization’s progress, make plans for the coming year, and elect officers. The National Council re-elected Supreme Court Chief Justice and former President William Howard Taft and Democrat Presidential candidate and former Secretary of the Treasury William G. McAdoo as Honorary Vice-Presidents.1

The highlight of the meeting was President Coolidge’s speech extolling the virtues of Boy Scouting and the organization’s social and civic stature before a crowd of thousands of delegates and Scouts. Coolidge acknowledged the long and intimate association between the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) and the federal government. He noted that former President Taft hosted the first annual meeting of the National Council at the White House in 1911, and that Taft and each of his successors had been pleased to serve as Honorary Presidents of the organization. Mayors, governors, and state and federal legislators across the country had long emulated this practice by accepting honorary positions from local councils and troops, giving speeches on the importance of Scouting, and orchestrating public Scout ceremonies. Coolidge stated that the Boy Scouts of America, which was granted a Congressional charter in 1916, “ranks in the popular mind with the only two other organizations which have been similarly honored, the Red Cross and the American Legion.” BSA officials used the legitimacy bestowed by the charter and its legal monopoly on the word Scout to force competing Boy Scout organizations out of business and to attract money, support, training, equipment, and privileges from government agencies and the general public.
The President pointed out that the BSA was an essential force for teaching boys the good character, civic leadership, and work ethic necessary for modern living, “The more I have studied this movement, its inception, purposes, organization, and principles, the more I have been impressed. Not only is it based on the fundamental rules of right thinking and acting but it seems to embrace in its code almost every virtue needed in the personal and social life of mankind.” Coolidge insisted that Scout character training “means a mental and moral fiber of high order, one which may be woven into the fabric of the community and State, going to make a great nation.” He argued that Boy Scout civic training was particularly appropriate for America’s representative democracy since it fostered self-government and community responsibility. The President praised Scouting for teaching each boy the cooperative effort and division of labor essential for “adapting him to modern life” and work, including the principle that “rewards come only after achievement through personal effort and self-discipline.” He commended the BSA for having recruited three million boys since its 1910 inception, one out of every seven boys during that period, but lamented, “Who can estimate the physical, mental, and spiritual force that would have been added to our national life during this period if the other six also had been scouts?” The President’s speech revealed not only the degree to which the BSA had become ingrained in American culture and politics by 1926, but also how central teaching the character, civic, and work values needed to adapt masculine norms to modern living was to the organization’s popularity and growth.²

This dissertation examines Boy Scouting as a window on the articulation of a new vision of manhood that served as the dominant, mainstream model of behavior for early twentieth century American boys and men in their daily lives. It argues that the BSA
invigorated Victorian, middle class men’s virtues such as self-control and a protestant
work ethic with a confined dose of primitive virility while also emphasizing the values of
scientific efficiency and hierarchical loyalty prized by the emerging corporate culture.
BSA supporters insisted that structured engagement with nature would develop the
nation's key resource – its adolescent boys. It would protect boys from a multiplicity of
dangers associated with city living and modern work. Drawing on psychologist Granville
Stanley Hall’s influential theories of adolescence and racial recapitulation, Scout leaders
constructed a masculine ideal that simultaneously avoided the supposed threat of
feminization while molding male character to the exigencies of urban-industrial society.
Yet within and without the organization, growing conflict centered on a key question:
Could exemplary character and civic virtue be cultivated only among select boys, or
could such qualities be universally developed? Debates on this issue shaped the
relationship between the BSA and the Girl Scouts, southern African-Americans, Native
Americans on western reservations, urban working-class immigrants, and rural farmers.
My dissertation probes these tensions as it explains the power and attraction of BSA
ideology for early twentieth century Americans.

Most gender historians studying the late nineteenth and early twentieth century
have argued that mainstream Victorian manhood was in crisis. They point out that
corporate industrialism, urbanization, the arrival of “new immigrants” from southern and
eastern Europe, and the entry of women into the wage labor force seemed to threaten the
dominance of native-born white men. Most gender histories argue that leading American
men responded to the era’s crises by shifting dramatically from Victorian manhood’s
self-control, restraint, and producerism to a modern “masculinity” or “passionate
manhood” that prized primitive virility, aggressive physicality, and instinctive spontaneity. Other historians argue that these trends and the rise of material abundance by the 1920s led to a “personality” model emphasizing consumption, leisure, outer-directedness, and orientation to a therapeutic ethos which continues to dominate today.

Such works have correctly articulated a broad range of historical forces challenging native-born white men’s dominance and the applicability of Victorian masculine ideals to turn-of-the-century life. There is little doubt that self-reliant, virile figures such as idealized Native American warriors, white frontier pioneers, and Theodore Roosevelt’s volunteer unit of Rough Riders during the Spanish-American War appealed to a large number of white American men faced by such changes. However, the existing historiography has assumed that the traits men prized in their escapist fantasies translated into prescriptive norms intended for daily life in modern American society.

The trouble with this interpretation is that virile, aggressive primitivism would have been of little help to native-born white men attempting to maintain their supremacy over a modernizing, diversifying society and economy. The two main real-life concerns for white American men in this period were work and social relations (both within and outside the family). Wholesale emulation of “savage” Indians and working class “toughs” would have made native-born white, middle class and elite men poor copies of those “inferior” groups of men over whom they were trying to reassert their authority. Being aggressive and individualistic left men vulnerable to accusations of selfishness and uncivilized behavior by progressive and women reformers. None of the attributes of virile masculinity were conducive to leading within a corporate industrial economy or a government increasingly grounded in notions of scientific efficiency and expert
management. Virile, savage masculinity could only serve as a compensatory fantasy for white American men in this era – a way of temporarily escaping modernity but not a way of successfully engaging it. This dissertation suggests that the dominant, mainstream model of fin de siècle – and modern – American manhood has yet to be identified.5

Intriguingly, many gender histories contain the same brief argument that Boy Scouting’s popularity and longevity serves as a key proof that the mainstream model of American manhood in the early twentieth century shifted from Victorian character to primitive savagery and aggressive virility. Gender historians have drawn on texts penned by Ernest Thompson Seton and Daniel Carter Beard as representing the mature BSA’s overall masculine teachings. The argument is linked to the assumption that the BSA promoted similar masculine values to those found in two preceding youth organizations, Seton’s Woodcraft Indians and Beard’s Sons of Daniel Boone. Seton and Beard did join forces with the emerging BSA, but only because their organizations’ masculine teachings and heroes failed to attract significant membership and support. BSA publications sometimes encouraged boys to play pioneer and Indian in order to learn self-reliance and outdoorsmanship; however, these heroes’ associations with savagery, selfishness, and inefficiency made them incomplete role models for modern boys. Most BSA literature stressed that good Scouts selectively retained qualities associated with Indian and pioneer ancestors while also developing the Victorian self-control and work ethic, scientific management, and loyalty to hierarchical authority needed to hedge aggressive individualism and adapt to modern life.6

A rigorous examination of the gender teachings of the early Boy Scouts of America provides an excellent opportunity to observe modern, mainstream manhood in
the making. The BSA’s active youth membership reached 929,769 in 1927; its cumulative membership to date exceeded five million by 1930. Active membership surpassed 6,287,000 at its zenith in 1970. The BSA is the largest youth organization and one of the largest voluntary organizations in American history. The Boy Scout handbook is one of the best-selling books in American publishing history. The organization drew a staggering breadth of support from across the socio-economic spectrum. Efforts by BSA administrators to promote a universal vision of manly character and citizenship and their debates about females’ and black, Native American, working class immigrant, and rural boys’ character and corresponding roles in Scouting and society offer a broad, complex perspective on the cultural construction of mainstream manliness.

Many books have been written about the history of the Boy Scouts of America, but surprisingly few of an academic nature. The best, most comprehensive work on early American Boy Scout history is David Macleod’s 1983 book, Building Character in the American Boy: The Boys Scouts, YMCA, and Their Forerunners, 1870-1920. He argued that Boy Scouting helped middle class parents control their adolescent boys by prolonging their state of dependence and channeling their energies “into boyish sports or anachronistic woodcraft, neither of much utility in modern life.” Macleod insisted that Scouting harkened back to nineteenth century character values and a nostalgia for rural boyhood. Sociologist Jeffrey Hantover’s 1976 dissertation, “Sex Role, Sexuality, and Social Status: The Early Years of the Boy Scouts of America,” took gender and class as its central foci. He argued that Boy Scouting helped skilled working class and lower middle class clerical men preserve nineteenth century masculine self-reliance, individualism, and competition in the face of modernization.
Macleod and Hantover correctly identified a strain of nineteenth century manhood in Boy Scout teachings, but failed to recognize the balanced emphasis on modern virtues such as scientific efficiency, expert management, and hierarchical loyalty. Macleod and Hantover mischaracterized Boy Scout gender ideology as a nostalgic masculine response to industrialization and urbanization that attempted to defy modernization. This contributed to Macleod stressing class and age factors while downplaying the significance of gender ideology in Scouting, even as masculine concerns continued to surface in his evidence. This dissertation argues that masculinity was the fulcrum of Scouting ideology, through which administrators articulated solutions to class, age, race, rural, urban, and environmental concerns. It agrees with Hantover that skilled working class and lower middle class groups found common ground in Boy Scout character ideology, but argues that the BSA drew support from across the socio-economic spectrum for its modern, balanced manliness rather than a nostalgic manhood.

**Boy Scouting’s solution to the “masculine crisis” and the “boy problem”**

The BSA triumphed over competing youth organizations and emerged as a dominant cultural force by offering a balanced ideal of manhood that simultaneously paid homage to traditional masculine values, reasserted native-born white men’s authority, and prepared select boys for leadership in a modernizing workforce and nation-state. BSA administrators promised that Scout training would counter the negative effects of industrialization, urbanization, immigration, and “feminization” for both boy members and their adult leaders. Administrators primarily designed Boy Scouting to build character in middle class, adolescent school boys and as an antidote to the perceived
dangers of commercial leisure and the urban, heterosocial youth culture. Officials advertised Scouting as an essential supplement to the home, school, and church that would develop capable boys into future leaders and ease social tensions in America.

By the early twentieth century, large-scale factories and machines had largely displaced small-scale production and the opportunity to become self-made via self-employment that had defined Victorian manhood. Frederick Taylor’s principles of scientific management and Henry Ford’s moving assembly line consolidated this transformation from handicraft to automated mass production. Incorporation and business mergers helped finance and streamline this process. Industrialization and incorporation created a more stratified work force which intensified class, racial, and ethnic tensions in America’s cities.9

Turn-of-the-century urbanization simultaneously drew communities toward a more uniform national culture while segregating the classes and races and fostering anonymity – processes which destabilized traditional small town bonds and native-born white men’s authority. Industrial jobs and urban amusements attracted rural white and black Americans and “new immigrants” from southern and eastern Europe. The laboring classes flocked to urban centers and increasingly overtaxed their infrastructures, prompting wealthier native-born whites to flee to the emerging suburbs. The influence of local elite men declined in the face of urbanization, mass culture, the privatized middle class home, and the larger scale of business and politics. By 1900, native-born white, middle class and elite men worried that the stabilizing influence of their traditional political and social authority was being swept away by a tide of self-interested minorities, striking workers, and the loose morals of mass leisure.10
In 1893, historian Frederick Jackson Turner articulated a related belief that the closing of the western frontier to new settlement threatened the development of America’s distinctive race of men and its democratic values. Turner argued that America’s democratic society had, up until that point, depended on the frontier to reinvent and improve itself. Many Americans believed that the frontier had provided a “safety valve” for excessive immigrants, the urban unemployed, and enterprising youth. With its supposed closing, many feared that men’s hardy, Americanizing experience of carving homesteads out of the wilderness and becoming self-made by owning one’s own farm or business might come to an end.\(^{11}\)

By 1900, the “New Woman” increasingly invaded male arenas outside the home: paid work, higher education, politics, and public leisure. Younger women pursued college degrees and new professional careers in social work and clerical service. Building upon their efforts to achieve such moral reforms as abolition and temperance, some middle class women’s volunteer clubs pushed for the right of suffrage and political office. The 1890s “Gibson Girl” and the 1920s “flapper” asserted women’s right to men’s leisure spaces and practices. Many middle class and elite men (and some conservative women) worried that these “New Women” were subverting the natural order of separate gender spheres and challenging men’s authority.\(^{12}\)

Progressive reformers envisioned these interrelated structural trends in terms of distinct “problems” that could be solved by scientific study and intervention by trained experts. Progressive reformers attempted to take decision-making power out of the hands of immigrants and the working class, but they also achieved notable improvements in urban housing, sanitation, and working conditions. White authorities – supplemented by
vigilante violence and lynching – dealt with the “race problem” through segregation and refusing non-whites the rights of full citizenship and voting. Restricting immigration in favor of Old Stock nations, which peaked in the 1924 National Origins Act, helped cap the number of “new immigrants.” Americanization, especially during World War I, attempted to force new immigrants to accept the values and behaviors of dominant culture by instructing them in English language, proper morals, hygiene, a work ethic, gender roles, and civic duty. While some native-born whites believed that it was too late for adult immigrants to change their ways, most reformers felt that immigrant children could be Americanized by public schooling and structured leisure time activities like city playground programs and Boy Scouting.¹³

Of all the various American reform efforts in the early twentieth century, solving the “boy problem” enjoyed perhaps the broadest range of support. Many reformers assumed that girls could – for the most part – be contained at home with domestic duties under mothers’ supervision. Many fathers played a decreasing role in childrearing and spiritual matters as they took jobs in factories and offices and turned their attention to business concerns. Middle class and elite men, especially, worried that their sons would be feminized by the transformed home and church and the integration of sexes encouraged by coeducation and mass leisure. Over-protective mothers supposedly turned boys into “mollycoddles” and “Little Lord Fauntleroys” who were well-mannered but incapable of self-reliance or virility. Adolescent schoolboys could escape feminization during their growing leisure time, but in the view of numerous commentators, the lack of proper adult supervision made them susceptible to the city’s “foreign” elements, heterosocial youth culture, and mass entertainment. Early twentieth century reformers
argued that adolescent boys were vulnerable to corrupting influences, but were also malleable enough to be saved and guided along a proper path.14

The first type of solution to the boy problem took the form of legislation and focused on non-white and immigrant working class boys. Many native-born white, middle class and elite reformers believed that such boys were innately flawed or that bad parenting and the tenement environment led them into delinquency. Reformers hoped that child labor laws and compulsory schooling would protect such boys from corrupting influences. Paternalistic judges presiding over new juvenile courts promised to catch those who fell through the cracks. These efforts placed “foreign” and non-white boys under the tutelage of native-born white men, in the hope of transforming them into “real” Americans or at least controlling them. However, many men feared that keeping boys in coeducational classrooms with women teachers would sap their manly initiative.15

The Child Study Movement, led by psychologist G. Stanley Hall, popularized the theories of adolescence and racial recapitulation as a means of coming to terms with the effects of modernization and providing a solution to the perceived problem of threatened boyhood. Hall defined adolescence as a turbulent stage between twelve and sixteen years of age in which sexually and spiritually maturing boys were vulnerable to moral suasion. He theorized that children recapitulated the racial development of primitive societies as they aged. Hall argued that small groups of adolescent boys should be socialized in new youth centers or outdoors under the leadership of responsible men in order to protect them from harmful influences and guide them along the proper developmental path.16

A number of adult-led, voluntary youth organizations drew on Hall’s theories to promote a second response to the boy problem that rejected maternal and feminine
influences by re-segregating boys. These efforts, which became collectively known as “boys’ work,” offered native-born white, middle class and elite men hope of an inexpensive, long-term resolution to the dislocations of modernity and its masculinity crisis. Starting in the late nineteenth century, the Young Men’s Christian Association [YMCA], the Boys’ Club, and the Big Brother Movement attempted to get working class immigrant boys off the streets and to Americanize them via gymnasiums, libraries, and meetings supervised by “respectable” men. Handicraft and hobby work paid homage to the artisan’s mastery of a craft while filling boys’ potentially dangerous leisure time with character-building activities. YMCA and Fresh Air Fund summer camps isolated less fortunate children from their immigrant parents and street life by sequestering them outdoors under the supervision of trained boys’ workers for extended periods of time. In the first decade of the twentieth century, organizations such as the Woodcraft Indians, the Sons of Daniel Boone, and, especially, the Boy Scouts of America helped expand boys work to include protecting middle class and elite boys from the perceived threats posed by modern life. The Woodcraft Indians and the Sons of Daniel Boone offered an opportunity for independent groups of boys to learn self-reliance and virility by reliving the manly hardships of Indian and frontier life, but these nostalgic organizations could not help boys engage with a changing society and proved unpopular. The Boy Scouts of America quickly became the dominant organization in the youth and camp field.  

The BSA’s vision of “modest manliness” and structured outdoor activities in adult-led troops emerged as a key solution to native-born white men’s anxieties and the boy problem. BSA national leaders promised to provide a universal character training program for boys that would ease America’s growing class and cultural tensions.
Officials consciously taught boy members a masculine ideal appropriate for the real life concerns of modern work and changing social relations. Boy Scouting paid homage to traditional masculine values such as self-reliance and virility while stressing the scientific efficiency, expert management, and hierarchical loyalty needed for corporate industrial work and progressive political leadership. BSA administrators heavily qualified or rejected outright many elements of the virile masculinity emphasized by most previous works in men’s history on this era: individualism, aggression, competition, primitivism, instinctive spontaneity, militarism, sports, and body-building. While there was a drift toward developing a businessman’s “pleasing personality” in BSA sources of the 1920s, the organization continued to emphasize self-reliance and a productive work ethic as keys to men’s success in work and in life. BSA sources suggested that being other-directed and focused on superficial consumption was too feminine and dependent to serve as the primary model of American manhood. Scouting’s character and citizenship teachings helped boys and men adapt to modernity instead of resist it with outmoded values.18

Boy Scouting’s balanced manliness also helped reassert native-born white, middle class and elite males’ dominance by distinguishing them from groups described in BSA literature as extreme and narrow. Women were vane and sentimental, lacking the Scout’s forethought and social consciousness. Blacks were lazy, irresponsible, and fit only for manual labor jobs. Native Americans were self-reliant, but too self-centered and primitive. BSA sources conceded that traditional farmers were independent and resourceful, but claimed that they knew little of group cooperation or scientific efficiency. Officials suggested that working class men’s physical toughness and aggression, while admirable qualities, led them to be selfish and out of control. National
leaders declared that the organization was open to all types of boys, but they maintained programming and membership policies that they knew made it difficult for non-whites, working class immigrants, and rural boys to join. Administrators succeeded in associating the Scout with advanced character and leading citizenship in the eyes of government officials and the general public, prompting excluded social groups to work to overcome these derogatory stereotypes and obstacles to participate in Scouting.

By the mid-1920s, many of the threats to native-born white men’s authority seemed to be subsiding. The Nineteenth Amendment granted women suffrage in 1920, but the feared women’s voting bloc and upheaval in gender norms failed to materialize. The 1921 and 1924 immigration acts greatly reduced the flow of immigrants from Asia, Africa, and southern and eastern Europe. Post-war labor conflicts and race riots subsided as the economy expanded. Nativist groups like the Ku Klux Klan were on the wane. Republicans dominated the White House with a pro-business agenda and a “return to normalcy.” The late 1910s emphasis on militarism and nationalism had given way to cries for international peace and prosperity through global trade.19

Over the course of the 1920s, BSA leaders shifted somewhat from an outrightly racist vision to the new social scientific theory that linked character to environment. Instead of having to extract an existing quality from select boys, it became conceivable to at least strengthen the character of any boy by improving his environment through Scouting and proper adult leadership. Local groups and Scout officials placed increasing pressure on administrators to make the program more inclusive. BSA national leaders adjusted policies to gradually incorporate working class immigrant, rural, black, and Native American boys who had once been largely excluded from the organization; but
the ways in which these new groups were included and restrictions placed on their Scout privileges continued to mark them as second-class members, men, and citizens. The diversification of BSA membership from 1924 to 1930 represented a subtle reinforcement of administrators’ gendered, hierarchical vision of character and citizenship rather than a major change in ideology. However, even restricted Scout membership served as a stepping stone toward respect and full citizenship for these new groups.

**Research scope and sources**

This dissertation analyzes Boy Scouting to explore mainstream, prescriptive manhood in the early twentieth century. It is not intended to be a comprehensive organizational study, though it provides new insight on the BSA’s development and cultural significance. This project analyzes the BSA’s origins and expansion in the 1910s as well as its maturation and diversification in the 1920s. While the perspective of boy members and their reception of Scouting is undoubtedly important, this dissertation is primarily concerned with the masculine values that adult members and supporters believed the program should teach boys. It utilizes national office publications like Boy Scout handbooks, magazines, and topical pamphlets that capture the organization’s overarching character and civic ideology. This study pays particular attention to the special literature written for adult troop and council office leaders that previous BSA histories have largely ignored. Publications for adult members outlined Scout educational theory and methods. In the process, national leaders explained why they emphasized particular character values and activities over others. Since national
headquarters did not have the staff or money to directly supervise local practice, publications were the lifeblood of the organization. Transcripts from training conferences for adult Scout leaders in the 1920s and key officials’ personal papers capture explanations of and debates about specific organizational policies and program emphases. Articles on the meaning of Scouting in prominent national magazines illuminate the image of the organization which the general public came to support. BSA Annual Reports, which were addressed to Congress starting in 1917 as a condition (or rather, privilege) of the federal charter, provide numerous statistical data on membership and budgets. They also chart the development of the organization’s administration, special program emphases, and outreach efforts to new social groups. Archival papers of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and the Rockefeller Foundation record the contested extension of Scouting to blacks and Native Americans.  

The uniformity and conformity of local Scout practice is key evidence of the widespread and mainstream nature of BSA gender and civic ideology. While this dissertation is mainly a national-level study that seeks to identify the common denominators of Scouting that appealed to a broad socio-economic spectrum of Americans, its examination of numerous amateur histories of local Scouting, regular Boy Scout columns in national newspapers, and sociological studies of Scouting in the 1910s and 1920s reveals a high degree of local conformity to the national program. This was especially remarkable because national administrators had few means with which to coerce local officials. Over ninety-nine percent of adult members were volunteers. Local supporters and members paid the expenses of area staff, offices, and camps. The national
office became increasingly dependent on contributions from the local councils, making administrators more susceptible to suggestions from below.

This dissertation contains two distinct but overlapping parts: the first three chapters interpret the organization’s structure and its general masculine ideology and programming, while the last three chapters analyze officials’ more nuanced articulation of leading manhood through their engagement with groups of boys and girls that fell outside the BSA’s native-born white, middle class, town norm. Chapter One examines Boy Scouting’s British origins and its unique development in the United States. It argues that the BSA’s balanced governance paralleled its vision of modest manliness and helped officials achieve the broad popular and government support necessary to triumph over competing Scout and youth programs. The chapter contrasts the BSA’s inclusive rhetoric with its initially limited membership reach. Chapter Two analyzes how the BSA’s balance of Victorian, virile, and corporate masculine values helped boys and men adapt to the changing nature of fin de siècle work and social relations. The chapter pinpoints the BSA’s core character and civic ideology through examining the American Scout Laws and Oath, historical heroes, and basic activities. Chapter Three illustrates how BSA administrators used natural resource conservation’s connotations of expert management, scientific efficiency, and social responsibility to reinforce their gendered, hierarchical vision of character and citizenship. Chapter Four argues that most early BSA administrators, following G. Stanley Hall’s psychological theories of racial recapitulation and adolescence, quietly limited the participation of blacks and Native Americans whom they deemed less capable of advanced character and leading citizenship. The BSA’s Inter-Racial Service worked to expand black and Native American recruitment in the
second half of the 1920s, but national leaders envisioned a narrow version of Scout character and membership for them. Chapter Five examines BSA administrators’ mixed and evolving attitude toward rich, poor, urban working class, and rural farm boys. Administrators made some minor concessions to encourage participation from these groups and to live up to their claim to provide a universal program for all boys, but they also knowingly maintained policies which limited urban, working class immigrant, and rural boy involvement. Chapter Six examines how BSA administrators circumscribed females’ participation in Scouting by keeping women out of BSA membership and leadership positions, and by attempting to persuade the leaders of the separate Girl Scouts of America organization to merge into the conservative, domestic-oriented Camp Fire Girls organization. The Epilogue summarizes the dissertation’s findings as well as highlights some of the character and civic issues with which BSA leaders continued to grapple in the Great Depression.
Chapter One

The origins and organizational development of the Boy Scouts of America

Many historians assume that the early BSA promoted the virile and self-reliant values taught by earlier youth organizations such as Ernest Thompson Seton’s Woodcraft Indians, Dan Beard’s Sons of Daniel Boone, and William Smith’s British-based Boys’ Brigade. It is apparently true that Smith suggested the idea of Boy Scouting to its British founder, Robert Baden-Powell, and that Baden-Powell borrowed selectively from all three organizations in formulating the original British Boy Scout program. Seton and Beard did join forces with the fledgling Boy Scouts of America in hope of achieving a broader platform for their masculine and environmental teachings. However, it is essential to understand that Smith’s, Seton’s, and Beard’s organizations failed to attract significant memberships in America because their masculine ideals and teaching activities did not meet the complex needs of men and boys trying to adapt to a modernizing society and workforce. If Seton or Beard had succeeded in fashioning the BSA according to his vision, then the organization would never have flourished as it did. Moreover, the BSA, as it matured, was a unique adaptation of British Scouting. The BSA beat out or subsumed a dozen or more competing Boy Scout organizations in the United States, some of which had quite different interpretations of Scout character, civic training, and ideal manhood. Seton and Beard provided the BSA with an important veneer of traditional American masculinity – individualistic, primitive, and virile. However, their role in the new organization was very circumscribed as was the influence of their vision. It was this modest balance of traditional and modern virtues rather than
primitive virility which made Boy Scouting such a powerful force in twentieth century American society.¹

Some historians have argued that the BSA surpassed competing youth organizations to become a widespread cultural phenomenon because of its centralized bureaucracy and adept advertising. The BSA actually thrived because its administrative structure paralleled its hybrid masculine ideology – preserving valued elements of nineteenth century, white American manhood while incorporating modern elements fit for a changing society and workforce. National leaders claimed it was a volunteer, democratic movement in line with Revolutionary and nineteenth century traditions, but in some ways the organization operated like a bureaucratic, hierarchical corporation well-suited to the Progressive Era’s economic and political climate. Volunteer troop leaders and local and national council members exemplified the democratic aspects of the BSA. By the 1920s, though, paid professional bureaucrats garnered power equal to that of the organization’s adult volunteers.

The tension between democratic volunteerism and corporate professionalism revealed itself in four major dimensions of BSA governance. National administrators and local officials wrangled over how centralized BSA authority should be. There was a related behind-the-scenes struggle among national leaders that pitted the charismatic pioneer and Indian outdoor “ax-men” led by Dan Beard and Ernest Thompson Seton against the “typewriter-men” or “armchair executives” led by James West. There was tension between the increasingly paid, professional council Executives and the volunteer troop Scoutmasters and council Commissioners over control of local Scout practices. Finally, there was a long-running debate in BSA circles over whether and how to use the
Patrol subunit and its elected boy Patrol Leader. In all of these scenarios, at issue was how power and status should be structured in American manhood and society. The BSA owed much of its popularity to its leaders’ ability to work out effective balances between traditional and modern masculine models of authority.

This chapter explores the BSA’s origins, development, and growth in membership to explain how and why the organization beat out competing youth associations and became a cultural and political icon. The popularity of the BSA far exceeded that of its predecessors and rival American Scout groups. The BSA’s modest manliness garnered support from a remarkably wide socio-economic spectrum, from labor union and socialist leaders to the “captains of industry” and the Presidents of the United States (of all party affiliations). The business elite, middle class professionals and managers, progressive reformers, educators, clergy, and psychologists provided key support for the early organization.

The BSA earned wide praise for its claim to provide character and civic training to boys of all races, classes, and creeds; however, its membership – like American society during the Progressive Era – became increasingly hierarchical and stratified by class and culture. Native-born white, middle class and elite males dominated the early organization’s leadership and membership. BSA administrators justified concessions made to local officials and troop sponsors to allow the exclusion or segregation of non-whites as permitting democratic “self-determination” in “local issues.” National administrators also knowingly maintained policies which made it difficult for working class and immigrant boys to fully participate. Immigrants’ and non-whites’ consistent lobbying for admission helped prompt BSA national leaders to gradually broaden the
organization’s membership, but in ways that reinforced assumptions about these groups’ second-class manhood and citizenship.

Scouting – a global phenomenon

Examining Boy Scouting’s British origins and the masculine teachings of preceding boys’ organizations helps illustrate the BSA’s unique adaptation of Scouting which made it so popular and responsive to the needs of modern American men. Colonel Robert Baden-Powell, the leader of “scout” army units on the British imperial frontier in India and South Africa in the 1880s and 1890s, founded Boy Scouting in London in 1908. During the Boer War, Baden-Powell had become a national hero by leading a small British army contingent against a long siege of the city of Mafeking in present-day South Africa. In 1899 and 1900, the world watched as the greatly outnumbered British force held out for two hundred and seventeen days against attacking Dutch settlers and local natives. Despite his celebrated victory, Baden-Powell was discouraged by what he perceived as the increasingly “soft” English city recruits for his scout army. He concluded that Great Britain needed to better prepare its young men for military and national service in order to maintain its empire and its position as a world leader.²

Boy Scout histories offer several different accounts of what inspired Baden-Powell to shift his attention to training boys in scouting. The main reason for this discrepancy may be how each author viewed Boy Scouting: as a military branch, as a product of Baden-Powell’s individual genius, or as a true descendent of existing youth organizations. The earliest chronological influences on Baden-Powell came during and as a result of the Mafeking siege. Short on soldiers, he and chief-of-staff Lord Edward
Cecil experimented with using boy “cadets” as messengers and orderlies. Upon his return to England, Baden-Powell discovered that boys had begun using the army scout training manual he had written in 1899 for their own outdoor fun. Some boys wrote him asking for further advice on how to scout. Some English schools also utilized his military scouting manual to educate boys or to train new teachers and governesses.³

Some historians stress the influence of the militaristic Boys’ Brigade, a youth organization started by Sir William Smith in Scotland in 1883. The organization combined church lessons and temperance with martial regalia and drill in an attempt to attract boys. A number of British and American churches, as well as Jewish synagogues, developed Brigades to help retain boy members as they grew older. Baden-Powell was one of several military officers who served as inspectors for the organization. He was impressed by the program, but felt that it was not exciting enough to retain boys’ interest and that it emphasized obedience at the expense of developing independent judgment and self-reliance. While attending a 1904 Brigade gathering, Baden-Powell informed Sir Smith that his program was not versatile or inclusive enough to prepare all British boys for the multiple duties of national service. Smith agreed and suggested that Baden-Powell rewrite his army scout training manual for boys.⁴

Baden-Powell’s 1899 military training manual, Aids to Scouting, contained some of the rudimentary forms and goals of the future Boy Scout organization. The adult manual provided instructions on how patrols of eight soldiers, under the close supervision of a knowledgeable officer, could be taught the outdoor and military skills needed to succeed in the British Empire’s scout army. Rejecting traditional infantry drill, Baden-Powell argued that scouting developed self-reliance by encouraging each soldier to take
initiative based upon his own observations and deductions. To adapt the book for boys, he added stories, games, a moral code, and a system of ranks and topical merit badge honors.\textsuperscript{5}

Other historical accounts credit American youth leaders for the Boy Scout concept. Most center on Indian lore enthusiast and naturalist Ernest Thompson Seton and his Woodcraft Indians. This small, decentralized organization, formed in 1902 via Seton’s monthly articles in the \textit{Ladies’ Home Journal}, took an idealized, primitive Native American as its role model. Boys organized themselves into self-governing tribes and learned Indian lore, handicraft, and outdoor skills with the help of Seton’s woodcraft manual and magazine articles. During a 1906 lecture tour in England to promote the Woodcraft Indians, Seton attempted to enlist Baden-Powell’s support for the program. Seton gave him the latest version of the Woodcraft Indian handbook, and the two corresponded for a number of years on youth programming.\textsuperscript{6}

Dan Beard claimed that Baden-Powell copied Boy Scouting from his Sons of Daniel Boone organization. Beard was a writer, illustrator, pioneer lore expert, and natural resource conservation enthusiast. In 1905, he created the Sons of Daniel Boone – an organization later renamed the Boy Pioneers. Using Beard’s books of handicraft and magazine columns for \textit{Recreation} and \textit{Woman’s Home Companion}, independent clubs of boys learned self-government through pioneer craft and outdoormanship. The organization peaked at around twenty thousand boys in 1909. Beard argued that American pioneers were the original scouts, and that he had referred to his members as scouts prior to the establishment of Baden-Powell’s British Boy Scout organization.\textsuperscript{7}
The Boys’ Brigade, Woodcraft Indians, and Sons of Daniel Boone never enjoyed a broad range of support or large membership in America because their masculine heroes were too nostalgic and narrow in scope; however, each offered important elements for creating a more balanced model of manliness and a more universal organization that would meet the needs of modern men and boys. Baden-Powell himself acknowledged Boy Scouting’s debt to each of these youth organizations and their leaders, prompting historians to assume Boy Scouting emphasized either militarism like the Brigade or primitive virility like Beard’s and Seton’s organizations. Boy Scouting’s phenomenal growth in America, England, and the world, however, resulted more from how it differed from its three “predecessors” than from how it resembled them. Baden-Powell incorporated some of the soldierly dress and ritual of the Boys’ Brigade, but he balanced the Brigade’s adult authority and strict obedience by dividing the Scout troop into patrols of eight boys. Under the leadership of an elected boy, the Scout patrol learned to think and act independently of the troop’s adult Scoutmaster. Baden-Powell also downplayed the Brigade’s denominational ties to make the program attractive to a broader range of British society. Seton’s Woodcraft Indians provided much of the form and method of Boy Scouting, including the system of ranks, merit awards, laws, and oath. Baden-Powell’s Boy Scout handbook gestured briefly to “primitive” races like Native Americans and Australian aborigines, but his focus was clearly on the character attributes of men from “advanced” white races. Beard’s pioneer and Baden-Powell’s soldier-scout offered virile, white outdoor heroes for Anglo-American males. Adopting the supposedly peaceful Scouting focus of Beard’s frontier pioneering and handicraft helped Baden-Powell refute labor union, Socialist, and pacifist accusations of Boy Scout militarism.
Baden-Powell’s program quickly outpaced all three predecessors combined by offering a new and more complex model of manly character. The Boy Scouts of America further modernized Baden-Powell’s character teachings to the point that it is more appropriate to contrast the BSA’s model of masculinity against that of Smith’s, Seton’s, and Beard’s organizations rather than lump the four together.\(^8\)

With the 1908 publication of Baden-Powell’s Boy Scout manual and a weekly paper, the program spread rapidly throughout the world. Baden-Powell’s small staff could hardly keep up with the flood of requests for membership and information. One hundred and ten thousand British boys had joined by September 1909, eclipsing membership figures for preceding youth organizations combined. Army officers, educators, and missionaries helped extend Scouting throughout Britain’s vast empire. As the handbook and news of the organization reached other countries, boys and youth workers started their own troops and associations. Official national Scout organizations quickly formed in at least twenty-six countries, including such disparate nations as France, Russia, Turkey, Argentina, South Africa, and Japan. By 1929, Scouting spanned at least fifty-seven nations, which together accounted for ninety percent of the world’s population. The number of active Boy Scouts in the world reached two million by the end of 1930. The United States and Great Britain were Scouting’s early strongholds and global leaders. People across the world recognized the Scout uniform along with the model of masculine citizenship that it represented. However, Scouting took a unique form in the United States – resulting in criticisms from Scout officials in other countries.\(^9\)
**Boy Scouting in America**

The Boy Scouts of America Corporation came to dominate competing American Scout programs and emerged as the nation’s leading youth organization because of the dramatic changes it underwent in its early years. The drive for scientific efficiency and expert management in Progressive Era American society – combined with native-born whites’ fear that the heterosocial youth culture, mass leisure, and burgeoning “foreign” cities would turn adolescent boys into delinquents – contributed to the development of a more centralized, adult-focused version of Scouting in the United States than in other countries. In 1910, the emerging BSA appeared as if it would teach virile self-reliance and youth self-government via Seton’s Indian and Beard’s pioneer heroes to a wide socio-economic spectrum of boys. Significantly, the first incarnation of the BSA failed to gain momentum. BSA administrators then recruited a broader base of support and leadership, but only by changing its program, masculine ideology, and target membership. Previous gender histories maintain flawed interpretations of Boy Scouting and early twentieth century, mainstream American masculinity because they utilize only select BSA publications from 1910 rather than doing a thorough study of the gender ideology of the mature (and vastly more popular) BSA after its first year. It took the evolved vision of modest, balanced manliness to attract the broad socio-economic and government support which enabled the organization to triumph over its competitors and become synonymous with American manhood and leading citizenship.  

In 1908, boys, girls, and interested adults across the United States began forming their own Scout troops. Church and Young Men’s Christian Association officials helped start many of these early troops. A few American units applied for charters from the
British office, while others established independent troops and associations. Some patrols of boys or girls simply read the handbook and interpreted it for themselves without the help of adult leaders. This was unsurprising, since Baden-Powell’s original handbook encouraged youth to start patrols on their own initiative and suggested that Scouting could benefit girls as well as boys. The Boy Scouts of America Corporation that dominates American Scouting today would soon overtake this spectrum of independent Scout troops and organizations.¹¹

The initial leadership of publisher William D. Boyce and YMCA officials suggested that the BSA would target big city and rural boys – particularly poor and working class youth. Boyce, a Chicago publisher who had made a fortune producing weekly newspapers such as the Saturday Blade and the Chicago Ledger for a rural clientele, established the Boy Scouts of America Corporation in February 1910. He had been impressed with Boy Scouting on a recent visit to London and probably hoped that it could provide a fun, character-building program for the army of thirty thousand boys that sold his newspapers in small towns and rural areas across the United States. Boyce hired a former clergyman to promote a decentralized BSA along the lines of the British program, but his efforts failed to produce significant results. Meanwhile, YMCA officials had started a number of Scout troops and were using Scout training at some of the four hundred existing YMCA summer camps. Edgar M. Robinson, the head of YMCA International Boys’ Work, had been consulting with his friend Ernest Thompson Seton on developing a Scout organization for the YMCA with a Native American theme. Upon hearing about Boyce’s BSA corporation, they instead decided to team up with him. Robinson and two associates convinced Boyce to hand over active direction of the BSA
to YMCA leaders. Robinson and John L. Alexander opened a one-room BSA headquarters in the YMCA’s New York City office, but requests for information and support quickly overwhelmed the small staff. Alexander reportedly lost track of troops and a number of Scoutmasters resigned.\(^\text{12}\)

Robinson soon called a meeting of representatives from thirty-seven different organizations at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel in New York to invigorate the fledgling BSA. The impressive list of attendees conveys the confluence of the business elite, educators, clergymen, social workers, and progressive reformers on Boy Scouting as a solution to a broad array of social problems. Many of the major figures who would guide the transformation of the BSA in its first two decades were present. Leading American banker Colin H. Livingstone chaired the organizing committee and served as President of the BSA until 1924. George D. Pratt of the Rockefeller philanthropies served as the BSA’s treasurer until 1935. Lee Hanmer of the Russell Sage Foundation, financier John Sherman Hoyt, and Sears, Roebuck and Company President Mortimer Schiff provided additional input from elite financial circles for years to come. Muckraking journalists Jacob Riis and Lincoln Steffens were also present. Military officials Adjutant-General William Verbeck and Colonel Peter Bomus were awarded the title of National Scout Commissioner for folding their own Scout organizations into the BSA. As Chief Scout (Baden-Powell’s title in the British organization), Ernest Thompson Seton served as the BSA’s initial spokesperson and Indian lore expert. The third National Scout Commissioner, pioneer lore and natural resource conservation enthusiast Dan Beard, ultimately emerged as the BSA’s public face. Seton and Beard put their own boys’ organizations on the back burner and encouraged their members to join the BSA.
William D. Murray of the YMCA’s International Boys’ Work Committee, William Mitchell of the Young Men’s Hebrew Association, Ernest Coulter of the urban working class Big Brother Movement, and Dr. Luther Halsey Gulick of the Recreation Association of America (and later co-founder of the BSA’s companion organization, the Camp Fire Girls) conveyed the interests and experience of other major youth organization leaders.\(^{13}\)

What Scout and gender historians have failed to fully recognize is that the BSA’s masculine and civic ideology, leadership, and membership targets shifted markedly after this meeting. The BSA soon outgrew its Woodcraft Indian and Sons of Daniel Boone heritage as well as its initial leadership by Boyce, Seton, Beard, and YMCA officials. Such changes were necessary to move the BSA beyond the narrow confines of primitive pioneer and Indian lore and denominational leadership to lay claim to providing a universal model of good character and leading citizenship for all American boys. Only then could it triumph over other youth and Scout organizations and garner broad popular and governmental support.\(^ {14}\)

Three administrative changes symbolized the evolution of the BSA and its model of masculine character. The BSA moved from its one-room YMCA office to larger, separate quarters in January 1911. At the same time, Robinson returned to his YMCA job and the BSA Executive Board hired James E. West to replace him as Executive Secretary. On the surface, West’s hiring seemed to point the organization toward an even greater focus on underprivileged, immigrant urban youth. As a crippled orphan who put himself through law school, West was a prime example of how poor urban children could be redeemed by education and effort. He was a key authority on prominent progressive
reform institutions for poor urban youth like the Playground Movement, the juvenile
court system, and the National Child Rescue League. The BSA, however, did not
become another working class boys’ organization. West helped guide the transformation
of the BSA into a centralized bureaucracy that hedged Seton’s and Beard’s self-reliant
primitivism with modern virtues like scientific efficiency, expert management, and
loyalty to corporate hierarchy. The BSA increasingly focused on the needs of native-
born white, middle class, town boys at the expense of rural farm boys and working class
immigrant boys from big cities. Finally, the subsequent change of West’s job title from
Executive Secretary to Chief Scout Executive acknowledged his triumph over Chief
Scout Seton and symbolized the BSA’s balance between traditional and modern
masculine values. Beard (the only remaining National Scout Commissioner after
Bomus’s and Verbeck’s involvement declined) overtook Seton’s role as the BSA’s
charismatic outdoorsman and public figurehead, but he never possessed the executive
authority that West achieved.¹⁵

Elite businessmen and leading politicians provided the BSA with essential support
it needed to subsume rival youth organizations. America’s wealthiest families (such as
the Rockefellers, the Vanderbilts, the Carnegies, and the Sages) made large financial
contributions, especially during the BSA’s formative period. Beard and Seton helped
bring ex-President Theodore Roosevelt on board, perhaps the key BSA supporter. He
served as Chief Scout Citizen, a position which was abolished after his death in 1919 as a
personal tribute. Seton and Roosevelt helped secure the backing of Baden-Powell for the
BSA. Given the range of American Scout organizations, this endorsement was not a
foregone conclusion. Baden-Powell later came to criticize the BSA for focusing on
bureaucracy and adult authority at the expense of boy self-government and outdoor adventure. By becoming the Honorary President of the BSA in 1910, William Howard Taft set a still-running Presidential precedent of supporting it over competing youth organizations.¹⁶

The public relations support and privileges which government and military officials of all levels and branches gave to the BSA – but not to other youth organizations – was perhaps the most important factor in the BSA’s success. Federal and state legislators, governors, and mayors across the country accepted honorary BSA roles from local Scout officials. Congress approved the BSA’s sole right to wear a uniform similar to that of the U.S. Army in the National Defense Act of 1916. That Congress stamped the organization with government recognition by granting the BSA a federal charter. This was the second-ever federal charter, after the American Red Cross and before the American Legion. The charter was a public relations coup and allowed BSA leaders to request supplies, transportation, and personnel help from military and government officials as well as private individuals. This charter also gave the BSA exclusive legal control over the use of the term “Scout” and its derivatives. The BSA used this power to help it eliminate competing Scout organizations and to demand royalties from companies producing consumer items with the word Scout in their names.¹⁷

Broad popular, elite, and government support for the BSA’s modest, balanced manliness helped the organization absorb or best a slew of narrowly-focused, rival American Scout associations that had been formed between 1908 and 1910: the Catholic Rhode Island Boy Scouts, Peace Scouts of California, Salvation Army Scouts, Polish National Alliance Scouts, Bonus’s Boys’ Brigade-like Boy Scouts of the United States,
Verbeck’s National Scouts of America that focused on promoting highway safety, media magnate William Randolph Hearst’s American Boy Scouts, Leatherstocking Scouts, and Jack Crawford Scouts. All used Baden-Powell’s handbook as a jumping off point, but they disagreed on what a proper Scout organization should emphasize and how it should be run. While some of the smaller Scout organizations limited membership to a particular area or social or religious group, the BSA promised an inclusive national organization that would ameliorate class and cultural rifts in American society.

A second difference among the groups involved attitudes toward teaching military or pacifist principles. Organizations like Verbeck’s and Hearst’s highlighted militaristic nationalism, while the Peace Scouts of California was internationalist and peace oriented. BSA officials navigated a safer but delicate middle road between these positions, claiming to be neither military nor anti-military. Another point of disagreement was on the proper balance of power between national headquarters, local officials, troop leaders, and boy members. The BSA appeared to be the most centralized organization, but volunteer local officials worked to maintain their own authority and freedom of action. Several Scout associations merged into the BSA at the key June 1910 organizational meeting. Some independent associations and groups resented and resisted – for a while – the BSA’s efforts to monopolize American Scouting. In the end, though, the BSA’s balanced, modern masculine teachings and administrative apparatus allowed it to dominate Scouting to the point that few people now know of its early rivals.18
Democratic volunteers and corporate professionals

The balance negotiated between volunteerism, charismatic initiative, individualism, and democratic practice on the one hand and paid professionalism, scientific efficiency, corporate standardization, and expert management on the other hand in the BSA’s evolving organizational structure reflected the complex values needed to adjust traditional American manhood to a modernizing society and workforce. BSA national administrators argued that different social groups and business interests were appropriately represented by volunteers on local Scout council boards, and that the national Scout council was democratically composed of a representative from each local council. However, BSA office administrators, as they were increasingly paid and professionally trained, came to hold a significant degree of power at the national, regional, and local levels. Friction between democratic volunteers and professional administrators surfaced in debates over the registration process, fees, local council pledge quotas, adult leader training, and inspections of local practice.

Voluntary service, a marker of leading citizenship for American men since the colonial period, was a key component of officials’ claim that the BSA was a classless, democratic movement rather than an organization or a corporation. Men took great pride in volunteering to serve as local council members, Scoutmasters, Troop Committeemen, and merit badge instructors. Throughout the 1910s and 1920s, over ninety-nine percent of adults who participated in the BSA were volunteers, which made the organization very cost-efficient to run. Scouting’s focus on citizenship training and patriotism – combined with the semi-official sanction granted to the BSA by government officials of every level, branch, and region – made BSA volunteers feel as if they were serving the nation itself.
This connection was made explicit near the end of World War I, when President Wilson urged American men to volunteer to be Scoutmasters to replace those troop leaders who had become soldiers, since “anything that is done or given to increase the war efficiency of the Boy Scouts of America will be a real contribution to the nation and will help win the war.” BSA national leaders tried to convince the U.S. Army that Scoutmasters should be officially exempted from military service. Their proposal failed, but it is striking that they envisioned the two as equal contributions to the nation and its war effort.\(^{19}\)

While volunteerism was a strong component and appeal of the BSA, the Bureau of Municipal Research ranked the organization as one of the most efficient corporations in the United States – second only to Sears, Roebuck and Company. Most BSA office bureaucrats, especially as their training and pay increased, seemed to value corporate ideals like expert management, scientific analysis, and bureaucratic organization. National administrators wanted a measure of control over local volunteers and troop Scoutmasters to protect the organization’s reputation and to ensure a degree of uniformity in practice. One vivid expression of BSA administrators’ mindset was the increasing number of pages of statistical data regarding cost effectiveness and bureaucratic and numeric growth in the organization’s annual reports to Congress. Headquarters required troop leaders and local office staff to fill out a mounting array of forms. Bureaucratic oversight of volunteers and troop practice increased by the 1920s via the expansion of adult leader training, regional offices, and national field staff inspections.\(^{20}\)

Examining the development of the BSA’s organizational structure demonstrates the effective balance achieved between democratic volunteerism and corporate professionalism. The BSA’s organizational structure consisted of four major pairs: the
National Council and office, the regional councils and offices, the local councils and offices, and the boy troops with their Scoutmasters and Committeemen. The volunteer national, regional, and local councils were primarily public relations bodies with limited legislative authority. A small percentage of paid professionals increasingly staffed and ran the national, regional, and local council offices. The national office administrators in New York City directed the general flow of Scouting, while local office Executives oversaw most aspects of local practice. Volunteer Scoutmasters, however, provided the direct instruction to troops of roughly twenty or thirty boys. Committees of three volunteer men advised each troop and helped it negotiate relations with its institutional sponsor and community groups. A large number of parents and other adult volunteers provided additional help with council office, camp, and troop meeting duties.

BSA leaders consistently cited the National Council as evidence of democratic government; however, as an internal 1927 study and occasional faint grumblings from the Scout field suggested, the National Council was more of an inspirational body than a real power player in policy decisions. The National Council was composed of national office administrators, a representative from each of the several hundred local councils, and a varying number of members appointed “at large” from the interested public. Members voted at annual meetings on changes to the Boy Scout national constitution or particular program points to emphasize the following year, but these proposals were usually crafted in advance by national office administrators. The National Council’s key power was electing officers and the Executive Board of twenty or thirty men. The Executive Board met more frequently to monitor the national office’s budget and to make recommendations about the general activities and scope of the organization.\textsuperscript{21}
The BSA – like many other professionally managed enterprises in the Progressive Era – was to some degree run by a small group of bureaucratic experts in the name of efficiency and the greater good. The national office, and James West in particular, was the primary force in BSA national policy and ideology from 1911 to the 1930s. West often met with a sub-committee of the Executive Board consisting of BSA Treasurer George Dupont Pratt and Lee Hanmer (who was later replaced by manufacturer John Sherman Hoyt). This trio appeared to have made many key decisions for the organization or drafted policies on which the broader Executive Board or National Council later voted. This chain of command was rarely discussed in public; decisions were usually credited to the National Council or its Executive Board to promote the sense that the organization was democratically governed. The national office’s administrative work was divided into departments such as Editorial, Education, Field, Supply, Finance, and Camping – the heads of which reported to West. The national office guided local practice via published literature, promotional efforts, training sessions, and Field Staff inspection visits.22

The national office’s efforts to expand bureaucracy and to professionalize local administrators and volunteers through increasing member fees and local council pledge quotas encapsulated the tension between volunteerism and professionalism within the organization. Expenditures by BSA national headquarters climbed from ninety-seven thousand dollars in 1912 to 1.8 million dollars in 1920 and 2.3 million dollars in 1929. The portion of national office income spent on the Field Department increased from four percent in 1914 to forty-three percent by 1926, reflecting headquarters’ growing emphasis on providing training and inspection for local Scout practice. In 1912, the
national office derived only one percent of its budget from registration fees, and the role of local councils had not been formalized in the administrative apparatus. In an effort to move away from the charity status associated with the BSA’s dependence on donations from elite philanthropists, national administrators raised local council and boy annual registration fees and attempted national fundraising drives in the 1910s. These failed to meet expanding costs, and local councils complained that they had difficulty soliciting local residents for their own budgets who had already been tapped by national fundraising drives. To meet these complaints and to regularize its income, the national office instituted the quota plan in 1920 that required local councils to pledge a certain amount of money each year to headquarters’ operations. In exchange, the national office agreed to stop soliciting donations in nationwide campaigns. Some local officials resented the rising registration fees and “voluntary” pledge quotas and the increasing national office oversight they financed. After a couple of difficult years during which many local councils did not pay their full quotas, the system gelled. By 1926, sixty-five percent of the national office’s normal operating expenses derived from annual registration fees and local council quotas. This shift in funding, however, did help local officials maintain some authority over the movement since they became the main source of money for the national office’s budget and staff paychecks.  

The division of power between national administrators and local officials

BSA officials gradually worked out an effective compromise between national and local authority that simultaneously balanced expert bureaucracy with volunteer initiative. The creation of informal Scout committees by local officials and supporters
starting in 1911 demonstrated the grassroots base of the BSA movement; however, James West and some other national administrators viewed these intermediate power centers as a threat to centralized control over local Scout practice. The increasing formalization and supervision of local councils and offices offered a compromise in authority between national and local leadership. Over the course of the 1910s and 1920s, BSA national leaders successfully encouraged local councils to replace volunteer Commissioners and their make-shift offices with paid, trained Executives and permanent offices. This trend brought more bureaucratic-minded men to local council leadership, but their professionalization also gave local officials increased authority within the organization. New national requirements that each troop have an institutional sponsor and three supervising Committeemen created both greater support and greater oversight for the individual Scoutmaster and his troop.24

The registration and fee system was a contested and evolving process. In the organization’s first three years, loose record keeping made it difficult to keep track of membership and maintain control of local adult leadership. Rampant boy, troop, and Scoutmaster turnover made the BSA appear wasteful and ineffective from the era’s standards of organization and efficiency. The national office formalized a local council and troop registration system in 1913 that allowed it to require a modest amount of supervision and support for each troop, control official recognition status, and tax members. By controlling the certification of local councils and troops, the BSA national office could better encourage compliance in areas such as maintaining high standards in rank and merit badge exams. West also worked to limit the boundaries of each local council to one municipality to curb its power. Still, in the 1910s, when the BSA national
office had little staff or power to directly control local Scout practices, national administrators had to give local councils a fair degree of latitude. Prominent men who successfully applied to the national office for a council charter gained the power to represent the BSA in their area and to screen annual charter applications for individual Scoutmasters and their troops. The annual troop charter application called for an adult Scoutmaster, a local sponsoring institution, and three community Committeemen to supervise the troop. Headquarters instituted a fee for each local council and troop that wanted to register, which some members initially resisted. Failure to meet these requirements meant not being granted the troop charter needed to buy uniforms and attend council camp and competitions.\(^\text{25}\)

The expansion of the national Field Department and the development of regional councils by the 1920s added a more immediate level of supervision over local councils, but also gave each region a stronger collective voice in national policies. The regional council acted as a liaison for information and concerns between the national office and local council offices. The regional councils studied local conditions and problems and helped enforce the local council pledge quotas toward the operation of the national Field Department. After a wave of converting existing informal committees into official local councils, the national Field Department and the regional councils played a stronger role in organizing and staffing new local councils.\(^\text{26}\)

BSA national administrators’ desire to curtail local council autonomy paralleled their concern about individual Scoutmasters running troops in rural and small town areas without the benefit of local council supervision and support. In an attempt to bring all troops under a local council and to complete Scout coverage of the country, BSA national
headquarters promoted Area Councils in the 1920s to supervise sparsely-populated rural regions. A 1927 study found that sixty percent of new local Boy Scout councils were created in the following manner. The national office sent a regional Executive to speak to community leaders and clubs in the target town. The speaker stoked up enthusiasm and promises of financial support. The national office then sent in an Executive freshly minted from the new national training school. The number of Scouts not under local council peaked in 1919 at 175,125, accounting for nearly thirty-eight percent of total Scouts at the end of the year. With the expansion of Area Councils, only fourteen thousand Scouts (less than two percent of the total) remained without local council supervision by 1929.27

Trends in local Scout council leadership mirrored a tilt in BSA masculine ideology from the self-reliant volunteer toward a balance with the expert bureaucrat’s standardization, efficiency, and scientific management. Under British Scouting and the BSA in its first couple of years, having a prominent local man serve as a volunteer Commissioner to direct council affairs was a point of pride. The local office was often informal or moved when the Commissioner changed. The BSA national office soon came to differentiate between “Second Class” local councils led by volunteer Commissioners and “First Class” councils directed by paid and increasingly trained Executives. The national Field Staff and regional councils worked diligently to convince local Scout supporters to raise money to establish permanent council offices and hire trained Executives to run them. In doing so, national and regional administrators sought to guarantee some continuity and supervision of local practice. Second Class Councils outnumbered First Class ones in 1915, 263 to 47. By 1929, the national office announced
with pride that 633 First Class Councils countered only eight Second Class Councils. Given that the national office did not and could not force local councils to make this change, the trend also reflects local Scout leaders’ and supporters’ increasing preference for First Class Councils with trained, paid Executives.  

Local council administrators shared authority over Scoutmasters with the institutional troop sponsors and Troop Committeemen. BSA national administrators hoped to achieve a modest degree of outside supervision and support for each Scoutmaster by adding the requirement that each troop be sponsored by a local institution such as a church, school, civic club, or unaffiliated group of prominent local men. Local council offices decided which Scoutmaster and sponsoring institution applicants would be approved. Sponsors often furnished troops with a free meeting space, Troop Committeemen, a Scoutmaster, and some measure of financial support. The sponsor provided public legitimacy and continuity to the troop, while the troop helped the parent institution retain existing members or attract new ones. In order to gain wider institutional support and greater membership, BSA national leaders decided to allow each sponsor the right to restrict its troop’s membership as it saw fit. BSA administrators boasted that Scout troops were miniature “melting pots” which helped democratize and Americanize its members, but in reality each troop tended to be socio-economically segregated according to its institutional sponsorship. The BSA was technically open to all boys at the national level, but local councils and troop sponsoring institutions did not have to accept everyone.

Boy Scout national and local administrators attempted to solidify troop sponsorship, stem the high rate of turnover among Scoutmasters, and perhaps gain some
control over wayward troop leaders by adopting the Troop Committee requirement in 1914. The Troop Committee plan was an elaboration of the initial requirement that each Scoutmaster applicant provide three personal references. The national office hoped that these volunteer committees of leading local men, through frequent troop inspections and the power to select and dismiss the Scoutmaster, would guarantee that the Scout program was being properly interpreted to boy members. The committee supervised troop business matters and ensured that it had adequate financial support and access to camping facilities. Committeemen arranged a troop meeting place and acted as a liaison between the troop, its sponsor, and parents. The level of Troop Committee involvement seemed to vary widely.\(^{30}\)

BSA administrators boasted that the organization was a classless movement whose very structure preserved American men’s democratic and volunteer traditions. By increasing adult training, inspection visits, and administrative oversight of local practice, national and regional officials helped guide Boy Scouting to a balance with modern virtues like scientific efficiency, expert management, and loyalty to hierarchical authority. Volunteer Scoutmasters, Troop Committeemen, and local council members shared power over local Scout practice with paid, trained Executives at the national, regional, and local offices. The BSA’s ability to effectively combine democratic volunteerism with bureaucratic professionalism helped the organization draw support and membership from a broad spectrum of groups and government officials.
Ax-men vs. typewriter-men: The BSA debate on men’s leadership

Figure 1.1  *The Scout Executive* (Feb. 1926): 15.

The distribution of power and status between national and local officials paralleled two long-running disputes in the organization: the ax-men versus the typewriter-men and the Patrol Leader debate. The February 1926 sketch from *The Scout Executive* (the BSA’s magazine for local council administrators) in Figure 1.1 captured the culmination of the struggle between BSA officials stressing progressive business values and those favoring the pioneer outdoorsman’s hardy individualism. The accompanying article stated that the typewriter-men emphasized centralized authority, standardized procedures, and scientific analysis. The ax-men argued that spontaneity, outdoorismanship, and being playful with the boys were the keys to success in Scouting and in life. The author happily noted that students of the first national training school for
local council Executives, held in 1925, believed that Scouting could and should balance the two ideals. At their 1926 biennial national conference, local council Executives agreed that modern American society required pairing the pioneer’s strenuous self-reliance with the bureaucrat’s scientific efficiency and corporate hierarchy. The ax-men, led by charismatic figures like Ernest Thompson Seton and Dan Beard, held initial sway in the organization. The typewriter-men made increasing inroads and achieved a balance of power with the ax-men. Since most officials had never advocated unfettered virile individualism, the modest shift toward business virtues by the 1920s was more of a refinement of traditional BSA masculinity than a completely new idea.31

The battle amongst BSA national leaders between the ax-men and the typewriter-men mirrored a larger American conflict in masculine ideology between the self-reliant, democratic pioneer and the professional, bureaucratic expert. The self-reliant pioneer and the free-wheeling entrepreneur had been fitting ideals of white American masculinity in the nineteenth century when there were sufficient opportunities for self-employment on the western frontier and in the country’s emerging industrial-capitalist economy. By the early twentieth century, though, the trend toward corporate consolidation in business and the belief that the western frontier had closed to settlement made self-made masculine ideals less applicable. The expert businessman armed with surveys and statistical analyses better fit the increasingly bureaucratic economy and government. However, many men expressed concern that the corporate mindset undercut American men’s traditional self-reliance and virility as well as the nation’s distinctive heritage. Moreover, white men felt that their status and authority was under siege from advances made by women, blacks, and immigrants from southern and eastern Europe. The real
“crisis” in native-born white American manhood in this period, then, was how to simultaneously hold onto some semblance of traditional American manhood, adapt it to a modern society and workforce, and defeat challenges from other social groups. Scouting’s modest manliness and balanced authority provided a key vehicle for achieving these goals.

James West seemed to revel in the centralized bureaucracy he developed as head BSA administrator from 1911 to 1943. A recent biography of West argued that the BSA’s administrative structure and efficient, impersonal management style were his primary legacies. West championed BSA administrators who wanted to build up bureaucratic oversight of troop functions through Committeemen and larger council and field staffs. Some subordinates, however, quietly complained that he was an autocrat that micromanaged almost every decision. Although ninety-nine percent of BSA adults were volunteers, Scout officials from other countries still criticized the BSA for its unusual dependence on paid staff and the stifling effects of its bureaucracy.32

In West’s first year of duty, charismatic outdoorsmen such as Dan Beard, Ernest Thompson Seton, Arthur Carey, and Robert Baden-Powell began criticizing him for being an “armchair executive” whose bureaucratic focus threatened to overshadow outdoor experts such as themselves who really inspired boy members and Scoutmasters. Beard characterized the conflict as a battle between “dreamers” and “bureaucrats.” He believed that paid staffers’ dependence on salaries and the bureaucratic apparatus made them incapable of manly self-reliance: “[T]he very fact of their being on a salary, no matter how conscientious they are, tends to deprive them of independent thought. An employee must, to hold his job, agree with his employers.” He insisted that the gulf
between educational theorists and the “masses” could only be bridged by the outdoor men, never the paid clerical force who advocated a “‘swivel chair’ proposition” for Scouting. Even Robert Baden-Powell quietly came to criticize “West’s Big Office” and his “typewriters and figures” for coming at the expense of the boy and his interests. Seton and Carey argued that commercialism was diametrically opposed to good masculine character and that Scouting was the key to curing modern society’s ills. Carey (the first director of the BSA’s Sea Scout branch for boys over fifteen) declared, “[T]he real man who lives somewhere under the jacket of every hustling business man” cared more about moral laws than any other aspect of life:

The ordinary social atmosphere of every-day life – with its thirst for personal success and eye to the main chance – is against us from the start. The spirit of commercialism is rampant around us on every side, tainting with its poison not only our politics and social life, but that of our churches as well. My plea is that the Boy Scout Movement should be regarded as a bulwark against all these influences for the coming generation.

All four men argued that the business mentality was too narrow for well-rounded boys and men and threatened to hijack higher political and spiritual endeavors. They insisted that the bureaucrats and businessmen who directed the national and local council offices focus on supporting the volunteer Scoutmasters and outdoor experts, whom they saw as the real backbone of the program. They felt that the organization diverged further from proper character formation with every new required form and layer of bureaucracy. Their critiques attracted some support from local BSA officials, many of whom were educators, clergymen, or outdoorsmen.33

The first stage of this debate peaked in the mid-1910s. Arthur Carey presented the national office with a petition signed by Scoutmasters, teachers, and other concerned
men that the organization’s increasing bureaucracy and zeal for commercial fundraising came at the expense of moral training for boys and local leaders’ self-government. In a *New York Times* article in December 1915, Seton criticized the Executive Board for allowing a man who was a lawyer with no knowledge of boys or the blue sky (West) to take over the BSA. At the same time, it was difficult in the Progressive Era to completely dismiss the BSA’s growth in membership and increasing bureaucratic efficiency. West and his supporters brushed the criticisms aside, expelled Seton (ironically, with Beard’s help), and continued to build the BSA administrative machinery. However, the volunteer Scoutmaster’s ideal of unselfish, democratic service and the appeal of the charismatic outdoor experts to boys were essential for energizing the emerging movement. At the level of local Scout practice and camp management, the “dreamers” remained very influential.  

The demands of World War I increased the BSA’s focus on social efficiency and production, but the era’s need for volunteerism and patriotic sacrifice curtailed the shift to a business mentality. Employers made inroads against labor unions and radicals in the immediate post-war period. By the mid-1920s, the tide had shifted dramatically. Industrial production, real estate, and the stock market boomed. Peace and prosperity dominated international relations. Pro-business Republicans won three straight Presidential elections on platforms of commercial expansion and a “return to normalcy.” The business craze filtered over to BSA programming.

During the 1920s, BSA national leaders and publications placed increasing emphasis on modern business virtues such as developing a “pleasing personality.” While business values had been largely confined to council Executive training in the 1910s,
elements of the business mentality seeped down to training and literature for Scoutmasters, Patrol Leaders, and regular boy members in the 1920s. The BSA merit badge for Salesmanship, first offered in 1927, offers an extreme example. It required the boy candidate to “[e]xplain what he understands to be the meaning of the statement that ‘Every man is a salesman. He must sell himself, his time, his ideas, his service.’” The badge emblem for Salesmanship was a simple dotted line, perhaps emphasizing the profit or loss tally in a business accounting book or the ability to convince customers to “sign on the dotted line” of sales contracts. The author stressed that boys should focus on their appearance, making good first impressions, conformity, and deference. The pamphlet emphasized that salesmanship extended far beyond business careers: “The force of salesmanship is so ever present that very often we accept it unthinkingly, just as we do the air we breathe or the water we drink.” The author claimed that salesmanship pervaded American history: “Indeed, behind every great page in history – behind every national development – behind every commercial, political or religious movement, you will find the salesman.” He argued that venerated heroes George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, Theodore Roosevelt, and Charles Lindbergh were all salesmen. Such single-minded adoration of business values remained, however, rare in BSA publications.36

One indicator and cause of the increasing emphasis in Scout programming on business virtues was the replacement of youth workers and clergymen by businessmen within the BSA leadership. YMCA men dropped from 5.7 percent of Scoutmasters in 1912 to less than one percent just four years later. The percentage of clergy Scoutmasters dropped from twenty-nine in 1912 to under eight by 1931, while the percentage of Scoutmaster applicants claiming “Mercantile” occupations jumped from nineteen to
forty-eight in this same period. Businessmen’s service organizations, especially the Rotary Club, sponsored a growing portion of Scout troops by the 1920s. Part of this arrangement was that club members became the Scoutmasters, Troop Committeemen, and merit badge examiners. The regional councils established in the 1920s were run mostly by business and elite men. Youth workers and educators had a sizable presence on the first BSA national Executive Board; many had been included in order to absorb competing youth organizations. As these men quit or were nudged out of BSA leadership by 1917, businessmen, bankers, and philanthropists with little experience working with boys replaced them.37

The changing background, training, and role of the typical local council Executive mirrored these trends. Local councils in the 1910s tended to hire outdoorsmen, teachers, youth workers, and popular troop Scoutmasters to be Executives. Their direct experience working with boys and the outdoors was seen as the best type of training to lead a local council. Many even volunteered their time as Commissioners for what later were classified as Second Class Councils. Local councils in the 1920s, however, increasingly hired men with business backgrounds and bureaucratic training. Scoutmaster literature and training sessions had doubled for Scout Executives in the 1910s, but in the following decade the national office created a separate handbook, magazine, training conference, and school for Executives. The Executive’s handbook, first published in 1922, argued that most councils now viewed their Executives as a “General Manager” or a “human engineer.” 1920s BSA literature argued that the ideal Scout Executive scientifically managed council planning, record-keeping, and staffing. BSA sources insisted that Executives attract and train other men by consent, tact, and moderation instead of
domination or dictation. BSA publications’ tone suggested that the national organization’s hero may have shifted in the 1920s from the Scoutmaster to the local council Executive. However, the ideal Executive’s character bore a strong resemblance to the modest manliness that the BSA had been teaching troop and boy leaders all along. The BSA’s adaptation of traditional American manhood to prepare select boys to manage modern society and its corporate industrial workforce remained consistent.\textsuperscript{38}

The creation of the national training school for Scout Executives in 1925 (the subject of Figure 1.1) reinvigorated the debate between the bureaucrats and the dreamers, but most instructors and Executives agreed that modern society needed the masculine virtues of both the self-reliant outdoorsman and the bureaucratic businessman. Dan Beard’s continued complaints about James West’s management style prompted the BSA Executive Board in 1926 to hire consultant Mark M. Jones to analyze the bureaucratic structure of the organization and West’s role. The extensive study concluded that West was responsible for too many functions and should delegate some responsibilities to subordinates. Jones suggested that the Executive Board be expanded and meet more often so that it could play a greater role in decision-making. West was forced to somewhat decentralize power at the national office. The Jones study did not help Beard as much as he had hoped since most of the new members added to the Executive Board were businessmen. Increasing its size diluted the influence of Beard and his outdoorsmen friends on organization policies. The Executive Board further curtailed Beard’s power in 1927 by stripping his Court of Honor of its legislative capacity. Overall, though, the late 1920s witnessed a balancing of power between charismatic volunteers and professional bureaucrats in BSA governance and local programming.\textsuperscript{39}
Occasionally, a maverick Scout leader would rail against the takeover of the organization by business-minded bureaucrats. Floyd Tillery, a former Scout Executive, wrote a scathing 1930 critique for *The Forum* magazine. He stated that Seton had introduced Scouting to America to promote common sense and self-reliance through roughing it outdoors. Tillery accused the civic club men who were playing a growing role in Scout leadership of drastically changing the program – prioritizing “exhibitionism” and numeric growth while fostering a superiority complex: “It binds the boy while young to the great American machine. He is early initiated into all the first-degree rites of the great group of joiners and pretenders.” Tillery lamented that troop meetings had devolved into formal affairs based on *Robert’s Rules of Order*. He argued that boys who participated in recent “parlor Scouting” had no special claim to better character or virility and were no more “rugged, robust, resourceful” than non-Scouts. Tillery stated that Boy Scouts had once chosen troop leaders based on their outdoor expertise, but now the Troop Committees picked men who were successful in business, church, and civic club work. He accused civic club men of sponsoring Scouting because it was good for business contacts and political aspirations: “Daddy does what he does largely because of the selfishness and infantilism which dwarf his real manhood and full maturity.” Another Scouter wrote a letter to *The Forum* to challenge Tillery, but admitted that bureaucratization, “coddling,” and self-aggrandizement had displaced “real scouting spirit,” hardy camping, and the true joy of selfless service in the organization. Such biting critiques and debates, though, grew increasingly rare. Most officials appeared to be pleased with the balance achieved between the ax-men’s virile self-reliance and the typewriter-men’s scientific efficiency and expert management.40
The BSA’s debate over the Patrol Method and boy leadership training

One of the key reasons why Baden-Powell’s British Boy Scout program became widely popular throughout the modernizing world was that it balanced individual boy self-reliance and autonomy with hierarchical adult authority. For Baden-Powell, Scouting’s fundamental unit was the patrol sub-group of eight boys. Three or four patrols formed a troop under the loose guidance of an adult Scoutmaster. Under an elected boy leader, each patrol enjoyed opportunities to think and act independently of adult authority. Early Boy Scouts in Britain and many other countries spent much of their Scouting time acting in patrols. Until the late 1920s, however, most BSA national and local officials’ adherence to the Patrol Method was merely rhetorical. Early BSA officials’ anxiety about youth autonomy and urban mass culture prompted them to emphasize the larger troop unit of roughly twenty-four boys and its direct adult leadership. This discrepancy was obvious enough that Scout leaders from other countries expressed criticisms of BSA officials for downplaying the essential patrol system and its development of boy initiative and leadership. Debates amongst BSA administrators about the applicability of the Patrol Method highlighted the tensions between American men’s democratic individualism and efficient obedience. These discussions gradually contributed to an increasing BSA emphasis on the Patrol Method and developing select boys’ leadership by the late 1920s.41

Like leaders of many Progressive Era institutions, BSA officials relied on the emerging field of social science to provide theoretical and statistical support for their programs and ideas. BSA national leaders liked to cite psychologist J. Adams Puffer’s popular gang theory as evidence of the patrol system’s ability to build character. Puffer
argued that most boys between the ages of twelve and fourteen were passing through the
gang and hero-worshipping phases of development. These boys had an innate instinct to
join a gang composed of six to eight boy peers. According to Puffer, the gang naturally
followed the most physically dominant and aggressive boy. Puffer’s key article,
published in 1905, was based on the author’s study of working class immigrant boys
living in a correctional institution; however, a wide range of professionals working with
youth appropriated the gang theory as being applicable to all socio-economic groups.
Sociologists, psychologists, and educators discovered the “natural” phenomenon of gangs
in the early twentieth century and began to promote Puffer’s theory as the best method
for socializing all youth.  

BSA leaders’ and Scout parents’ fear of urban street life, working class militancy,
and the heterosocial youth culture, however, led American officials to downplay the
patrol system’s emphasis on boy independence and to reject the leadership of virile,
aggressive boys. In the BSA’s first fifteen years, administrators intentionally undercut
Baden-Powell’s focus on the patrol unit and its corollary, developing boy leaders capable
of acting independently of adult authority. Most early BSA national as well as local
leaders preferred nominal patrols firmly directed by adult troop leaders. In defiance of
both gang theory and Baden-Powell’s ideology, the early BSA’s hero was the
Scoutmaster instead of the Patrol Leader. Many American Scoutmasters ran troop
activities directly with little or no boy leadership from 1910 to at least the mid-1920s.
The BSA adopted an informal policy requiring Scouts going outdoors to be accompanied
by an adult, while Scout officials in other countries encouraged boy patrols to make at
least modest hiking and camping forays without adults.
Given the centrality of patrol activities and independent boy leadership to Baden-Powell’s original Scout program, surprisingly few early BSA publications mentioned them. Moreover, the early American Scout sources that bothered to discuss the patrol system set out a narrower range of responsibilities for boy Patrol Leaders than Baden-Powell had intended. Most emphasized that boy leaders should merely steer the rest of the patrol into following the Scoutmaster’s orders. The American Patrol Leader’s other main duty was to see that his boys advanced by teaching them how to pass the Tenderfoot, Second Class, and First Class rank exams. BSA literature instructed Scoutmasters to oust Patrol Leaders whose groups did not advance fast enough. Some publications suggested that the Patrol Leader could help maintain order, deal with minor discipline matters, or lead his boys in games and competitions. He sometimes collected dues or was responsible for patrol property. Many early American troops, however, never operated as patrol units.44

European Scout leaders’ ongoing criticism of Americans’ over-reliance on the Scoutmaster helped inspire BSA officials to reconsider the patrol system in the 1920s. British Scoutmaster S.H. Marshall argued in a 1920 article for Scouting (the BSA’s magazine for Scoutmasters) that American troop leaders needed to make better use of the patrol system in order to develop boys’ initiative, responsibility, and active citizenship skills. Captain Frank Gidney, the influential director of Great Britain’s international Scout leader training center at Gilwell Park, chastised BSA local council Executives at their 1922 national conference for disrupting the basic foundation of Scouting and boy socialization. He characterized a troop relying solely on the Scoutmaster for leadership as “merely a boys’ club,” by which he meant the Anglo-American clubs for urban
working class and destitute boys such as the YMCA, the Big Brother Movement, and the Boys’ Club. Adults in these organizations led large groups directly since the boys were seen as lacking the character required to lead themselves. Gidney chided that British Scouting trained good citizens instead of just good technicians like American Scouting.\(^4^5\)

BSA leaders’ debates on the patrol method focused on the tension between American men’s traditions of democratic individualism and the importance of obedience to authority in an increasingly interdependent society and corporate workforce. One Executive at the 1924 national training conference argued that the innate initiative of the American boy was the reason why the patrol method could not be applied to BSA troops. He claimed that the patrol method worked better in Europe because the boys were more obedient, while “[t]he American boy has more initiative, and wants to go his own way, and that is going to be our problem with so-called organized patrols.” Leaders favoring the patrol system argued the opposite – that the democratic and free nature of American society necessitated the development of boy leadership and individual initiative.\(^4^6\)

Speakers and attendees at the 1929 Scoutmasters’ training course at Columbia University Teachers College debated the proper balance between democracy and efficiency in the patrol method, echoing broader political debates in the Progressive Era. Charles Smith, Instructor in Scouting and Recreational Leadership at Teachers College, argued that an autocratic Scoutmaster secured docile “followship” and easily “put all members through the same mold,” but the patrol method was necessary for developing democratic citizenship. J. P. Freeman, the BSA national Director of Professional Training, noted that America used a representative form of government since having everyone be involved in every decision was too time-consuming. He argued, though, that
assuming that the Scoutmaster could adequately represent all the boys’ wishes was carrying representation too far, and that it was better to have boy Patrol Leaders help make decisions. Freeman explained that the patrol method was appropriate if one understood efficiency in terms of the net results for character training rather than lost time. The Scoutmaster for the Horace Mann School for Boys in New York City suggested that troop leaders hedge the patrol system by first deciding all the possible options on which boys could vote: “So you secure what you want because you have made up your mind beforehand you would just as soon have either alternative, and what is more important, the Troop feels it has been taken into your confidence.” Another speaker complained that the Patrol Leaders took over the few decisions the whole troop used to make, such as whether or not to allow a new candidate into the troop. American Patrol Leaders’ increasing power apparently came in part at the expense of regular boy members, whose role in the Scout democratic process was already limited.47

Although the Scoutmaster’s leadership remained dominant, the BSA’s use of the patrol method gradually expanded during the late 1920s and 1930s. Patrol projects and patrol camping increased. The BSA national office published a new handbook and encouraged training conferences specifically for Patrol Leaders. Still, BSA administrators hesitated to give boys full control. One revealing compromise was the increasing use of BSA “patrol corners” in the 1920s. For a designated period of the regular troop meeting, each patrol went to a separate corner of the room. Under the watchful eye of the Scoutmaster, boy leaders taught Scouting skills to their patrols.48

BSA national officials encouraged increasing use of the patrol method, but their goal was never to train all boys in leadership skills. BSA literature consistently
instructed Scoutmasters to sort boys into permanent classes of followers and leaders based on assumptions about their character and capacities. A 1917 *Scouting* article instructed a Scoutmaster forming a new troop to first select six to eight boys whom he thought would make good leaders and train them separately for several months. To maintain the other boys’ enthusiasm during this period, the Scoutmaster was told to meet with them weekly to “play games and have the same sort of good time that is provided for in a boys’ club.” The other boys were not deemed to possess the natural character necessary to lead patrols, so they were treated like boys in youth organizations for the urban working class and the destitute who were trained in deference instead of leadership. Only when the pre-selected group had mastered the Tenderfoot and Second Class Scout requirements were the other boys supposed to be brought into the fold. The boy leaders then trained the followers, under the supervision of the Scoutmaster. BSA literature instructed Scoutmasters to continue training these boy leaders separately and in advance for the entire Scout program. Since mastery of Scouting requirements was a key qualification and task of Patrol Leaders, the early American patrol system (what there was of it) was designed so that the other boys would never catch up with those whom the Scoutmaster had pre-selected.49

The ideal BSA Patrol Leader’s particular set of masculine traits distinguished him from regular Scouts as well as the aggressive leaders of Puffer’s immigrant gangs of working class toughs. The Chicago council’s 1922 training course for Patrol Leaders, reproduced by editors in the new national handbook for local council Executives as a suggested guideline, provided a representative description of the ideal boy leader. The Patrol Leader overlapped with regular Scouts on being thrifty, cheerful, trustworthy,
mentally alert, and skilled in outdoorsmanship. The Chicago course also listed several new traits that pointed to a different type of character, one based on being able to command the respect and obedience of the regular boy members. A Patrol Leader’s patience and fairness allowed him to adjudicate the interactions of the other boys. Being a Patrol Leader required high intelligence, efficiency, and perseverance to stay ahead of the other boys in learning Scout skills. The attributes which most distinguished Patrol Leaders from the boy masses were initiative, will power, and decisiveness. Officials argued that the ideal Patrol Leader should be popular, but also modest and dignified so that he did not steal the whole show or undercut the Scoutmaster’s authority.\textsuperscript{50}

The BSA’s interpretation of the patrol system reflected the modern American economy’s unequal distribution of power and rewards. BSA literature instructed Scoutmasters to set the Patrol Leaders apart and give them special privileges in order to help them maintain respect and obedience from the regular boys: “The gradation of authority and responsibility, as represented in different offices and enforced by a constitution and by-laws, shows [each Scout] his relative position in an organization and aids him in adjusting his bearing and relations to others of his patrol.” Special privileges also served to reward the boy leaders and retain older teenagers in Scouting. The Patrol Leaders often had their own separate meeting room. Patrol Leaders, unlike the other boys, received direct access to the Scoutmaster and the troop library at all times. The Patrol Leaders and their Assistants met with the Scoutmaster to decide on program plans and goals. In most BSA troops using the patrol system, the other boys appeared to have little say in such matters.\textsuperscript{51}
The unique confluence of American gender, race, and class tensions with rapid urbanization and industrialization helps explain why the BSA diverged from Scouting in the majority of the world on the patrol issue until the 1920s. Early BSA men believed that the key to solving the boy problem was pulling them away from the feminized spheres of home, school, and church as well as the heterosocial youth culture and putting them under adult men’s firm leadership in isolated and outdoor locales. A patrol of Boy Scouts acting autonomously, then, was as much a threat as it was a solution. The BSA’s cautious adaptation of the Patrol Method by the late 1920s offered a compromise on men’s concerns about democratic individualism, efficiency, and hierarchy in modern American society. The ideal Scout troop balanced emphasis between adult and boy authority and between the larger group and the individual Scout. BSA national and local leaders believed that a properly-functioning Scout troop would protect boy members from corruptive social influences and provide the ideal socialization environment for passing through the vulnerable adolescent stage. The proper makeup of a Scout troop, then, was a matter of extreme importance.

A universal program for all boys? BSA recruitment

Debates about the character capacities of different individuals, national versus local authority, and the nature of democratic practice were as intertwined in the BSA’s membership recruitment as they were in its administrative structure. BSA national leaders’ claim to offer a program of universal appeal open to all American boys was a key factor in the organization’s broad popularity, government support, and rapid growth. Administrators argued that allowing all boys to wear the same uniform and learn the
same masculine and civic values made Scouting a force for easing class and cultural conflict in American society. To appeal to a broad spectrum of Americans and to live up to its classless rhetoric, BSA national leaders tried to avoid any policies which would make the organization look partisan or draw criticisms from prominent groups. In practice, these conflicting priorities meant that BSA national leaders allowed local officials to exclude “undesirable” boys. BSA administrators characterized this as a democratic policy allowing councils “self-determination” in local social issues. Many local councils – led mostly by native-born white, middle class and elite men – chose to segregate or exclude minority groups, particularly blacks, at the local level prior to 1925. Administrators’ preferences for troop over individual Scouting and “self-reliant” troops over “charity” troops limited the participation of rural, working class, handicapped, immigrant, and non-white boys until the organization’s membership policies began to change after 1923. Boys from these social groups increasingly joined the BSA, but were tracked into secondary Scout and civic status by special restrictions placed on them.

The typical early Boy Scout was between twelve and fifteen years old, from a small-to-medium-sized town, of native-born white parentage, middle class, and Protestant. Most BSA administrators assumed that such boys had greater potential for character-building and should therefore be developed into the nation’s future leading citizens. BSA national administrators insisted that no females could be members or leaders and that boys had to be at least twelve and adult leaders twenty-one years of age. The national office allowed each local council some leeway on whether and how to include racial, ethnic, and working class groups. The remainder of this chapter will break down BSA recruitment rates by age, geographical region, population density, race,
ethnicity, religion, and class. Chapters Four and Five will analyze why the BSA recruited as it did and the policy changes which affected recruitment rates amongst particular groups.

Total boy and men membership statistics demonstrate the organization’s expanding popularity and bureaucratic growth. The number of active boy members topped one hundred thousand in 1913. Membership boomed in World War I, attracting 481,084 boys and 86,737 men during 1918. By 1920, the United States had more Scouts than the rest of the world combined, including even the British Empire. The rate of active American membership growth slowed but still reached 572,273 boys and 141,054 men for the year 1922. With help from President Harding’s “round-up” in 1923, pre-Depression membership peaked in 1927 at 929,769 boys and 180,000 men. The BSA’s total boy membership to date topped one million in 1919 and reached 4,277,833 by 1930. The BSA was in many ways a man’s organization as much as a boy’s organization, and it became more adult-focused over time. The percentage of members that were adults (paid staff, Scoutmasters, Troop Committeemen, council members, and other registered volunteers) doubled from one adult for every ten boys in the organization’s first three years to one adult for every five boys by 1922. Half a million men had been members to date by 1924 and close to one million by 1930.\textsuperscript{52}

A more tangible means to express the organization’s popularity is in the rising percentage of available American boys it recruited. In 1911, the ratio of registered Scouts to available boys between ages twelve and seventeen was one per one hundred and twelve. This ratio quickly improved to one active Scout per fourteen boys for the year 1918, and peaked at one active Scout for every eight boys by 1927. Of twenty-six
million boys between 1910 and 1930, one boy out of every six had been registered as a Scout at some point during that period.\textsuperscript{53}

Scouting did best at recruiting early adolescent boys, the stage during which many experts argued that male character was most at risk. These twelve-to fifteen-year-olds, especially middle class and elite boys, had unstructured leisure time after school hours that parents and BSA supporters hoped to fill with constructive character and civic training. Although the BSA was open to older boys and encouraged them to stay, most boys quit (and new boys failed to join) after age fifteen. Boy Scout headquarters offered the Navy-based Sea Scout program for boys over fifteen, but with relatively scant success. Sea Scouting denied the autonomy, dating, and sports that many teenagers sought because administrators felt that these were pernicious influences. BSA national leaders (though not all local officials) excluded the throngs of boys under twelve who wanted to join for the organization’s first two decades since they believed preadolescents were incapable of advanced character and civic training. BSA national leaders reluctantly developed a separate Cub branch for boys under twelve in 1930.\textsuperscript{54}

During the BSA’s first five years, the number of troops grew most rapidly in New England, New York, New Jersey, and the Great Lakes states. While BSA membership increased in density and geographical coverage throughout the organization’s first two decades, the pace slackened in the initial growth areas. Between 1915 and 1930, Scout density (calculated as the number of Scouts per ten thousand residents) in the Pacific Northwest and the Rocky Mountain States increased dramatically. Mormon leaders latched onto Scouting as a way to further their civic and spiritual training of boys while allying Mormons with Americanism, so Utah and Idaho soon came to lead the BSA in
enrollment rates. Clearly, the BSA’s worst performance from 1910 to 1930 was in the southeast – particularly the Deep South. The high percentage of black and rural residents – two groups that had suspect character in the eyes of many BSA officials – contributed to this trend well beyond 1930.⁵⁵

After an initial phase of big city growth, Boy Scouting recruited best in small towns with between one and five thousand residents. According to the 1925 BSA Annual Report, small towns (which likely included some areas that would today be classified as suburbs) sponsored 19.2 percent of Scout troops, but only held 8.6 percent of the U.S. population. These communities had sufficient population density, social cohesiveness, and white Protestant makeup to support Scouting. Beyond the five-thousand residents mark, the rate of Scout recruitment dropped as the size of the city increased. For example, cities between twenty-five and one hundred thousand residents supported 14.9 percent of Scout troops compared to 9.8 percent of the American population in 1925. Cities with over one million residents supported only 6.4 percent of Scout troops relative to 9.6 percent of the U.S. population. Cultural heterogeneity and the wide availability of alternative leisure activities helped undercut Scout recruitment in more urbanized areas.⁵⁶

Rural farming regions were least receptive to BSA recruitment efforts, in part because population was not sufficiently dense to sustain viable troops and councils. Programs which boys could join as individuals and work on a flexible schedule – such as the Lone Scouts of America and 4-H – fared much better in rural areas. The 1920 U.S. census found that thirty-four percent of boys between twelve and eighteen years of age lived in “open country” areas with less than twenty-five residents, but the 1925 BSA Annual Report noted that only 0.2 percent of Scout troops were located in such areas.
BSA national leaders discouraged individual boy membership applications because they believed that the troop and firm adult leadership were essential for boy character development. BSA rural recruitment rates improved slightly with special outreach efforts in the second half of the 1920s, but national administrators’ attempt to force self-reliant, rural Lone Scouts into the adult-led troop mold largely failed.  

It is difficult to pinpoint Scout recruitment rates among immigrants and non-whites prior to 1925 because the BSA did not ask for such information from applicants. A 1927 study of the organization by consultant Mark M. Jones provided a succinct summary of racial and ethnic minority recruitment trends: “In the states where there is a substantial negro or foreign-born white population…troop Scouting is weak…[In states where Scouting is strongest] the percentage of the total population represented by the foreign-born white and negro population is very low.” While not precise correlations with boy membership, statistics on Scoutmasters’ self-designated “nationality” and the rates at which different church denominations sponsored Scout troops support Jones’s general findings. Native-born whites of “Old Stock” English and Scottish ancestry who attended mainstream Protestant churches clearly dominated Scoutmaster applications and church troop sponsorship. Newer immigrant men from Germany, Ireland, and southern and eastern Europe led and sponsored Scouting at much lower rates relative to their portions of America’s population. Jewish and Mormon boys, who became relatively overrepresented in Scouting, were the exceptions to these trends. 

BSA headquarters finally surveyed local councils in 1929 in an attempt to estimate the number of white ethnic minority troops. It found only one hundred Spanish-American troops and one hundred Polish-American troops out of over twenty-four
thousand total BSA units, along with an unspecified “large number” of Lithuanian, Italian, and other white ethnic troops. The fact that the latter groups were not prominent enough to give even a rough count suggests that the number of each was considerably less than one hundred troops. While some ethnic minority boys belonged to “mixed” ethnicity troops, most of them were probably in segregated units due to the institutional sponsorship requirement and residential, church, and organizational segregation patterns in America. Newer immigrant groups thus remained underrepresented in American Scouting through the Depression.\(^{59}\)

Despite the organization’s rhetoric of being open to all boys regardless of race or color, few non-white boys joined Scouting prior to 1925. It appears that most councils, especially those in the South, did not allow or encourage non-white boys to join. Most black boys who managed to join the organization belonged to segregated units, even outside the southeast. The 1926 creation of the BSA’s Inter-Racial Service helped to increase the number of non-white Scouts. The Inter-Racial Service’s initial 1926 survey found 249 black troops in 122 local councils for a total of 4,923 boys. After four years of modest but persistent Inter-Racial Service efforts, 274 councils reported 779 black troops with roughly fourteen thousand Scouts in 1929. This figure represented approximately 1.7 percent of Boy Scout membership for that year. Since blacks composed about ten percent of the U.S. population during this period, black boys were still grossly underrepresented in Scouting. The discrepancy was most striking in the rural southeast, where the percentage of blacks in the population was highest and the portion of available blacks in Boy Scouting was lowest.\(^{60}\)
Only a handful of Native American troops existed before 1929, when the Secretary of the Interior and the Commissioner of the Indian Service Bureau reached an agreement with the BSA’s Inter-Racial Service to start Scout troops at federal boarding schools to help Americanize and modernize Native Americans. The number of these troops jumped quickly to one hundred and fifty by 1932. By this date, Native American boys joined Scouting in a proportion roughly equal to that of their percentage of the U.S. population. The agreement between federal officials and the Inter-Racial Service encouraged local Scout leaders to integrate Native American boys into mixed troops, camps, and other Scout events. Most Native American boys, though, probably still belonged to segregated troops.\(^{61}\)

Statistics on Asian-American Scouts remain sketchy since the Inter-Racial Service took little interest in studying or recruiting them. BSA publications occasionally mentioned a couple of specific east coast Chinese troops, seemingly because of their novelty. It is reasonable to assume that very few Asian-Americans belonged to Scouting outside the west coast and Hawaii. One sociological study of Scouting in the late 1920s suggested that a surprising percentage (13 of 463 sample Scouts, or 2.8 percent) of Japanese boys belonged to urban West coast councils, especially Seattle. Asian-American boys were overrepresented and proudly integrated in Hawaii troops, but this was exceptional in the 1910s and 1920s.\(^{62}\)

BSA national leaders failed to keep statistics on the class makeup of boy members, perhaps due to their desire to present the organization as being free from class divisions. Sociological studies from the period and several histories of the BSA suggest that the early organization recruited best from the middle classes, but reasonably well
from the skilled working class as well. Elite boys and skilled working class boys appeared to have joined in proportions roughly equal to their percentage of the American population. Semi-skilled, unskilled, and destitute boys were underrepresented in Scouting. Headquarters did keep occupational statistics on Scoutmasters. These suggest similar trends, except that working class men were somewhat less likely than their sons to belong to the organization. The percentage of skilled working class Scoutmasters rose modestly in the 1920s, but they were still underrepresented in Scout leadership. As one climbs the early organizational hierarchy, the class makeup became more elite. Local council Executives were more likely to be middle class, professional, and businessmen than were Scoutmasters. Local Troop Committeemen and local and national council members tended to be from the upper middle class and, especially, the elite. The national Executive Board roster read increasingly like a “Who’s Who” of Wall Street bankers, big business owners, philanthropists, and media magnates.63

BSA national administrators achieved mixed success on their lofty claim to provide a universal program applicable to all types of American boys. To pronounce that the organization accepted boys of all races, colors, classes, and religious creeds was a bold statement in the 1910s and 1920s – an era in which racism, nativism, and the Ku Klux Klan were on the rise. Technically, BSA national leaders did not exclude any social group. BSA national leaders’ desire to appear nonpartisan and the fact that the BSA was a voluntary organization with a federated structure, however, compelled administrators to allow local officials to discriminate as they saw fit. Scouting’s relatively high costs, fixed schedule, troop method, and local council self-determination undercut its ability to attract working class and rural boys.
The BSA appealed to a broad spectrum of Americans by articulating a balanced, modest manliness that helped prepare boys for a modernizing workforce and changing social relations. BSA officials gradually worked out effective compromises between national and local authority and between volunteers and professionals by balancing American men’s tradition of democratic self-reliance with modern virtues like bureaucratic efficiency and expert management. Native-born white parents, educators, and experts on youth issues believed Boy Scouting’s troop method and firm Scoutmaster leadership would guide boys in the precarious developmental stage of adolescence through the moral dangers posed by urbanization, industrialization, and the recent rise of women, blacks, and new immigrants. The BSA triumphed over competing youth organizations by best addressing the problems associated with modernization from the perspective of dominant cultural groups. Gaining the support of elite businessmen, progressive reformers, and especially government officials was a key factor in the organization’s phenomenal success. Even non-white and immigrant groups belittled in BSA literature worked to gain admission under terms acceptable to them since Boy Scouting was viewed widely as a key marker of good character and civic responsibility.
Chapter Two

“A modest manliness”: The Boy Scout laws

Since the thorough “Americanization” of the British Boy Scout handbook and Laws in 1911, the vast majority of BSA publications and activities have promulgated a modest, balanced masculine ideal that facilitated native-born white men’s efforts to reassert their superiority in an interdependent, urban-industrial society. The mature organization addressed the range of native-born white men’s concerns by combining a confined dose of virility via outdoorsmanship with Victorian self-control and the scientific efficiency, expert management, and loyalty to corporate hierarchy required by a modernizing society and workforce. BSA leaders spoke increasingly in terms of developing a well-rounded “happy medium,” a “modest manliness,” or a “full-orbed manhood.” Officials argued that possession of this modest, balanced manliness best distinguished native-born white, middle class men from females as well as from rich, non-white, immigrant, urban working class, and rural men. BSA administrators used G. Stanley Hall’s prominent psychological theories of racial recapitulation and adolescence to validate their masculine teaching goals and methods.¹

The ways in which American Scout leaders interpreted and adapted Baden-Powell’s original British Boy Scout Laws, Oath, Motto, and primary teaching activities best illustrate the mature BSA’s core masculine ideology. The twelve American Scout laws and values closely associated with them can be grouped into solutions to native-born white, middle class and elite men’s two principal problem areas: the changing nature of work and challenges to their traditional authority by the New Woman, “New Negro,” and new immigrants. Modern corporations needed employees to work together in order to
compete efficiently. At the same time, the specialization of function popularized by Frederick Taylor and Henry Ford required a hierarchy of workers. BSA laws and programming created a new work ethic for American men by combining older values such as competitive self-reliance and self-control with scientific efficiency, obedience to expert authority, group loyalty, and cheerful, thrifty effort. The second group of Scout laws helped resolve leading men’s concerns about changing social relations. Laws on helpfulness, courtesy, and kindness promoted native-born white, middle class men’s unique ability to provide service to the nation and to people classified as dependents. Being thrifty, clean, and morally straight helped distinguish Scouts from females and non-white and immigrant working class men who were portrayed in BSA literature as careless and selfish. The organization grew even more rapidly during World War I by increasing stress on Americanization, patriotism, and civic duty – but left its core masculine values in tact. BSA administrators and authors, caught up in the focus on business in 1920s American society and politics, placed somewhat more emphasis on values such as a pleasing personality and salesmanship in explanations of the Scout laws. However, a resurgence in this period of self-reliant Scout heroes such as the Indian and Charles Lindbergh and the continued emphasis on outdoorismanship and resourcefulness set limits to the organization’s drift toward a business mindset. Balanced, modest manliness prevailed in Scouting – suggesting that long-term continuities outweighed short-term fads in mainstream, American masculine ideals.
The “unselfing” and “unfortunate boys”: Adolescence and racial recapitulation

One key to understanding the BSA’s core ideology is to analyze its leaders’ commitment to psychologists’ theories of adolescence and racial recapitulation. Granville Stanley Hall, known as the father of the Child Study Movement, synthesized and popularized these conjoined theories in his 1904 work, *Adolescence*. The theories provided support for the idea that groups of white boys in their early teens needed outdoor Scouting under the supervision of good men for proper growth. Hall’s work also offered scientific “proof” that black, Native American, and new immigrant boys were less capable of Scout training in advanced character and leading citizenship. BSA national leaders used these theories to teach Scoutmasters how to train their troops and how to deal with boys from disadvantaged groups. Theories of recapitulation and adolescence helped legitimize discrimination in Scout programming and policies. On the one hand, the fact that BSA officials followed these principles was unsurprising given the popularity of racist and nativist sentiment in the early twentieth century. However, such ideas and practices conflicted with leaders’ claim to provide a universal program appropriate for and open to boys of all races, classes, and creeds. BSA publications of the 1920s retreated a bit from literal adherence to recapitulation, but the theory continued to influence Scout teaching methodology and activities.

Hall characterized adolescence, which covered the early teenage years of puberty, as an essential but tumultuous period of change. He argued that heredity was the primary force behind a child’s development until age twelve, at which time social and environmental influences came to the fore. Adolescents were particularly susceptible to either good or bad moral influences, so this stage was the key time to draw out good
character or it would be lost forever. Hall’s notion of adolescence focused on native-born white, middle class and elite school boys who had unstructured free time after school hours; many working class youth still held jobs, and girls were supposedly under their mothers’ supervision learning to be housewives. A corrupt environment or unsavory companions would strand an adolescent boy in child-like selfishness and cruelty, leading him into juvenile delinquency and criminality.³

The counterpart to adolescence was the theory of racial recapitulation, also known as the “cultural epochs” theory. Hall and his Child Study Movement popularized the concept that children, especially boys, relived the experiences of previous races as they aged. Young boys evolved from beasts to infant cavemen and then to Native American hunter-gatherers, who started forming loose “tribes” around age seven. Hall referred to this as the “pigmoid” stage, in which boys were selfish, indulgent, and violent. After age ten, white boys moved toward a feudal European stage which emphasized a medieval knight’s chivalry and obedience to a monarch. Hall argued that the adolescent boy’s “rebirth” from ages twelve to sixteen witnessed the formation of advanced character traits which differentiated individuals, the races, and the sexes. Knights gave way to self-assertive pioneer settlers who rejected the feminine home, school, and civilized society. Pioneer-like boys evolved by their late teens into cooperative, democratic, modern, white American men.⁴

Two implications of recapitulation for child development theory were the subjective analysis of each race’s character and what constituted a proper environment. Inferior races and younger boys were deemed selfish, individualistic, impulsive, intolerant, and chaotic. Advanced races and older boys who successfully recapitulated
were altruistic, cooperative, self-controlled, tolerant, and organized. Recapitulationists insisted that character traits, also referred to as instincts or racial tendencies, were passed on to offspring. With the right environment and companions supervised by good men, boys’ inherited instincts became habitual and could be directed toward the greater good. Early twentieth century youth organizations emphasized outdoor living partly because the Child Study Movement insisted that it was the best environment for boys to recapitulate through the savage Indian and self-assertive pioneer stages. Groups of adolescent boys could learn cooperation, obedience to hierarchical authority, and a modern work ethic through structured camping and hiking – which also served to isolate them from the moral dangers of the heterosocial youth culture, mass leisure, and America’s increasingly “foreign” cities.

Hall and his followers deemed non-white and new immigrant boys as being capable only of reaching their race’s potential for civilization and character. Native Americans and blacks supposedly stopped evolving at the selfish, instinctive stage of preadolescence. Both scientific and popular thought decreed that southern and eastern European immigrants were more advanced than non-whites but inferior to native-born white Americans and northern and western Europeans. Many BSA national and local officials believed that Scout training in advanced character and leadership was inappropriate for boys of inferior races because it was beyond their capability and might skew their already limited development. Recapitulation and adolescence theories warned that mixing boys in different stages of development was potentially disastrous for all the groups involved, thus many early Scout officials felt justified in excluding boys of inferior races or at least segregating members by race or class.
The American Scoutmaster handbooks explained boy development theory and teaching methods to troop leaders, so they provide an outline of BSA national officials’ beliefs about character formation. The first Scoutmaster handbook, published in 1912, was organized on the basis of racial recapitulation theory. The handbook consisted of suggestions for a series of troop programs that encouraged boys to recapitulate through the stages of racial development as they progressed in Scouting. The author explained that Scouting appealed directly to a boy’s natural instincts through “activities of racial character such as roaming, exploring, tracking, signaling, gang activities and the like. These are based on the fact that the boy instinctively relives many of the occupations of his racial ancestry, going back to the pastoral and roaming tribes with their camp life and animal lore.” The first troop meeting, for example, started with a “pioneer” of the community or one of his descendents giving a talk on early white settlement of the area. Then selected boys delivered prepared speeches on their personal experiences of camping and their interest in outdoor life. These talks helped members vicariously relive the transformation from pastoral roaming to the pioneer’s conquest of the wilderness and its “savage” inhabitants. The first Scout troop meeting was thus already beyond the supposed developmental capacities of boys of inferior races.  

The second troop meeting plan emphasized learning the habit of the daily “Good Turn” because the key to white adolescence and recapitulation was evolving from primitive selfishness to self-control and the capacity to act on behalf of the greater good. The author argued that a maturing boy must surrender some of his individual wants to serve the community: “The boy will recapitulate the steps of earlier race groupings and like the tribe, he joins the band for a common interest and a common good.” The boy,
pulled by the instinct of gang loyalty, learned to adjust himself to the group’s needs. Recapitulation theory stipulated that boys of inferior races remained in the self-centered and undisciplined stage, incapable of selfless service.\(^6\)

The 1912 Scoutmaster handbook drew heavily from recapitulation theory in its discussion of racialized body development and male character. The tenth meeting program taught each boy to compare his bodily development to his peers and male progenitors in terms of racialized standards of growth. The author instructed Scoutmasters to have a doctor give each boy a racial-physical exam in order to discover any physical defects and to establish a base line of bodily measurements. The exam would include such questions as hair, eye, and skin color and parents’ nationality. By conducting a similar exam every six months, each member could keep a record of his physical development, thereby instilling “in the boy a desire to attain to a standard of physical strength and fitness and perfect manhood.” Each boy then compared his bodily development to the other boys in the troop as well as to his father and grandfather. This practice would “inculcate a strong desire for a higher perfection of the physical standard of his family line. This will lead to a true idea of racial progression.”\(^7\)

The sixteenth troop meeting program on tracking, which comprised nearly a fourth of the 1912 Scoutmaster handbook’s pages, taught boys how to judge a person’s character by racialized bodily differences. George Merritt, the first BSA editorial department director, explained how to teach boys the Bertillon System of racial identification. Dr. Alphonse Bertillon, a prominent French anthropologist and chief of the identification bureau of the Paris police, designed this system in the 1880s. Bertillon argued that every person in the world possessed a unique “signalment” that could be used
to verify his identity. The Bertillon System promised to help eliminate crime, purify elections, enforce immigration laws, and facilitate business contracts. The system spread throughout the world as a means for police, penitentiary officials, and border guards to track criminals and other undesirables.\textsuperscript{8}

Instead of distinguishing individuals, the Bertillon System lumped them into stereotyped groups based on the assumption that character and morality were inextricably linked to racial and other visible bodily differences. A Bertillon exam assessed a person’s character via bodily inspections and measurements, movements, and abnormalities such as scars and warts. Head and neck carriage and posture, for example, revealed a person’s innate attitude and personality. In this system, the physically handicapped and those with abnormal bodies were suspected of poor character or even criminality. A man’s foreign accent (depending on the language of origin) or feminine voice exposed a faulty character. The evaluator also judged a person’s racial origin, education and job (i.e., class status), and quality of personal relationships. The handbook explained that the most important part of the exam was eye, hair, and skin color, which, when combined with the race origin assigned by the evaluator, “becomes the primary element of the whole descriptive signalment, and is placed by itself on the line which precedes the heading of the descriptive signalment of an individual. Such terms would then be – pure negro, negro slightly crossed, negro greatly crossed, Chinese, Japanese…American Indian, Mexican, Indian crossed with European, European, etc.” In other words, nearly a fourth of the first handbook for American Scoutmasters instructed troop leaders on how to teach racial profiling to Boy Scouts so that they could recognize people of bad character and assist police in tracking those with “criminal dispositions.”
A later troop meeting had the boys practice Bertillon exams on each other in order to “call all the attention of the boys to the difference in their identity” in the form of eye and hair color, manner of speech, and stature. This troop meeting program subtly skipped over differences of skin color, suggesting either that all Scouts were white or that racially integrated troops were rare.9

The 1912 Scoutmaster handbook downplayed the easier and more accurate Galton fingerprinting identification system, apparently because it failed to link morality and character with physical differences of racial groups. Merritt stated that fingerprinting was quick, easy to use, and required little apparatus and no special skills. He added that since every person’s fingerprint was unique, “[n]o error is possible.” The Bertillon System, on the other hand, required expensive and delicate instruments and more than a half hour’s time from a trained person. Merritt revealed, “The personal equation, or liability to make mistakes in measuring or registering, can never be eliminated, while a single error may render the whole [Bertillon] record quite useless.”10

The second American Scoutmaster handbook, in use from 1913 to 1919, eliminated the Bertillon System explanation but increased the focus on recapitulation and adolescence by adding a new chapter explaining the theories in detail. The author argued that an effective Scoutmaster had to understand these principles and their effect on boy-life: “The boy, as a study, is treated by the majority of modern boy-workers, as a product of race development and heredity, recognizing that in his life from its remotest source, the boy relives all the periods of life that stretch into the dim vistas of mammalian and human history.” With guidance from a good man, capable boys turned inherited racial instincts into character habits: “[T]he Scout Master can better foster the greater
development of character by building on these race-like desires and appeals, and
directing the acquisition of right principles through contact with racial impulses and
actions.” Quoting prominent “boyologist” and Oberlin College theology professor
George W. Fiske, the 1913 Scoutmaster handbook suggested that non-whites and
preadolescents were equally incapable of advanced character training, “In many senses it
is true…that the savage is a child and the child a savage. They both live near to nature –
give them half a chance – and they know little of the conventions of society. Both live
self-centered egotistic lives and are little influenced by public opinion…Both are apt to
shun labor, responsibility and care; having little foresight, worrying little and laughing
much.” The handbook drew on boyologist William Forbush, founder of a church youth
organization called the Knights of King Arthur, to summarize the most important
development in advanced boys: “Adolescence has been termed an unselfing.” Through
gang loyalty and proper supervision, native-born white, adolescent boys evolved from a
savage child’s self-centered, undisciplined nature into the self-control and social
responsibility necessary to lead the democratic nation-state and its modern workforce.¹¹

The 1913 handbook stated that theories of adolescence and racial recapitulation
could help Scoutmasters recognize and sort twenty-five different “Classes of Boy Types”
into a hierarchy of character. The passage instructed troop leaders to balance the extreme
character traits of different boys toward a modest, well-rounded manliness. The author
assumed that behavioral types reflected innate and for the most part immutable
differences: “Temperamentally, nature has made him what he is.” The handbook told
Scoutmasters to put the “masterful boy” in charge of other Scouts because he naturally
“see[s] things quickly, will be the leader of his gang, will dominate his patrol, and will
run the troop unless the Scoutmaster is on his job.” The author explained that other types of boys should be shunted into non-leadership positions. The Scoutmaster might have to use “physical repression” on the “choleric fellow who is always off at ‘halfcock,’ running his head into danger whenever he can.” The hybrid boy, who switched behaviors like a chameleon, was destined to be shiftless and lose out in the struggle of life. The shy boy suffered from having been “brought up with his mother and sisters and merely lacks the touch of a man and a man’s viewpoint,” suggesting that a change of companionship might improve his character. The Scoutmaster should, with the help of the other boys, “sit on” the smartie and joker types. The self-assertive boy (the evolutionary equivalent of the pioneer) should lower himself to savagery to contain the bully: “A fight between boys is usually not a good thing, but when it comes to putting the bully in his place it is one of the greatest institutions that the savage man has invented.”

The 1913 Scoutmaster handbook argued that both heredity and environment could have a permanently negative impact on a boy’s character and future success. The author lumped wealthy, working class, dependent, mentally deficient, immigrant, and black boys into a separate group of “Unfortunate Boys” who required different treatment than regular boys. The other types of boys were categorized by social behavior, but race, class, and physical and mental ability were the dominant factors in evaluating the character of Unfortunate Boys. The author instructed troop leaders to exclude mentally “deficient” and “dependent” boys who relied on charity, since they were “really out of the scope of the Scoutmaster.” In a common refrain of early BSA literature, the handbook claimed that both working class and rich boys had poor character due to parental neglect, “Boys of very wealthy parents and boys from homes of poverty are
usually sinned against by their parents…It is these neglected boys that oftenest produce our great criminals. Every boy of this type somehow or other is tied together. The neglected boy generally becomes the delinquent and the delinquent boy the criminal.” The author argued that “street, foreign-born and negro boys” furnished the same type of problem as working class boys – all tended to be shiftless and neglected by their parents. The handbook noted that Scouting might gradually improve the character of working class and immigrant boys, but it would require special effort from the Scoutmaster such as giving up his holidays since this was one of the few times when these boys were not working. The author refused to give specific advice on how to handle black boys since “[e]conomic and social conditions will naturally determine the place of the negro boy in the Scout movement, and it is best to leave this problem to the local councils and the Scout Masters who are directly facing the situation.” Leaving such matters up to local officials resulted in the near-exclusion of blacks from Scouting, especially in the South, prior to 1925. The chapter did not mention Asian-Americans or Native Americans, suggesting that they were not of interest to most BSA national leaders at this point.  

Previous histories of Scouting and youth organizations have argued that BSA administrators’ emphasis on racial recapitulation declined in the 1920s, but, in fact, well into the 1930s, leaders continued to rely on the concept that race shaped character. Anthropologist Franz Boas and sociologist Robert Park had begun to steer social scientists away from biological determination of character and toward cultural or environmental determinism, but the most that BSA national leaders of the 1920s were willing to concede was that character resulted from the combined influences of heredity and environment. BSA officials’ position was not that surprising, since many social
scientists who emphasized cultural determinism simply substituted the phrase “civilization” or “cultural tradition” where biological determinists had used the term racial instinct or racial inheritance. It did not make a significant difference because many experts insisted that the community and family conditions of non-whites and immigrants were as debilitating as poor heredity for character formation. Scouting — under the guidance of select men in outdoor settings removed from urban contagions — could make a slight improvement in non-white or immigrant boys’ overall environmental influences. BSA sources suggested that this might be enough to make them satisfactory workers and loyal to the country, but not leading men of advanced character.\textsuperscript{14}

The Scoutmaster and local council Executive handbooks of the 1920s somewhat distanced the organization from literal belief in the theory of racial recapitulation. The Scoutmaster handbook in use from 1920 to 1935 argued that while the theory of racial recapitulation was generally correct, “it seems sane counsel to the Scoutmaster to not construct his program along post-glacial or savage lines, but rather to glean from these facts a point of view. They should aid the Scoutmaster in becoming sympathetic toward the boy and most of his aberrations.” The editors replaced the previous Scoutmaster handbook’s charts of racial recapitulation stages with YMCA author Henry William Gibson’s chart on the physical, intellectual, social, religious, and moral characteristics of childhood. Gibson’s popular 1916 book, \textit{Boyology, or Boy Analysis}, presaged more recent works on child development theory. Although his chart did not refer specifically to race, many of the characteristics he listed for different age ranges echoed those in Hall’s recapitulation theory. Belief in Hall’s adolescence and child development theory, whitewashed of its debt to recapitulation, remains firm in American society today.\textsuperscript{15}
1920s BSA literature maintained that a boy’s character potential and future success – regardless of if it was environmentally influenced – was still determined by race. The revised 1920 Scoutmaster handbook’s section on building masculine character through habit-formation identified heredity as the key factor governing each boy’s potential growth and achievement: “The heredity of the boy is a heritage which accompanies him into life. It is a fixed influence limiting the boy’s possibilities. The Scoutmaster cannot change it.” The 1922 handbook for local council Executives suggested that adults taught character to children, but could do so only within each race: “The experience of the race, its ideals, its relationships, its literature, its science, its worship, its faith – all of the socially determining things of civilization must be transmitted to the boys by adults. This may be called social heredity.” The author explained that character development and leading citizenship were integral parts of the race’s social inheritance and that Scouting was an essential factor in its transmission.16

Recapitulation theory continued to structure Scout educational methods and programming in the 1920s and beyond. Recapitulation justified Scouts’ outdoor activities, “playing Indian,” and celebrating white frontiersmen. BSA publications persistently reported and encouraged grand public pageants stressing how boys recapitulated through Indian and pioneer stages to become modern Scouts or soldiers. Some troops’ initiation rituals cast beginning Tenderfoot Scouts as Indians, Second Class Scouts as medieval knights, and boys of advanced ranks as pioneers, modern Scouts, or soldiers. The Montclair, New Jersey council took recapitulation a step back in time in its 1925 initiation for older boys. The candidate started out as a beast or a slave, “physically strong and able to do hard work, but lacking in mental alertness and moral sense.” The
candidate evolved into modern civilized manhood by learning the Scout Oath and Laws.

The most dramatic evidence that BSA administrators clung to recapitulation was the content of the separate programs developed for younger and older boys. The Indian-based Cub program for boys under twelve (started in 1930) and the Navy-based Sea Scout program for boys over fourteen (preferred by BSA national leaders from 1912 to the mid-1930s) sandwiched the intermediate knight and pioneer developmental stage represented by traditional Boy Scouting, thus completing an elaborate recapitulation scheme. The theories of recapitulation and adolescence theories contributed to the near-exclusion of non-whites from Scouting prior to 1925 and restricted their membership privileges in subsequent years. From the BSA’s beginning, recapitulation and adolescence theories helped guide officials’ adaptation of British Scout Laws and programming and their vision of modest, balanced manliness. Hall’s ideas contributed significantly to the BSA’s new work ethic and the parallel process of resolidifying America’s social hierarchy.17

**The new Scout work ethic: “He is loyal to all to whom loyalty is due”**

Being self-reliant, self-made, and competitive were central tropes of American work in the nineteenth century; by the early twentieth century those values were losing credibility. The self-employed master artisan, yeoman pioneer, and aggressive small entrepreneur could no longer serve as models of appropriate work ethics for white American men after the supposed closing of the frontier and the corporatization of industrial capitalism. One group of BSA laws articulated a fitting new work ethic for the twentieth century’s large-scale industries and corporate management style. American
Boy Scouting successfully balanced individualism and independence with allegiance to a hierarchical and corporate workforce. BSA literature stressed the Scout laws on being trustworthy, obedient, and loyal while carefully avoiding the taint of servility. Administrators explained that boys who were cheerful and thrifty in their labor would build individual character and succeed in modern business. American Scouting taught boys to harness self-reliance with self-control and to balance competition with cooperation for the greater good.

The First, Second, and Seventh Scout Laws on being trustworthy, obedient, and loyal were intimately related and the ones most often emphasized in BSA programming and literature. One reason they required frequent explanation and stress was because they conflicted with the traditional strain of individualism and self-reliance in American manhood. Historian Michael Rosenthal argued that British Scout leaders used these three laws to maintain a fixed class hierarchy and ensure loyalty to established authority figures. White American men, however, took great pride in their independence and the belief that the opportunity for each individual to make his own destiny distinguished the country from European society’s artificial, fixed class hierarchy. These popular beliefs prompted BSA administrators to carefully hedge this set of laws in American Scouting.

BSA authors and officials applied the First Law, a Scout is trustworthy, to a broad range of social and work situations. The standard explanation of this law noted that good Scouts did exactly what they were told and did not lie or cheat. Boy members were put on their honor to carry out any and all given tasks in Scout troop meetings, camp sessions, pageants, and stories. Arthur Carey argued in his 1915 book on the meaning of the Scout laws that the punctuality, persistence, and efficiency a Scout needed to be
trustworthy were the same virtues required in modern business and the military. Being trustworthy was the only Boy Scout law that carried specific threat of punishment if not performed. A boy might be instructed to turn in his Scout badge if he violated the trustworthy law, signifying his expulsion from the troop. Baden-Powell’s original Scout handbook went so far as to compare this loss of honor to the death of one’s manhood; the boy who had to turn in his badge after breaking this law would “never be allowed to wear it again – he loses his life.”

The Seventh Law, a Scout is obedient, overlapped but did not duplicate the trustworthy law. Being trustworthy connoted a voluntary decision or a general character trait, while obedience was a forced submission which threatened an individual’s freedom of action. Explanations of the law on obedience in American Scout literature both expanded and limited the law’s original British interpretation. Baden-Powell specified that a British boy should “obey orders of his patrol leader or scout master without question. Even if he gets an order he does not like he must do as soldiers and sailors do, he must carry it out all the same because it is his duty.” The 1911 BSA handbook version instructed a boy to obey “his parents, scout master, patrol leader and all other duly constituted authorities.” The BSA’s addition of parents and all other duly constituted authorities expanded the law’s application from Scout functions to every situation in a boy’s life, but American leaders undercut Baden-Powell’s militaristic, forceful tone by deleting the remark that boys must obey orders without question like a soldier.

The soldier made a loyal subordinate, but he was ultimately too aggressive, blindly obedient, and controversial to serve as a wholly compelling model for the BSA. The scout was a palatable type of soldier because he acted independently based on his
own analysis and deductions and led the way for others. Prior to America’s entry into World War I, the politics and culture of isolationism undercut the appeal of the soldier as a model for socialization. The Boys’ Brigade and other cadet organizations that emphasized soldiering achieved only limited American memberships. Some detractors as well as supporters assumed that Boy Scouting was a junior military branch because Baden-Powell had founded the organization and members wore army-like uniforms and were sometimes put through military drills. Early criticism by Socialists, pacifists, and labor union leaders that Scouting taught militarism and slave-like obedience to authority forced BSA national leaders to declare that the organization was neither pro-military nor anti-military. Administrators instructed Scoutmasters and local council Executives to tone down military drill and other obvious forms of soldiering. Historians have pointed to the aggressive bravado of Theodore Roosevelt’s Rough Rider unit in the Spanish-American War as representative of early twentieth century American masculinity, but BSA sources rarely mentioned America’s latest imperialist adventure or that aspect of Roosevelt’s life. Instead, BSA officials and publications occasionally mentioned Revolutionary or Civil War soldiers when teaching boys patriotism and self-sacrifice.21

BSA officials advocated a range of interpretations of obedience. Pirie MacDonald, a portrait photographer of famous men and one-time President of the New York Rotary Club who authored a BSA drill manual, argued in 1918, “‘In order to take boys out [camping and hiking] they must be obedient to the absolute limit, or I cannot trust myself to take them out.’ That is what you tell the boy, and in order that they may be obedient in the precise way that you and I – the immediate scoutmaster – prefer, we teach a close order drill, the regular United States army drill, the real thing.” Arthur
Carey argued in 1915 that strict military and Scout obedience was equally useful in large-scale businesses and industries since all cooperative endeavors required that participants act as a unit “under the direction of one guiding mind” to achieve maximum efficiency.22 Ernest Thompson Seton, on the other hand, argued that boys should think carefully about whether to obey orders from others. His frequent criticisms of blind obedience and patriotism were too alarming for most BSA administrators, contributing to his 1915 expulsion. Dan Beard tried to articulate a middle ground on boys obeying “intelligently.” He warned boys in 1917 not to act like the Casablanca boy who went down with a burning ship because his father had told him earlier to stay put:

Now, that was the wrong sort of obedience. A good Scout, when he found he was the only living soul in sight and was doing no good there, would have investigated to find what was the matter with his daddy and when he had found that his daddy was also dead, he would have got off that ship as fast as he could, because he would have known that that would have been the command his daddy would have given him, could the dead have spoken.

The only thing that saved the boy, however, was his assumption that his father would have ordered him to leave the ship. What would Beard have suggested had the boy known that his father or commanding officer would have told him to remain on the burning ship? After all, Navy tradition demanded that men not give up the ship and that the captain goes down with the ship.23

Most BSA officials and publications, as they did with many masculine virtues, adopted a modest compromise on obedience. Most leaders could agree that boys needed to learn at least enough obedience to be safe outdoors and to save lives in emergencies. Being prepared and level-headed in such situations differentiated males with good character from women, helpless children, and inferior men. BSA literature advised boys
to work to change laws that were unfair, but in an orderly manner. Criticisms had forced BSA national leaders to discourage outright military drill, so they instructed local officials to turn community services and outdoor skills into drills to teach boys obedience and efficiency. Scoutmasters across the country drilled troops on tasks as varied as calisthenics, First Aid, and setting up camp. As seen in Figure 2.1, public crowds of tens of thousands flocked to watch boys drill and compete on such tasks at rallies, which served as important fundraisers and community gatherings.24

Figure 2.1 Scouting (April 1922): 8.

BSA administrators had to work out a similar balance on the Second Law, a Scout is loyal. The original British version instructed a boy to be “loyal to the King, and to his officers, and to his country, and to his employers. He must stick to them through thick and thin against anyone who is their enemy, or who even talks badly of them.” British Scout literature emphasized the fixed nature of class status and that each boy should learn to be satisfied with his lot in life. Based on his work on urban playground reform and immigration law, Joseph Lee expressed working class immigrants’ concern with this interpretation of loyalty: “I think the scout ought to be loyal to his employers, but the
[Second Law] as drawn now implies that he must not belong to a trade union or be loyal to that. These cases of conflicting loyalties are among those in which our people need much education.” Harping on class distinctions also contradicted the belief that America was a land of opportunity, free of Europe’s fixed class divisions. BSA editors deleted the reference to being loyal to employers and military officers. The 1911 BSA version read, “He is loyal to all to whom loyalty is due: his scout leader, his home, and parents and country.” BSA administrators took a neutral stance on labor conflict by mentioning neither employers nor labor unions in the law’s official explanation and by instructing Scouts in other publications to avoid taking sides in labor disputes.25

World War I prompted a temporary expansion of BSA emphasis on loyalty and patriotic obedience. A 1918 Scouting article declared, “We are putting a hole into individualism; we are warring on selfishness…we are creating in the American boy that one quality which is so needed today – solidarity. We are trying to make the people interlock…this is the first step of real nationalism.” Scout officials understood the political and moral position of pacifists in gendered and ethnic terms. Once America had entered the conflict, BSA publications castigated those who rejected militarism or the war effort as being shirkers or mollycoddles. The shirker intentionally neglected his duties out of laziness or fear, while the mollycoddle still depended on his mother’s leadership. A 1918 serial biography on Theodore Roosevelt in Boys Life argued, “This is a story for boys. Tomboys will like it also…Peace-at-any-price folk, sentimentalisists, slackers of all sorts and men who serve two masters will find nothing in it to appeal to them.” Men serving two masters referred to suspicions about the loyalty of new immigrants and labor unions. Patriotic girl tomboys got a rare complement.26
Overall, though, America’s tradition of individual self-reliance and the desire to promote a society free of class tensions prompted BSA administrators to maintain a modest position on being trustworthy, obedient, and loyal. As Figure 2.2 from the 1922 Executive handbook suggests, officials insisted that loyalty to hierarchical authority was essential for success in Scouting and modern life. At the same time, leaders warned boys against indiscriminate loyalty. Arthur Carey argued that a good Scout’s loyalty referred to faithfulness to law, whereas personal loyalty to friends or political parties might lead a boy astray. He cited corrupt big city political machines as an example of bad loyalty. American Scout leaders prioritized loyalty to corporate authority and the nation-state over individualism and egalitarian class and peer group loyalty.27

Figure 2.2 Community Boy Leadership (1922), 352.
Making “use of every opportunity which its nature and its surroundings permit”

A number of gender and cultural historians have argued that dominant American masculinity shifted from a nineteenth century focus on production and the Protestant work ethic to conspicuous consumption and leisure in the early twentieth century. It is true that product availability and discretionary income had increased and that advertisers, salesmen, department store managers, and recreational entrepreneurs happily peddled the fantasy of self-fulfillment via unlimited consumption. However, a realistic model of daily living for working class and middle class men still required primary emphasis on a work ethic and careful spending. Small-scale, nineteenth century craftsmen’s shops had integrated down times and sociable leisure into the day’s routine, but Taylorism and Fordism tried to maximize production by separating leisure from work and setting a rapid pace via machines and the factory whistle. Corporate industrial work depended on employees’ consistent, efficient effort on segmented tasks in large-scale settings. The Eighth and Ninth Scout Laws on being cheerful and thrifty attempted to reinvigorate the Protestant work ethic by teaching boys to enjoy modern work for its character-building qualities. Scouting tried to make work into a game and leisure into a duty. A number of BSA sources stressed the importance of boys working hard and cheerfully. The BSA modernized thrift – a long-standing American virtue – to include time-clock efficiency at work. BSA explanations of these two laws embraced a kind of Social Darwinist conception of society, in which economic inequality was a natural result of differences in men’s characters and their corresponding work ethics.

BSA national leaders argued that Scouting and one’s life and work were grand games to which members should cheerfully give consistent effort. The Eighth Law, a
Scout is cheerful, insisted not only that Scouts follow orders promptly, but also that they show how much they enjoy work: a good Scout “smiles whenever he can. His obedience to orders is prompt and cheery. He never shirks nor grumbles at hardships.” Scouting made tasks like learning First Aid and setting up camp fun by turning them into group games or competitions. The “Cave Scout” column advised Boys’ Life readers in 1920 that shirkers grumbled and tried to avoid work, while the happiest people were those who worked the most. Prominent banker and BSA President Colin Livingstone declared in 1928 that a Scout’s smile “is a sign of self conquest” that puts him on the “upward road to success.” Cheerful work required self-control and internal motivation instead of relying on external discipline and reward.29

BSA supporters claimed that labor unrest was caused by the fickle character of inferior types of men, while the ability to develop cheerfulness and the prized quality of “stick-to-itiveness” would immunize Scouts from future unemployment and work-related complaints. A 1915 study by Norman E. Richardson and Ormond E. Loomis, The Boy Scout Movement Applied by the Church, argued that America needed Scouting because a “boy who constantly shifts about from one kind of work to another soon finds himself out of work and among the vacillating mass of poorly paid, little-respected laborers, who are responsible for a large part of society’s discontent.” Such statements suggested that one’s attitude toward work determined one’s life chances.30

BSA leaders conceived of thrift as a broad indicator of a boy’s work ethic, character, and consumption habits. The Ninth Law, a Scout is thrifty, stated that a member “does not wantonly destroy property. He works faithfully, wastes nothing, and makes the best use of his opportunities. He saves his money so that he may pay his own
way, be generous to those in need, and helpful to worthy objects.” BSA administrators hoped that all boys would learn thrift, but believed that the rewards of that effort were determined by one’s innate character and environment. An early BSA pamphlet on thrift by Charles W. Eliot, long-time President of Harvard University, argued that Scout training enabled boys to make the most of their unequal opportunities, “Heredity and environment combine to make impossible equality of opportunity for children.

Nevertheless every child in a free country should be enabled to seize on and make good use of every opportunity which its nature and its surroundings permit it to utilize…That is the freedom which the thrifty boy scout ought to enjoy.” A handwritten note on the BSA national office’s copy of the pamphlet reported that it was not that popular. This may have been because its message conflicted directly with the belief that America provided unlimited opportunity for anyone willing to work hard and save. Tellingly, though, the note stated that the pamphlet was helpful in recruiting the support of America’s elite.31

Scouting’s advancement program and troop format distinguished thrifty, efficient, and cheerful boy workers from shirkers. The 1912 Scoutmaster handbook stated that boys unwilling to strive for or incapable of making rapid advancement in Scout rank and badge work were unwanted: “It will be your business to watch out for natural laggers and shirkers, and to so instill the idea of progression in the minds of the majority of your Scouts as to cause a general movement forward through the force of public opinion.” The author suggested that, if all else failed to “arouse the shirkers to move onward,” the Scoutmaster should appoint a committee to force them to progress or expel them since “[s]hirkers of the persistent sort are not wanted, and the sooner the organization is rid of them to make room for ‘climbers,’ the better it will be for all concerned.”32
One of the organization’s most effective recruitment pitches for financial and parental support was that adolescent boys’ unsupervised and unstructured leisure time might ruin their work ethic by bringing them under the destructive influence of bad boys, street life, and mass entertainment. BSA leader training conferences stressed that every minute of troop meetings, camps, and hikes should be filled with constructive activities. Sample troop meeting programs in BSA literature scheduled time in five or ten minute intervals and suggested an orderly procession through the steps. Daily and weekly schedules for Scout camping were also highly structured. Actual troop meeting and camp programs from across the country revealed that most local leaders followed these suggestions with surprising uniformity.  

![Pocket Watch Advertisement](image)

**Figure 2.3 Handbook for Boys (1919), 475.**

Corporate advertisers played to the BSA’s obsession with work thrift and efficiency and the organization’s fine line between work and play. The pocket watch advertisement in Figure 2.3 from the 1919 Boy Scout handbook stressed the time
management associated with industrial production and mass transportation. The second hand and the radioactive glow-in-the-dark feature encouraged constant monitoring of one’s use of time. An advertisement in the 1927 handbook from the same company depicted a Scoutmaster reading out instructions to a group of attentive Boy Scouts on a hiking or camping trip. The caption insisted that a Scout must have a watch that “doesn’t need to be coddled and petted” and that “keeps time under all conditions of usage” since he received his orders on a time basis. In the drawing, the Scoutmaster merged into the watch band, implying that his primary function was to discipline boys to the time efficiency associated with military discipline and modern factory and office work.

Scouting brought an ethos of industrial efficiency into nature itself.³⁴

John D. Rockefeller, Jr., the son of the great oil magnate, hoped to capitalize on the thrift training offered by the Scouts. In an article he wrote for Boys’ Life in 1921, he explained that there were right and wrong ways to be thrifty: “How the world needs those who will do their best! That do not seek to see how little work they can do in a day, but how much service they can render. Not restriction in the output of industry, but thrift in conserving the rewards of industry is their motto.” An employee might have argued that limiting his work output served his fellow workers by helping to maintain a reasonable pace of work. Rockefeller hoped to close this loophole by using Boy Scouting to train loyal, efficient employees and to deflate labor union efforts to maintain worker control over the pace and methods of production.³⁵

BSA leaders juxtaposed thrifty, cheerful, and efficient Scout workers with strikers and beggars who supposedly acted selfishly, ignored their responsibilities, and depended on charity from others. BSA literature invoked the hobo or the tramp as the ultimate
downfall of an unthrifty, unprepared man with a poor work ethic. The winning Scout’s essay in a 1925 contest on “Why I Practice the Savings Bank Habit” argued:

In summer, if you will look in the parks, or in winter in hotel lobbies and waiting rooms, you will see shabby men sitting or standing despondently, hands in pockets. These men never have saved; some of them will tell of the time they had good positions which paid well. They have nothing to prove their tales now, because as fast as their money came in, it went; none of it was put away for a rainy day. Now it is raining and they are penniless. Sickness sometimes is a cause of poverty, but more often poverty is a result of wasted prosperity.

The shabby men’s despondent attitude and pocketed hands implied an unwillingness to work hard. The reference to rainy days downplayed the persistent problems of structural or seasonal unemployment and how employers benefited from a reserve, unemployed labor pool. BSA literature instructed thrifty boys to provide assistance to the worthy poor, but to not give handouts to shirkers and beggars who refused to work and save.36

The BSA sought to reconcile its emphasis on thrift with the growing twentieth century emphasis on consumption. BSA explanations of thrift taught boys to balance saving and spending. Technically, the Ninth Law was the only one necessary to advance in Scouting; earning Second and First Class ranks required saving money in a bank account. A 1929 Boys’ Life article argued, “Thrift is the middle ground between the spendthrift and the miser. The one spends extravagantly, the other hoards extravagantly.” The author declared that careful spending was more difficult than just saving. A common example of this was the instruction to save money from working so that one could spend it on a uniform and Scout activities that would provide long-term character dividends.37

BSA explanations of being cheerful and thrifty represented a middle ground on men’s production and consumption appropriate for modern America. Scouting
reintegrated work and leisure. Taylor and Ford taught employees to work productively in order to have time and money for leisure afterward, but Scouting sought to make work fun and to make leisure a responsibility. The cheerful and thrifty laws facilitated BSA administrators’ effort to refit the Protestant work ethic for an increasingly hierarchical and corporate system of production. Working cheerfully and thriftily allowed a boy to make the most of his life chances, but it could not fundamentally alter one’s in-born capabilities or environment. BSA literature argued that corporate capitalism’s work and rewards were distributed according to permanent differences in character, justifying the better positions and wealth that native-born white men tended to enjoy.

The well-rounded body: “The key stone in the arch of the Scout Oath”

BSA leaders argued that a well-rounded body was intimately connected with the ability to work and consume cheerfully and thrifty: “The Ninth Law refers not only to money. It also refers to your strength, your powers, your time.” Gender historians have focused on the body as a key site for the articulation of a virile, aggressive ideal of masculinity in fin de siècle American culture. They have argued that native-born white, middle class and elite men understood upheavals in social relations and the conditions of modern work in terms of a degeneration of the white race and, more particularly, the white male body. Authors have pointed to body-building and the professionalization of sports as evidence of the increasing value placed on raw strength and physical aggression in this era. BSA administrators, however, juxtaposed Scouting’s balanced program of exercise, moderation in diet, and conservation of bodily energies and fluids with the detrimental character effects of professional sports, excessive exercise, and body-
building. BSA leaders emphasized that the right combination of modern living and outdoorismanship helped a boy maintain a balanced physique and overall health. BSA sources insisted that a well-rounded body was central to building modest manliness, a modern work ethic, and leading citizenship.  

Cultural historian John Kasson argued that body-builder Eugene Sandow exemplified the early twentieth century American masculine ideal, but examining BSA sources suggests otherwise. BSA leaders rejected “bulging biceps” and extreme body-building as excessive, narrow, and unhealthy for men’s bodies as well as their character. Kasson was probably correct in arguing that Sandow, the magician Houdini, and the fictional Tarzan symbolized the white male body’s ability to overcome the obstacles of modernity; however, Scouting’s popularity and longevity suggest that most Americans tried to find ways to live with modernity instead of ways to resist it. Sandow, Houdini, and Tarzan offered extreme, escapist forms of manhood at the turn of the twentieth century; the BSA’s modest, balanced manliness and well-rounded body better represent the dominant model that shaped American males’ real identities and daily experiences.  

It is telling that the only particular mention this researcher found about Eugene Sandow in well over one hundred thousand pages of BSA texts referred to his program of “setting up” drill instead of his weight-lifting and stunning displays of physical strength. Setting-up drill was an early form of non-intensive group calisthenics for cardiovascular health and general fitness. As Figure 2.4 shows, it was a core feature of many BSA camps, meetings, and rallies across the country in the 1910s and 1920s. Most camp programs listed it as the first order of business each morning, but without reference to
Sandow. Leaders praised setting-up drill for building well-rounded physiques and teaching discipline and order without the aggressive taint of army drill.  

BSA leaders – like other early twentieth century youth workers and physical educators – believed that bodily, mental, and moral development was intertwined, and that the key to healthy growth was balance and moderation. Chief Scout Executive James West declared in the 1929 *Personal Health* merit badge, “A strong body, with no defects which can possibly be corrected, is the basis on which we build a worth while character and a life of efficiency, effectiveness and indeed, happiness. It is the basis for every worth while achievement. With it go mental alertness and high character.” The 1928 Boy Scout handbook instructed each First Class candidate to compare his height,
Having a strong and balanced body helped a boy stay loyal to the rest of his Oath to keep himself mentally awake and morallystraight.41

BSA leaders’ consistent emphasis on all-around fitness and their frequent criticisms of “bulging muscles” and “the proportions of our professional strong men” provides evidence of the premium modern American society and corporate industrial work placed on balanced, modest manliness instead of virility, brute strength, and primitivism. The 1929 Scout merit badge pamphlet on Physical Development declared that building bulging muscles was “really harmful” and “absurd.” The pamphlet was one of many BSA sources that argued that a balanced physique was needed to perform the overly-specialized jobs in modern American industry. The author warned boys against aiming for “huge biceps and great knots of muscle. I do mean that he should be supple and enduring…[in order to] stand the strain of business and also, if necessary, stand the occasional overstrain without bad effects.” He suggested that the proper male body was efficient like a machine instead of exaggerated in proportions: “The real essential is the engine, the part under the hood – lungs, heart and internal organs. The engine should be kept oiled if it is to run smoothly and climb the hill, and the right kind of exercise is the lubricant.” Gone were the days of celebrating American men’s sheer will power and aggression in business and social life.42

Gender historians have characterized the rise of professional and collegiate sports in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century as indicative of the emphasis in dominant American masculinity on aggression and competition. BSA literature, however, argued that competitive sports fostered overly-specialized athletes with
imbalanced bodies and character as well as crowds of idle men suffering from “spectatoritis” – symptoms of which included passiveness, gambling, and associating with “unclean” crowds. Professional sports left the majority of the population unfit for the responsibilities of American citizenship. Baden-Powell and Seton likened American sport audiences to the Roman crowds watching vast circuses and gladiator competitions while the empire fell into disarray. The professionalization of sports, after all, had done nothing to remedy the ominous fact that nearly thirty percent of American army registrants failed their physical exam during World War I. BSA leaders argued that every citizen needed to be physically fit in order to perform his duties during both war and peace, so they insisted that local officials refrain from promoting sport competitions.43

Arthur Carey argued in 1915 that Scouting’s varied training and balanced physical development was very different from and superior to collegiate or professional athletics, since the latter contributed to nervous strain and injured the heart by over-exertion. Scouting offered each boy the chance to earn individual awards based on set standards of merit. Traversing one mile in twelve minutes using Scout’s Pace, swimming fifty yards for Life Saving, and hiking fourteen miles – all relatively easy goals – were the only physical tests required to earn advanced Scout ranks. These skills allowed boys to be self-reliant and help people in emergencies. The fact that Scout’s Pace required boys to alternate walking and jogging to make one mile in precisely twelve minutes was very revealing. Like the BSA’s overall exercise program, Scout’s Pace emphasized the functional regularity and endurance required by modern corporate work rather than the bursts of frantic speed and strength needed for professional sports.44
BSA administrators argued that the best locale for developing the ideal male body was the outdoors rather than the football field or the gymnasium. The 1910 Boy Scout handbook declared, “[W]e have sought out those pursuits which develop the finest character, the finest physique, and which may be followed out of doors, which, in a word, make for manhood.” The boy’s handbook in use from 1914 to 1927 maintained that the well-rounded physique Scouts developed outdoors was essential for leading citizenship: the program “aims to touch [a Scout] physically – in the campcraft and woodcraft of the outdoor life in order that he may have strength in after days to give the best he has to the city and community in which he lives, as well as to the nation of which he is a part.” The 1928 Boy Scout handbook argued that developing a well-rounded body – “the key stone in the arch of the Scout Oath” to keep physically strong, mentally awake, and morally straight – in turn made it easier for Scouts to hike and camp.45

BSA leaders believed that developing a well-rounded physique and modest manliness hinged on a boy conserving his bodily fluids. BSA authors reflected the era’s notion of the “spermatic economy” and its confusion between semen and testosterone. Dr. George Fisher, who worked for the YMCA’s Physical Department and later became James West’s second-in-command at the BSA national office, wrote one of the few discussions of masturbation in early BSA literature: “In the body of every boy, who has reached his teens, the Creator of the universe has sown a very important fluid. This fluid is the most wonderful material in the physical world.” Fisher’s 1911 essay explained that this “sex fluid” deepened a boy’s voice and strengthened his muscles, brain, and nerves. He warned readers, “Any habit which a boy has that causes this fluid to be discharged from the body tends to weaken his strength, to make him less able to resist disease, and
often unfortunately fastens upon him habits which later in life he cannot break.” Fisher instructed boys to conserve this power and fluid by being pure in thought and clean in habit, since “to yield means to sacrifice strength and power and manliness.” Much like wasted natural resources, the sex fluid could not be remade or serve future generations if dissipated on selfish endeavors. He explained that the sex fluid, if conserved by self-control, helped a boy develop physically and enlarged his ideas and made him nobler.46

Fisher’s chapter on “Health and Endurance” for the 1911 Boy Scout handbook exemplified the BSA’s balanced fitness and health ideal and the modest manliness which it helped develop. This chapter was one of the few handbook sections that appeared unchanged in subsequent versions in the 1910s and 1920s. Fisher diagrammed daily setting-up exercises to maintain erect posture and healthy organ function. He praised walking and suggested, “Slow running across country is great; it lacks strain and yet affords splendid stimulation to heart and lungs.” Fisher discouraged weight lifting, long sprints, and distance racing: “A boy should be careful not to overdo…Severe training for athletics should be avoided. All training should be in moderation.” Fisher instructed boys to chew food slowly and thoroughly before swallowing and not to over-eat or “eat too much of a mixed nature.” He denounced stimulants such as coffee and tea as well as depressants like alcohol and tobacco. He suggested that boys have two regular times each day for “going to stool,” even if they felt no desire to do so. This theme of bodily moderation and healthy balance ran throughout Scout literature and programming. BSA leaders argued that balanced physical development made to serve the public was a key marker of self-control, modest manliness, and leading citizenship.47
**Self-control and the “ability to care for themselves in all exigencies of life”**

BSA leaders instructed members to use the Victorian virtue of self-control to reign in the individualism inherent in white American men’s traditional self-reliance for increased work productivity and service to the greater good. BSA literature and activities placed a great deal of emphasis on self-reliance and self-control, presenting those qualities as innate qualities of select boys that could best be developed outdoors with a proper troop of peers and a respectable Scoutmaster. BSA sources juxtaposed the self-controlled, self-reliant Scout worthy of leading society with stereotyped black, female, and poor figures who did not possess these attributes. BSA administrators modernized self-control and self-reliance by carefully delineating the self-supporting Scout who worked for others but managed himself. Explanations of BSA laws placed increasing emphasis on business values like developing a pleasing personality during the 1920s, but this shift represented a refinement of traditional BSA values rather than a revolution. 48

BSA leaders incorporated their reinterpretations of self-reliance and self-control into their revision of the British Boy Scout Oath. Baden-Powell’s original Oath required Scouts to be loyal to God and king, help others at all times, and obey the Scout laws. In 1911, the BSA added the promise, “To keep myself physically strong, mentally awake and morally straight.” One likely source for the change was G. Stanley Hall, the leading proponent of the psychological theories of racial recapitulation and adolescence. In response to a solicitation for advice from a special BSA committee charged with Americanizing the British Scout Laws and Oath, Hall suggested adding a new law on purity, “something to the effect that the scout should keep himself clean in body and mind, that he should respect other boys’ sisters as he does his own…Some phrase
touching on eugenics, not by name and very lightly and remotely, ought to be included.” Hall later merged these ideas into his proposed addition to the Scout Oath, “involving doing duty to one’s self, such as to keep myself well, true, pure or something of that sort...This is often the best kind of discipline to do duty to other people.” Hall’s notion of keeping oneself implied that boys who naturally possessed self-control and self-reliance should protect this essence from outside moral contagion (like a white boy’s vow of character chastity) rather than the idea that any person could be taught such virtues. Although no specific mention was made of eugenics in the final version of the Oath, it closely resembled Hall’s recommendations.49

Emphasis on self-reliance, sometimes referred to as resourcefulness, threaded through much of the BSA’s programming and ideology. Learning to be self-reliant in the woods was a key Scout goal and activity. Woodcraft focused on such outdoor skills as animal and plant identification and tracking. Campcraft taught boys to make primitive shelters and cook outdoors. Outside of thrift and First Aid, most of the Second and First Class rank tests evaluated camping or hiking skills. Officials employed Indian or white pioneer heroes to encourage boys to learn outdoorismanship and self-reliance. The merit badges, which covered an increasingly broad range of subjects, could be seen as aids to self-reliance. The term “merit badge” suggested that consistent effort rather than noble birth or political connection determined the distribution of life’s rewards. The vocational merit badges encouraged boys to learn “stick-to-itiveness” and find a steady career. By not taking “dead-end” jobs, Scouts could avoid being dependent on charity or the state.50

The self-reliant Boy Scout, however, was not and could not be the equivalent of the nineteenth century’s self-made homesteader, artisan, or businessman – all of whom
were defined by ownership of independent farms or businesses. An increasing number of Americans, especially the skilled working class and middle class who made up the majority of BSA membership, worked for big corporations or the government by the early twentieth century. Baden-Powell argued that career training could help Scouts become “self-supporting,” a term which helped distinguish Scout self-reliance from self-made manhood. Dan Beard and other BSA national leaders emphasized that every boy needed to at least learn to work for a living so that he would not have to beg, steal, or depend on handouts. They insisted that Scouts work to earn their own uniforms and fees instead of relying on parents or charity. Beard argued, “Ready made clothing, food and shelter do not grow wild on trees on public land to be plucked by lazy people – And all these things are the product of labor and only made by labor.”

A key component of the BSA’s modest, balanced manliness and the organization’s ability to adapt the Victorian work ethic to modern America was the careful distinction leaders made between working under the direction of others and becoming slavish automatons. Administrators exhorted boy members to develop self-control and self-reliance so that they could work semi-independently instead of having to rely solely on others’ leadership. BSA leaders drew on Hall’s theories of racial recapitulation and adolescence to argue that less mature boys were controlled by selfish and primitive instincts and therefore had to follow a superior man’s firm lead, while adolescent boys of advanced races developed a balance between self-control and self-reliance that they consciously directed toward group endeavors and the greater good. A 1914 article in *Good Housekeeping* by prominent children’s fiction author and nature conservationist Thorton W. Burgess, entitled “Making Men of Them,” insisted that good
Scouts were guided by self-conscience rather than blind obedience to authority: “He is not merely a Scout when under the eye of his scout master. He is a Scout all the time under the tenfold more watchful eye of his own conscience.” The BSA redirected self-control from its Victorian associations with spiritual well-being and self-employment to a modern, task-oriented focus. A 1915 *Boys’ Life* article encouraged boys to avoid temper tantrums, loud speech, excessive eating, alcohol, and tobacco because “A SCOUT practices self-control, for he knows that men who master problems in the world must first master themselves.” Herman H. Horne, a leading professor of education and psychology at New York University, may have best explained the concept in a 1930 BSA publication on Scoutmaster theory, “Control of youth should pass as quickly as possible from the outer to the inner. That is, outer control is disciplinary; it is external. Inner control is liberating; it is internal; it is free.”

Early BSA national leaders proudly proclaimed that the organization was open to boys and men of all races and classes, but simultaneously used black and poor males as foils for Scout self-reliance and self-control. BSA literature depicted leading white boys distancing themselves from the home to perform heroic services for the broader community, but the lazy black boy in the 1921 *Boys’ Life* sketch in Figure 2.5 still required his mother’s prodding to work. Other sketches and poems in early BSA publications depicted black males as irresponsible, unprepared, and lacking in thrift. Speakers at BSA national conferences used black men as the butt of jokes which characterized them as cowardly, unprepared, and thieves. These occasional gibes at black masculinity were all the more striking because they were practically the only mentions made in BSA national literature about black men or boys.
Over the course of the 1920s, BSA national administrators achieved an effective balance between self-reliance and being other-directed. The booming economy and business craze of the mid-1920s filtered over into BSA programming. Business priorities even crept into such mainstays as the Scout laws. Being trustworthy and obedient became business concerns instead of just moral or patriotic issues. A 1930 *Boys' Life* article on honesty emphasized that modern business required it: “In business, in all forms of partnership, it’s the same way; successful operation depends on mutual trust and confidence, mutual honesty.” The virtue extended to consumption: “Every day merchandise worth thousands of dollars is delivered on credit, because the dealer knows
that the purchaser will make payment when his bill is rendered.” A 1928 Boys’ Life article by John D. Rockefeller, Jr., on “Character and Business” argued that although a boy needed to obey laws, he should also respect those who try by legitimate means to repeal laws contrary to the public interest that “unnecessarily hamper and restrict business and do not serve the common good.” Rockefeller also suggested that a boy could not be completely self-reliant: “[N]o man can live unto himself alone, our lives are too interdependent.” BSA literature from the 1910s had told Scouts to be courteous toward dependents such as women and invalids, but a chapter in the 1928 Boy Scout handbook on “The Manners of a Scout” stressed that boys should act modest and courteous because it brought them advantages in business contacts and job hunting.54

BSA programming’s continued emphasis on self-reliance and the resurgence of individualistic Scout heroes such as the Indian and the explorer in the second half of the 1920s, however, provided a counterweight to the business and other-directed mindset. BSA literature increasingly argued that a boy’s conscience was a better judge of his character than others. The 1927 Boy Scout handbook revision instructed boys trying to earn advanced ranks to judge themselves on whether they had done their best to meet the obligations of the Scout Oath and Law. Previous handbooks had required a boy’s Scoutmaster, teacher, parents, and minister to assess him on this final and most important test for Second and First Class ranks. To a modest degree, the BSA’s increasing use of the Patrol Method promoted boy leaders’ autonomy and independent thinking. Boy Scouts across the country competed in the second half of the 1920s to join real explorers for Arctic expeditions, an African safari, and an Alaskan bear hunt. Scout groups greeted Charles Lindbergh at every stop on the tour celebrating his solo, trans-Atlantic airplane
flight. Such efforts glamorized individual bravery and self-reliance – masculine qualities which served as counterpoints to the corporate, bureaucratic mindset.\textsuperscript{55}

\textbf{Figure 2.6 Business merit badge pamphlet (BSA, 1928): cover.}

As the 1928 cover illustration from the \textit{Business} merit badge pamphlet in Figure 2.6 suggests, 1920s BSA masculinity was more of an adjustment of the organization’s 1910s values than a completely new vision. Since almost half of the fourteen steps to “Honorable Success” in business were BSA laws, the sketch invites a comparison between the two sets of values. Cleanliness, obedience, politeness, mental alertness, honesty, and courage were drawn almost directly from the Scout Laws and Oath. Punctuality was a key part of being trustworthy and loyal. “Order,” though not an official law, was a key method and goal of Scout programming. Self-reliance was a consistent theme in BSA sources. Energy was related to a Scout’s cheerful work, physical endurance, and balanced exercise. Previous explanations of the Scout law on
thrift stressed making the best use of one’s life opportunities. Responsibility and square dealing could be seen as linked to the laws on being trustworthy and honest. In many ways, the business model simply clarified or modernized traditional BSA values. Noticeable for their absence from the stairs to business success were the Scout laws on being helpful, friendly, kind, and reverent. These laws could be linked to altruism, equality, and spirituality – life approaches which had little place in modern business.56

“The corporation of spirit as well as effort”: Balancing competition and cooperation

BSA administrators balanced America men’s traditional competitive individualism with the social cooperation and service to the broader community required for an increasingly interdependent society and corporate workforce. Unregulated competition and the aggressive self-made man were useful models on the western frontier and in the emerging industrial capitalist system of the nineteenth century, but corporate owners by the early twentieth century believed that unbridled competition was harmful to business. The “captains of industry” merged independent businesses into vast corporations and enlisted politicians’ help in regulating the economy to smooth out the volatile boom and bust cycles. Even the era’s famed Trust Busting – which on the surface protected the self-made, small business endeavor – often seemed to work in favor of large corporations. Moving assembly line production and the new management style in factories and offices encouraged cooperation. At the same time, this specialization of function popularized by Taylor and Ford required a clear hierarchy of workers and management levels. Each corporation expected its workers to cooperate with each other to make the business competitive with others in the industry, but supposedly allowed
employees to compete against each other for better positions and pay. Twentieth century cor-
porate workers advanced by exhibiting efficiency in a group and task-oriented framework and their ability to encourage consistent effort from others. BSA programming taught boy members to maintain this proper balance between competition and cooperation and to sort others into modern corporate work’s hierarchy of roles.57

BSA leaders praised Scouting for being non-competitive in the sense that each boy earned his own ranks and merit badges based on set standards of achievement, but they taught boys the skills needed to earn individual awards through cooperating within the patrol and troop as well as competing against others. James Wilder, Sea Scouting’s second director, argued at the 1922 BSA Executives national training conference that organized selflessness was replacing individualism as the primary trait men needed to succeed in modern American society:

Scouting on the sea, the Scout law applied in a confined and crowded company of men! Now the days have gone by when Uncle Dan Boone stood on the top of a mountain with his foot on a dead Indian and a coon skin hat. That was the pioneer – a fine idea, but we are moving on and we are getting crowded and we must learn how to live in a crowded community. Now I can see the ship as one of the greatest chances in the world to teach modern conscience.

Officials also recognized that controlled competition helped attract members and spur boys to advance through the program. BSA literature instructed Scoutmasters to pit boys, patrols, and troops against each other in efficiency contests. Troop leaders used competition at weekly meetings and annual council rallies to prod boys to learn skills.58

Scouts competed as individuals and groups, balancing self-reliance and social cooperation. The 1929 Scoutmaster handbook argued, “The relations between the patrols should be characterized by approximately equal division of cooperation and competition.
It is important for the unity and strength of the troop that the patrol cooperate readily and effectively. It is essential to the development of patrol moral that there be between the patrols continued friendly competition.” BSA literature suggested that troops put a grid like the one in Figure 2.7 up on their meeting room walls to chart each boy’s and patrol’s progress in exams and rank achievement: “Each Scout knows right where he stands, and what is better he knows that others are watching his record too. He can also see the progress of other Scouts and he knows that what they do and have done he can do.” The chart encouraged boys to compete against each other while cooperating with their patrol against other units. More elaborate Scout and troop efficiency contests, referred to as the “Credit System,” tracked uniforms, dues, community service, hiking and camping trips, heroic acts, school grades, and attendance at troop meetings and church. The 1914 Scoutmaster handbook suggested introducing efficiency percentages, “such a system as used in baseball records of league standings, batting averages, etc.”

[Figure removed for copyright compliance.]

Figure 2.7 “Good Troop Records Make for Progress,” Scouting (Oct. 1928): 7.

BSA administrators depended on competition to spur members through the program, but warned troop leaders against fostering excessive ambition or haughtiness in boys. Dr. H.W. Hurt, the psychologist and BSA Research Executive who was designing
the Cub branch for boys under twelve, argued at a 1929 Scoutmasters’ conference that the organization needed a rank and badge advancement scheme because “[g]rowth is the law of life” and boys needed goals to inspire character development. He suggested that Scoutmasters ward off the inevitable “small-pox epidemic of badge hunting” by limiting the number of badges an overly-eager boy could earn in a month or having him help the other boys with their badge work. In a speech the BSA national Director of Education gave at the same conference, a section sub-titled “Stabilizing Ambition” argued that the Scoutmaster could provide stability in a boy’s life by helping him channel his ambition toward a worthwhile vocation and life objective. Ambition and competition without a constructive and finite goal risked upsetting the BSA’s modest, balanced manliness.  

The BSA trained its most promising boy members to sort other people into the hierarchy of roles required by modern work. The 1912 Scoutmaster handbook explained:

The object is to get the boys to **work together**. The spirit of competition and the individual desire to excel must give place to a **division of responsibility** and the **corporation of spirit as well as effort**…The boys will unconsciously learn to size up and measure the other fellows with whom they are working. The ability to know, to awaken, and finally to use to the best advantage another fellow’s skill is the secret of the success of many of our greatest men in the business world. It is the Scout Master’s opportunity to start his boys toward a successful career along these lines.

The author stated that competition for positions of authority resulted in the willing cooperation and loyalty of subordinate boys to those worthy of being leaders. Leading a modern workforce required knowing how to work with and control others.  

The BSA’s modernized work ethic and modest manliness were indebted not only to Social Darwinism but also to scientific management. Scouting’s emphasis on loyalty, cheerful and efficient work, and cooperation for the greater good helped balance
nineteenth century masculine virtues like self-reliance, self-control, and competition. BSA leaders characterized Scout advancement tests and efficiency contests as a modern-day version of the struggle for the survival of the fittest. The 1912 Scoutmaster handbook argued, “Every test is in its nature a selection in which the efficient survive and enjoy the greater privileges, while the inefficient either drop out or remain in the lower ranks. The desire to survive and to live an efficient life is the spur of our modern commercial age.” The author argued that the Scout who advanced in rank demonstrated his fitness for higher positions in the future: “Life is made up of many standards and stations of merit. Good positions select good men, and high honors await the boys of today who are worthy to become the representative men of tomorrow.” Scouting’s efficiency contest produced a clear hierarchy of boys. In the organization’s first ten years, seventy percent of boys dropped out as Tenderfoot, while only six percent reached First Class and 0.17 percent became Eagle Scouts. The prized Eagle Scout rank served as a broadly-accepted standard of good character that applicants eagerly included on job resumes and college admission letters.\textsuperscript{62}

The Scout laws of society

The second major group of BSA laws helped native-born white, middle class and elite men reassert their dominance in the face of challenges by the New Woman, the New Negro, new immigrants from southern and eastern Europe, and working class militants. This project was heavily intertwined with administrators’ modernization of the Victorian work ethic and teaching select boys to guide those with inferior character into subordinate economic roles. Gender historians have repeatedly cited the same few,
exceptional early BSA sources to argue that the organization revived white men’s social superiority via teaching them primitive virility and self-reliance. The vast majority of BSA publications after 1910, however, suggested that developing a well-rounded, modest manliness through Scouting better demonstrated the superior character of members (the majority of whom were native-born whites). BSA sources explained that Scouts should be courteous and helpful to those weaker in character: women, the poor, blacks, and the handicapped. Racial and class tensions prompted BSA administrators to deal more cautiously with the Fourth Scout Law on being friendly to others and a brother to every other Scout. The BSA also added three new laws to the original British nine to help boys navigate changing American social relations. The laws on bravery and cleanliness helped set limits to a Scout’s interactions with working class and immigrant groups characterized as moral contagions. Given the fear of “atheist” Socialist upheaval, a new BSA law on being reverent stressed tolerance for those belonging to mainstream faiths and the importance of religious belief for developing balanced, modest manliness.63

A Scout’s helpfulness and courtesy symbolized his strength and preparedness relative to those groups depicted in BSA literature as inferior. BSA officials stated that a Scout’s duty to be helpful and courteous particularly applied to his relationships with women, children, the elderly, and other “weak and helpless” people. The Third Law, a Scout is helpful, instructed boys to “be prepared at any time to save life, help injured persons, and share the home duties. He must do at least one good turn to somebody every day.” BSA literature consistently admonished boys to “do a Good Turn daily” to a person in need, which became the organization’s slogan. By all indications, many Boy Scouts took up the Good Turn with eager conviction. BSA local and national council
annual reports and Scout newspaper columns were consistently filled with long lists of Good Turns to demonstrate the organization’s value to the community and its ability to build boy character. Common Good Turns such as delivering holiday food baskets to poor mothers, providing directions to lost people, and helping children and old ladies across streets reinforced the notion that Scouts possessed superior character.\textsuperscript{64}

Many Americans viewed selflessness and kindness as feminine traits, so BSA leaders had to persuade boy members that being helpful to others was manly. A 1911 letter to the editor of the \textit{Chicago Daily Tribune} argued that Scouts should report their Good Turns so that other members who read about them would learn that being kind and gentle did not make a Scout a weak and ineffectual “milksop.” BSA leaders also downplayed helping mothers with home duties, which a 1928 article by a Seattle Scoutmaster referred to as “the little phrase that haunts the third Law.”\textsuperscript{65}

BSA explanations of the law on being helpful stated that young Scouts would be called on in emergencies to help the injured or save the lives of those who lacked strength, training, and composure. A significant portion of Scout handbooks, rallies, and troop meeting time was dedicated to learning Life Saving and First Aid. Making rank progress required increasing knowledge of these skills. The public praised the BSA for teaching boys to do such men’s work and services. A 1928 \textit{New York Times} headline, “Boy Scout Dives into Bay and Saves Woman While Men Stand Helplessly on the Sea Wall,” suggested how a Scout’s training and composure proved his superiority to both the victim and unprepared onlookers. The Scout had to struggle with the drowning woman and finally “subdued her” in order to save her. Annual reports recounted many tales of Scouts earning medals of heroism for lifesaving. Scouts often staffed medical booths or
demonstrated First Aid skills at fairs, parades, and other large public events. Training in outdoorsmanship and Life Saving helped Scouts locate missing persons before government search and rescue units were widely available. A 1914 article reported that Scouts found a missing man after two days of police futility: the man was “exhausted from his wandering...The police force stated at the end of the search that the lads were better adapted to the work than men, as they covered more territory and they did their work more thoroughly than the average man would.” They showed up the bewildered man and the inefficient police with their manly preparedness.66

Helpful Good Turns rendered by able-bodied and prepared Scouts during the 1913 Peace Jubilee reunion of Confederate and Union Civil War veterans in Washington, D.C. reinforced the notion that physical strength and health were essential for good character and leadership. In Figure 2.8, boy members seemed to provide muscles and mobility to the elderly soldiers. Narrative reports described how Boy Scouts rescued veterans who were roaming the campsite lost at night and brought them water and food. The soldiers, though venerated heroes of the Civil War, had lost the physical ability to be real men. Moreover, their feebleness hinted at moral flaws. Witnesses commented that the Scouts sometimes had to assist veterans because they were drunk. Boy Scouts performed similar functions at later veterans’ reunions, such as the 1925 Union gathering in Grand Rapids, Michigan. There Boy Scouts even had to carry the flag for the “tired and worn” veterans; “[t]heir army of today carried on for the army of yesterday.”67
BSA leaders often compared the related Fifth Law to be courteous to a medieval knight’s chivalry; both suggested strong men helping weak women. BSA literature distinguished chivalric courtesy from a woman’s mere politeness. A 1926 Boys’ Life article contrasted a woman’s “soft” answer that “turneth away wrath” with a good man’s “far more advanced ability of reaching the heart and stirring the kindliness of both friend and foe, which sincere courtesy has never failed to do.” Anyone could be polite, but courtesy to a dependent upheld a social hierarchy dominated by self-reliant males.

Media coverage of Scout Good Turns suggested that racial and ethnic difference was another axis along which helpful and courteous acts could be performed. A Boys’ Life article praising Scouts for helping black women and children left destitute by a 1926
hurricane concluded, “I think that Scouting is a good means of engendering race chivalry.” It is significant that early BSA magazines and reports frequently specified when the recipient of a “Good Turn” was non-white or an immigrant. A 1926 *New York Times* article, entitled “Help Aged Negro,” praised Spokane, Washington Scouts for planting a garden for an “ex-slave” in 1926. More than sixty years after Emancipation, the former slave still seemed dependent on charity from white males.⁶⁹

The seemingly innocuous Fourth Law, “a Scout is friendly,” was actually one of the most contentious. Baden-Powell instructed, “A Scout is a friend to all, and a brother to every other Scout, no matter to what social class the other belongs…A Scout must never be a SNOB. A snob is one who looks down upon another because he is poorer, or who is poor and resents another because he is rich.” As they did with the reference to being loyal to one’s employer, BSA editors removed the concluding portion of the law referring to social classes. BSA leaders argued that the new version reflected the more democratic nature of the organization and American society: “Note undemocratic phrase in English Law No. 4 to which we happily have nothing to correspond.” This did not mean that social classes did not or should not exist, but rather that American society was and should be free of Europe’s “artificial” social divisions.⁷⁰

BSA literature insisted that discrepancies in wealth were a result of – and insignificant compared to – real differences in innate character. Arthur Carey warned Scouts in 1916 to avoid being “tied down by what is called ‘class prejudice’ and giv[ing] too much importance to the mere circumstances of life, such as wealth or poverty, luxury or hardship…Life itself is distinct from these and far more important.” He claimed that the disadvantages of being rich far outweighed the advantages, so the poor should not
despise the rich. As the grandson of John Jacob Astor, the richest American in the mid-
nineteenth century, Carey’s words rang hollow. He instructed boys to adjust the manner
in which they were friendly to match the recipient’s character. American Scouts had to
be friendly to all, but were supposed to reserve true friendship for those with similar
beliefs and behavior. For example, Carey warned that being friendly to a drowning drunk
might require a Scout to “strike him senseless” in order to save his life.71

BSA national leaders had to tread carefully regarding the implication of racial
equality in the Fourth Law’s stipulation that a Scout had to be a brother to every other
Scout. Early BSA national leaders condoned many local councils’ decision to avoid the
issue by excluding or segregating non-whites. Since Scouts were seen to possess superior
character and training to non-Scouts, excluding non-whites from membership confined
them to the category of dependents to whom Scouts gave service rather than allowing
them the friendly law’s egalitarian respect. Some councils that enrolled non-whites
denied them the opportunity to wear the official uniform. This policy sidestepped the
Fourth Law’s requirement that a Scout who saw another uniformed Scout had to be
friendly to him, which would have signified their equality and brotherhood.72

Prior to 1925, BSA administrators placed more emphasis on members befriending
Scouts from other nations than treating non-white Americans as equals or facilitating
their inclusion into Scouting. Boys’ Life promoted a pen-pal service with Scouts from
other countries, although BSA editors tended to white-wash the faces of international
Scouts in magazine sketches. BSA members flocked in the 1920s to the World
Jamborees, large encampments of Scouts of all races from around the globe. Boys met as
equals and became friends, but BSA leaders hesitated to bring non-white Americans to the Jamborees or to grant them full membership in the organization.\textsuperscript{73}

In 1911, BSA national leaders added new laws on being brave, clean, and reverent to complete the Americanization of the British laws. The instruction in the Tenth Law on bravery that Scouts “stand up for the right against the coaxings of friends or the jeers or threats of enemies” hinted at fighting for social justice. In 1911, Dan Beard explained the best way for a member of the Boy Pioneers (his separate youth organization) to win a Mark Twain Top Notch award for bravery, “Perhaps the greatest test of moral heroism is CHAMPIONING AN UNPOPULAR CAUSE OR PERSON WHEN THEY ARE UNJUSTLY TREATED. Taking for instance the part of a persecuted negro in the South, a JEW in Russia, or Chinaman in California, or standing up for justice for a queerly dressed country lad among well dressed city boys.” Explanations of bravery in BSA national publications through the mid-1920s, however, failed to include Beard’s plea for combating racial, class, and cultural discrimination.\textsuperscript{74}

BSA administrators instead argued that Scout ancestors like knights, pioneers, and Pilgrims demonstrated bravery by subduing aggressive savages. BSA literature recounted the knight’s fight against law-breaking brigands and irreverent infidels to protect women, children, and social order. BSA publications and pageants heroized brave Pilgrims and pioneers for conquering the savage Indians who threatened their wives and children while carving civilized settlements out of the howling wilderness. Since most Native Americans had been killed, rounded up onto reservations, or integrated into mainstream American society by 1910, brave Boy Scout pioneers fought troop members pretending to be Indians in mock battles before public audiences.\textsuperscript{75}
BSA sources suggested that modern-day Scouts could demonstrate this “Racial Inheritance” and “manly heritage” of bravery by standing up against working-class street toughs. The 1922 *Boys Life* drawing in Figure 2.9 implied that the source of working class immigrant boys’ problems was their aggressive character, diverting attention from ethnic discrimination and the structural inequalities of corporate capitalism. This scenario of Scouts showing bravery by standing up against working class toughs was replicated in both pageants and local experience. Scout troops frequently performed skits along this line for the public. Local leaders reported that Scouts had to endure taunting from working class boys for their uniforms and parading.76

Figure 2.9  H.S. Wainwright painting, *Boys’ Life* (April 1922): 2.

The Eleventh BSA Law on cleanliness suggested that it was a moral choice more than a material condition. Like the thrift law, the cleanliness law reflected the era’s belief
that bodily, mental, and moral healths were intertwined. Explanations of the cleanliness law stood in contrast to the heterosocial, working class youth culture that was attracting middle class youth. The Eleventh Law explained that a good Scout “[k]eeps clean in body and thought, stands for clean speech, clean sport, clean habits, and travels with a clean crowd.” A 1919 article on the Scout law on being clean insisted that a man:

may be clean in his thoughts in spite of squalid surroundings, but a mentally clean man would never deliberately choose such an environment. The man who considers perspiration and inspiration synonymous is a back number. The modern business man stands for cleanliness because he knows the salutary effect on his employes [sic], he knows that plenty of fresh air and sanitary surroundings not only add to the tone of the place but also add to the profits…A good scout can’t be habitually dirt, it is an impossibility.

Given the dirty conditions of poor urban dwellings and factory work and the disease and moral dangers that native-born white Americans associated with non-whites and new immigrants, the Scout law on cleanliness implied that boy members should maintain their distance from such contaminating influences. Explanations of the cleanliness law also contained veiled references to not masturbating. A 1930 pamphlet warned, “There are boys who check nature’s work with them by unclean habits. Just as a growing tree loses its sap and its strength if you cut into its bark with your axe, the growing boy loses his strength if he misuses his own body.” BSA leaders argued that constructive physical activity best distracted boys from mental contamination and moral filth.77

Baden-Powell and his original British Scout program downplayed religious belief, but BSA national officials added a twelfth law on reverence because they felt it was essential for an American boy’s character development and civic responsibility. BSA administrators argued that the particular ways in which Scouts should be reverent
demonstrated their ability to be political and business leaders. A 1929 Scoutmasters’
training course suggested that rather than Scouts just attending church as individuals,
“why not occasionally have [the uniformed troop] gather in the vestibule of the church
and march down the aisle to the stirring notes of some march, present the church flag and
the Flag of the United States with color guards while the congregation joins in singing
one verse of ‘America.’” Boy Scouts also showed reverent leadership by mowing church
lawns, distributing church literature, serving as ushers, and helping handicapped
members attend services.\textsuperscript{78}

The BSA laws on bravery and cleanliness encouraged members to distinguish
between people of different socio-economic groups, but the law on reverence generally
facilitated inclusiveness. Hoping to appeal to a wide spectrum of Americans, BSA
national publications offered very little in terms of direct religious instruction outside of
requiring Scouts to attend the church of their choosing and to “respect the convictions of
others in matters of custom and religion.” In an era rampant with discrimination against
Jews, Catholics, and other non-Protestants, the reverence law taught tolerance for those
belonging to mainstream faiths. The BSA provided a range of religious services at large
camps as well as speakers from diverse faiths at conferences and meetings. BSA officials
succeeded in their efforts to elicit statements of support from national leaders of the
major church dominations. Churches sponsored the majority of Scout troops, partly in an
effort to attract and retain boys for their increasingly female-dominated congregations.\textsuperscript{79}

Although the Twelfth Law’s exclusion of atheists and agnostics has created legal
difficulties and splinter organizations in recent decades, early BSA sources reveal little
domestic dissent on this policy. The law stirred some debate at the international level.
Scout organizations in some countries followed Baden-Powell in downplaying focus on religion, while others copied the BSA’s new reverence law. In 1921, the BSA’s Chief Scout Executive James West and President Colin Livingstone tried to convince the international Scout association to reject organizations that did not officially recognize the deity and a boy’s religious obligations. Livingstone argued that allowing organizations that did not require reverence opened the door to atheism and accommodated bad Scoutmasters’ “loose manner of living and thinking.” In a private 1917 letter to West, Livingstone had declared, “Pandering to sneering, self-conceited, well satisfied athaeists [sic] and agnostics is not one of my functions and, so far as my influence is concerned, it will not be one of the functions of the Boy Scout organization.” Livingstone insisted that non-religious men were infidels, free-thinkers, cowards, and cheats.80

The laws of society helped the organization’s primarily native-born white clientele develop the balanced, modest manliness necessary to reassert their superiority to groups depicted in BSA sources as having inferior character. Courtesy, helpfulness, and Good Turns carried a tone of condescension toward those dependent on service from Scouts. Being brave, clean, and reverent demonstrated Scouts’ advanced character and worthiness to lead society. The BSA’s three new laws were increasingly essential in an era in which America’s burgeoning cities, diversifying society, and heterosocial youth culture seemed particularly threatening. Many BSA national and local leaders balked about the egalitarian implications of the laws on being friendly and reverent; they stressed those two laws less than hierarchical ones like courtesy and helpfulness.
The BSA’s Laws, Oath, Motto, and related masculine virtues drew widespread popular and government support for articulating a new work ethic and hierarchical vision of character fit for a modernizing economy and society. BSA emphasis on self-control and being helpful and courteous to others prevented self-reliance from devolving into rampant individualism, a quality which conflicted with American society’s increasing interdependence. Being trustworthy, obedient, and loyal encouraged Scouts to harness their self-reliance for the good of the nation and modern industry. Scout laws pertaining to social relations encouraged boy members to sort others into a hierarchy of character. The Scout then adjusted his bearing based on where each person fit into this social scheme. Scout helpfulness and courtesy to dependent women, children, blacks, and the handicapped served as a modern form of knightly chivalry. BSA leaders argued that their revisions of the British Scout laws reflected a more democratic organization and American society. The BSA drifted toward business values in the 1920s, but the program’s overall emphasis on modest, balanced manliness remained consistent into the Depression.
Chapter Three

“Conservation of Boyhood”: Natural resource conservation and male character

In the Boy Scouts of America’s fourth annual report of 1913, Chief Scout Executive James West articulated one of the organization’s key concepts, the “Conservation of Boyhood”: “Conservation of our national resources is universally approved, but of what value would material resources be unless we conserve the moral, intellectual and physical future of the coming generation?” Conservation became a key linchpin of Scouting ideology, a handy way to meld the Scouts’ three principal concerns: masculine character, citizenship training, and the environment. The immense popularity of the Scouts as well as the state’s support of the organization suggests that many Americans shared the same preoccupations. The conservation of boyhood superseded pioneering as the BSA’s organizing scheme and dominated the program into the 1930s.¹

The BSA emerged at a time when a broad conflict was brewing over approaches to environmentalism. The widespread belief that the western frontier had closed prompted some Americans to recognize that the country’s land and natural resources were indeed limited. Many Americans, especially poor ones, maintained that the individual pioneer’s unrestricted use of natural resources for material needs was a traditional right that society and government should continue to facilitate. In the late nineteenth century, natural resource conservationists and wilderness preservationists worked together to challenge the prevailing pioneer model of resource use. Both reform groups wanted to protect public lands and natural resources from unregulated development; both favored middle class and elite priorities over the traditional subsistence uses of natural resources by poor rural people and Native Americans.²
The first decade of the twentieth century, however, witnessed an increasing divide between these two groups of reformers. The majority of environmental reformers came to promote conservation, which supporters defined as the use of scientific expertise to wisely manage the development of remaining resources for the greater good for the longest time possible. Government conservation – exemplified by Gifford Pinchot and the National Forest Service – favored large-scale, corporate development of natural resources over individual homesteader’s and hunter’s subsistence needs because the former was thought to be more scientific, efficient, and invested in maintaining sustainable resource yields. John Muir championed a smaller group of preservationists, most of whom advocated the withdrawal of presumably pristine wilderness tracts from development in perpetuity as a spiritual and aesthetic retreat from an increasingly urban and industrial society. Preservationists, who established institutional bases in the Sierra Club and later the National Park Service, drew on the Romantic and Transcendentalist argument that the beauty of America’s scenic wilderness was a source of national pride and creative inspiration that was on par with Europe’s rich cultural history. Supporters sometimes linked wilderness preservation with a stereotyped, primitive Indian role model, since many white Americans assumed that Native Americans had an intimate and spiritual relationship with nature and a negligible impact on the landscape.3

Gender as well as ethnic and class tensions were heavily intertwined with this three-way environmental debate. Many gender historians have argued that the crisis of native-born white, middle class and elite masculinity instigated the turn-of-the-century outdoor living craze as a surrogate for the rugged individualism of American pioneer mythology and for passing modes of pre-industrial labor. Many works cite the success
and longevity of Boy Scouting as evidence that primitive, virile individualism through outdoor adventure become the dominant model of masculinity for native-born white, middle class and elite American men by the early twentieth century. A few of the earliest BSA publications stressed pioneering or “playing Indian” outdoors to teach members virility and self-reliance, but this mentality soon came under fire for encouraging Scouts to be too selfish, aggressive, and wasteful. BSA national administrators gradually shifted the focus of Scout environmental and character training from primitive pioneering to the simultaneous conservation of natural resources and boyhood, though tensions between these priorities resurfaced throughout the 1910s and 1920s. In light of the organization’s rapidly expanding membership and broad range of popular and governmental support, BSA national leaders’ move toward conservation suggests the emergence of a very different, longer-term resolution to masculine anxieties than that identified by most gender historians.  

In addition to challenging the dominant interpretation of early twentieth century American masculinity, analyzing the BSA’s conservation of boyhood adds a new dimension to the existing environmental historiography. Most works assume that the 1906-1913 battle over the Hetch Hetchy Valley dam neatly split reformers between the victorious, utilitarian-minded natural resource conservationists and their wilderness preservationist opponents, who hoped to leave the scenic valley undammed for spiritual and moral regeneration. Carolyn Merchant has argued that conservation declined in popularity for two decades after being professionalized by men working for government land agencies in the wake of the Hetch Hetchy controversy. Adam Rome recently argued that – after the damming of the valley – male environmental activists shied away from
cooperation with the predominantly female preservationists and their emphasis on morality and children, and increasingly pursued natural resource conservation’s business and scientific priorities. Yet, leading male conservationists within government and business joined with women to promote and teach the BSA’s conservation of boyhood. Scouting generated a staggering spectrum of popular, government, and corporate support from both men and women. It did so by representing a middle environmental ground. BSA leaders insisted that boys built character and morality by combining camping and hiking in picturesque settings with learning to scientifically categorize and manage natural resources. Scouting’s conservation of boyhood promised to simultaneously solve America’s environmental, masculine, and social “crises.” Boy Scouting was a key force popularizing the conservation of natural and social resources, serving as a bridge between early conservation enthusiasm and the New Deal. Indeed, Franklin D. Roosevelt’s vision of the Civilian Conservation Corps was heavily influenced by his eighteen years of work with the BSA prior to becoming the U.S. President.5

This chapter examines how and why BSA leaders applied natural resource conservation to character and civic training for boys. Conserving boyhood meant providing the structured outdoor setting and expert guidance to develop select individuals into productive leaders for the advancement of society. As Dan Beard put it in 1913:

You have seen a lot in the papers about conservation of our resources. The most valuable resource we have are the boys of America. Every boy who goes astray and becomes a misfit and a failure is a great loss to the assets of this country. Every honorable, brave, efficient boy is a tremendous asset to this country. The Boy Scouts of America is the greatest conservation society in the world, for we are working to conserve the boys.
Just as nature faced threats of industrial pollution and urban development – and conservationists responded through programs of efficient resource protection – BSA officials argued that the character of adolescent boys was threatened by “foreign” cities, mass entertainment, the heterosocial youth culture, and the feminization of home, school, and church. BSA leaders depended on conservation activities and symbolism to teach boys modern virtues like scientific efficiency, expert management, and social responsibility that balanced American men’s tradition of aggressive self-reliance. Officials argued that character training was the most important use of public lands and natural resources. The pioneer’s primitive virility or the preservationist’s spiritual contemplation might have offered men a temporary escape from a modernizing society, but the BSA’s conservation of boyhood taught members the balanced, modest manliness needed to adapt to modern life and retain leadership of American society and its corporate industrial workforce. Just as nature conservation lavished attention on the most productive species, the BSA’s conservation of boyhood favored native-born white, middle class and elite males who were assumed to possess the potential for leadership. BSA conservation imagery encouraged members to channel those groups characterized as inferior into subordinate social roles. In other words, Boy Scouts learned to expertly manage society by conserving natural resources.\(^6\)

**The two-edged axe: The conflict between Scout pioneering and conservation**

The BSA’s embrace of conservation as its overarching socialization and environmental strategy was the product of a drawn-out debate over the 1910s and 1920s. While most BSA national leaders in this period were not swayed by the ideology of
spiritual wilderness preservation, they were initially drawn to the vision of man and nature symbolized by the pioneer. The belief that the western frontier had closed to new settlement fueled and reflected a sense among middle class urbanites that Americans’ heritage of masculine independence, opportunity, and virility were under siege. In the organization’s first couple of years, pioneering and Indian motifs were common. BSA activities such as chopping down trees to build campsites and log cabins offered an organized dose of the pioneer life in an isolated, all-male setting.

Yet, growing criticism by landowners and government officials of Scouts’ destructive and wasteful environmental practices suggested that pioneering conflicted with the self-control, civic responsibility, and scientific efficiency demanded by modern America’s corporate industrial economy and progressive reform climate. BSA leaders increasingly employed conservation to teach this second set of values and to defuse charges that Scouting encouraged boys to be selfish savages, but they had to do so in a way that still allowed members to demonstrate their superior manhood. In effect, BSA leaders incorporated a model of virile masculinity into an environmental outlook that celebrated efficient resource conservation for the greater good rather than the pioneer’s individual conquest. Scouts, however, continued to symbolically pioneer through pageants, hiking, and camping.

In the early 1910s, BSA national leaders and programming suggested that pioneer lessons in virile self-reliance were more important than conserving boyhood or natural resources. The first BSA publications and rank and merit badge tests emphasized that boys should chop down trees with axes to relive the pioneer life. Figure 3.1, a sketch in the first American Boy Scout handbook, bluntly explained that if a tree was too thick to
climb, then a boy should cut down a nearby tree and lean it into the target tree as a ladder. The first two boy handbook editions (in service from 1910 to 1914) carried extensive instructions on how to build a log cabin, but without any warning against using live trees. One Second Class rank test required knowing “the proper use of knife and hatchets, which are about the most useful implements of a backwoodsman. In fact a good camper, hunter or mountaineer would be lost without them.” To earn a Pioneering merit badge, boys had to cut down a tree at least nine inches in circumference and build a bridge and a shack that would probably have been made of cut trees. Scouts across the country built pioneer cabins and bridges – even indoors or in flat, dry areas where a bridge was not needed. Construction of a pioneer lookout tower was a popular feature of Scout camps and public demonstrations in urban arenas. Such projects proved Scouts’ resourcefulness while embodying the notion that they would become society’s vanguard.7

Figure 3.1 *A Handbook of Woodcraft, Scouting and Lifecraft* (1910), 63.
Early BSA leaders also used pioneering to connect Scouts to male patriotic heroes from America’s past. The frontier pioneer was an attractive version of the scout because he led white civilization in its virile conquest of the wilderness and its “savage” Indian inhabitants. The pioneer exemplified American men’s independence, self-reliance, and resilience while bravely protecting the women and children in his care. In his instructions in the third major edition of the Boy Scout handbook (first published in 1914) for building a log cabin, pioneer lore expert Dan Beard argued “There is scarcely a great man in early American history who did not know how to wield an axe and all were either born in a log cabin or lived considerable time in such a home. Although George Washington was skillful in using the axe, one of the greatest axemen among our great men was Abraham Lincoln. It might even be said that American history was written with an axe.” Troop and council pageants celebrating Scout “ancestors” depicted Washington, Lincoln, Daniel Boone, and Davy Crockett as pioneers. Like historian Frederick Jackson Turner’s 1893 Frontier Thesis, early BSA literature pointed to pioneering as evidence of the progressive evolution of white American men and their nation-state.8

In conjunction with mounting criticism by private property owners and government forest and park officials of the savage attitude and environmental waste encouraged by Scout pioneering activities, a few outside conservation experts recruited to write for BSA publications in the mid-1910s began chipping away at the organization’s predilection for rampant pioneering. These authors had to renegotiate Scouting’s powerful linkage of pioneering, virile patriotism, and a celebratory interpretation of American history. The federal government’s plea to curtail waste to free up materials for World War I may have contributed to this emerging critique.
George Sudworth, the U.S. Forest Service’s Chief Dendrologist (tree expert), criticized pioneering via two components of Scout masculine ideology: race and age. He suggested in a 1917 *Scouting* article that the self-control and selective scientific judgment associated with conservation demonstrated the superiority of mature white men, while boys playing pioneer bordered on savagery. Sudworth equated the legend of George Washington chopping down a cherry tree with the primitive act of torturing innocent animals. The author called on a mature Scout’s honor, discipline, and civic responsibility to keep him from slipping into such masculine excesses: “The larger purposes and manly training of the American Boy Scout do not permit him to commit any of these barbarities.” Sudworth also characterized Washington’s tree-chopping as infantile behavior: “Even George Washington knew no better when he was a boy, although the disgrace of his thoughtless act was lessened by truthful consequences.” Unwilling to completely insult the former President’s memory, the author allowed Washington to retain manly honor by pointing out that confessing to having chopped down the tree fulfilled the First Scout Law to be trustworthy.⁹

Sudworth may have disrupted the linkage between pioneering and proper masculine character development, but he upheld the notion that learning to be a real man required tree consumption. He argued that the conservationist’s tactic of using dead and down trees would suit most of the legitimate needs that Scouts had for wood. When there were no dead or down trees, Sudworth advised using inferior trees that were worthless as lumber. This discriminating approach simultaneously facilitated Scout pioneering projects and ceremonial campfires while buttressing the concept that natural resource conservation was the distinguishing characteristic of responsible male citizens.¹⁰
Through the mid-1920s, BSA administrators remained ambiguous on the use of axes and hesitated to expressly prohibit pioneering. They took more than a decade to implement Sudworth’s reforms in Scout rank and badge tests. The 1921 sketch in Figure 3.2 from *Scouting* magazine captured the difficulty officials had in dissociating the Boy Scout from the pioneer. Wearing Scout uniform shorts and hats, the smiling axe-Scout and matchstick-Scout pleaded that playing pioneer and building big bonfires was an integral and innocent part of the adolescent boy’s camp experience. They seemed unaware of the selfish deforestation and wasteful forest fires left in their wake. American Scouts and their leaders resisted, for a time, the uniform shorts that European Scouts and leaders had already adopted because they saw them as juvenile. The artist contrasted the axe- and matchstick-Scouts’ shorts, spindly limbs, and casual posture with the Boy Scout’s adult pants, muscular build, and erect stance – suggesting that protecting forests...
from these juvenile “Engines of Destruction” was the environmental priority of mature males. Paralleling the debate amongst BSA leaders and critics – and psychologists’ theories that behaving like Indians and pioneers was a natural stage of development beyond which leading boys had to evolve – the clench-fisted Boy Scout conservationist seemed ready to fight his childish inner demons for control over his own masculinity.\textsuperscript{11}

For years, the BSA vacillated between promoting virile pioneer individualism and pleading with boys to maintain self-control and far-sightedness by giving up their axes. One might presume that a 1922 \textit{Scouting} article entitled “Scoutman, Spare that Tree” would contain a clear indictment of both pioneering and corporate timber extraction. The title mimicked the popular 1830 poem by George Pope Morris, “Woodman, Spare that Tree,” which \textit{preservation} advocates used to challenge timber companies’ exploitation of forests in the early twentieth century. School children often sang Morris’s sentimental song about a man’s relationship with a special tree from his childhood for Arbor Day, which became popular in the 1880s. The BSA’s growing caution about cutting down trees, though, stemmed more from conservation than preservation concerns. The author of the \textit{Scouting} article argued, “The BOY SCOUT AXE has proved itself to be a two-edged article.” He questioned whether Scouts should be allowed to carry axes at all, since the good that camp did for members was outweighed by the harm done to the organization when Scouts destroyed other people’s property. Like Sudworth, the author suggested that Scoutmasters’ call on a Scout’s honor to get him to stop cutting down trees. Sketches of rustic camp decorations made of carved wood on the same page, however, undercut the conviction of this anti-pioneering message. Moreover, the article included instructions on axe safety, suggesting that pioneering was acceptable in
moderation and necessary for a boy’s development. A *Scouting* article later that year fantasized that a Scout’s axe could be sensitized to allow itself to cut down a live tree only when the Scoutmaster or the tree’s owner had good reasons for the action. The author lamented that, since the axe could not be given such a conscience, Scouts would have to be taught to recognize under what conditions it was right to cut down trees.\(^\text{12}\)

\[\text{[Figure removed for copyright compliance.]}\]

**Figure 3.3 Weekly Bulletin of Boy Scout Activities (Jul. 1, 1925).**

The BSA extended its support to lumber companies in the mid-1920s, a move that offered a compromise between pioneering and conservation at the expense of preservation. The sketches in Figure 3.3, circulated by the BSA national office in a July 1925 bulletin sent to newspaper editors for republication across the country, suggested that Scouts were no longer free to chop down trees for selfish purposes but could vicariously demonstrate their virility by assisting efficient lumbermen. The left sketch accompanied a story of a visit by forty Arizona Scouts to the Petrified Forest National Monument, which had been preserved for scenic tourism and scientific study. The Scout was surprised to break his axe trying to chop the fossilized wood, hinting that the pioneer’s clear-cutting mindset was no longer appropriate for a modern and scientific
American society. The sketch on the right accompanied a report that a local council had
sent a Scout to run errands for the Lumberman’s Annual Convention. The Scout saluted
a logger who was effortlessly carrying a tree trunk after his successful conquest. The
difference between the two tree chopping efforts was that the lumberman worked for an
efficient, large-scale corporation. Both the BSA and government forest officials
supported scientific, efficient timber development in the 1920s. In recognition of Scouts’
contributions to forest conservation, the timber companies and the lumbermen themselves
held up their end of the masculine pact with the BSA. The Weyerhaeuser Timber
Company and the Virginia Hardwood Lumber Company were among those timber
corporations donating woodland camps to local Boy Scout councils in the late 1920s.
The International Fraternal Order of Lumbermen, known as the Concatenated Order of
Hoo-Hoo, joined five thousand St. Louis Scouts in a 1924 tree planting ceremony.13

In the second half of the 1920s, BSA sources increasingly admitted that
pioneering was at odds with the needs of modern American society. In a new section on
wildlife and forest conservation for the 1927 Boy Scout handbook revision, E.W. Nelson
(Chief of the U.S. Bureau of Biological Survey) explained that pioneer settlers had
encountered a land so abundant in natural resources that they regarded the forest “as an
obstruction in the path of progress and [it] was cut and burned as rapidly as possible to
make way for cultivated crops.” He noted that this attitude had contributed to the
destruction of much of the country’s forests and wildlife, but that “enlightened public
sentiment” was now working to conserve them for future generations. Nelson’s
explanation shifted the characterization of frontier pioneering from Frederick Jackson
Turner’s crucible of American manhood and democracy to a recipe for environmental
savagery. Continued national progress required society’s future leaders to evolve beyond the vision of the individualistic pioneer to an enlightened concern for the greater good.  

The BSA’s shift away from pioneering activities and toward conservation principles reflected the organization’s increased focus on the masculine values associated with the managed development of natural resources: scientific efficiency, expert management, and social responsibility. The original First Class Scout test required cutting down a tree or creating a significant piece of wood art. In 1928, the national Badges and Awards Committee began allowing boys the alternative of repairing a tree. That year’s Boy Scout handbook told boys to plant seedlings in spots where they cut trees, even dead ones. A revised Camping merit badge pamphlet placed greater emphasis on conservation. It stipulated the judicious use or even avoidance of the Scout axe while camping. The pamphlet replaced the requirement to build a wooden shelter with setting up a reusable canvas tent. The author instructed boys to select naturally-cleared spaces for pitching camp and to gather dead and down wood for a small cooking fire instead of cutting down live trees for a large bonfire. Scout campers and hikers could now demonstrate a pioneer’s virility and self-reliance while safeguarding the country’s remaining natural resources.  

The critiques of early Boy Scouts’ selfish attitude and environmental destruction suggested that unfettered pioneering uncomfortably blurred the distinction between native-born white “civilized” men, “primitive” preadolescents, and non-white “savages.” BSA leaders discovered that conservation could teach boys masculine and environmental values that balanced pioneering’s excesses. Conservation imbued members with self-control, civic responsibility, and scientific efficiency – values more conducive to leading
modern American society and its corporate industrial workforce. After more than a
decade of inconsistent environmental messages, BSA administrators settled on
conservation activities and imagery as the primary way to socialize boys. Scout leaders
partnered with government conservation officials, timber companies, and progressive
reformers to simultaneously conserve forests and American boyhood.  

The “Boy Scout Forest”: Using conservation to teach boys modest manliness

The frequent use of Boy Scout Forest and Scout Tree metaphors captured the
organization’s multi-layered linkage of natural resource conservation with the building of
male character. BSA leaders used conservation imagery because it conveyed the belief
that scientific, expert management was needed to protect and guide the nation’s key boy
resources through what was seen in this period as the most volatile and susceptible period
of child development, adolescence. Scout sources suggested that adolescent boys needed
access to forests because those areas offered essential opportunities to learn the masculine
qualities associated with both pioneering and conservation. As in the conservation of
natural resources, not all boy resources were deemed to be of equal value. BSA
administrators insisted that the highest priority in conservation was the development of
natural male leaders. BSA literature frequently implied that working class immigrant and
black boys had delinquent tendencies, so the emphasis in their Scout training was on
shaping them into obedient, loyal worker-citizens. The mass media and government
agencies agreed with Scout officials that the use of conservation to teach select boys the
self-control, respect for social hierarchy, and scientific judgment required of leading
citizens and to dissuade lesser boys from becoming juvenile delinquents made the BSA
itself a national resource worthy of popular and government support. Planting Scout Trees to memorialize heroes such as World War I soldiers and Theodore Roosevelt exemplified BSA forestry’s combination of virility with conservation service.

Scoutmaster Ralph Allen’s 1922 Boys’ Life rendition of the twelve Boy Scout laws with reference to “A Tree as a Good Scout” illustrates how forest conservation metaphors helped teach the BSA’s masculine virtues and its vision of social hierarchy. A trustworthy tree “faithfully stays in its place and does its work well.” A loyal tree “is true to the laws of its nature. It does not play double.” This statement may have been a veiled nativist critique of the suspect dual loyalty of southern and eastern European immigrants. Since the clean tree “takes care of itself and cleans itself of worn out branches,” Allen’s article implied that disloyal and unproductive elements should be cast aside by the individual Scout and by American society.17

The BSA’s conservation of boyhood suggested, however, that Scout training might mitigate immigrant boys’ hereditary and environmental defects. In a 1925 Scouting article entitled “Crooks: A Nature Study Article About Trees and Men, but Chiefly Men, Apropos of the Present Agitation About Crime and Its Prevention,” the author compared proper boy rearing to a forester controlling the future shape of a tree. The essay explained how Scouting made boys more honest and educated and therefore less likely to sink into a life of crime. In listing key threats to the nation’s boys, the author’s first concern was that “[o]ne boy in four gets his American ideals in a foreign-born home…So right here we have a fundamental truth about crooked trees and crooked men, THEY WERE NOT GIVEN THE RIGHT START IN LIFE.” The author hinted that Scouting under a worthy leader might help prevent immigrant boys from becoming
delinquents, but this would not make them into leaders. Neither Scouting nor conservation could fundamentally change a boy’s or a tree’s true nature.\textsuperscript{18}

BSA supporters argued that forest settings were essential to the program because they enabled boys to learn the virile self-reliance of outdoor pioneering, tempered with conservation’s scientific efficiency, self-control, and civic duty. The symbolic and physical isolation of forests protected adolescent boys from urban living, mass leisure, and the heterosocial youth culture—forces which many native-born white Americans assumed to be key threats to proper masculine and moral development. BSA supporters referred to special forest areas set aside or planted for troop use as “Boy Scout Forests.” BSA leaders encouraged local Scout councils that lacked access to existing woodlands to plant trees at their campsites or acquire their own forests, which many did. The organization’s Camping Department Director, L. L. McDonald, pointed out in 1922 that “forestplanting” Scout campsites would make them more valuable and attractive and eventually provide shade and protection. More importantly, a small grove could furnish material for both pioneering and scientific nature study. The University of Wisconsin granted a Madison troop use of one such Boy Scout Forest in 1925. The university’s Agricultural Department cooperated with a local BSA committee in drawing up plans for the construction of Scout trails, camp grounds, and rustic bridges. The troop cleared forests and erected structures like pioneers while practicing conservation via reforestation, tree study, and scientific thinning of the forest.\textsuperscript{19}

BSA national leaders insisted that the priority in conservation was balanced development of the nation’s adolescent boys, since trained Scouts would wisely manage other human and natural resources when they took charge of American society. In 1911,
BSA administrators rejected a proposal by Gifford Pinchot (former head of the U.S. Forest Service and America’s leading advocate of conservation) to add a new Scout Law stressing the wise use of natural resources such as timber and water. What seemed to be missing from his suggested law was emphasis on training boys in good character and civic leadership. BSA editors published an essay by Pinchot the following year in *Boys’ Life* because it argued that Scout conservation lay at the very center of the nation and its citizenship training project. Pinchot was named the BSA’s Chief Scout Forester. Pinchot started a troop in his hometown and, as governor of Pennsylvania, helped designate over thirty thousand Boy Scout Forest Guides by 1925.\(^{20}\)

The popular press echoed BSA officials’ claim that conserving the nation’s boyhood was the greatest priority and product of wise natural resource management. A 1919 *Scientific American* article, “Harnessing Boy-Power,” explained that Scouting harnessed boy energy in a way that benefited the boy as well as the nation. The author argued that efficiently tapping American boy-power was a “far greater, more important proposition than harnessing the water power of the nation.” By comparing boy conservation with damming rivers, the author suggested that both wild forces could be engineered to produce benefits instead of potential social disaster. It was believed that adolescent boys, if left to their own devices, would succumb to their natural savagery or the immoral influences of urban mass culture and turn into juvenile delinquents. The author argued that boys under a Scoutmaster’s expert guidance built up muscles and a “good constitution” while performing conservation services like combating destructive pests and converting fallen timber into firewood for the needy. Conservation developed a Scout’s innate physical and moral virtues while fulfilling his *noblesse oblige*.\(^{21}\)
Government officials supported Scout conservation not only for the boys’ contributions to natural resource management, but also because it developed leading men capable of balancing virility, self-control, and scientific judgment. The BSA received a ringing endorsement at its 1926 Executives national training conference from William B. Greeley, the third chief of the U.S. Forest Service. He promised the agency’s support for Boy Scout conservation since “[w]oodcraft and the virtues that are bred in the forest – self-reliance, cool-headedness and resourcefulness, close observation, love of and companionship with nature, hardiness and simplicity – are a large part of what scouting aims to teach.” He reported that many government foresters first learned such manly virtues, outdoor living skills, and a passion for the woods as Boy Scouts.22

The reciprocal relationship between BSA leaders and government officials suggested agreement on the principle that developing adolescent boy character was a key use of public lands. Government officials in all branches, levels, and regions gave BSA groups special perks such as instruction, transportation, equipment, and land for conservation work. Boy Scouts were often allowed to use the public lands they helped conserve for hiking and camping. Government agencies granted members semi-official status such as the 1915 “National Forest Aide” badge for Boy Scouts who rendered at least ten days service during the fire season. The BSA worked fervently to hold up its end of the bargain with the government. Scouts fought forest fires and served as park police – guarding prized tree groves and enforcing game conservation laws. In light of work by historians such as Karl Jacoby, these Scout efforts would have been opposed to the interests of most real “pioneer” settlers in areas set aside for government conservation during this era. Scouts helped with government fire-prevention campaigns and
distributed forestry literature. Troops surveyed forests and planted trees on public lands. By 1930, Boy Scouts were planting more than one million trees annually in cooperation with state and federal forest and park officials.23

Memorial Scout Tree planting emerged as a popular conservation activity because it helped connect members to virile American heroes while demonstrating Scouts’ social responsibility and scientific management. BSA officials argued that the individual memorialized and the type and origin of the tree both reflected and influenced the character of the Scouts who were involved in the planting ceremony. During and after World War I, Boy Scouts planted black walnut “Scout Trees” to honor America’s fallen soldiers. These popular community-building ceremonies allowed Scouts to idealize war and soldiering without practicing the aggressive military drills for which the organization had been criticized in the early 1910s. These events also paid tribute to Boy Scouts’ own war service of locating black walnut “Liberty Trees” for the government to harvest for airplane propellers and gun stocks. The BSA exported its Scout Tree analogy by sending seeds to reforest French battlefields where American soldiers had fought.24

Theodore Roosevelt – who best embodied Scouting’s balanced masculine attributes, environmental orientation, and civic leadership – was named the BSA’s first and only “Chief Scout Citizen.” It is no coincidence that he rose to the top of the Scout Tree memorial list when he died in 1919. A 1926 Boys Life article declared, “Scouting might have been modeled after his vigorous life and splendid character. He loved the open sky, he never tired of the rough trail. To his own boys he was what Scouting would call the ideal scoutmaster. His ideal of manhood was a character strong, rugged, resourceful. He was Scouting’s one and only First Scout Citizen.” Roosevelt mirrored
Scouting’s combination of virile individualism with self-control, civic duty, and progressive expertise. He had been a cowboy on his own western ranch and the head of the volunteer Rough Rider contingent in the Spanish-American War. As President, he enlisted expert bureaucrats to monitor the corporate trusts for the “greater good.” He was both a conservationist and a preservationist. Roosevelt tripled national forest holdings and advocated conservation methods such as land reclamation and leasing public land for efficient private exploitation. He also won the respect of preservationists by establishing national parks and using the new Antiquities Act to set aside national monuments like the Petrified Forest and the Grand Canyon. Roosevelt was the BSA’s most important public advocate in the 1910s. In return, Scouts were key supporters of his manly legacy.25

Rugged Scout Trees memorializing virile men served as a gendered form of currency for white males. James West declared that it was the duty of every American boy “who aspires to be a manly man” to plant and care for his own Roosevelt Memorial Tree so that the boy and the tree could mature together. The National Council instructed sixteen thousand troops to plant a sturdy memorial tree with a bronze tablet to honor “the Great Scout.” Troops around the country – inspired by large annual Scout pilgrimages led by Dan Beard and his pioneer friends to Roosevelt’s grave – planted seeds from the black walnut tree overhanging his final resting place. Beard argued that rugged native trees like oak and hickory could also be planted. He cooperated with Scientific American magazine to send Roosevelt walnuts to an English troop to honor the “brotherhood and fellowship of the American Scouts for their brother Scouts of England.”26

The rhetoric of BSA conservation implied that native-born white, middle class and elite boys were the most productive trees in the forest of society. Using natural
resource conservation methods, Scoutmasters provided the structured setting and expert management necessary for developing the character inherent in each particular boy. Immigrant and black boys might be trained into loyal, obedient workers. In the process of learning to conserve Boy Scout Forests, the most capable members developed the self-control, scientific judgment, and social responsibility needed to balance pioneering’s aggressive self-reliance. Planting and caring for Scout Tree memorials linked members to virile American heroes while reinforcing Boy Scouts’ concern for the greater good. Commitment to natural resource conservation demonstrated Scouts’ superior character and ability to lead the nation-state. Government officials and the mass media agreed with BSA administrators that teaching select adolescent boys Scouting’s modest manliness and leading citizenship was a crucial use of public lands and natural resources.

The conservation of social resources

The BSA’s choice of conservation as its central socialization concept reflected administrators’ cultural biases. National leaders claimed that the Scouts’ training program was a universal one and welcoming to all American boys regardless of race, class, or religious affiliation. Natural resource conservation, however, was a selective and unequal process. Its practitioners assumed the prerogative to judge between those species and individuals worthy of protected development and less productive ones that should be neglected or exterminated. BSA leaders suggested that the ability to conserve natural resources was a key indicator of balanced, modest manliness and that such qualities were best exhibited by native-born white, middle class men. Officials implied that blacks and Native Americans, like young children, were too savage and selfish to be
capable of deliberate conservation. Conservation provided the organization with a metaphorical standard for measuring the character and loyalty of European immigrants during World War I. The conservation of boyhood reinforced the belief that working class and destitute people lacked the well-rounded character needed to manage the nation’s resources. Conservation’s scientific discrimination distinguished Scouts from females whom BSA leaders stereotyped as being too sentimental and selfish toward nature. BSA sources also suggested that Scouts, as America’s future leaders, should learn to expertly and scientifically manage social resources through practicing natural resource conservation.27

Bird protection demonstrated conservation’s versatile ability to reinforce the BSA’s social hierarchy of character. In its support for the Migratory Bird Act and bird sanctuaries, the BSA prioritized elite sport hunting, bird watching, and farming over market and subsistence hunting. A 1913 Boys’ Life article urged Scouts to get their fathers to write congressmen in support of the McLean Bill for federal protection of migratory birds. The author criticized how, despite robins’ service to humans in eating hordes of crop-damaging insects, “we are right now, this very month, allowing the negroes and the poor whites of seven Southern states to slaughter the robins for the pot.” The BSA’s advocacy of bird conservation extended far beyond the successful McLean Bill. Scout troops policed and even created their own bird sanctuaries, reporting violations of game laws to authorities. Dan Beard lamented in 1916 that native birds had been pushed to extinction because “our dear mammas, our lovely sisters and our darling sweethearts and wives wanted the beautifully upholstered skins of these poor birds as ornaments for their hats.” He contrasted women’s superficial fashion urges with Boy
Scouts’ wise protection of endangered native birds. Beard’s article ignored middle class and elite women’s demonstration of self-control and environmental concern during a successful boycott of the millinery trade from the 1890s to the 1910s.\textsuperscript{28}

BSA literature claimed that white men’s character enabled them to protect the nation’s natural resources. In a revised 1914 Boy Scout handbook, George Sudworth compared white western ranchers’ intentional burning of public forests to create grazing land with Native American hunters’ practice of burning forests to scare out game. He stated that both groups were equally to blame for selfishly killing millions of trees.

Ranchers, however, were also guilty of what might be termed environmental treason to the white race: “Wanton destruction of this sort is excusable in the case of Indians, because they were uncivilized and thought only of their own immediate needs. But in the case of white people such useless waste of what, in most cases, did not belong to them, is criminal-uncivilized.” In the handbook’s new section on “Conservation of Wild Life and Forests,” William T. Hornaday cast civilization as nature’s main enemy, but maintained that deliberate conservation was exclusively a white man’s trait: “The natural tendency of civilization is to destroy the products and the choicest handiwork of nature. Civilized man exterminates whole species of wild birds, beasts, and fishes as no savages have dreamed of doing.” Hornaday, a prominent advocate of wildlife protection and director of the world-leading Bronx Zoo, singled out reckless game hunters and people who started forest fires as the primary culprits in civilization’s “Army of Destruction.” While the passage hinted that primitive non-whites might serve as a model for a broader Scout philosophy of nature, the author posited the intentional conservation of remaining wild life and forests as a “white man’s burden” that Boy Scouts “should manfully take up.”\textsuperscript{29}
During World War I, BSA leaders used conservation metaphors to illustrate the flawed character of Germans and other supposedly disloyal immigrant men and to instruct members on how to deal with these groups. The 1918 *Scouting* magazine drawings in Figure 3.4 and Figure 3.5 juxtaposed the efficient, modest Scout conservationist with Germans’ aggressive, insidious manhood. In Figure 3.4, the artist characterized German militarism as a faceless flood preparing to dash American civilization. He equated the American war effort with a levee’s ability to protect human communities and material production from excess river flow. The artist positioned the factory worker contributing munitions at a lower level of civilization, suggesting a class hierarchy to the war effort. A well-dressed man added a bag of gold to the levee, but the artist denied him the full respect of showing his face. The rich man almost seemed to be bowing to gold or the Scouts’ superior contribution to the war drive. The era’s stereotyped rich men, bloated and effeminate dandies or stingy Jewish bankers, did not make appropriate role models for leading boys. The two men’s (or classes’) contributions were not enough to stem the flood; Uncle Sam called for two Scouts to add food sandbags. The Scouts’ contributions are the ultimate focus of this sketch, the point of Uncle Sam’s pride. The food bags symbolized two of many war era Scout service projects that were described in organizational literature as conservation drives. Boy Scouts were leaders in the Liberty Gardens project to grow crops in vacant urban lots and abandoned fields. They also helped recruit and supervise their mothers’ adherence to Herbert Hoover’s food conservation program that limited consumption in homes. With many fathers off at war, older Scouts were expected to be the “man of the family.” Both efforts maximized food supplies for soldiers fighting the volatile Germans.  

30
In Figure 3.5, the artist equated tent caterpillar extermination – a widespread BSA conservation activity during the 1910s and 1920s – with a Scout’s ability to eliminate hindrances to the American war effort. By labeling the helmeted German tent caterpillar infestation “propaganda,” “lies,” and “pessimistic rumors,” the artist suggested that the real obstacle to the war effort was immigrant Americans’ suspected treason rather than German military might. Only the vigilant Boy Scout conservationist could weed out these social plagues. The black walnut Liberty Tree (a leading victim of tent caterpillar defoliation) grew strong in the soil of Americanism, implying that forceful conversion of immigrants was the only path to victory.\(^{31}\)
Learning to conserve natural resources provided a key lesson on social relationships: a good Scout developed a conservationist’s ability to scientifically categorize human resources into productive species, harmless creatures, and pests – as well as the fortitude to deal with each type appropriately for the greater good. One 1918 *Scouting* article referred to weeds in Scout Liberty Gardens as the “enemy in our Midst...Every weed is a friend of the ‘Hun’ and by pulling it you will be doing something toward gaining the victory over the enemies of Liberty.” Another article argued that since Scouts were not supposed to be kind to harmful rats and rattlesnakes, then they did not have to befriend the country’s enemies who murdered women and children. The article, entitled “Shall We Have Hun Scoutmasters?”, instructed local officials to expel German-American Scoutmasters since they were probably manipulating boy members into sabotaging the war effort. Some local councils complied.\(^\text{32}\)

BSA sources criticized working class immigrant boys for being too selfish, ignorant, and short-sighted to live up to conservation’s standards of sustained development and responsibility to the broader community and future generations. The working class street “Tough” was a stock character of early Scout plays and stories. The Tough exhibited aggressive virility like a pioneer, but his foreign and impoverished background hinted at delinquent tendencies arising from an ingrained lack of self-control. A 1929 play written by a boy member for *Scout Executive* magazine centered on a conversation between an Eagle Scout (the BSA’s highest boy rank) and a Tough with a heavy accent, poor grammar, and “several front teeth missing.” The Tough reported that he spent his free time “smokin’ cigarettes, ridin’ box cars and shootin’ birds. Shot a robin and a canary this morning.” The Tough asked the Eagle Scout how many birds he
had to shoot to earn the Marksmanship merit badge on his uniform. The Scout retorted that the badge judged accuracy and consistency in shooting inanimate targets since “[o]ne of the first things a Scout pledges is not to kill harmless creatures for the mere pleasure of killing.” The play hinted that savage treatment of innocent birds led to further character shortcomings; the Tough’s inquiry about other merit badges gave the Eagle Scout a chance to lecture him on safety, nutrition, hygiene, and school study habits.33

BSA leaders suggested that women were too self-involved and sentimental to conserve resources, while Scouting developed select boys’ inherent reason and scientific judgment. The Sixth Scout Law, inherited from the original British Boy Scout program, instructed boys to be kind to animals and help protect them. Beard and other BSA national leaders, however, feared that being kind to all animals and insects was a feminine liability in terms of natural resource management. Beard clarified the Sixth Scout Law in 1917, “A Scout is kind, but that does not mean that he will not kill [creatures that] are enemies to the plants.” He argued that being kind to harmful animals and insects was “slushy sentimentalism, which is neither the pure water of truth and kindness nor the hard cold ice of decision. A Scout is kind, he is kind but firm.”34

BSA sources argued that firm scientific judgment allowed leading boys to differentiate between species like native birds and trees that deserved kind protection and pests like mosquitoes and tree caterpillars that conflicted with human interests and needed to be eliminated. Government officials frequently sought and received Scout aid on a wide range of protection and extermination projects, especially when there was insufficient funding to pay men to do the tasks. As the Figure 3.6 sketch by BSA staff artist Frank Rigney reproduced in the New York Times suggested, Scout hunting
campaigns to exterminate pests allowed boy members to simultaneously vent their primitive instinct and distance themselves from sentimental women and poor, black, and immigrant men depicted in Scout literature as undiscerning and wasteful for slaughtering “harmless” animals like native songbirds.  

[Figure removed for copyright compliance.]

Figure 3.6  *New York Times* (June 15, 1924): X11.

The conservation of boyhood helped adolescent Scouts develop the balance between aggression and gentleness needed to conserve natural resources, manage society, and fill leading roles in the corporate industrial economy. Officials described being kind to “dumb,” “weak,” and female animals as a form of chivalry, linking the Scout’s protection of harmless animals with his provision of service to “helpless” women, the poor, and invalids. Being gentle and chivalrous to innocent dependents required being firm with natural and human pests that preyed on the weak. Arthur Carey argued that a key part of the medieval knight’s chivalric duty was “to bring order out of confusion, – to kill the wild beasts that interfered with flocks and herds and made farming difficult.” He equated the extermination of savage predators with the knight’s duty to overpower the highwaymen and robbers who made traveling unsafe for women and children: “It goes without saying that dangerous or noxious animals should be killed…by killing them we are really protecting far more life, and life of a higher order, than we destroy. The motive
of the killing is really constructive or upbuilding.” Carey differentiated conscientious pest extermination from a young boy’s foolish whim to kill harmless squirrels or songbirds, a primitive instinct which a mature Scout sublimated. Being firm with pests paralleled the National Park and Forest Services’ widening predator extermination campaigns in this era, but the BSA placed particular emphasis on pest extermination’s ability to build character in leading boys.36

The metaphorical relationship between Scout natural resource conservation and managing society was a two-way street. Scouts were encouraged to apply conservation tactics to society as well as to use cultural standards in conserving natural resources. Theodore Roosevelt and naturalist John Burroughs had accused Ernest Thompson Seton and other writers of being “Nature Fakers” for their sentimental anthropomorphic tales, but William T. Hornaday enlisted anthropomorphism to serve “hard” Scout conservation and character-building. Hornaday, who also established the Permanent Wildlife Protection Fund and the BSA’s wildlife conservation medal, employed masculine norms to justify hunting certain animals for their furs. He argued in the 1914 Boy Scout handbook revision that pumas were destructive to cattle and sheep as well as not “courageous,” so boys could fulfill their duty to protect livestock by hunting them. Weasels’ and minks’ savage and wasteful desire to kill more birds than they could eat made trapping them chivalric. The woodchuck was a fair target because he destroyed gardens and was fat, unsocial, and “anarchistic.” The beaver was a more complex case. Hornaday told Scouts that they could learn good character traits by colonizing and observing the gallant, wise, and industrious beaver; but he insisted that killing “excess” beavers for fur was “a perfectly legitimate industry.”37
In a 1918 *Boys’ Life* article on “The Ethics of Trapping,” Hornaday seemed caught between a man’s conflicting duties to experience the virility of a pioneer past, protect productive natural resources from pests, and avoid savage cruelty to animals. He confessed that the “steel trap is admittedly a cruel method,” but argued that no other way of exterminating pests was practical. The article warned boys that trapping as a career was difficult, but it contained a subtle undertone of nostalgic praise for men living far from others in a log cabin, not bathing, and risking death in a battle against the elements. After having justified trapping harmful pests and noting the manly benefits of the trapper’s life, Hornaday concluded, “In fact, how can any scout become a professional steel-trap trapper and live up to the Boy Scout Law [on being kind to animals]?”

Animal rights advocates used this tension in Scout masculine ideology to challenge the organization’s support of animal trapping. In response to trapping essays and advertisements in *Boys’ Life*, prominent stage actress Minnie Maddern Fiske wrote a letter in 1920 to the *New York Times* demanding that Boy Scouts live up to the Sixth Scout Law’s “manly promises to ‘be kind’” to animals and end “the barbarism of trapping.” She argued that trapping animals for furs would not only lead to their extinction, but also encourage boys to torture animals like savages instead of learning the humane self-control that was supposed to distinguish Anglo-Saxon men. She attempted to counter the virility of hunting and trapping with the ideal of men’s chivalric protection of the weak. Fiske argued that if the Scouts refused to comply, then ladies could ban together to boycott the purchase of fur clothing and put an end to the trapping business themselves. An article published the following month in *The Literary Digest* sought to undercut potential gendered critiques of Fiske’s letter, insisting that she was “basing her
opinion not upon sentiment, but upon the fact that she has been ‘in close touch with trappers and with the business of trapping for twenty years.’” Playing on the Scout concept that a boy’s attitude toward nature reflected his broader character, the author warned that a Scout’s breach of the requirement to be kind to animals might lead to other infractions of his manly duty.39

BSA officials used several tactics to defend boys’ right to trap animals. A.E. De Ricqles, the President of the Denver Scout council, responded to the editor of the New York Times that trapping was essential for teaching boys hardy self-reliance. He argued that a protective woman was incapable of understanding the manly joys of trapping:

If the Boy Scout must be led by the hand into the woods by a nursemaid in spotless white, properly sterilized, and carefully shown the tracks of a field mouse, he certainly has a good chance to grow up into a model of propriety and gentleness, but let him get a few duckings in the creek on a very cold day while he is out trying to set his trap for a muskrat, and the chances are he will grow up with a pretty good idea of how to take care of himself, what is fair play, and the knowledge of how to train his own boys when he grows to be a man.

De Ricqles added that being a woman rendered Mrs. Fiske unable to perceive the cruelty that animals exhibited toward each other. He argued that such animal behavior justified the practice of trapping.40

BSA national administrators offered a modernized defense of trapping by using conservation to reframe the masculine duties of self-control and protecting the weak. They argued that a Scout’s primary manly duty was to protect human crops and livestock from horrible pests that fed on them, and that animal trapping was the most efficient, practical way of doing that. Since the Sixth Scout Law only protected harmless life, destructive animals such as wolves or weasels should still be trapped by boys. Visiting
the traps daily and not further torturing animals distinguished humane, modest Scout conservation from environmental savagery. This was still a difficult line to tread, so BSA administrators quietly decided to refuse trapping ads in future issues of *Boys’ Life*. The author of a 1923 *Boys’ Life* article rejected the suggestion in a popular New York play that Scouts were kind to all animals: the playwright “was wrong. Scouts kill things that are only harmful. Destructive pests…should learn to fear the Boy Scouts.” The BSA national office published an American Humane Association leaflet on the barbarism of animal furs and trapping in 1930, but lodged it at the end of the *Taxidermy* merit badge pamphlet. Despite the author’s instruction that Scouts should only practice taxidermy on harmful pests, dead family pets, or poultry headed to the dinner table, the pamphlet could not entirely mask the contradictions inherent in the BSA’s gendered nature policies.¹⁴¹

Reflecting their use of conservation to reinforce a hierarchy of character and citizenship, BSA leaders suggested that the benefits of the country’s natural resources should flow primarily to those best able and trained to manage their development instead of to everyone equally. Gifford Pinchot at least rhetorically argued that every person had a duty to conserve resources to benefit the most people for the longest time, whereas BSA sources depicted conservation as a privilege of leading citizens. In Figure 3.7 from the cover of the 1920 *Conservation* merit badge pamphlet, the cornucopia gourd swallowing up natural resources and the coin wealth they represented hinted that Boy Scouts should practice conservation primarily to enrich themselves. Figure 3.8 from the 1925 BSA Annual Report reinforced the idea that those boys trained in Scouting should inherit the resources of America’s urban, small town, and farm landscapes. As the embodiment of America’s future, it was necessary that Boy Scouts control its resources.¹⁴²
BSA national leaders used conservation activities and symbolism to distinguish between the relative character and citizenship capabilities of women and men, as well as different ethnic groups and social classes. BSA sources suggested that women were too sentimental and selfish to conserve natural resources. Native Americans and working class immigrants were seen as too aggressive and destructive to manage nature properly, while blacks seemed fit only for manual labor in the outdoors. The organization attracted broad government and popular support by promising to train select boys in balanced manhood and leading citizenship while safeguarding the nation’s natural resources. BSA officials argued that conservation’s differential treatment of productive, harmless, and noxious species should be applied to society. Efficient Scouts learned to manage society by dealing firmly with pests and protecting harmless women, young children, and other dependents. In return, the organization promised Scouts control over the nation’s landscapes and resources.
He “must not be satisfied with the mystery and romance of it”: Manly preservation

Environmental historians have characterized the early twentieth century public lands debate as pitting John Muir’s preservation of pristine areas devoid of human presence for spiritual contemplation against Gifford Pinchot’s managed exploitation of material natural resources. BSA leaders articulated a third position – that public lands should be protected because they were rich with human history and provided a space for the reordering of an increasingly urban, chaotic, and feminized American society. BSA national administrators came to reject the spiritual and holistic connotations of nature preservation, partly because that vision seemed too feminine and anti-progressive. Emphasis on God-in-Nature or nature’s Great Mystery also implied a dangerous equality between different social groups before a superior force and hinted that animals and plants might be of equal intrinsic worth to humans. BSA administrators and editors employed conservation or pioneering rhetoric to make occasional Scout preservation-like activities and imagery more masculine and to keep them in line with the organization’s hierarchical social vision.  

In its earliest stage, the BSA needed colorful, well-known naturalists and authors to attract members and support. Notable among these were experts on Indian lore, Charles Eastman (a Sioux Native American rights’ activist) and Ernest Thompson Seton (the BSA’s Chief Scout and best-known naturalist). Eastman and Seton used Indian lore to encourage both boys and girls to live in harmony with the outdoors by becoming sympathetic friends with nature and accepting natural things as lessons in themselves. They taught youth to seek nature’s Great Mystery, a Native American term for a spiritual quest to contemplate the “unsolved and unsolvable” beauty of nature instead of mastering
it for scientific or utilitarian purposes. Most BSA national leaders, however, only wanted girls to emulate this nature philosophy; they supported the Camp Fire Girls organization because it used Indian lore and a romantic view of nature to teach girls to enjoy their traditional housewife role. The flipside to most BSA national leaders’ support of the Camp Fire Girls was their antagonism toward the Girl Scouts of America, an organization with no official ties to the BSA. BSA national leaders tried to keep girls from Scouting by encouraging the Girl Scout organization to merge into the Camp Fire Girls. This hostility was a defense of Boy Scouts’ exclusive right to conquer nature like a pioneer, scientifically conserve its resources, and thereby to become the nation’s leading citizens.

As the BSA grew and shifted toward conservation, it had less need for Seton and Eastman. BSA administrators increasingly downplayed nature preservation, which they associated with feminine cultural and psychological proclivities. They expelled Seton in 1915 for his radical ideas on nature, gender roles, and Native American rights; and they limited Eastman for the most part to teaching Indian craft and dance.44

Most BSA national leaders argued that boys who were capable of advanced character should develop their innate potential to master nature instead of befriending it or contemplating its mystery. Eastman emphasized that nature’s secrets were unknowable, but most BSA authors and speakers encouraged boys to study nature scientifically to understand its secrets, facilitate its material exploitation, and learn masculine values appropriate for modern living. The first handbook for Scoutmasters, published in 1912, promised that new boy members would be instinctively interested in their first outdoor troop meeting because they “are yearning to know their world. To unlock the mysteries of nature and to know their relationship to them.” The author,
though, cut short any suggestion that the purpose for Scouts’ discovery of nature’s mysteries might be spiritual growth, “They must learn to recognize the forces and the laws of operation which underlie the manifestations of nature. Their wonder and interest must not be satisfied with the mystery and romance of it all but their ability to use and master these forces must be impressed upon them. This mastery will give knowledge and power for later life-work.” The author insisted that maturing boys should develop a man’s desire and ability to dominate nature for productive use.45

The third major version of the Scoutmaster handbook, in use from 1920 to 1935, relied on military and hunting masculinity to eclipse a rare BSA expression of preservation philosophy. In a passage that John Muir himself could have written, the section on “Woodcraft” explained that “The OUT OF DOORS – with its beauty and its mystery, its towering trees and fragile flowers, its little people in fur and feathers, its beckoning trail and its cooling springs, its warming sun by day and its guiding stars by night – calls to the boy.” This anthropomorphic characterization implied that Scouts should have empathy for nature and respect for its rights. The author, however, quickly redirected the point by declaring that animal tracking, Scout’s Pace, and compass training were the three best ways to “introduce the Scout to the lore of the woods.” These activities resembled military or hunting practice more than a Transcendentalist’s or preservationist’s contemplation of nature’s timeless divinity.46

Preserving wild areas from development has primarily been associated with a spiritual desire for sublime scenery, but BSA leaders argued that public lands should be set aside for masculine character-building via pioneering and the practice of conservation. Dan Beard echoed historian Frederick Jackson Turner’s 1893 frontier thesis that
American men had once developed self-reliance, freedom, and self-government in their struggle to carve homes from the western wilderness and the reclaiming of land from its “savage” Indian occupants. He argued that since the frontier had closed, it was the special duty of Boy Scouts and Boy Pioneers to “preserve what is left of our freedom, our forests and our wild life, so that there shall be left to this country something to suggest the old wilderness and the primitive surroundings of the early American heroes.” Like the right to exploit natural resources, the BSA posited the virile pioneer wilderness experience as an entitlement of leading male citizens. The “Cave Scout” argued in his 1924 *Boys’ Life* column that Uncle Sam should set aside the wildest and most remote section of the country as a perpetual wilderness park to preserve American boys’ right to “penetrate virgin wilderness,” by which a boy could “acquire some of the habits of thought and qualities of character that made his ancestors men of great physical strength, mental alertness and moral courage.”

Eagle Scout Trail building projects provide a vivid example of how the BSA used the pioneer’s virility and the conservationist’s scientific efficiency and social responsibility to masculinize activities associated with wilderness preservation. These Scout Trails, built on public lands with the cooperation of government officials, celebrated America’s progressive outdoor history by commemorating Indian archaeological sites and pioneer explorer paths while facilitating the enforcement of conservation laws. Boy Scouts cut trees, cleared brush, and graded trails – symbolically emulating pioneer men like Daniel Boone who blazed paths in advance of white “civilization.” By 1922, at least eight such public trail projects were ongoing across the United States. Starting in 1924 in Yellowstone, elite Eagle Scouts began constructing
special trails in national parks. The original Eagle Scout Trail primarily served rangers patrolling for fires and catching game poachers, who were probably poor local whites or Native Americans. At the dedication ceremony, the local council Executive emphasized how trail building simultaneously demonstrated Boy Scout reverence for nature, pioneer manhood, and civic service: “We have come closer to God in these two weeks in the park…We are going home more self-reliant, stronger, and better equipped for our duties. We have given our best in the making of this trail.” The Eagle Scout Trails project spread rapidly to other public lands.48

Conservation experts writing for BSA publications and animal rights’ advocates pushed the organization to set limits on pioneering and trapping, but these concessions did not signify a shift to preservation or ecology. Manly conservation and pioneer mastery increasingly trumped the BSA’s initial flirtation with the rhetoric of preservation. For the most part, the organization eschewed language that presented nature as the site of spiritual contemplation. BSA leaders argued that the best reason to set aside public lands was to preserve boys’ right to learn the masculine values associated with pioneering and conservation. Boy Scout help on wilderness projects may have actually worked against the priorities of traditionally-defined preservationists.

The character values associated with preservation and pioneering were of limited use to native-born white, middle class and elite men attempting to navigate a changing world. Preservation offered a temporary escape from modernity rather than a way of engaging it effectively. The pioneer’s aggressive, individualistic mindset helped white American men feel invigorated, but it did not fit with an increasingly corporate and
interconnected society. By contrast, adoption of principles linked with conservation helped native-born white men maintain their dominant positions in society and the workforce. Conserving natural resources demonstrated Scouts’ scientific efficiency, expert management, firm self-control, and civic cooperation – values more conducive to leading a modern, corporate industrial society. The conservation of boyhood reinforced BSA leaders’ hierarchy of character and citizenship by maintaining that women and non-white, immigrant, and working class men were incapable of the attributes needed to efficiently manage the nation’s resources. Scout training encouraged boy members, as America’s future leaders, to apply conservation principles to managing human resources. Ideas about modest manliness and management of social resources imbedded in the conservation of boyhood were central to the popularity of the BSA and to natural resource conservation itself in the 1910s and 1920s.
Chapter Four

African-American and Native American Scouting

BSA national leaders prided themselves on the claim that the program was open to all boys, regardless of race, class, or creed. The organization drew broad socioeconomic and governmental support for its promise to ease growing cultural tensions by promulgating a universal model of modest manliness and civic duty. The popular press trumpeted the BSA’s inclusive vision. Lyman Beecher Stowe, a leading proponent of the Social Gospel movement, declared in 1911, “Rich boys, poor boys; boys black, white and yellow; Protestant boys and Roman Catholic boys and Hebrew boys; nice boys and bad boys; boys born in this ‘Land of the free, and home of the brave,’ and boys born in other and quite different lands. In fact, any and every old kind of a boy may [join the BSA], if he can pass the test and will take the oath.” Indeed, outside of those with severe mental or physical handicaps, the basic requirements barred no boys over the minimum age of twelve. Declaring that boys of different races and classes could join was a brave statement in an era of rampant discrimination and segregation. From some early reports, it appeared that the BSA’s egalitarian promise was true. *The Outlook* described the second annual rally of New York City Boy Scouts in 1913. The author stated that the three thousand, five hundred participants included a cross-section of nationalities and classes. He argued that, since all the boys were Scouts and had the same principles and training, “[t]he result was that race, color, and education were forgotten.”

The early BSA did not formally exclude anyone, but in practice it discriminated against boys that were believed to possess inferior character. Application rules, costs, and the partial control that troop sponsoring institutions and local councils had over their
own memberships contributed to the organization’s exclusivity, but the most important factor was many officials’ belief that non-white, working class immigrant, and rural boys were incapable of the modest, balanced manliness that defined good character and leading citizenship. Previous histories of American Scouting have noted that Southern councils excluded blacks and that southern and eastern European immigrants could only join on the BSA’s terms (such as using the English language for Scout instruction), but the organization’s membership policies in this period were more complex. Not even all native-born white boys were free to join. Prior to the 1916 creation of the Pioneer branch for rural boys, the BSA did not accept membership applications from individuals. Even after this date, the national office discouraged individual applicants by requiring each to prove that he could not join a regular troop. Almost every boy who became a Scout had to convince an adult Scoutmaster to put his name on an annual troop charter application, which was then turned in to the local council. The members of some existing troops had input on which new boys to add. A 1914 model troop constitution specified that the existing officers, both adults and boys, first had to report favorably on an applicant before a troop vote was taken on whether or not to admit him. If the applicant passed the leaders’ scrutiny, he could still be blackballed by any of the other troop members. The national office quietly permitted local councils to refuse a troop application for any reason, a policy it justified as allowing democratic “self-determination” on local issues. The national office evaluated troop applications in areas not under local council and also controlled annual council charters. In short, boy members, Scoutmasters, local councils, or the national office could reject new applicants on any grounds: racism, nativism, fear of radicalism, or personal vendetta. Some applicants may never have been accepted,
since “[m]any successful Troops maintain a waiting list, from which new members are elected as vacancies occur in the Troop.”²

BSA administrators employed G. Stanley Hall’s theories along with derogatory cultural stereotypes to help justify limitations placed on non-white, working class immigrant, and rural boys’ participation. They also employed savage, “Negro,” working class “tough,” and rural hayseed anti-Scouts to shape and promulgate their vision of balanced, modest manliness. To include supposedly inferior boys in Scouting would, according to some officials, risk skewing the limited development of inferior boys as well as the character of advanced, native-born white boys. The interaction between BSA national policies, cultural stereotypes, and local practices in the 1910s resulted in membership discrimination along the lines of race, ethnicity, class, and population density. Many local councils excluded or segregated non-whites, while new white immigrant and rural boys were severely underrepresented in Scouting.

The most important membership divide was that of race. Repeated inquiries from local officials about the organization’s exact race policies prompted the Executive Board to form a committee to study the black Scouting issue. The makeup of the committee and later decisions suggest that BSA national leaders primarily viewed black Scouting as a way to train black boys to be loyal workers rather than leading citizens. BSA national leaders rejected egalitarian arguments made by local black rights’ organizations and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People that black men’s valiant service during World War I proved that they were equally capable of advanced character and leading citizenship and that their sons had the right to Scout. Between 1918 and 1925 BSA national leaders toyed with the idea of creating a separate but inferior, Scout-
like organization for black boys, while holding to the policy of local council self-
determination in race matters. The lessening of perceived threats to native-born white
men’s authority and the offer of a foundation grant by the mid-1920s, however, helped
shift administrators’ position. In the second half of the 1920s, BSA national and local
leaders ran recruitment campaigns to facilitate the gradual inclusion of black and Native
American boys who had been largely excluded from Scouting.

The creation of the Inter-Racial Service [IRS] in 1926 marked a dramatic shift in
BSA membership policies. The IRS actively encouraged local Southern councils to
experiment with segregated black troops. Blacks worked to overcome obstacles to
Scouting because they associated it – even in segregated troops without uniforms or camp
access – with equality, rights, and independence. In the late 1920s, IRS officials
cooperated with the Indian Service Bureau to start a large number of troops at federal
boarding schools for Native Americans. Native American leaders hoped that Scouting
could teach their boys tribal heritage, while federal officials saw Scouting as a way to
modernize and Americanize Native Americans. However, restrictions placed on these
new groups confined them to second class Scout membership, manhood, and citizenship.

**Anti-Scouts: Savages and negroes**

BSA spokesmen invoked stereotyped figures to suggest that non-whites possessed
inferior masculine character and to identify behaviors that contrasted with Scouting’s
modest manliness. BSA national leaders often used these figures, who might be referred
to as “anti-Scouts,” in jokes to break the ice at meetings or in essays or sketches on the
meaning of Scouting. Some Boy Scouts sang campfire lyrics and acted in blackface
pageants that characterized blacks as lazy, selfish, and unfit for leadership. The promulgation of such stereotypes is not surprising since they reflected mainstream white American culture and thought during the early twentieth century. It does, however, contrast with BSA national leaders’ inclusive rhetoric about the organization. BSA sources and child development theory argued that boys’ character would be deformed by associating with the wrong people, so officials’ use of anti-Scouts suggested that members should avoid all intimate contact with these corrupting types.

BSA leaders’ frequent invocation of the savage as an anti-Scout demonstrates their rejection of the aggressive virility that most gender historians insist was the dominant model of white manhood in early twentieth century American society. The savage was a skilled outdoorsman, but he was governed too heavily by his primitive instincts. He was incapable of the self-control, group cooperation, and scientific judgment needed for modern American society and work. BSA literature characterized the savage as inefficient, chaotic, untrustworthy, and unclean. Given the popular belief in Indian virility and self-reliance, BSA officials usually employed the general term savage instead of Indian when they wanted to criticize a particular masculine trait as excessive. Most of the organization’s leaders seemed to accept Hall’s recapitulation theory that preadolescent boys of advanced races passed through a savage stage of development as they evolved into a higher form of manhood. Calling someone savage in this era was thus an insult of the target’s racial character and maturity rather than a positive marker.

BSA leaders had mixed feelings about idealized Indian manhood, but they consistently held up black manhood as an object of ridicule. Early BSA national publications never showed black Boy Scouts or heroic black figures. BSA national
leaders ignored the brave, strong Zulu scout warrior in Baden-Powell’s original British Scout manual as well as black American intellectual and cultural leaders, instead focusing on the stereotyped American Southern black and the ex-slave. Despite the era’s massive migration of black Americans to northeastern and midwestern cities for factory jobs and military service, BSA sources usually characterized blacks as rural people who had heavy Southern accents. BSA depictions suggested that blacks were incapable of balanced, modest manliness because of their faulty innate character. Officials implied that blacks’ laziness, stupidity, and lack of preparation limited them to manual labor jobs. Boy Scouts “played Negro” in a variety of ways, but always in juxtaposition to boys of advanced character. Boy and adult members across the country parodied black manhood in minstrel shows, fiction, sketches, poems, jokes, and songs. Even after the BSA national office’s Inter-Racial Service started actively recruiting blacks in 1925, these degrading spectacles continued.4

The depiction of black anti-Scouts permeated the organization from its highest echelons down to the troops. In the 1910s and 1920s, some Scout leaders began speeches with jokes about stereotyped black men who were stupid or cowardly. At the first BSA national training conference for local council Executives in 1920, guest speaker Dr. Herman H. Horne (a prominent author and New York University professor of philosophy and education) told a joke about a black boy and a white boy who were fighting. The white boy won both the physical contest and the exchange of verbal insults. Unable to keep up with the big names the white boy called him, the black boy exclaimed, “‘O! dem der t’ings you call me you is ‘em.’” The large audience laughed in response, as they did
at an earlier speaker’s joke. When a judge instructed a black defendant that he had sixty minutes to get out of town, the black man replied, “Judge, I hand you back fifty nine.”

Figure 4.1 *Boys’ Life* (Nov. 13, 1919): 26; and 1919 BSA Annual Report, 61.

Only three images of black boys (besides savage Africans in safari tales) appeared in a multitude of BSA national publications from 1910 to 1930, and they reflect the dominant BSA perspective, namely that black boys were too lazy and lacking in self-reliance and thrift to be good Scouts, good workers, or good men. The text accompanying the 1919 “pickaninny” sketch in Figure 4.1, for example, explained that
the black boy was unprepared for a future career and would fall into any job he was offered. The pickaninny, wearing ragged clothes and swinging from a tree, seems not to have evolved very far from his “monkey ancestors.” His lack of self-control and forethought and his parents’ negligence might leave him unemployed later and dependent on charity, swallowed up by life’s struggle for the survival of the fittest. BSA publications frequently depicted white boys conserving natural resources or camping efficiently, but the backwoods pickaninny ironically seemed lost outdoors.  

The occasional black character in published BSA fiction buttressed the notion that they were natural servants or lackeys to white men. White boys were cast as heroic Scouts, but blacks appeared in BSA safari fiction as savage Africans or guides for white explorers. A 1917 Boys’ Life story of “Smokey the nigger” described how a white Scout troop came to adopt a black orphan street boy as its troop mascot, equating blacks with the boys under twelve and the animals who served as the other Scout troop mascots in this era. Smokey was a newspaper boy who shared a big-city basement dwelling with a white newspaper boy named Jimmy, a drunken janitor, an Italian organ-grinder, and a monkey. Smokey and his white orphan pal Jimmy fled to the Adirondack Mountains to recover from a city-borne illness. The Adirondacks was an idyllic retreat for elite whites from the increasingly working class and foreign-seeming city. A local Scout troop included Jimmy as a full Scout member, but made Smokey the troop mascot. Smokey, who appreciated simply being a part of the white troop, seemed blissfully unaware of his subordinate status: “I’se just a li’l nigger, sir, but de all’s a moughty good bunch and de don’t mek no difference ‘cause I ain’t white.”
Local Scout practice echoed BSA national leaders’ beliefs about black men’s inferiority. Minstrel shows were probably the most important way Boy Scouts played Negro. Boy Scout campers put on frequent minstrel shows, usually consisting of skits that stereotyped blacks as stupid, superstitious, and lazy. Guided by BSA magazine articles with titles such as “Black Faces Make Green Backs,” a number of councils and troops used minstrel shows as public fundraisers. As late as 1931, BSA publications instructed members on how to run a proper minstrel show. A second common method for Boy Scouts to play Negro was singing black spirituals. White boys and men singing black spirituals tended to reinforce the notion that blacks were primarily fit for manual labor and were happy with their subordinate position in American society. BSA song books categorized “Negro songs” like “Old Black Joe” as “Old Quiet Songs” that were best used when “The Fire Burns Low.” Another favorite, “Carry Me Back to Old Virginny,” declared, “Carry me back to Old Virginny…There’s where I labored so long for old master, Day after day in that field of yellow corn; No place on earth do I love more sincerely.” Up to (and probably well beyond) 1930, minstrel shows and black spirituals were regular features of troop meetings and evening campfires. White local council Executives sang black spirituals at their national training conferences in the 1920s. American Scouts taught foreign boys how to play Negro at the World Jamborees, similar to their exportation of “playing Indian.” For example, Southern Scouts practiced “Mississippi cotton-field songs” to use at the 1929 global Scout gathering.8

The ways in which Boy Scouts played Negro contrasted with David Roediger’s characterization of blackface performances by white American working class men in the antebellum period. Roediger argued that the performers and audience held ambivalent
feelings about black character; as independent artisan work gave way to repetitious dead-end jobs, white working men both scorned and longed for the supposedly lazy and carefree lifestyle of stereotyped pre-industrial blacks. Boy Scout blackface performances and depictions of black men and savages, on the other hand, projected nothing but scorn. The days of yearning for the pre-industrial life had passed – being undisciplined and carefree were no longer positive or even ambivalent character attributes for modern American men. The lazy, inept Negro and the aggressive, reckless savage represented the opposites of Scouting’s balanced, modest manliness.9

“Self-determination” for the “White Boy Scouts of America”

BSA membership policies reflected administrators’ belief that black boys and men possessed inferior, imbalanced masculinity rather than the organization’s inclusive and universal rhetoric. Prior to 1925, subtle membership policies and programming decisions combined to exclude most non-whites. BSA national administrators quietly allowed local council leaders to exclude or discriminate against those undesirable socio-economic groups. The BSA Executive Board, faced with continued inquiries from local officials on race policy as well as several examples of successful black Scouting, formed a committee in 1914 to study the “Colored Question.” An Atlanta woman challenged administrators to extend Scouting to black boys since black soldiers were serving valiantly in the Great War, but national leaders continued to adhere to the policy of local self-determination. Some administrators felt that a separate but inferior, Scout-like organization should be established for black boys, while a few argued that blacks should be included in the BSA even if some white members quit in protest.
In one of its earliest major policy decisions, the Executive Board privately voted in 1910 that local councils could decide whether and how to admit black boys and Scoutmasters, and that the national office would reject applications from black troops in areas not covered by a local council. The national office justified the exclusion of blacks with the democratic principle of local council self-government or “self-determination” on “local matters.” The result of this policy was that relatively few councils allowed non-white boys to join and fewer still actively recruited them. Councils that admitted non-white boys often denied them full membership. A number of councils refused to allow black troops to wear the official uniform or attend camp. The Executive Board resolution’s second clause was particularly important in the 1910s, when many areas (especially the rural South where most blacks lived) were not yet under local council jurisdiction. Chartering black troops in areas not under council would have set an inclusive precedent, whereas the Executive Board’s decision had the opposite effect. The national office could have decided to reject the charter applications of any local council that excluded boys for reasons of race, class, or disability – but forcing local councils to admit non-whites would have made the national office appear “partisan” and probably have cost the BSA a significant number of white supporters and members.  

Since the BSA national office’s inclusive rhetoric hinted that councils might be forced to admit non-whites, local leaders periodically asked national headquarters for clarification on race policies. The Executive Board privately told inquiring white local council leaders that they could exclude non-whites or restrict their membership at will. For example, the spokesperson for a large independent organization of New Orleans Scouts offered to merge his troops into the BSA in September 1911 if they did not have
to accept black boys. He claimed that white parents would pull their boys out of Scouting if blacks were admitted. Chief Scout Executive James West replied that New Orleans Scout organizers certainly did not have to accept black boys and that BSA headquarters left such matters up to each local council.\textsuperscript{11}

In response to an inquiry from men in Jacksonville, Florida about admitting black members, the BSA Executive Board resolved in December 1914 that “the time had come for a more definite handling of this problem.” The Board voted against raising the issue before the entire National Council at the next annual meeting, since it felt that “such a course would be unwise and that the problem should be worked out by the special committee and the Executive Board prior to the Annual Meeting if possible.” The Board formed a special committee to quietly study the matter, consisting of Charles Patrick Neill (an Economics professor specializing in industrial arbitration who had served as Theodore Roosevelt’s and Taft’s Commissioner of Labor), Benjamin Lewis Dulaney (a leading financier of East Tennessee and West Virginia railroads, coal mining, steel production, and banking), businessman F.L. Seely, Mortimer Schiff (President of Sears, Roebuck and Company), and John Sherman Hoyt (a New York financier of railroads and manufacturing). The makeup of the committee suggests that the Board saw the possible inclusion of blacks in Scouting in terms of creating a better industrial labor force. The Executive Board discussed the “Colored Question” at five meetings in 1915, but it failed to make any substantial progress. The original chairman of the committee quit; further committee deliberation stalled, supposedly due to the new chairman’s busy schedule. Despite the overall Board’s urging that the committee make a report soon, no actions were taken beyond the continued adherence to the policy of local council self-
determination. The lack of definitive results suggests that the members of the special committee disagreed about the proper role of African-Americans in Scouting or at least the best way to approach the issue.12

Several important arguments in support of black Scouting came to the attention of the BSA Executive Board during World War I. By January 1918, the Executive Board had learned that the Louisville, Kentucky council “was experimenting with a plan for solving the Negro question as it related to the Scout Movement, the plan having been worked out entirely upon the initiative and under the direction of that local council.” White Louisville council leaders had begun actively recruiting black boys into segregated troops. The council established a separate black camp and office. Surprisingly, white Scouts and the local community came to accept the black troops.13

In an April 1918 letter to James West, Rosa Lowe of the Anti-Tuberculosis Association in Atlanta attempted to shift the terms of the Scout race debate from local white council self-determination to manly patriotism, fairness, and public health. She argued that Scouting should be extended to black boys since black men were serving valiantly in the U.S. Army. She argued that it was hard to explain to black parents why their boys could not be Scouts when their older sons and husbands wore the same Army uniform as whites. Lowe’s letter equated Scouting and military service as markers of full male citizenship. Perhaps playing to white fears, Lowe suggested that black boys needed Scouting’s recreational opportunities twice as badly as white boys to improve their health and help fight tuberculosis. Public health for kids was a cause on which almost all progressive reformers and youth workers could agree because it served the broader community and had a scientific basis and clear goals.14
A letter from the Executive Secretary of the National Committee of Patriotic Societies appeared to spur West to action on Lowe’s letter. W.M. Lewis told West that German propagandists were making headway with Southern blacks by arguing that they were being conscripted at a rate ten times their portion of the population in an effort to kill off the black race. According to Lewis, German propagandists had convinced black Americans that Germany invaded Belgium to punish them for treating blacks cruelly in the Congo. Lewis also claimed that the Germans promised to give blacks Ford cars if they did not help America’s war effort. Lewis suggested that speakers be arranged to refute this German propaganda and asked if BSA officials had additional ideas. West asked Henry S. Atwater of the Committee on Public Information, the federal agency for war propaganda, to investigate Lewis’s assertions and take vigorous action if they were true. West wrote Lowe back and promised to bring her concerns up with the Executive Board. He distributed Lowe’s letter to some key BSA leaders for their input. West agreed with National Scout Commissioner Dan Beard that while Southern whites “live in constant dread of an uprising” by blacks, the BSA could not take on race tensions single-handedly. West suggested to Beard that the BSA assist the Committee on Public Information with countering the German propaganda pitched to Southern blacks.15

BSA national leaders responded to Lowe’s request in a variety of ways. Edgar M. Robinson and G. Barrett Rich both sided with Lowe. Robinson, who had been the driving force behind the invigoration of Boyce’s BSA in 1910 as the organization’s first director, wrote West, “I feel that an unjust thing is being done and also a very unscoutlike thing in denying the privileges of the organization to negro boys. I feel the Scout principles are violated when an Atlanta Scout Council is organized which does not fully
represent the colored people.” He argued that racial discrimination was no different than religious discrimination, which BSA administrators had worked hard to prevent in its local branches. Robinson suggested that the BSA admit black boys, perhaps in a separate branch, and let the white boys quit if they so chose.\textsuperscript{16}

Bolton Smith, a prominent Memphis investment banker, argued in his May 1918 letter to Lowe that the policy of local self-determination ensured black boys’ safety. He stated that the issue was more complicated than she realized, since it was unfair to ask white boys to stand up for positions on which their elders were so divided. He argued that as long as whites tolerated lynching of blacks, there was little hope of them accepting blacks in Scouting. Smith suggested that the black YMCA create a separate, Scout-like branch with a simple uniform and different insignia. He stated that this would save black boys from white abuse and would not prompt any white boys to quit Scouting. Smith concluded that the BSA, under present social conditions, could not help black boys.\textsuperscript{17}

Drawing on Robinson’s and Rich’s letters, Rosa Lowe’s response to James West criticized the discrepancy between the war for democracy and the BSA’s exclusive policies: “The very name of your organization is a misnomer as long as the colored boy is excluded and should be called, ‘White Boy Scouts of America.’ By excluding the colored boys the nation is perpetuating undemocratic principles though the world is fighting today for Democracy.” Lowe noted that the federal government had ignored white opposition to recruiting blacks for the Army and that Southern whites applauded uniformed black soldiers parading in Atlanta. She concluded that blacks might accept a separate Scout organization and uniform, but that it should not be necessary since “they are boys of America, too.”\textsuperscript{18}
As of June 1918, James West and the Executive Board appeared to agree with Bolton Smith’s plan to create a separate organization for black boys that would have been a shadow of white Boy Scouting. The black organization would have a simple badge instead of a full uniform. It would leave the word “Scout” out of its name, since only white males were deemed capable of the advanced character and leading citizenship implied by the term. The black organization would take on less extensive service activities than regular Scouts. The Board voted that Thomas Jesse Jones of the Phelps-Stokes Fund and the federal Bureau of Education be hired to lead a special committee to work out a broad comprehensive solution to the issue. They expressed hope that President Wilson himself might help resolve the Scout race issue. Despite these plans and the Board’s admission that it was obligated to work out the problem “without delay,” it again stalled on the extension of Scouting to blacks.¹⁹

**Soldier-Scoutmasters**

In 1919, the national office of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People [NAACP] threatened to file a discrimination suit or raise a public outcry against the BSA if it did not force Southern councils to admit blacks into the organization as equals – asserting that black boys were as capable as white boys of Scout training in modest, balanced manliness and leading citizenship. The threat of a legal suit or public exposure carried some weight because BSA national administrators continued to boast about the organization’s inclusiveness while quietly allowing local white officials to exclude blacks or restrict their membership privileges. NAACP national officials formulated three arguments in their effort to break Scouting’s race barrier. They asserted
that good white Christian men would not discriminate against blacks. They played on white fears by arguing that black boys needed Scouting’s drill and discipline more than white boys. NAACP national officials argued that admitting only those blacks who would accept segregated Scouting would attract cowardly men who lacked integrity and virility. BSA national leaders agreed that black boys could benefit from Scouting, but their insistence on segregated troops and allowing local whites to decide the ultimate fate of blacks in Scouting undercut the NAACP’s claim that blacks possessed equivalent character to whites and therefore had a right to Scout as equals. BSA national leaders’ black Scouting plan suggested that race problems in American society were caused by the inferior character and criminal tendencies of black boys and men rather than white prejudice and discriminatory laws and customs.

The NAACP’s August 1919 case focused on a black soldier, Thomas Stith, who had formed a black Scout troop in Rocky Mount, North Carolina upon his return from war service. Since there was no local Scout council, he requested and received the approval of a group of prominent local whites to start the black troop. The national Scout office granted Stith’s application. However, a white local council then formed, and promptly expelled Stith’s troop. New local Commissioner Thomas P. Allen wrote to the national office that white boy members disliked blacks wearing the BSA uniform and doing the same drill. He argued that the participation of Stith’s troop in the June fifth welcome home parade for American soldiers was offensive. One gets the sense that the local council was formed expressly to eliminate the black troop. James West informed Stith that his Scoutmaster’s commission had been a mistake and that he had to get the local council’s approval first.²⁰
The first of three approaches taken by the national NAACP to open the BSA to Southern blacks was to challenge the character of the local Scout Commissioner, who was also a Presbyterian minister. The national NAACP office wrote Allen, “I feel sure there must be some misrepresentation upon this matter and that it is impossible in the State of North Carolina that a minister of the Gospel could have taken a stand forbidding colored boys to have the same training as citizens as white boys.” The letter hinted at both the equality of all men in Jesus’s eyes and a Christian minister’s special duty to serve all people. Commissioner Allen failed to take the bait.\(^{21}\)

Mary White Ovington, the NAACP’s white co-founder and national Chairwoman, forced James West to meet with her by threatening to give the matter full publicity if he did not respond. At the resulting August twelfth meeting, West explained that Stith’s Scoutmaster commission had been a clerical error. Ovington questioned West about the official procedure for forming troops. West replied that a national BSA field worker evaluated the character of black Scoutmaster applicants, but then added that a committee of local white citizens decided whether or not a black troop could be organized. West was even vaguer on how white Scout troops were formed in the South – probably because they just had to fill out an application to be accepted. West argued that he could not force Southern whites to admit blacks because some had come to his office and threatened to quit the organization and burn their Scout paraphernalia at city hall if blacks were admitted. When Ovington responded that the best thing West could have done was to tell them to go ahead and quit, West replied that she was mistaken. At the conclusion of the meeting, Ovington requested a precise statement from West concerning the BSA’s policy of commissioning black \textit{and} white troops in the South. W.E.B. DuBois, the
Director of Publication and Research for the NAACP, agreed with Ovington that the dismissal of Stith’s black troop should receive full public exposure if not resolved satisfactorily. In their requests to BSA headquarters to reconsider the exclusion of Southern blacks from Scouting, NAACP leaders looked to manipulate BSA officials’ belief that blacks had inferior character. A draft letter from the NAACP national office to West argued that Southern blacks should be allowed to Scout because they needed drill and discipline as much if not more than did white boys. In a marked-out portion of the draft letter, the author took yet another approach – that the BSA’s race policies attracted black men of poor character. The author noted that the policy of requiring blacks to get the permission of Southern whites to form segregated Scout troops would make it “very difficult to secure colored men of the highest character, of the virile personality and of courage to act as scout masters.” The author argued that a worthy black Scoutmaster needed to be “a man of integrity, of courage, unwilling to stoop to anything underhanded, one who seeks always to gain his ends by straightforward means.” As later statements and policies demonstrated, most BSA national leaders preferred that black men be passive and subordinate to white men instead of brave and virile.

West sent a letter to Ovington that included an anonymous five-page memo clarifying the BSA national office’s plan for black Scouting. The memo had been drawn up the previous year in response to another matter, probably the issues raised by Rosa Lowe and W.M. Lewis. The memo’s author stated that the plan reflected correspondence and interviews with leading white and black men from Atlanta, Louisville, Memphis, Washington, and New York. The memo argued that, due to the country’s need for
trained soldiers to fight in the Great War and for the resolution of the “many perplexing problems of race contacts” that would likely follow the war, black boys needed Scouting even more than white boys. The author added that black boys especially needed Scouting because they “have not only been left to follow their own natural impulses in seeking pleasure but that they are frequently surrounded with the most debasing influences.” The memo suggested that race conflict could be decreased or even eliminated by the cooperation of white and black Scouts and the mutual understanding that would result. This plan involved a new argument that the BSA could lead rather than follow white public opinion on integrating blacks into mainstream white society.24

Ironically, the BSA memo suggested that black Scouts be held to a much higher and more arbitrary standard of character than white Scouts. The author noted that uniforms should be withheld until a black troop demonstrated the ability to live up to the Scout Laws and Oath. White Scouts could wear the uniform after passing the easy Tenderfoot tests, namely reciting the Scout Oath and Laws. The author’s call for the organization of a small committee of black men who were “known for their good judgment and cooperative attitude toward the white people” in each test city to support the effort implied that docility was a character quality that blacks would have to demonstrate before white officials would admit them or give them Scout uniforms.25

The memo demonstrated that BSA national leaders did not share the egalitarian beliefs of Rosa Lowe, Edgar Robinson, and the NAACP. It suggested that blacks should be included as a war expediency rather than as a democratic right or because black males possessed equal character capacity to whites: “It should be explained to the white boys that the extension of the organization to the colored boys is based on patriotic principles
which are approved by the Federal and State governments and that no infringement on
the best conventions of the South is contemplated.” The memo declared that a white
Southern man should be employed by the BSA to encourage local councils to consider
admitting black boys. The NAACP sought a black field worker who could organize
black troops without the consent of local whites. The Southern leaders consulted by the
memo’s author responded that two or three select cities, starting with Atlanta, should
quietly set up one or two black troops to demonstrate their potential. Their success might
persuade other white Scout officials to admit blacks, but local councils would not be
forced to do so. Despite its limitations, the plan would have been the first step taken by
BSA national leaders to encourage the recruitment of non-whites. The active extension
of Scouting to blacks, however, took eight more years to materialize.26

Discussions about black Scouting at the first national training conference for local
council Executives in 1920 revealed that a number of vocal national office staff and local
council Executives seemed to agree that Scouting should not formally exclude blacks, but
that local councils should not be forced to accept them. Given the rise of postwar labor
conflict and race riots across the country and the reemergence of groups like the Ku Klux
Klan, BSA leaders’ reluctance to take aggressive action on the race issue was
unsurprising. A guest speaker at the 1920 conference, Dr. Herman H. Horne, struck a
chord when he argued, “We live in the country, and we are all Americans. It is the Boy
Scouts of America. I do not believe it is the white Scouts of America.” The audience
awarded “Great applause” to Dr. Horne for his statement, but officials seemed divided on
how black Scouting might work in practice. Building on Horne’s statement and echoing
Rosa Low and Edgar M. Robinson, Stanley Harris, a BSA Field Officer stationed in
Chattanooga, argued that all boys had a right to Scout. Several local council Executives confirmed that the hard part was not finding enough blacks interested in becoming Scouts, but rather the resistance of local whites to their inclusion. A Louisville council representative suggested focusing on winning over white boy members instead of waiting on the majority of white adults to accept the plan. Chairman Horne remarked, “There is nobody here who says that because he is a negro he cannot be a boy Scout.” Despite the chorus of No’s from the audience, Horne stated that the issue of if and how blacks should be included in Scouting needed further study to be resolved. After an intermission, several local council Executives pointed out that black Scouting was related to issues concerning white immigrant and Japanese-American boys. Dr. Horne reiterated that the national office left such decisions up to each local council. He praised “the inherent wisdom of the boy scout management, in recognizing the principle of local self-government, and to use a world-phrase now, ‘self-determination’ in this matter of race troops” and quickly moved on to the next item on the agenda. Horne seemed to be equating the BSA’s policy of letting white local councils exclude non-whites with Woodrow Wilson’s advocacy of minority group self-determination, suggesting that Southern whites were the persecuted minority instead of excluded blacks.²⁷

**The Louisville compromise on the “right sort of colored boy and man”**

In the second half of the 1920s, a few exceptional white Southern Scout officials drew reluctant BSA national leaders into developing a recruitment program for black boys in the South. Bolton Smith, the Memphis investment banker who had been appointed by the rest of the Executive Board in 1921 to direct a study on the black
Scouting issue, emerged as the leading proponent. In a January 1925 letter requesting funding for his plan from the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial foundation [LSRM], Smith argued that the strictly segregated Scouting plan being used in “Louisville is a good illustration of what can be done” in “helping to develop the right sort of colored boy and man.” The statement begs the question: What did BSA national leaders see as the right sort of black male? Most seemed to hold to the belief that black boys and men had innately inferior character, and they hoped that Scouting could train them to be loyal, efficient worker-citizens. BSA national leaders’ plan for black Scouting represented a diminutive, simplified version of Scout manhood and civic teachings. The BSA’s Inter-Racial Service, started in 1926 with LSRM funding, worked to persuade Southern council leaders to emulate the Louisville, Kentucky segregated Scouting model. BSA national leaders insisted that black Scoutmaster applicants needed to undergo extensive training before receiving troop commissions, which was not required of white Scoutmasters.28

Bolton Smith’s priorities and methods resembled Booker T. Washington’s 1895 Atlanta compromise speech. In a 1921 article in The Outlook, Smith voiced his support for President Harding’s recent speech that the lynching of blacks must be stopped and that only “fit” blacks should be allowed to vote. Smith argued, “If the Fifteenth Amendment were not in the way, I think many Southern States would be prepared now to adopt a mixed education and property qualification for the negro, but as things are, the South must just be allowed to do the best it can.” Smith warned that any insistence by black leaders on full enfranchisement would be sure to exacerbate the lynching trend and delay the improvement of black education and economic opportunities, which he considered the most important goals.29
Smith argued that letting blacks join Scouting in segregated units, if it could be done gradually and voluntarily by local white Southern officials, was the best way to improve the tense relations between the races. In his January 1925 grant request to the LSRM, he stated that the differences between blacks and whites were so great that there would be little intermarriage or “mingling of blood” for generations. He argued that, even though he eventually hoped for “at least potential equality and definite sympathy and kindliness of attitude,” considerable segregation was advisable under present conditions. He speculated that other Southern councils might be persuaded to copy the Louisville model if the right white man gently persuaded local leaders to quietly start one or two black troops. Smith recommended Stanley Harris, the BSA Assistant National Field Director for the southeastern Region Five since 1917, who had argued at the 1920 Executives conference that all black boys had a right to Scout. Smith suggested that having blacks in Scout uniforms would prompt Southern whites to give them a modicum of respect and be kinder to them, just as black soldiers’ uniforms had done in World War I. He stated that black Scouting “will perhaps keep a larger number of negroes in the south. Besides, the negro Scout will rarely, if ever, be guilty of any of those acts which bring about racial conflict.” Smith concluded, “The Boy Scout movement seems to me to be the most effective method by which contact between the negro and white ideals of civilized conduct can be established.”

Leonard Outhwaite, an LSRM representative working on the BSA grant request, questioned Stanley Harris in February 1925 whether it would be better to have an independent, Scout-like organization for blacks with a different name, uniform, and program. Harris replied that BSA national leaders had considered that idea, but felt that
it was inadvisable since some black leaders would criticize it as racial discrimination. He added that there were already thousands of black Scouts [outside the South] and that the BSA had worked hard in the past to eliminate independent Scout organizations so that it could control the quality of American Scout programming. LSRM official Beardsley Ruml pressed Bolton Smith on how black intellectual leaders might respond to segregated BSA troops and if they should be consulted. Smith replied in March that black leaders’ criticisms might be avoided if the recruitment plan was superficially extended to include other regions of the country and other minority groups, “It seems to me we had better call the proposed service one to be rendered to ‘under privileged boys.’ In my region there are the Arcadian or French families…which require special effort to become interested in Scouting for their boys…though the underprivileged boys we have in mind are the negro boys above all as presenting a more serious problem than any other boys.” Smith blurred the line between two distinct recruitment problems: those socio-economic groups which were underrepresented in Scouting because they were not interested in joining, and those groups which were actually clamoring to get in but were excluded by local Scout officials.31

Smith and Harris’s plan to recruit blacks into the BSA almost failed. Smith tried to use his new position as BSA Vice-President to convince the rest of the Executive Board to promote segregated Scouting based on the Louisville model, but they rejected his plan in April 1925. The Board instructed Smith to stop the grant application process since it was an “inopportune” time to pursue the project. Smith apparently persisted. A separate black BSA branch or a separate Scout-like organization for blacks nearly emerged. A November 1925 bulletin sent to local council Executives mentioned that a
separate uniform for blacks was in the works. The BSA National Council resolved at its April 1926 annual meeting to develop a separate, less-extensive, Scout-like organization for black boys with a different name and uniform but the “same ideals.” At first, LSRM representative Outhwaite was unconvinced by Harris and Smith’s arguments for including blacks in the BSA. Outhwaite solicited the opinions of several leading race and education experts in February 1926 before finally approving funding to help recruit blacks into segregated BSA troops. The LSRM awarded the BSA a forty thousand dollar grant to use between 1926 and 1928 to get an Inter-Racial Service [IRS] underway.\(^{32}\)

Smith, Harris, and the LSRM grant offer seemed to drag the rest of the BSA Executive Board into agreeing to start the IRS; however, the idea that the national office would actively promote black Scouting to local council leaders was less far-fetched in 1926 than it was in 1920 or 1911. Labor strife and race riots which had plagued the country in the immediate post-war years had declined noticeably. 1921 and 1924 federal laws cut off most of the “threatening” flow of immigration from Asia, Africa, and southern and eastern Europe. As Harris pointed out to Outhwaite, the time was ripe for expanding black Scout recruitment because of the good feelings after the resolution of the Great War and the waning of the Second Ku Klux Klan. The economy was booming and Republicans dominated the White House with pro-business agendas. International peace and business prosperity was the order of the day. New social science theories emphasizing environmental influences had cast a shadow of doubt on the theories of racial recapitulation and racial-biological determination of character.\(^{33}\)

The IRS’s resulting “Louisville Plan” represented a compromise between the forced integration of Scouting advocated by the NAACP in 1919 and developing a
separate, diminutive, Scout-like organization for blacks. A BSA committee formed to
advise the IRS voted unanimously in May 1926 to continue allowing each local white
council to decide whether and how to include black boys. Stanley Harris, the first
director of the IRS, explained in a 1969 interview that Louisville Scout leaders’ proposal
that each council be forced to recruit blacks was rejected. The plan that IRS staff came to
promote was based largely on Stanley Harris’s March 1925 study of the Louisville Scout
council’s methods. Black Scouting should be started slowly and with no publicity.
Interested councils should begin with only one or two black troops to demonstrate that
they could be successful before trying to expand. Blacks should be in segregated troops
with black leaders. Black should have completely separate meetings, Courts of Honor,
camps, and training sessions: “The activities of the colored department parallel those of
the white but are kept distinctly separate…to avoid any possible clash between white and
colored scouts.” IRS staff told local council leaders that it was essential to enlist good
institutional sponsors for black troops, usually black churches. A white or black man
might be the immediate supervisor of black Scouting, serving as a special assistant to the
white local council Executive. White council leaders should select cooperative black
men for an advisory council, but final authority on black Scouting would rest with the
white Executive and the white local council. A separate black headquarters should be
established in the black area of town, since blacks might be “reluctant” to visit the white
council office.34

IRS staffers argued that having black boys Scout would train them to be loyal and
efficient laborers, reduce juvenile delinquency, and curtail Southern sanitation and
disease problems. White IRS men suggested that black boys’ training should stress the
Scout Laws on being trustworthy, loyal, courteous, obedient, cheerful, and clean. White Scout leaders rarely spoke of black boys developing bravery, reverence, self-reliance, or leadership. Black and immigrant boys were the social resources which native-born white Scouts would learn to direct for the greater good and industrial growth. Harris happily reported to the Inter-Racial Committee in 1927 that the black boy who Scouted was very much improved “as a laborer. He is more industrious, more courteous, and generally more efficient.” He added that teaching black Scouts cleanliness and sanitation would help solve Southern disease problems. The 1927 IRS annual report’s “Compelling Reasons for Pushing Forward” with black recruitment emphasized Scouting’s ability to transform them from state liabilities to labor assets, “To be the most useful to his community, each individual must be taught the dignity of labor, the importance of industry and the obligation to do well each task he undertakes. [Scouting] seems ideal as an agent to supplement the school in giving the Negro youth these fundamental virtues.”

The 1928 IRS report explained that crime cost the nation ten billion dollars annually and that eighty-five percent of it was done by blacks and immigrants. Intriguingly, the author argued, “Students agree that these people are no more criminal in nature and intent than native-born whites and that the large amount of crime among them is due to environment and lack of moral training. Scouting does reduce crime and would undoubtedly improve the boy’s surroundings.” This statement represented a modest change from those made by BSA leaders in the 1910s. The author suggested that bad environment rather than biological inferiority caused delinquency. This opened the possibility that black boys’ characters could be improved, but only if they were isolated from their parents and cultures and taught by trained men outdoors.
It is difficult to pinpoint whether white IRS leaders believed blacks were innately inferior, or if they consciously adopted condescending rhetoric to improve their chances of convincing white audiences to allow blacks to Scout. Bolton Smith explained to local council Executives at their 1928 national training conference that development of Scouting among blacks was comparable to the civilizing work of foreign missionaries:

We send missionaries to Africa but here at home each one of us may become a missionary to the African in our midst…No religious man can deny this program to the boys of any race without hearing His master say: ‘It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck and he were cast in to the sea than that he should offend one of these little ones.’ And that he meant these little ones of the colored race and of other races, is proven by the fact that we send missionaries to these lands and races.

He argued that it was safe to allow blacks to Scout since white Americans were such an unquestioned majority and had a more cohesive culture than blacks. Smith and Harris’s annual report that year characterized the decision of Chattanooga’s white council Executive to allow blacks to organize troops to be “[s]omething like a Christmas present to the negroes at Christmas time.” The statement recalled white masters giving black slaves Christmas presents to stem their resentment and to encourage them to continue working faithfully without rebelling.36

BSA national leaders strongly encouraged councils starting a black troop to require its black leader to undergo intensive training in Scouting before granting a Scoutmaster commission and troop charter. BSA administrators had never required white Scoutmasters to undergo formal training. The most frequent justification given by BSA national leaders was that it was difficult to find worthy black men, so they had to be trained before being ready to lead a Scout troop. Bolton Smith argued in a 1928 letter to LSRM officials that the insufficient support and leadership provided by institutional
sponsors for black troops made extensive training and ongoing supervision of black Scoutmasters necessary: “Therefore, we must not only instruct these Scoutmasters but we must keep track of their work and patch it up where it fails.” Black institutions such as churches and colleges had already demonstrated their eager and active support for Scout troops, so it was unclear if Smith doubted black Scoutmasters’ and institutional sponsors’ ability to guide Scouting, or if he exaggerated the situation to ensure LSRM approval and continued financial support for training black Scoutmasters.  

The IRS began running segregated training schools for black Scoutmasters in 1926 to meet the “deficit” in black character and sponsorship and to deflect white prejudice. The Hampton Institute in Virginia and the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama hosted early black training sessions; other Southern black colleges soon followed suit. Many attendees at these early training sessions were studying to be school teachers, so educated, lower-middle class black men often led the early black troops. Some local councils ran their own black Scoutmaster training sessions. The General Education Board, a philanthropy led by John D. Rockefeller, Jr., actively supported black Scoutmaster training and the expansion of black troops. The General Education Board offered thirty-five local councils five hundred dollars each to help pay the salary of a black administrator for new black troops. Thirty-three of them eventually accepted. The General Education Board also paid the expenses of black teachers to attend Scoutmaster training, if they were nominated by officials at the state level. The policy of requiring black Scoutmasters to undergo extensive training held at least through 1936.  

White IRS leaders suggested that the character a man needed to direct a local council’s black division was less than that needed to direct white Scouting and the overall
IRS Director Stanley Harris characterized R.M. Wheat, the white Louisville administrator in charge of black Scouting, as “limited enough in ability to make his success in work with white boys very questionable, yet strong enough to be of undoubted service [in heading the black Scout branch]. He is much too much a super-Scoutmaster to be a large executive under any conditions.” Harris suggested that Wheat made a good leader for black Scouting because he was a “boys’ man,” implying that Wheat was not enough of a “man’s man” to be an effective Executive in charge of the overall council and white Scouting. It is possible that Harris was trying to deflect the potential criticism that having a good white man like Wheat lead the black division came at the expense of white Louisville Scouts who would not benefit from Wheat’s leadership. Harris added that black Scouting in other councils might be directed by a trained black who possessed unusually high executive ability for his race. It went without saying that many white BSA officials at the time deemed black men incapable of directing white Scouting.39

The creation of the IRS and its efforts to encourage Southern councils to admit blacks marked a significant step in national leaders’ efforts to diversity the organization, but the higher echelons of Scout character status and leadership remained closed to them. Although the IRS helped increase black Scout membership, its segregation plan shuffled black boys into an almost-hidden, inferior branch in which Scouting was a very different experience than it was for most members. Instead of opening adult-like civic and leadership opportunities as it did for white boys, Scouting in the 1920s in some ways only reinforced black members’ inferior status. One might wonder why blacks persisted in joining the organization, given these limitations.
Black Scouting and leading citizenship

The fact that black leaders named their black Scout troops and divisions after heroes like Frederick Douglass and Crispus Attucks suggests that their work to overcome Scouting obstacles should be viewed as part of black Americans’ broad and long labors to achieve full citizenship. Especially in the early twentieth century, being a Boy Scout carried significant status in the eyes of the white American public, government officials, military personnel, and employers. Much like the military uniform it resembled, the Scout uniform signified that the wearer possessed balanced, modest manliness and the capacity to be a selfless worker and leading citizen. Disagreements among black leaders on if black boys should join segregated Scout troops or insist on integrated troops mirrored the larger debate amongst the black American community on the best way to advance blacks’ conditions and status. Black community leaders’ efforts to increase the number of black Scouts and some black leaders’ willingness to accept segregation and restrictions on uniforms and camping helped convince white BSA national and local officials to admit them. Scouting with restrictions represented a half-way step to demonstrating balanced manly character and civic duty that many black boys and men eagerly grasped. Those blacks who achieved Scout membership encountered an array of white responses as well as continued obstacles in the form of high costs and discrimination in pool, camp, and uniform access. Despite its limitations, black Scouting grew gradually in the South and around the country.40

Many black rights’ advocates such as W.E.B. DuBois encouraged black Scouting, but not all agreed on the terms under which BSA membership was acceptable. With the IRS quietly underway, the BSA national office received a letter in May 1926 from the
black Community League of Ogden, Utah. The League complained that two top-ranked, veteran black Scouts bearing recommendation letters and transfer papers from their former Scoutmaster had been expelled from their new troop. According to BSA policy, a Scoutmaster was supposed to automatically accept boys transferred from other troops who had these forms and credentials. A white Scout’s father, however, had complained to the Scoutmaster, “[A]s long as there were ‘niggers’ in Troop 2, his boys could not belong.” The Chief of Police and the juvenile court judge took the father’s letter to a meeting of local officials, at which it was unanimously decided that the black boys had to leave, but that a new segregated troop might be formed for them. W.E. Bailey, speaking for the local black Community League, accepted the terms, “[a]s hampered freedom is by far better than unhampered bondage.” The compromise stalled, however, upon local blacks’ demand for an apology from white BSA local officials to the boys and to the race for humiliating and insulting them. After complaining to BSA national leaders about this case of racial discrimination, Bailey wrote to NAACP headquarters for advice.41

National NAACP officials wanted to push racial integration and black rights regarding Scouting faster than did some local black leaders. The NAACP national Assistant Secretary replied that Bailey should reject the white community leaders’ offer and demand an integrated troop. NAACP officials also suggested that Bailey form a local chapter of the NAACP to protect the rights of area blacks. Bailey responded that he wanted to wait until the Boy Scout matter was resolved before considering the formation of a local NAACP branch, but the NAACP Director of Branches argued that the Scout situation made now the best time to organize there. Bailey might have assumed that forming an NAACP chapter would antagonize white community leaders and eliminate
the possibility of black boys being able to Scout in Ogden altogether. NAACP national leaders fired off a letter to BSA national headquarters, reiterating the demand for an apology from white BSA officials and stating that the white boys who objected to the black boys in the troop should be offered the “opportunity of resigning.” The Director of the BSA’s national Troop Service Department wrote Bailey that they were looking into the matter, but the available historical record is unclear as to the result of the affair.  

White Boy Scouts’ responses to the growing number of black Scouts ranged from outright resistance to emphatic support. There appeared to be some truth to the frequent claim made by Southern Scout leaders that some white boys refused to admit blacks into their troops and patrols. Other white boys, even in the South, facilitated black inclusion by giving their used uniforms to black boys or teaching them Scout skills. Such gestures, though, may have only reinforced black subordination in the BSA’s hierarchy of character. White Scouts may have seen helping black Scouts as similar to giving charity to the poor, handicapped, and females – groups who needed rather than provided service. Some white Boy Scouts acted courageously to include new black members, even stepping across racial segregation lines drawn by local adults. When the first group of black Louisville Scouts earned their Eagle ranks in 1925, eleven local white Eagle Scouts came of their own accord to the black Court of Honor ceremony to congratulate them and wish them well. In Mississippi, black and white adults agreed that new black Scouts should not be allowed to purchase or wear uniforms. Local white Boy Scouts defied this decision by buying uniforms for the black boys. Five white Miami Boy Scouts challenged their local council Executive in 1928 on why there were no black troops, while white Atlanta Scouts offered to help organize black troops.
White adults who vehemently opposed black participation in the BSA reinforced the notion that Scouting was a key marker of advanced character and leading citizenship, thus pushing blacks to demand inclusion into the organization. IRS Director Stanley Harris informed LSRM officials in 1927 that white adults with whom he had spoken who opposed black Scouting “admit they would like to keep the Negro down where they can control him and scout training and organization are detrimental to their keeping him down in the sense they want to treat him, as a brute.” Local Ku Klux Klan chapters intervened against black Scouting, particularly black troop camping. A Pennsylvania Klan burned a fiery cross and fired shots to break up a 1924 encampment of black Scouts. The fact that black boys and men persisted under the real threat of violent reprisal reveals how crucial they saw Boy Scouting to be to their masculine and civic status.44

Even if a council admitted them, black Scouts still faced great obstacles to advancing through the program. The costs of Scouting and racial discrimination in access to swimming pools, camps, and Scout uniforms blocked many blacks from opportunities for leadership, status, and adventure made available to most white boy members. Some local Southern councils subsidized registration fees for black troops, but this only reinforced the assumption that blacks could not be self-reliant or thrifty. Few Southern blacks had open access to public or BSA swimming or camping facilities, making it difficult for them to participate fully in Scouting or pass rank tests. The swimming test – for which no exemptions were allowed by the national office – probably barred many black Scouts from First Class and advanced ranks. IRS officials recognized this problem, but did not suggest any exemptions or replacement tests to fix it. Pool discrimination prevented black Scouts in areas such as Richmond, Virginia from
advancing as late as the 1950s. Segregated Scout camping or the outright exclusion of blacks from camps served as an additional barrier to their progress. Camp was the year’s most intensive period of instruction for passing Scout tests and badges. Attendees had access to special instructors, often for the only time each year. Moreover, the entire Scout program was geared toward the summer camp apex. Not being allowed to camp probably discouraged many blacks boys from advancing or even wanting to join.45

Both black and white Scout officials and boys saw the uniform issue as particularly important. Many white Americans, especially in the South, resented blacks wearing military-like dress. The IRS instructed local councils starting black troops to withhold uniforms until local whites approved. IRS Director Stanley Harris suggested in 1925 that local councils even delay the approval of black troop charters until they were fully accepted by whites. He explained that black troops must understand that there would be no mixing of races and that they should not expect recognition from white Scouts. Local council uniform policy varied, but most Southern councils restricted black members’ access to uniforms in the 1920s and beyond. These conditions required blacks to submit to the stigma of inferiority carried by troop segregation and the lack of official charters and uniforms.46

The 1928 IRS annual report offered several justifications for withholding uniforms from blacks. The editors of that year’s overall BSA Annual Report to Congress removed the following sentence from the statement submitted by IRS officials:

“[N]egroes have a tendency to parade and the use of the uniform would encourage parade, hence, delay its use until the spirit of Scouting is developed.” The final version of the report retained the IRS’s statement that withholding the uniform ensured the safety
of black boys, who would bear the brunt of any white opposition to their presence in Scouting. The published report concluded that not allowing uniforms might also encourage more blacks to join, since most were too poor to buy them if they were required. Administrators made similar rhetorical claims about attracting working class boys by not requiring them to have uniforms, but the flood of BSA publications and speeches on the centrality of the uniform to building modest manliness and troop camaraderie made it obvious that those lacking uniforms were inferior members or perhaps not real members at all. BSA leaders argued that the uniform gave a Scout status and authority in the eyes of the public and fellow members.\footnote{Pool, camp, and uniform discrimination hampered black boys’ progress to First Class and advanced ranks and their many privileges, literally marking them as Second Class Scouts. Merit badges were usually reserved for First Class Scouts, so if a boy did not have access to a swimming area then he could never start on merit badges. Merit badges offered boys the chance to explore new areas of interest and develop special skills and knowledge. The ties between community leaders, government agencies, and the BSA created unique leadership opportunities for select Scouts, such as serving as the Honor Guard for the town mayor in a parade or even meeting the U.S. President. Boy Scouts also competed for prestigious awards, scholarships, and grand adventures such as African safaris and Arctic expeditions. The catch was that BSA leaders always gave these honors to highly decorated Scouts. Black boys barred by pool and camp discrimination from advancing in Scout rank could rarely compete for such awards. Without these incentives, Scouting probably was of less interest to them.}
The combination of IRS efforts, some cooperation by whites, and blacks’ determination to participate in the organization gradually expanded black Scouting. Black Scouting met particular resistance in the areas where the percentage of blacks in the total population was greatest: Mississippi, South Carolina, and Georgia. Southern Illinois and Indiana, where the second Ku Klux Klan flourished in the 1920s, also opposed black Scouting. By 1930, though, every Southern state had at least one black troop. If they had not already developed segregated Scouting, most local councils fell in step with the Louisville Plan. While some northern and western black boys joined integrated troops, racial prejudice and the institutional sponsor requirement combined to segregate the majority of black Scouts. The IRS created some new black BSA troops by admitting existing unofficial black units. The IRS asked unofficial black troops either to become official ones under the control of the white local BSA council or to desist in referring to themselves as Scouts, leaving little room for blacks who wanted to Scout but rejected the restrictions placed on their membership privileges by white officials.48

IRS recruitment of Southern blacks was a brave and forward-looking effort in an era of rampant racial discrimination, but the ways in which blacks were admitted to the organization tended to reinforce their second-class manhood and citizenship instead of challenging the BSA’s racial hierarchy of manly character. Although the Depression facilitated somewhat greater awareness of the obstacles that blacks faced in America and in Scouting, it created little change in BSA policies. In 1931, James West upheld white local council leaders’ right to exclude or segregate blacks, claiming that it was impossible to do otherwise. Scouts were racially segregated in some areas, even outside of the South, into the 1960s. Some councils continued to restrict blacks’ access to uniforms and
camping. Despite these obstacles, the number of blacks in the BSA increased to one hundred thousand by 1944. Blacks were still very underrepresented in Scouting relative to their portion of the population, but the 1944 figure marked a major improvement. Closing black schools after the Supreme Court’s 1954 Brown vs. Board of Education decision, however, undercut black Scouting since they had sponsored many troops.\textsuperscript{49}

\textbf{Native American Scouting}

Native Americans, as an object of Boy Scout evolutionary and historical ideology as well as a potential membership source, experienced a unique relationship with the organization. Most BSA national leaders seemed to follow racial recapitulation theory’s claim that white boys needed to relive a bit of the primitive Indian stage in order to evolve properly into advanced manhood. BSA leaders welcomed Native American adults to teach Indian lore to white Boy Scouts to add authenticity to this process. An increasing number of Native American men taught Indian lore to Boy Scouts to connect Native American men to white Boy Scout character ideals and to promote awareness of Native American cultures and rights. Some Native American men argued that Boy Scouting might also help Native American boys retain their ancestors’ cultural traditions. Racial recapitulation theory, however, decreed that Native American boys were biologically incapable of evolving beyond primitivism. Scouting’s modest manliness and leadership training would thus be too advanced for them and might skew their limited development. Moreover, BSA national leaders assumed that Native American boys did not need Scout training in self-reliance and outdoorsmanship because they naturally possessed these skills. Native American instructors or white officials at federal boarding
schools ran the handful of Native American troops in the 1910s. BSA publications described these troops as if they were novelties, distinct from normal Scouting. The number of Native American troops remained miniscule until the late 1920s, when federal Indian Service Bureau officials began cooperating with the BSA’s Inter-Racial Service on a plan to bring Scouting to federal boarding schools. Gender historians have pointed to Scouting as a key proof that virile primitivism served as the dominant model of manhood in early twentieth century society. Federal and white BSA officials, however, clearly saw Scouting as a way to teach Native American boys the modest, balanced manliness that would enable them to evolve beyond their primitive, savage nature and enter the modern American mainstream. Native American adults’ growing participation in Boy Scouting and cooperation between the Inter-Racial Service and federal officials led to a sharp increase in the number of Native American Scouts by the early 1930s.50

The sketch and caption in Figure 4.2, which accompanied a 1922 Boys Life article about a new troop at the Chemawa Indian School in Oregon, revealed the conflicting issues at stake for Native American men and boys who participated in Scouting. The caption noted that Native American wards of the state needed to obtain federal government permission to become Scouts, highlighting their dependent status. Although the author declared that the troop’s “outdoor activities are similar to those carried on by their ancestors from time immemorial,” the sketch suggested that Native American boys gave up their tribal culture in becoming Boy Scouts. The artist drew the Scoutmaster as a Native American in traditional dress, standing in front of a teepee. The Scoutmaster gave a Boy Scout hat to a new troop member, who was still wearing an Indian deerskin coat. The coat and Boy Scout hat also resembled the buckskin pioneer outfit worn by BSA
figurehead Dan Beard, so it may have represented a step in the Scout evolution toward modern white American manhood. The figure on the right appears to be a veteran Native American Boy Scout, who has cast aside his native bonnet and backpack for a Scout uniform and stave. The picture implied that Scouting taught Native American boys the ways of modern society, even as it left adult Native American Indian lore experts dwelling in tribalism.\textsuperscript{51}

Figure 4.2 *Boys’ Life* (Feb. 1922): 22.

Native American adults taught Indian lore to Boy Scouts to correct white misassumptions about Native American men’s character. Native Americans quickly grasped that they could exploit the child development theory that white boys needed to recapitulate through an Indian stage and the assumed link between the Indian warrior and the Boy Scout to interest white members in Native American history, cultures, living conditions, and rights. Native Americans helped Scouts with their Indian initiations and
rituals like those for the Order of the Arrow, a camping honor society which members associated with strong character and leadership. Quite a few early Scout camps taught Indian lore, but in the 1920s camps increasingly hired a specialist who focused on such activities that was either a Native American or a white man trained by Native Americans. Other Native Americans served as guests of honor for Scout conferences and banquets. Native American leaders helped Scouts “play Indian” throughout the BSA’s first two decades, but these arrangements grew more frequent in the second half of the 1920s.\(^{52}\)

Three Native Americans emerged as leading BSA Indian lore teachers to counter stereotypes about Native American men’s character and to champion Native American culture and rights. Sioux Charles Eastman, a national spokesperson for Native American traditions and treaty rights, frequently gave lectures and wrote articles on Indian lore for the Boy Scouts. Sioux Chief Standing Bear, Jr., the first student enrolled in the prominent Carlisle Indian School and supposedly the first Native American to become an American citizen, wrote articles for BSA magazines that challenged dominant cultural stereotypes by characterizing Native Americans as sanitary, healthy, honest, and brave. Ralph Hubbard, a part-Cherokee and popular BSA expert in the 1920s, led a number of large-scale Boy Scout Indian performances such as those at the World Jamborees. Hubbard explained at the 1924 BSA national training conference for local council Executives that it was more important that older rather than younger boys learned Indian lore since the older ones would be responsible for Native Americans’ safety and security in a few years. This statement contrasted with white BSA national leaders’ claims that younger white boys needed to play Indian to vent their savage instincts so that they could evolve into civilized manhood. Hubbard tapped American nationalism to reinforce the
importance of white Scouts learning Indian lore, “else it will be too late to save this only thing truly American. We have drawn almost all our art from Europe, except this.”

A number of tribes taught white Scout troops their traditional dances, songs, and crafts while trying to link Native American and white character teachings. Cherokees taught Oklahoma Scouts a modified version of the Stomp Dance in 1914, and, perhaps more significantly, translated the Scout Laws into Cherokee. In the second half of the 1920s, an increasing number of tribes adopted white Scouts who took a special interest in studying Indian lore as honorary members. Figure 4.3 depicted New York Governor and future Democratic presidential candidate Al Smith’s acceptance of a ceremonial headdress from a Dakota chieftain at the 1926 Boy Scout national demonstration camp at Bear Mountain. This ceremony used the favoritism government officials showed toward the BSA to connect Native American leaders and culture to white politics.

[Figure removed for copyright compliance.]

Figure 4.3 “Indian Bonnet For Governor,” *Boys’ Life* (Oct. 1926): 23.
Native American leaders turned to white Boy Scouts to help popularize a special day commemorating Native American culture and political rights. Dr. Arthur Parker, a Seneca and prominent archaeologist of Native American life at the New York State Museum, convinced a group of Rochester Boy Scouts to celebrate “First Americans Day.” The local Scouts did so from 1912 to 1915, perhaps making it the first white group to observe the commemorative day. The American Indian Association sanctioned the plan at its 1915 annual meeting. New York State adopted the celebration in 1916, and other states soon followed. Identifying Indians as “First Americans” suggested that Native Americans had rights which whites had violated and challenged the perceived character gulf between Native Americans and white Americans.\(^5\)

Through the mid-1920s, both Native American leaders and white BSA officials prioritized teaching Indian lore to white Boy Scouts. In the late 1920s, several strands merged with Native American adults’ increasing interest in Boy Scout Indian lore to stimulate BSA recruitment of Native American boys. The Inter-Racial Service had made headway encouraging Southern councils to admit blacks in segregated troops led by extensively-trained black Scoutmasters. It was clear that black boys could be added to the BSA in a subordinate membership branch, without having to grant them access to uniforms, camping, or white council events. BSA national leaders articulated a simplified version of Scout masculinity for black boys that focused on being loyal, obedient, clean, and efficient. IRS officials considered expanding its recruitment efforts in 1927 to include Native American, Asian-American, and Mexican-American boys, but only Native Americans received sustained attention before the Depression.\(^6\)
The federal government’s growing interest in sponsoring Boy Scout troops at Native American reservation boarding schools provided the key stimulus. This initiative seemed to stem partly from the granting of American citizenship to all Native Americans in 1924. A significant number of Native Americans had already earned citizenship by accepting individual land allotments from tribal holdings per the 1887 Dawes Act or by serving in the military during World War I, but the second half of the 1920s witnessed a surge of federal government interest in Americanizing Native Americans. Secretary of the Interior Hubert Work had responded to increasing calls for reform of the government’s handling of Native American affairs by appointing the diverse Committee of One Hundred in 1923. The Committee found that health and education on reservations needed vast improvement, but offered few specific solutions. Judging from the composition of the Committee, it seems likely that the idea of using Boy Scouting to socialize Native Americans was discussed. Seneca Arthur C. Parker, who had convinced white Rochester Boy Scouts to celebrate First Americans Day, chaired the Committee. Sioux Charles Eastman, perhaps the most important promoter of BSA Indian lore after Ernest Thompson Seton’s expulsion in 1915, also served on the Committee. The findings of the Committee of One Hundred led to the hiring of the Brookings Institution to make a thorough study of the Bureau of Indian Affairs in 1928, the result of which became known as the Meriam Report. The report chastised the Bureau for failing to meet Native Americans’ basic needs. Its authors argued that Boy and Girl Scouting could be used by reservation boarding schools to improve a wide range of deficiencies, including religious and physical education. The report was likely a key factor encouraging federal officials to initiate large-scale Boy Scout recruitment at reservation boarding schools.  

\(^{57}\)
A troop of Alaskan Eskimo Boy Scouts near Cape Prince of Wales organized in 1926 by the Bureau of Education served as a precedent for federal officials’ plan to use Scouting to improve Native American boys’ character. Scoutmaster Clark M. Garber, a school teacher there, explained how he adapted traditional Scouting to fit the needs and capacities of Eskimo boys. He noted that Eskimos had no opportunity to earn money to buy the Scout uniform and supplies, so he had to purchase them as a “missionary in spirit and deed.” The Bureau of Education supplied U.S. Army equipment for camping and hiking. Garber stated that Scouting could not bring about a rapid transformation of the character of Eskimo boys, “Of course we cannot hope to bring about a complete transition from the racial instincts and native customs of the Eskimo to the present social and moral standards of the white man, but the seed is sown in fertile soil, it is germinating and I can but hope…the plant will be nourished and caused to bloom into a great and useful Eskimo citizenship.” Garber suggested that Scouting could improve Eskimo character, but that both environmental and biological obstacles set limits to the effect the program could have. Several other Eskimo troops followed at Point Barrow, Ketchikan, and Angoon.  

Secretary of the Interior Lyman Wilbur and Indian Service Bureau Commissioner Charles Rhoads asked the BSA in 1929 to help start Native American troops across the country. The Indian Service Bureau issued a circular to all reservation boarding school superintendents instructing them to start Boy and Girl Scout troops. The BSA’s Inter-Racial Service created a separate Division of Indian Work, including leading white experts on Native American culture like future Indian Service Bureau head John Collier and anthropologist Dr. Clark Wissler on its board. IRS Director Stanley Harris visited
reservations and their boarding schools to promote Boy Scouting and help remove any
obstacles to starting troops. Partly due to federal officials’ instructions and the isolated
nature of reservations, the IRS had an easier time convincing white local Scout officials
to accept Native Americans than it did trying to expand black membership. 59

Arrangements made to pay boarding school troop and Scoutmaster training
expenses helped track Native Americans into an inferior category of BSA membership.
There was little opportunity for Native American boys on reservations to earn money for
Scouting expenses, so the BSA national Indian Committee paid their fees in exchange for
performing such tasks as washing dishes, digging ditches, and peeling potatoes for their
teachers. BSA officials sometimes used this fee-work plan for poor black boys in the
rural South. Most Native American troops probably used federal or donated equipment
for camping and hiking. The catch was that such arrangements made Native American
and black Scouts look less capable of self-reliance, thrift, and leading citizenship than
“regular” Scouts. 60

A 1930 IRS study of reservation life prompted the staff to admit that Native
American boys there were not and could not be self-reliant because of the lack of good
job opportunities. The study helped lead the IRS to a narrow conception of what Scout
training could do for Native American boys, “Many Indians are on reservations where
they will never be able to be self-supporting and must be trained to go out into industry.
These need scouting perhaps more than those who live on rich reservations…Scouting
could make a great contribution in addition to normal scout virtues by helping them to
adjust themselves in cities or industrial plants.” Progressive Era white reformers feared
that life on “backward” reservations encouraged Native Americans to become lazy and
dependent on the state. Some white BSA leaders argued that Scouting could teach Native American boys initiative and a modern work ethic.\textsuperscript{61}

Native American men, however, hoped that Scouting could help their sons retain virtue and self-reliance in the face of modernization by emphasizing tribal traditions and outdoorismanship. The Native American teacher who helped start the first Native American BSA troop in New York at the Tonawanda Reservation explained his motive:

The traditional virtues of the red man are no longer taught to the Indian youth of today. Because of the fast pace set by modern environment the Indian parent no longer finds the time to teach his son the mysteries of woodcraft. Indian philosophy is almost a mystery. The Indian is losing his virtues with astonishing rapidity. A few of us who realize this situation have banded together to revive the ancient creed of the Redman which is likewise the creed of the Boy Scouts.

He saw Scouting as a way for Native American boys to resist modernization, while white leaders argued that Native American boys needed Scouting to evolve beyond their backward environment and enter the urban-industrial mainstream.\textsuperscript{62}

BSA national leaders required men applying to lead Native American or black troops to undergo extensive training before receiving commissions, but policies for leaders of Native American troops reflected one important difference. BSA and federal officials encouraged Native American men as well as white reservation officials to lead Native American troops, whereas BSA national leaders preferred that only black men lead black troops. For a 1931 training conference at the Flandreau Indian School in South Dakota for leaders of Native American troops, IRS Director Stanley Harris told each reservation boarding school superintendent to send one Native American man and one white man. He noted that federal officials doing agricultural, vocational, educational, or office work on the reservations would make the best Scoutmasters for Native
American troops. The federal government paid the expenses for both white and Native American men to attend the training conference.

IRS leaders suggested that Scouting could help modernize Native American boys, but they emphasized camping skills and primitive Indian Lore when training Native American adults. The 1929 IRS annual report stated that developing camping skills could help Native American men provide service on the reservation and “enlarge their contribution to the [Scout] camps where a considerable number are employed each summer [to teach Indian lore.]” The 1930 IRS annual report noted that, out of the thirty-seven men earning Scoutmaster’s certificates at the Haskell Institute training conference, “[t]wenty-two young Indians went out into our camps not as Indian lore showmen entirely, but as assistant camp directors or activities men. These men brought to scouting first-hand Indian ideals and customs upon which so much of the scout program is founded.” Ironically, teaching primitivism and outdoorsmanship at rustic Boy Scout camps served as a way for these Native American men to get off the “backward” reservations and integrate into mainstream white American culture.

Contrary to the IRS’s suggested policy for black boys, the agreement between the BSA and the federal government stated that Native American boys should be in racially-mixed troops whenever possible, or at least be allowed to interact with other Scouts at integrated rallies or camps. Most Native American Scouts, however, were probably members of de facto segregated troops due to the isolation of reservations. Starting with what may have been fewer than five troops, the combined efforts of the federal government and the IRS led to the formation of forty Native American troops by the end of the first year of concentrated effort, 1929. The IRS estimated that another four
hundred Native American boys were in “mixed” troops. The number of Native American reservation troops grew to one hundred and fifty by 1932. Assuming that the typical troop reached the national average of twenty-two boys, one arrives at a rough 1932 count of three thousand, three hundred boys in Native American troops and perhaps one or two thousand more Native American boys in integrated troops. Native American boys thus may have been overrepresented in Boy Scout membership relative to their portion of America’s population, while blacks remained vastly underrepresented in the BSA.65

Under new Indian Bureau head John Collier’s leadership and vision of cultural pluralism, federal officials began closing some of the older reservation boarding schools in 1933 in an attempt to re-integrate Native Americans into local communities and white schools. This resulted in the loss of many Native American boarding school troops, just as school integration would undercut black Scouting in the 1950s. Some reservation troops recruited new sponsors or merged into integrated troops, but others disappeared. Some Native Americans expressed disappointment about the closing of the boarding schools and their troops, since they represented a means of retaining tribal identity.66

Native Americans were an easier fit for BSA recruitment efforts than black boys. Monetary and promotional support from the federal government advanced Native American Scouting, but the isolated nature of reservations and the smaller number of Native Americans meant less white resistance. The assumptions that Native American boys naturally possessed self-reliance and that black boys were naturally lazy and dishonest contributed to the more rapid expansion of Native American Boy Scouting. Nonetheless, most white BSA leaders seemed to view Scouting as a way to mainstream both blacks and Native Americans into subordinate roles rather than leading citizenship.
BSA national leaders had always touted that the program offered a universal model of character and citizenship and was open to boys of all races, classes, and creeds. Their belief that boys of other races had inferior character, however, led early administrators to quietly allow local white council leaders “self-determination” to decide whether and how to include minority boys. By the mid-1920s, the threats of war, economic turmoil, and the disruption of social hierarchy had lessened. Most native-born white BSA officials came to accept that black and Native American could be gradually included in segregated units to learn a narrow version of Scout masculinity. This vision of manhood emphasized the efficiency, loyalty, and patriotism needed for modern industrial workers rather than advanced character and leadership. The concessions made to include black and Native American boys and the restrictions placed on their Scout privileges helped uphold rather than challenge the dominant belief in their second-class masculine status and citizenship.
Chapter Five

The “underprivileged majority”: Rich, poor, urban immigrant, and rural Scouting

The 1922 national training conference for local council Executives marked a peak in BSA administrators’ awareness of the obstacles faced by underprivileged groups, as well as a reinforcement of existing policies and attitudes that discouraged such groups from participating in Scout training. Based on input from the leaders of the Boys’ Club Federation and the Big Brother Movement (two youth organizations that targeted urban working class youth), a special BSA Commission on the Underprivileged Boy reported to attendees that the majority of American boys were underprivileged in some way, and that the Scouting program was not well adapted to their varied needs. The commission stated that “inherited mental slackness,” physical defect, “inherited vicious qualities,” racial prejudice, foreign-born parentage, or having to work to provide family income all hindered a boy’s life opportunities. However, the commission’s report presented a narrower list of key problems in reaching underprivileged boys with Scouting: the “old military bugaboo” (the fear of working class immigrant parents that Scouting promoted militarism), finding “worthy” adult leaders in these districts, the boys’ long working hours, and the high cost of Scout fees and equipment. This second list belied the difficulties posed by racism and nativism, ignoring the facts that BSA national leaders permitted local council officials to discriminate against undesirable groups, and that the national office excluded non-whites in areas not governed by a local Scout council. Instead, the report emphasized the lack of worthy non-white and working class immigrant men for troop leadership. Moreover, the commission argued that class obstacles to Scout participation were primarily figments of poor boys’ imaginations. The chairman claimed
that one major type of handicap was “the boy that is restrained from full privilege by a class consciousness of being a poor boy.” This statement hinted that only poor people had a class consciousness, and that class consciousness rather than economic poverty was the real handicap. The chairman argued that the troop fee problem was “largely a state of mind,” since many boys who claimed that they could not pay the Scout fees spent the same amount of money every week attending movies. The commission stated that working class parents simply needed to be told that their sons did not really need a uniform or camping equipment to Scout, but this contradicted the flood of BSA sources insisting that a proper uniform and camping equipment were essential for developing modest manliness, leading citizenship, and troop camaraderie.¹

The commission’s conclusions reduced the obstacles to Scout participation posed by poverty, handicap, and ethnic and racial prejudice to underprivileged boys’ character flaws, psychological inferiority, and poor decision-making. The commission, satisfied that the problems these groups faced were of their own making, declared, “We find no apparent reason so far as the Scout program is concerned, for recognizing the underprivileged boy as a type or class to whom any special appeal should be made to enter the ranks of Scouting.” Even though the commission admitted that the leaders of the Boys’ Club and the Big Brother organizations had superior expertise in regard to understanding the needs of these groups, it ignored their advice to adapt Scouting to increase underprivileged enrollment. The commission instructed Executives to avoid special treatment of underprivileged boys due to the heavy attention that they would require and the probability that these efforts would not show rapid results.²
The audience reinforced the commission’s argument that underprivileged boys could overcome their obstacles by simply believing that America was an unbound, democratic society instead of dwelling on imagined social barriers. The first respondent declared, “I seriously object to the use of the term underprivileged boy as it relates to the Boy Scout Movement. We are teaching democracy… I don’t believe the Boy Scout Movement should set up any class of distinction. We can run the clubs in East Side just as well as on Fifth Avenue, if we provide leadership. I don’t like this term.” Arguments like this one carried the day, as they had since the organization’s second year, 1911. Despite having grown up as a cripple in an orphanage, Chief Scout Executive James West ended the discussion by decreeing that the organization would refrain from even categorizing any boys as underprivileged. He then vaguely added, “call them what you will,” those less blessed with “abundance” and “opportunity” still needed some attention from local council Executives. Given the tone of the discussion and West’s initial statement, however, it is difficult to see how any attending Executive could have concluded that he should work to eliminate barriers posed by racism, nativism, economic inequality, and physical or mental handicap to participation in Scouting.³

While the commission’s conclusions were dismissive, it seemed to strike a chord which would create ripple effects in the organization’s membership policies for the remainder of the decade. For the first time, the report laid bare for every local and national administrator the discrepancy between the BSA’s claim to offer a universal program fit for all American boys and its relatively narrow membership approach. The commission’s report evoked questions about how the BSA could include marginalized groups without risking the program’s rank and merit badge standards. Bending policies
to encourage wider participation showed favoritism, which many BSA officials believed to be undemocratic. Granting exceptions and broadening membership threatened to disrupt the BSA’s teaching of balanced, modest manliness and leading citizenship.

BSA national leaders shifted from trying to maintain a universal program of modest manliness and a single membership class in the 1910s to fostering a hierarchy of Scout membership and masculine teachings after 1922. This change can be traced through how BSA national leaders dealt with six groups which differed from the organization’s native-born white, middle class, town boy norm: black boys, Native American boys, rich boys, urban working class boys, new white immigrant boys, and rural boys. The vision of a classless and nonpartisan society, a universal modest manliness, and a unified Scout membership exemplified BSA national leaders’ mindset from 1910 to 1922. BSA sources argued that Scouting could moderate the imbalanced character of both rich and poor boys by having them work together. BSA administrators downplayed class and ethnic tensions and tried to avoid any change in uniform, fee, or schedule policies which would mark distinctions between members. In the early 1910s, BSA national officials worked to achieve a common masculine ground with labor and Socialist leaders to make the organization look nonpartisan. They made minor membership and programming concessions to discourage Catholic and Polish groups from maintaining separate Scout organizations, partly to eliminate rivals that would make the BSA look biased. Despite these modest gestures, maintaining standards such as troop-based membership, set activity schedules, high costs, and full uniforms limited the number of rural and urban working class boy participants in the organization’s first fifteen years. During World War I, BSA national leaders retracted the initial latitude they
gave immigrants to teach dual culture and split patriotism through Scouting. Some local
BSA officials created Industrial and Institutional Troops that offered a diminutive form of
manly and civic training for working class and destitute boys. BSA national membership
policies changed after 1922, but in ways which reinforced rather than challenged the
organization’s hierarchy of masculine character. National administrators seemed to make
an effort to reach out to rural, urban working class, handicapped, and other marginalized
boys by absorbing the Lone Scouts of America organization in 1924, but they lost most
Lone Scout members when they turned it into traditional, troop-based Boy Scouting.

**Balancing the characters of rich and poor boys**

Early BSA leaders’ vision of modest manliness entailed the belief that both poor
and rich boys had imbalanced character because of environmental deprivation and the
difficulty each group had in seeing beyond its class position. The 1918 yearbook for the
Old Colony Scout Council in Massachusetts declared that boys from both class extremes
could benefit from Scout training in modest manliness: “The aristocratic boy is prevented
from being an idol of the nursery and the poor boy is saved from the poisonous infection
of the city alleys and streets.” BSA literature frequently characterized rich boys as
suffering from being “overprivileged.” Their dependence on house servants feminized
and infantilized them, interfering with learning manly self-reliance and service to others.
BSA administrators suggested that suspect heritage, neglectful parents, and over-
exposure to the moral contamination of mass leisure and the heterosocial youth culture
derailed the character development of working class and destitute boys. BSA sources
tackled between the character priorities of those at the two extremes: wealthy capitalists
and working class leaders. BSA national leaders believed that such policies allowed the organization to be neutral and nonpartisan on class issues. Officials characterized European class divisions as artificial and arbitrary; they hoped America’s “natural” character divisions would result in a society with classes but free of class conflict or resentment. Administrators promised that Scouting eased socio-economic tensions in America by teaching boys not to taunt or resent boys of other classes and by teaching all boys a universal vision of modest manliness, civic duty, and democracy.4

American Boy Scouting has been viewed as a middle class phenomenon, but the organization derived essential support, leadership, and membership from the nation’s elite. BSA authors and speakers accurately boasted that national and local councils included the best men from business, politics, academia, and the leading professions. Wealthy capitalists provided key financial and public support for the early BSA. They were partly motivated by the hope that Scouting would socialize obedient and efficient employees – both entry-level workers and middle class managers. BSA editors occasionally published articles by men such as John D. Rockefeller, Jr., on Scout values, but elite writings stressing outright social control were relatively rare. BSA national leaders, moreover, held increasing reservations about the organization’s financial dependence on the elite and they listened to labor leaders’ criticisms of Scouting as a capitalist tool. In addition, they feared the effect that spoiled, rich boy members might have on Scouting’s modest manliness.5

BSA leaders and supporters hoped to ease growing class tensions by teaching poor and rich boys modest manliness, a key component of which was learning to avoid dwelling on economic differences. BSA writers and speakers argued that class conflict
resulted from individuals’ unwarranted belief in or undue emphasis on social distinction rather than from structural inequalities or material differences in wealth or pay. A 1910 article in The Outing Magazine argued that denying social distinctions was the Scout’s mark of true chivalry: “Above all he must never be a snob, and snobbishness in the scout’s eyes is two-edged. It may be despising the rich as well as the poor. In short, social distinctions are to be obliterated.” A Nashville woman praised Scouting’s unique “double definition of a snob” in a 1912 Boys’ Life article. She argued that poor people who resent those who were richer “themselves are drawing the artificial line which divides men by reason of money and position or the lack of these, and are forgetting that real manhood and real interest in life may always meet on a common level of friendliness and equality without regard to money or place or power.” The author claimed that the nation’s rich and powerful deserved their privileges: “people of position have won their place by real merit or deserved good fortune and…people in power are powerful because they are worthy of it.” Conversely, BSA sources hinted that an inherent lack of a cheerful work ethic, thrift, and drive explained the lot of the poor. If each Scout understood that natural differences in character determined one’s class status, then there would be no need for class resentment or taunting.⁶

BSA literature constructed an image of working class manhood which it both criticized and idealized. Working class street toughs could certainly not be accused of being spoiled and feminine like rich sissies, but they risked being excessively aggressive and instinctive. In a 1917 movie screenplay, James Wilder (a white Hawaii artist who later revamped the BSA’s Sea Scout program for older teenagers) suggested that working class boys’ courage and loyalty – if redirected via Scout training in modest manliness and
civic responsibility—could be redeeming qualities. After his thieving father was accidentally killed during a robbery, Pug (the leader of a gang of working class boys) was “filled with promptings of the old tribal code that demands revenge for injury done to any member of the family no matter how despicable the member may be” and attacked the policeman. The policeman lectured Pug that right was more important than brute strength, and that his father had been appropriately penalized for breaking the law: “[T]he state killed him—not I!” Pug later got involved in a robbery to keep a younger gang member out of trouble and ended up badly cut. The policeman tracked Pug to his lair and demanded that his gang reveal his whereabouts. They refused, “We’ve took a swear, an’ we stick! You can kill me before I’ll tell!” The detective thought for a moment and then replied, “I guess you’re right, boys! If you swear anything, sticktoit!” A local Scoutmaster arrived with his troop to help the injured Pug. The Scoutmaster and the detective agreed that the street gang was worthy of becoming a Boy Scout troop because they had showed “courage and loyalty…Well, that’s half the battle!” The policeman, upon learning that the Scoutmaster was the busy President of the Metropolitan Trust Company, decided that he could also find time to be a Scoutmaster. It seemed fitting for the troop of working class toughs to be led by the Irish policeman, representing the Americanized working class immigrant. The toughs had positive but misplaced virtues which Scouting under a worthy man could channel into improved character.7

Although BSA leaders argued that Scouting could help balance the characters of boys at both economic extremes by mixing them together, most troops were separated by class. At the first annual meeting of the BSA National Council in 1911, a representative of the Big Brother organization for urban working class boys argued that Scouting not
only provided poor boys with opportunities for wholesome play and companionship with men of good character, but also benefited the rich boy by having him “mix in with some of the rougher diamonds…to have some of his more objectionable characteristics, such as selfishness, polished off.” Scoutmasters at a 1917 training conference at Columbia University, however, reported that mixing millionaire and slum Scouts had failed. Some of the Scoutmasters expressed doubt that rich boys even belonged in the organization since they had to bring a valet to troop meetings or were snobs. The institutional sponsor requirement often resulted in each troop serving a church’s, Rotary Club’s, or factory’s own narrow class of clientele. The occasional mixed-class troop appeared to benefit rich boys more than poor ones. One Scoutmaster stated that he intentionally selected rich boys as Patrol Leaders. With all the spare time and help a rich boy had available for Scouting, he advanced faster and thereby could spur on the poor boys to earn ranks and merit badges.\(^8\)

BSA literature suggested that only middle class boys naturally possessed balanced character. A 1921 article in *The Scout Executive* on “Some Fundamental Principles of Democracy” stated, “The greatest steadying force in the nation is the middle class…Our Boy Scouts come largely from the middle class with a goodly sprinkling of the upper and lower strata.” Such statements implied that it was difficult for the poor and the rich to see beyond their class position, so only the middle class readily modeled democratic attitudes and modest manliness.\(^9\)

Links between the BSA and the Rotary Club point to the role of both organizations in shaping a wider middle class culture based on classless, nonpartisan, and service values. At the 1917 International Association of Rotary Clubs annual meeting, a
new Committee on Boys’ Work voted that Rotary should focus its support on Boy Scouting since both organizations emphasized the spirit of service to others. Attendees at the preceding Thirteenth District annual conference in Sacramento had recommended that all Rotary clubs sponsor Scouting exclusively because “[w]e believe that there is a very close parallel between the movement of the Boy Scouts and the movement of Rotarians. The object of the Boy Scouts is to make junior Rotarians. The object of the Rotarians is to make good citizens, and the boy scout graduates into a Rotarian in a very facile manner.” BSA leaders from across the country bombarded the program committee chairman for the 1918 International Association of Rotary Clubs meeting with requests to give preference to Boy Scouting in all the Committee on Boys’ Work discussions. Many Rotary leaders supported the BSA’s vision of America as a society free of artificial class, religious, and political divisions. A Rotary delegate from Pennsylvania praised the BSA’s non-sectarian, non-political stance and its federal charter. A Nebraska delegate suggested that the BSA was the only boys’ organization that might ease the “continually growing abyss between capital and labor” because it mixed poor and rich boys and encouraged them to respect each other. A West Virginia delegate argued that Rotarians’ support of Scouting would benefit boys of all classes because the Scouts would provide service to working class boys’ organizations. The BSA’s Samuel Moffett gave an invited speech at the conference that echoed these arguments. Rotary and other middle class men’s organizations sponsored an increasing number of Scout troops in the 1920s. Service club men frequently acted as Scoutmasters, Troop Committeeemen, and local council members. They led Scout membership drives and helped purchase Scout camp sites and office buildings.¹⁰
Men and boys from all segments of the middle class enthusiastically joined the BSA. Native-born white, middle class school boys had extra leisure time and spending money, so they faced few obstacles to Scout participation. The balance of nineteenth century self-reliance and competition with social cooperation, scientific efficiency, and expert management in the BSA’s modest manliness eased the middle class’s transition to modern American work and society. As youth historian John Gillis has argued with respect to British Scouting, the BSA helped middle class parents protect their investment in a lengthened period of schooling by filling their boys’ leisure time with character-building activities and training in civic leadership.\textsuperscript{11}

BSA leaders argued that Scouting could balance the character of poor and rich boys into a modest manliness appropriate for an increasingly interdependent society and corporate workforce. Administrators believed that democracy required that all Americans look beyond their class position and build a common ground of manly friendship with other groups. Supporting Scouting served as a positive, patriotic form of public relations service for the nation’s elite and made them look less selfish and extravagant. Close affiliation with Scouting’s good character and leading citizenship helped middle class families stake out a firm identity between the poor and the rich. Scouting offered working class men and boys an avenue to join mainstream society and demonstrate their good character and patriotism.

**Scouting for working boys**

BSA national leaders worked for and achieved common ground with moderate labor union leaders and even Socialists by emphasizing modest, balanced manliness.
Contrary to most gender history accounts of the early twentieth century, neither middle class BSA officials nor working class labor representatives stressed aggression, virility, or individualism. Instead, the two groups overlapped on a modest manliness that balanced self-reliance with social cooperation, individual honor with loyalty to a greater good, and a hard work ethic with smoothing out labor conflict to provide more rewards for all. The two groups found a common enemy to criticize: stereotyped elite men’s selfish individualism. Officials eliminated offensive class remarks from BSA publications to placate labor and Socialist critics and to substantiate the organization’s classless rhetoric, but they failed to take steps they recognized as essential for attracting large-scale working class participation. In 1922 two BSA commissions studied working class and industrial boy obstacles to Scouting and concluded that making special efforts to better accommodate these groups would be undemocratic and a waste of local officials’ time. It is likely that they also wanted to avoid showing undue favoritism to working class boys that might upset the organization’s essential middle class and elite supporters. Still, BSA national leaders’ modest gestures toward labor’s concerns and Scouting’s association with modest manliness and leading citizenship encouraged a surprising percentage of working class boys to join.\textsuperscript{12}

British and American labor union and Socialist leaders initially criticized Scouting for teaching boys slavish militarism, obedience to employers, and hatred of the working class. The American Federation of Labor [AFL] and other unions argued that Scout training undercut a boy’s developing self-control and independent judgment. By October 1911, at least thirteen labor unions in Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Wisconsin, Missouri, and Colorado had gone on record
opposing Scouting. The United Mine Workers of America issued a ban in 1912 refusing union membership to anyone connected with either the National Civic Federation or the Boy Scouts, suggesting that the unions saw the BSA as a junior military arm of employers. This was a reasonable conclusion since so many leading businessmen and financiers contributed monetary and public relations support for early Scouting and served on national and local Scout councils.\textsuperscript{13}

Complaints from labor and Socialist leaders that Scouting taught boys to be excessively militaristic and violent also had some merit. Some military men served as early Scoutmasters (partly because of their training in outdoor living). The Boy Scout uniform looked suspiciously like that worn by the American National Guard, which had been used for decades to repress strikers. The mass media’s failure to distinguish between the BSA and more militaristic Scout organizations like the American Boy Scouts also caused confusion. In the early 1910s, newspapers carried tragic accounts of Boy Scouts shooting other boys. A December 1910 article reported a fatal clash between two rival factions of Boy Scouts in Covington, Kentucky. In 1912, a twelve-year-old Bronx Boy Scout carrying a loaded rifle from a drill session came upon three other boys. He ordered them to throw up their hands; one of the boys dared him to shoot. The Scout shot and killed a nine-year-old. The Scout later defended himself by saying that the victim had been throwing stones.\textsuperscript{14}

The harsh characterization of working class and unemployed manhood in Baden-Powell’s first British Scout handbook, published in 1908, exacerbated labor and Socialist criticisms of the program. Baden-Powell declared that poverty was the result of bad character and habits, notably drinking, smoking, and wasting of time. The British Scout
Laws emphasized loyalty and obedience to employers. Baden-Powell referred to striking workers as wasters and bad citizens who did not deserve to be saluted; he insisted that joining labor unions and striking was not a manly way of improving one’s lot in life. He instructed better-off boys to be charitable to the worthy poor, not to the ninety-nine percent of street beggars who were frauds. Baden-Powell held up bees as the model community, since they obeyed their Queen and killed off their worthless unemployed. Labor and Socialist leaders also resented Baden-Powell’s instruction that each boy should know and keep his place by being a “brick” in the wall of the British Empire.¹⁵

Highlighting fixed class divisions, however, did not sit well with many white Americans’ rhetoric of unlimited opportunity and their hope for a society distinct from Europe’s traditions. Two men suggested at the first BSA National Council annual meeting in 1911 that American boys could best be taught democracy by retaining Baden-Powell’s class references, but they were outvoted. Administrators chose to eliminate Baden-Powell’s overt references to class hierarchy from BSA literature; however, they clung to his underlying assumptions about the different character and socialization needs of class groups. Administrators met with the AFL’s influential leader, Samuel Gompers, and the BSA adopted a policy of not favoring either side during labor strikes. Ernest Thompson Seton’s criticism of the effects of militarism and overly-specialized industrial jobs and his promise that Scouting’s outdoormanship and woodcraft could serve as a release for strained laborers appealed to some union members. Administrators argued that “peace Scouting” activities like pioneer and Indian craft and First Aid training distinguished the BSA from militaristic groups like the American Boy Scouts.¹⁶
BSA officials’ efforts gradually placated most labor and even Socialist critics. In 1912, the AFL made a study of the BSA and interviewed its national leaders. The investigators concluded that some of the confusion resulted from the presence of the militaristic American Boy Scouts organization. They were pleased that the BSA had removed Baden-Powell’s offensive, class-based remarks from the Scout Laws and deemphasized military training and drill. The AFL voted at its 1912 annual meeting in Rochester to retract its denunciation of the BSA. AFL leaders promised to promote Boy Scouting while helping it guard against any militaristic tendencies. The AFL’s softening stance reflected its philosophy of “business unionism,” in which leaders increasingly cooperated with business leaders and their allies to gain wage increases and other tangible benefits for workers while downplaying political conflict between capital and labor. Despite greater differences, the Socialist Party also withdrew its protest of the BSA in 1913 due to the overlap between the two organizations on masculine ideals. In a 1915 letter to a fellow Socialist which BSA editors reprinted in the 1922 Executive handbook, Eugene Debs confessed to liking Scouting’s “teaching of manliness, its attention to bodily health and vigor, its stimulating out-doors program and its inculcation of principles of mutual kindness and mutual help among its members.”

The warming relationship between union leaders and the BSA during World War I suggested that both parties agreed that patriotism and war production were the immediate priorities. BSA administrators worked to reassure labor leaders of their good intentions. In a national press release, James West reminded workers that the BSA had quickly made every change labor leaders suggested in its 1911 Americanization of the Oath and Laws. West persuaded the President of the Boston Scout council to retract his
statement that the BSA should work to counter labor’s aggressiveness after the war. A June 1919 *Scouting* article reiterated the policy forbidding members from helping either side of labor strikes. Such gestures even softened the militant United Mine Workers of America. The union removed its ban on members’ sons belonging to the BSA in May 1917, stating that the Boy Scouts contributed to the country’s war needs.  

BSA national officials’ vision of modest, balanced manliness and an American society free of class tensions led them to discourage language and activities which obviously favored the rich or degraded the lower classes; however, the same worldview helped prevent them from making program and policy changes needed to attract a larger working class membership. BSA leaders recognized from organization studies and surveys of working class parents that Scouting’s costs, uniform, and fixed schedule barred many working class and destitute boys from participating. Scouting was designed for middle class and elite town boys with discretionary income and leisure time after school and during the summer. Many working boys could not attend regular troop meetings or get time off in the summer to attend the all-important Scout camp. Administrators offered few plans for better accommodating working class boys and even stated that such efforts were undemocratic and a waste of time, which suggested that they were not that interested in recruiting them. Most but not all local councils and troops followed suit.

Debates about the high costs of Scouting and its impact on working class boys centered on the required purchase of an official, full uniform. It was a large, up-front expense for new members and many working class people believed that it encouraged the wrong type of masculine behaviors. Some working class boys viewed the Scout uniform
as feminine and childish. Working class, immigrant, and Socialist adults cited the uniform as key evidence that Scouting taught boys militarism and blind obedience to employers. The BSA might have attracted more working class boys and parents by simplifying or doing away with the uniform.

While an occasional source mentioned that a Scout did not have to own a uniform to participate, most BSA publications and the popular press stressed that it was essential for developing balanced manhood and classless camaraderie. A 1911 article in *The World’s Work* magazine reported:

> There is comradeship and fraternity in a uniform, but the uniform of the boy scouts is by no means essential to membership. It has its advantages: it is picturesque and distinctive, as well as serviceable. It tends to develop a democratic feeling. It checks snobbishness and helps the boy to feel the force of the scout law that, ‘a scout is a friend and a brother to every other scout.’ Social distinctions are not permitted in scouting, and a common uniform does much toward obliterating them.

The statement suggested that every member needed to buy a uniform in order for class differences to be ignored. A poor boy who joined the BSA but could not afford to buy the uniform therefore risked being called undemocratic and un-American for calling attention to class disparities. Not having a uniform marked poor Scouts as second class members, just as it did for black Scouts denied uniforms by many local white councils. A non-uniformed Scout could not be readily identified as a member, so the public did not have to respect him and other Scouts did not have to befriend him as an equal brother.¹⁹

BSA national leaders’ decision to allow each local council to design its own uniform policy paralleled the organization’s plan granting “self-determination” to each council on race matters. Both policies subtly permitted local council officials to discriminate while upholding the national office’s claim to be running a “democratic”
organization. The 1914 Scoutmaster handbook noted, “The ordinary patrol and troop will be composed of the boys of all classes, and how to regulate the uniform and equipment under such conditions will always have to be settled by local needs and circumstances.” The handbook insisted that, if a troop or council required its boys to buy uniforms, each boy had to earn his own money to pay for it. BSA literature repeatedly declared that putting boys “on a charity basis” by soliciting funds from the public or philanthropists for expenses which the boys should pay themselves was not allowed. These policies, in conjunction with statements on the centrality of the uniform for Scout character-building, encouraged the middle class and elite men who dominated local Scout councils to limit participation by working class boys by requiring full, regulation uniforms.²⁰

BSA national leaders rejected several options that would have let in more working class boys. Edgar Robinson, the YMCA official who had served as BSA director in 1910, proposed at the first meeting of the National Council in 1911 that the uniform be replaced with a simple badge since requiring an expensive one would “keep the good that is to be derived from our movement from the boys who need it most, and I think we should keep the price of the uniform down so it can be within the reach of the poorest boy.” BSA administrators chose to keep the full version, and even adopted a more expensive one and increased strictures on wearing the official uniform in the 1920s. The Los Angeles council Executive complained that troops wearing incomplete or mismatched uniforms contributed to misbehavior and negative publicity. In a 1923 bulletin to local officials, James West agreed that the standard uniform should be better enforced. Later that year, West instructed boys to borrow money if they had to in order to acquire a proper uniform: “If necessary incur an honorable debt to somebody for the
price, and then keep everlastingly at it until you pay up.” A 1927 study suggested that a lower-priced, medium-quality uniform and shoes would suit Scouts’ needs, discourage boys from buying low-quality knock-offs, and allow more poor boys to join. The BSA, however, did not lower uniform prices until well into the Depression.²¹

The findings of two special commissions at the 1922 Executives national training conference reinforced the BSA’s benign neglect of working class and destitute boys. The report of the Commission on the Underprivileged Boy, discussed previously, argued that a poor boy’s life handicaps were of his own making and warned local officials against making special efforts to attract working class or other underprivileged boys. The Commission on Scouting in Industry reached similar conclusions. The chairman started off his report by downplaying its importance. The commission was limited by its adherence to the belief that rich boys were disadvantaged: “We disagree on what is the underprivileged boy. Some of us believe that the boy with an automobile is far more under-privileged than the boy in industry.” Only a few local officials bothered to respond to a survey about their efforts to recruit working class boys, suggesting that most Executives either felt that the questionnaire was a waste of time or had no working class recruitment plans to report. One local Executive claimed that he had made no special efforts to recruit working boys because there was “no industry” on the Pacific Coast. The commission instructed local Executives to not allow a company’s welfare worker to serve as a Scoutmaster for boy employees or let business owners pay for company troops since that would accustom working class boys to wait for free handouts: “You absolutely are not going to make Scouts that way.” This warning was striking since major corporations such as Western Union and Mutual Life Insurance had been running successful Scout
troops on this basis for several years. The commission leaders wanted to retard this type of outreach since paying for the boys to Scout and adjusting the program to better fit the schedule of factory boys would set them up as a special class of Scouts, be un-American and undemocratic, and exacerbate rather than resolve class conflict.²²

Deputy Chief Scout Executive George Fisher informed attendees that many union members, especially the radical elements, were still suspicious of the BSA National Council and Executive Board since they were dominated by rich men. He instructed Executives to have a labor man serve as an *unofficial* advisor to each local council, but not to put him on the council board since that would give unions a special advantage relative to other groups. Fisher insisted that local Executives choose their own friendly labor representative instead of conferring with elected leaders of local unions. No major labor spokesperson appeared on the BSA national Executive Board, and only a few unions sponsored BSA troops.²³

For the most part, BSA administrators seemed content through the 1920s to leave poor and delinquent boys to agencies like the YMCA, Boys’ Club, and the juvenile courts. Working class men and institutions seemed to lack the requisite character to lead Scout troops. The BSA National Council resolved in 1926 that it was important that local councils organize troops in the poorer sections of cities since the Boy Scout program was “particularly helpful” to boys living in such areas. Little action, however, was taken by the national office on this resolution. Even the Inter-Racial Service, which was supposed to recruit boys that were disadvantaged for reasons of class as well as race, took little initiative in this area. Making special efforts and accommodations necessary to attract more working class boys conflicted with BSA national leaders’ notion of an organization
and American society free of artificial distinctions and the resentments which they believed would result. BSA administrators’ vision of modest manliness and the theory that rich boys were as disadvantaged as poor ones continued to undercut working class outreach efforts through the 1920s.  

**Industrial and Institutional Scouting**

Some institutional officials, local BSA leaders, and juvenile court judges hoped that a modified version of Scouting could teach self-control and hierarchical loyalty to boys whom they saw as prone to the selfish and impulsive acts which led to delinquency. A few local Scout officials ignored BSA national leaders’ warnings against working class outreach and helped start Industrial Troops for boy employees and Institutional Troops in reform schools, orphanages, and settlement houses. Sponsoring institutions, which took the initiative to form some of these troops, often paid the boys’ expenses and altered the schedule and activities to fit their needs. Business owners and institutional officials believed that Scouting could improve their boys’ character, work ethic, and health. Industrial and Institutional Scouting hoped to shift working boys’ “naturally” fierce loyalty from street gangs to the company’s owners and law and order. BSA national leaders did relatively little to support these special troops prior to the Depression, outside of publishing an occasional article about them.

Industrial Scouting can best be understood as a form of welfare capitalism, a term for business owners’ provision of structured leisure and educational services to employees and their families in the hope of maintaining workers’ efficiency and company loyalty in 1914. Lewis Gawtry, Vice-President of the Consolidated Gas Company in
New York City, formed one of the earliest BSA Industrial Troops for boy employees. The company’s chief clerk, Walter Israel, served as Scoutmaster for thirty-five years. The company paid to send the troop on tours and to establish a weekend camp. Israel stated that Gawtry believed that the boys would become more efficient on the job because Scouting would improve their health and *esprit de corps*. Gawtry hoped to keep boy employees from lounging in billiard halls and on street corners by interesting them in Scouting and outdoorsmanship.\(^{25}\)

Industrial Scouting served as a broad-based efficiency and loyalty test akin to Frederick Taylor’s scientific management time studies and piece-rate pay system. The Scoutmaster of the Edison Company’s Brooklyn branch troop reported in 1924 that management used Scout advancement to help determine which boy employees should receive job promotions. He stressed how Scouting taught the boys to be alert, play fair, and cooperate with a team. The Postal Telegraph Company of Savannah claimed that its company troop transformed noisy, indifferent boy workers to “polite, attentive, honest, clean and orderly uniformed employes [sic].”\(^{26}\)

A number of large corporations started troops for boy employees: Western Union, Swift & Company, Armour & Company, National Cash Register, Mutual Life Insurance, American Telephone & Telegraph, and others. Although Gawtry served on the BSA National Council from 1919 into the Depression, neither the National Council nor the national office led a movement to establish more Industrial Troops prior to 1930. It is difficult to estimate the number of such troops, although the one hundred and twenty-five troops that met in offices in 1917 (out of seventeen thousand total) is a reasonable indicator. The fact that, like black Scouting, there were some unofficial Industrial Troops
suggests that not everyone felt they belonged in the BSA. Some company owners may
have kept their troops independent so that they did not have to abide by national policies
such as the instruction that each boy should pay his own way. Some local councils may
have denied Industrial Troop applications because they felt that working class boys
would tarnish the organization’s image or infect the character of middle class boys.27

Some adult working class employees cooperated with owners, managers, and
local Scout officials in supporting Industrial Troops. As Jeffrey Hantover’s and David
Macleod’s investigations of Scouting in the 1910s argued, part of working class men’s
motivations to support Scouting may have been a desire to show employers that they
valued traits such as hard work, thrift, and service to others. Adult workers also believed
that Scout service and First Aid training could directly benefit workers and unions.
During the 1920s BSA fundraiser Waldo Shaver persuaded owners in the Illinois Coal
Operators Association to contribute money for Scouting in gangster-and union-plagued
small coal mining communities in southern Illinois. Shaver garnered the support of
miners for their sons’ Scout work by holding fundraising competitions between the tipple
men and the underground workers, with a bean supper for the winners. The local Scouts
proved their worth to workers by providing service in the deadly March 1925 tornado.
Scouts also served coffee and sandwiches for a week as miners dug to recover the body
of a well-liked police officer who had been murdered. Shaver reported that, for a time,
mine coveralls replaced the Scout uniform and Mine Rescue pamphlets replaced the Boy
Scout First Aid versions. By balancing the interests and support of mine owners and
workers, Shaver increased area membership from twenty-seven Lone Scouts in 1923 to
over one thousand Boy Scouts in sixty troops in 1926.28
Institutional Scouting at reform schools, orphanages, and settlement houses challenged BSA national leaders’ statement that Scouting was incapable of reforming the character of boys prone to delinquency. These local initiatives drew support from juvenile court judges, a number of whom argued that Scouting developed character in such a way as to keep boys from wanting to get into trouble. Key among these was Denver Judge Benjamin Barr Lindsey, the “father of the American juvenile court system” and a friend of such prominent reformers and BSA supporters as Theodore Roosevelt, G. Stanley Hall, Lincoln Steffens, and Jane Addams. Lindsey argued in 1914 that juvenile courts were only capable of the better handling of delinquency cases after it was too late, while the BSA was “our greatest hope, the greatest single activity in this country promising a solution, not only of the boy problem, but the girl problem, for the best protector of girls is the youth who lives up to the laws and ideals of the Boy Scouts.” Lindsey suggested that Scouting could prevent juvenile delinquency by redirecting boys’ innate energies from harmful associations and aimless activities to building good character and serving the broader community. He predicted that if enough people supported the BSA’s efforts, the juvenile court system would disappear altogether. A host of other juvenile court judges, educators, and sociologists echoed these sentiments. A few argued that Scouting might reform boys who had already become delinquents.29

Scout troops in settlement houses, reform schools, and at-risk neighborhoods designed to curtail juvenile delinquency placed more emphasis on obedience, gym sports, and industrial training than did most BSA troops. Institutional Troop sponsors believed that working class and delinquent boys needed more structure, discipline, and career preparation than other Scouts. Jane Addams, in a response to an inquiry from Judge Ben
Lindsey, argued that since Scouting did not allow guns and focused on outdoor skills and trade instruction, it gave working boys the “pleasure and also the training which comes from military drill, without any touch of the military spirit.” She stated that the Hull House’s Scout troop was particularly useful in maintaining the interest of the “rough sort of boy.” Scoutmaster H.H. Townsend in Wagoner, Oklahoma convinced the leaders of The Dirty Dozen and The Silent Six to turn their gangs into BSA patrols in 1915. This troop focused on sports, industrial training, and Bible class. Some retail merchants supported Scout troops to prevent financial losses caused by juvenile delinquency and shoplifting. In 1923, the Retail Dry Goods Association praised area Scouting, “[I]t will have a direct tendency to lessen the petty theft menace in New York City.”

Reform school troops treaded a delicate line on voluntary Scout membership and the applicability of advanced character and leading citizenship to boys classified as delinquents. Starting in 1916, businessmen’s service clubs and veterans’ organizations sponsored troops at the Whittier State Reform School for Boys (later Fred C. Nelles School) outside of Los Angeles. The patrols were organized on a cottage basis, with staff serving as Scoutmasters. The cottage offered a club room for Scout meetings and space for a patrol library. The Whittier Scouts hiked and camped on school grounds. As the reform school troop idea evolved, parole officers transferred boys leaving the school into external BSA troops. The introduction of Scouting at the New Jersey State Home for Boys reformatory at Jamesburg in 1921 triggered a larger response. Groups of boys at the institution Scouted unofficially before they applied to BSA headquarters for charters and uniforms. Despite the hesitations of a few BSA national leaders, James West granted the Jamesburg troops recognition. West had grown up in an orphanage and may have
sympathized with the institutionalized boys. Eight Princeton undergraduates ran Jamesburg troops for one hundred and sixty eager boys. The superintendent noted that the number of escape attempts declined as a result of Scout programming. By October 1925, three hundred twenty-five of the five hundred boys at the school had been Scouts at some point during their incarceration – a staggering recruitment rate of sixty-five percent. Scout leaders and businessmen’s clubs in areas such as Nashville, Seattle, and Toledo followed the Jamesburg precedent by starting their own Institutional Troops.  

One, however, should not overestimate the modest shift in BSA character ideology that Industrial and Institutional Scouting represented. First, these were isolated local efforts not actively supported by the majority of local administrators or the national office outside of hesitant approval of their charters and an occasional magazine article about them. Much like Scouting for blacks and Native Americans, the ways in which destitute and delinquent boys were included in the BSA continued to mark them as having inferior character. For example, a St. Louis juvenile judge tried to integrate boys who had been in his court into regular Scout troops in 1921, but parents objected. BSA and juvenile court officials for East St. Louis instead created segregated troops for the delinquent boys supervised by judges and prominent business and professional men. Industrial and Institutional Troops taught a simplified version of Scout manliness which emphasized obedience, loyalty, and cheerful work instead of leadership training. Such boys might be Scouts, but they were members of clearly segregated, working class or delinquent troops that were dependent on outside funding and leadership.  

BSA administrators promised that Scouting’s universal program and its mixing of poor and rich boys with middle class boys could heal class tensions and help all members
develop a modest manliness more conducive to a modern, democratic American society. BSA leaders criticized snobbery by both the poor and the rich. Eliminating Baden-Powell’s invectives against workers and insisting that members remain neutral in strikes allowed the BSA to establish a common masculine ground with labor leaders on values like a steady work ethic, group loyalty, and patriotism. The BSA kept most Socialist and other radical groups at bay without actively antagonizing them. At the same time, national Scout leaders advised local councils to not change the core program to attract more working class and poor boys. Many BSA national and local leaders clung to the notion that poverty resulted from the poor character and decision-making of individuals rather than larger economic structures and trends. It took years of widespread destitution – seeing men of all races and classes standing in Depression bread lines – to change some leaders’ opinion about the character capacities of working class and poor boys.33

“A Catholic has equal rights”: The BSA’s Catholic and Polish concessions

BSA national leaders believed that Scout training and a dose of the outdoor life might alleviate some of the deleterious effects of the urban environment and foreign parents on new white immigrant boys’ character. Popular and academic theories stated that immigrants from southern and eastern Europe belonged to distinct Slavic or Jewish races, but had somewhat better character than blacks and Native Americans. Nativists feared that new white immigrants’ loyalty to Catholicism or Judaism interfered with proper character development and Americanization. Administrators hoped that new white immigrants would join Scouting to balance out their presumably clannish and selfish character and increase BSA membership. BSA officials worked to prevent
Catholic and Polish groups from running their own Scout organizations because they made the BSA look partisan and would divide rather than unite American society. At the same time, some BSA national officials worried that making special recruiting efforts or adjustments to attract new white immigrants would be undemocratic and set such boys up as a special class in Scouting and American society.

New immigrants also hoped that Scouting could teach their boys balanced manliness, but the balance they had in mind was between mainstream American culture and that of their specific mother country and religion. New immigrants initially hesitated to join the BSA because they feared it was a militaristic, white Anglo-Saxon protestant [WASP] conversion factory. They threatened to establish independent Scout organizations if they could not control their own troops’ membership and programming. Separate troops within the BSA encouraged their boys to maintain a dual patriotism and a distinct cultural or religious identity while demonstrating their good character and civic leadership to the broader public. Catholic, Polish, and Mormon leaders sought and received permission from BSA headquarters to operate their own troops that excluded outsiders. BSA national officials also agreed to Polish leaders’ demands that Polish could serve as the language of Scout instruction. Such concessions could be justified in the early 1910s as being nonpartisan or allowing institutional sponsors democratic self-determination in troop matters. After America’s entry into World War I, however, new immigrants’ freedom to balance a dual culture and patriotism in their interpretations of Scout masculine and civic teachings became increasingly circumscribed.

Key leaders of American Catholic churches (dominated by working class immigrants living in urban enclaves) expressed concern in the early 1910s that the BSA
would teach their boys martial values and turn them into Protestants. German and Irish Catholics also disliked the elite English origins of Scouting. *The Holy Name Journal* of New York suggested the formation of a separate “Holy Name Scouts” to ensure that Catholic boys lived up to their religious responsibilities without falling prey to the influence of Protestantism or atheism. At the very least, Catholic leaders wanted the power to appoint their own Scoutmasters and exclude boys who were not in their parishes.\(^{34}\)

In order to win over Catholic immigrants, the predominantly WASP national leadership had to ramp up its courtship efforts in a manner that treaded a fine line between self-determination and setting up Catholics as a special class in the organization. James West denied the charge that Catholics were barred from BSA leadership in 1912, “In fact, we will not recognize a Scout council unless the Catholics are proportionately represented on the Council…A Catholic has equal rights and is just as eligible to an office as a Protestant, and has never been and never will be discriminated against in any way.” The BSA national office stated that councils should have Catholic representation on their boards and should admit Catholic boys, policies which were not extended to blacks, Asian-Americans, or Native Americans. BSA administrators appointed Victor Ridder as National Commissioner for Scout Work in the Catholic Churches in 1913 and created the Catholic Bureau in 1914. BSA officials conceded to the demand of Catholic troop leaders that they be allowed to exclude boys who did not belong to their parishes.\(^{35}\)

Starting in 1917, the National Catholic War Council increased the number of Catholic Scout troops as part of the American bishops’ patriotic drive to support the war effort. The troop drive offered proof that immigrant Catholics would be loyal to the
United States instead of to the Vatican or their homelands. Even the Pope added his blessing in 1919 for Scouting in “distinctly Catholic troops.” Notre Dame University offered a Scoutmasters’ training session in 1920. The Knights of Columbus, the Catholic men’s fraternal organization, adopted Scouting as the association’s official youth program in 1922. Given that many American Catholics were immigrants from southern and eastern Europe or Mexico, the gradual growth of Catholic troops reflected a modest but not proportional increase in the number of white ethnic minorities in the BSA. Scout officials continued to complain that it was hard to attract Catholics in new areas unless a trusted insider like Brother Barnabas came and spoke to them.36

Building on the special policies created for Catholics, Mormon leaders adopted Boy Scouting as the religion’s official youth program based on the conditions that troops be allowed to exclude non-Mormons and that a Mormon be given a special BSA commission to be in charge of all Mormon troops. Boy Scouting’s modest manliness and emphasis on civic and spiritual duty fit neatly with Mormon teachings. Support for Scouting allowed Mormons to demonstrate their good character and patriotism in an era when many Protestants considered them to be immoral heretics. The Mormon Young Men’s Mutual Improvement Association took up Scouting by 1913. Being a Mormon boy became synonymous with being a Boy Scout. Today, Mormon troops form the largest and most powerful single block amongst BSA troop sponsors.37

While some Orthodox leaders established separate Jewish BSA troops, many reform Jewish leaders hoped Scouting in religiously-integrated community troops would directly mainstream and Americanize Jewish boys. Jewish leaders were so successful in their promotion of Scouting that Jewish boys became overrepresented in the organization
relative to their portion of the population. Mortimer Schiff, the Jewish President of Sears, Roebuck and Company, was a leading BSA donor and member of its national finance committee. He hoped Scouting would improve relations between Christians and Jews and combat the spread of communism. He was even named BSA President in 1931, but died a few months later.\textsuperscript{38}

BSA national leaders’ second major form of new immigrant outreach involved the Polish Scouts of America [PSA], a branch of the Polish National Alliance [PNA]. The PSA was modeled after the \textit{Harcestwo} Scouting organization in Poland, which emphasized Polish nationalism and culture. James West argued in 1914 that the two groups should merge because the PSA had infringed on BSA copyright by publishing three of its own pamphlets. In exchange for agreeing to the complete BSA program and transferring its nine thousand members, the PSA was offered two spots on the BSA National Council and one Special Field Scout Commissioner. BSA national leaders also agreed that the Boy Scout handbook could be translated into Polish and that Scout instruction could be done in Polish. The merger failed when BSA officials refused PNA leaders’ new demand for a semi-independent branch with a separate badge and rules. The PNA argued that it needed to maintain a distinct branch due to the trouble its people encountered both in America and abroad.\textsuperscript{39}

BSA headquarters was more amenable to a request to train men belonging to a Polish fraternal organization, the Polish Falcons Alliance of America, to lead BSA troops. The Falcons, formed by PNA members and once linked to that organization, combined physical education and military drill with instilling Polish language and cultural pride into its young men. BSA national leaders sent a field officer who, aided by
a translator, guided a two-month-long Scoutmaster training course in the summer of 1914 for fifty-eight Falcons. The PNA provided facilities for the Polish Falcons’ Scoutmaster training course at its Alliance College at Cambridge Springs, Pennsylvania.40

BSA national leaders’ agreement with the Polish Falcons helped solidify three important procedures for dealing with racial and ethnic minority groups. First, the national office demanded that all white, troop-based Scouting groups be under its direct jurisdiction; it refused requests for independent branches. Second, national leaders encouraged local officials to require that boy troops be led by a person of that ethnicity or race. Finally, early BSA administrators worried about finding men from minority groups who they deemed worthy of leading troops, so they focused on selecting and training minority adult Scoutmasters instead of on actively recruiting as many minority boys as possible. Minority Scoutmaster applicants were expected to undergo intensive Scout training before receiving their troop commissions. The national office did not require “Old Stock” Americans to attend such courses, although it increasingly recommended that they volunteer for training. Catholic, Polish, and Mormon leaders seemed content with these stipulations in exchange for permission to run exclusive BSA troops.41

Scouting’s “great melting pot of boyhood”

The BSA displayed some latitude on multiple national loyalties in the early 1910s to attract Catholic and Polish groups, but the Great War strengthened administrators’ belief that single-minded American patriotism was essential to modest, balanced manliness and civic training. The organization’s Americanization rhetoric, which peaked alongside broader society’s “100% Americanism” movement between 1915 and 1921,
revealed BSA leaders’ growing concern about new immigrants’ work ethic, patriotism, and honesty. BSA Americanization resembled the inclusive but assimilationist “civic nationalism” defined by historian Gary Gerstle. Historians have argued that women social workers and settlement houses often tried to Americanize by teaching immigrant women proper habits and values, but during the war era WASP BSA national administrators viewed the immigrant problem and its solution in terms of a defective masculinity. BSA administrators envisioned a circumscribed set of masculine values appropriate for immigrant boys. They hoped that these transformed Scouts might Americanize their parents. However, administrators spent more time talking about including new immigrants in Scouting than they did actual recruiting in the second half of the 1910s and the 1920s. A few local officials took initiative to reach out to immigrants, but these groups remained underrepresented in Scouting into the Depression.42

The sketch in Figure 5.1 from the Chicago News, reprinted in the 1915 BSA Annual Report, juxtaposed the Boy Scout’s balanced, modest manliness with immigrants’ excessive, divided masculinity. Scattered about the room and in the trash can were the problems created by the faulty character of immigrant Americans. Uncle Sam’s worries about “Hyphen Stuff” and “Foreign Spies in U.S.” referred to native-born white fears that southern and eastern European immigrants and German-Americans were more loyal to their mother countries or Catholicism than to the American war effort. The sketch associated immigrant men’s character with political corruption in the forms of graft and “pork.” Instead of being patriotic, the hyphenated Americans were either apathetic or selfish in their partisan greed. Uncle Sam gazed in a fatherly manner at a young boy member while holding a list of the Scout’s masculine virtues. Uncle Sam smiled in
recognition that Scouting could teach immigrants the loyalty, courage, chivalry, and kindness needed to shore up their faulty manhood and divided patriotism.43

Figure 5.1 1915 BSA Annual Report, 113.

BSA national leaders claimed that Scouting could solve the immigrant problem and help win the war by blending the variety of immigrant strains into a unified and balanced American manhood. BSA Executive Board member Theodore Roosevelt, Jr., argued in a speech at the 1919 National Council annual meeting that Scout troops and camping would have a democratizing and Americanizing effect on immigrants similar to that of World War I army regiments, “All those [soldiers] considered themselves Americans and nothing else. They would not have tolerated a question of any allegiance to any so-termed ‘old country’…It got him right out of the frame of mind that he belonged to any particular strata. It de-internationalized him, but – it nationalized him.”
Roosevelt concluded that returning soldiers would make ideal Scoutmasters. BSA publications advised local units to perform the “melting pot” skit as a public fundraiser. In the most popular version, boys of various European nationalities (or “Old Stock” boys dressed as ethnic minorities) entered into a cauldron of Americanism and emerged as neatly uniformed Scouts.44

The Great War strengthened BSA leaders’ belief that Scouting’s balanced, modest manliness could serve as a broad Americanization platform. Scouting magazine defined Americanization in 1919 as an emphasis on thrift, using the English language, cooperation through the troop and patrol spirit, and maintaining American standards of living, nutrition, and childcare. The author noted that Scout outdoorsmanship was one popular method of converting immigrants: “And we thought the cooking tests were fun! Here they are in the guise of Americanization.” Promoting “Safe and Sane” Fourth of July practices was a key opportunity to teach immigrants proper patriotism, safety, and self-control. The author added that Americanization should resist antagonistic propaganda, eliminate causes of immigrants’ misunderstanding, and work to eliminate cultural prejudice and the segregation of immigrant communities. Dan Beard informed boy members in 1919 that it was their duty to learn about America so that they could inform people of foreign birth about its meaning: “This is the melting pot of the world, all races come here, but when they come they must leave their race behind, they must come here to join us, to be one of us.”45

The 1920 BSA Annual Report argued that immigrant boys who participated in Scouting’s “great melting pot of boyhood” helped sew seeds of sympathy and loyalty for America amongst their parents and bring “scout lessons of cleanliness, health, safety and
happiness into practical application in their own homes.” A key example of this was a 1921 service project in which Boy Scouts helped the federal Commissioner of Naturalization in the Department of Labor distribute pamphlets to forty-five thousand immigrants in three hundred and thirty-eight communities. The publications encouraged adults to apply for naturalization and attend English language and citizenship classes. One article noted that Scout tracking skills came in handy when locating immigrants who had moved. Given that some of the Boy Scouts delivering these pamphlets were likely immigrants, the project served a dual Americanization purpose.\textsuperscript{46}

BSA leaders’ plans fell in the middle of the spectrum of Americanization ideologies. They came to reject the pluralist notion that immigrant cultures were of equal worth and could co-exist in American society, but they fell far short of immigration restriction efforts and the Klu Klux Klan’s [KKK] virulent nativism. KKK members sent a note to the 1924 BSA Executives national training conference threatening to pull their children out of Scouting if the organization continued to accept Jewish, Catholic, and black boys. James West wrote to a prominent Scout supporter that, despite the fact that both organizations emphasized 100\% Americanism, the BSA wanted no affiliation with the KKK because “[t]he Twelfth Scout Law so definitely covers the principle involved that there can be no question where the Boy Scouts of America stands.” The Twelfth Law instructed boys to respect other people’s religions, so West was defending Jewish and Catholic immigrants’ participation in Scouting. If he had wanted to stand up for blacks’ right to Scout, West would have referred to the Fourth Law on being friendly to all people and a brother to every other Scout.\textsuperscript{47}
For over a decade, BSA national leaders toyed with the idea of making concerted efforts to recruit what they came to term “white nationality groups” (generally eastern and southern European and Hispanic immigrants), but they took few tangible actions. One obstacle was figuring out how BSA national leaders could take an active role in recruiting more immigrant boys without setting them up as a separate class within the organization and American society. The National Council sent a resolution to the Executive Board in 1922 that reaching immigrant boys should be emphasized in Scout literature and that special instructions should be provided to local officials on how to do so, but the Executive Board and national office did little to help. Local council Executives debated at their 1924 national training conference if basic information pamphlets on the Scout program should be translated for immigrant parents in order to encourage enlistment. Some Executives claimed that the pamphlets could convince parents that the BSA was not teaching anything contrary to their religion or culture, but others felt that it was un-American to discourage immigrants from learning to read English. In 1927, the BSA Inter-Racial Service [IRS] stated its intention to expand Scout outreach efforts to white nationality groups. It translated two basic information pamphlets on Scouting into Spanish, Lithuanian, and Polish in 1929. The IRS suggested that year that “foreign-born boys” be mixed with native-born white boys where possible to “bring them more quickly into full American citizenship with respect for our laws and institutions and a desire to upbuild the community.” However, the IRS offered little practical advice on how to overcome the resistance of both native-born white and immigrant groups to ethnically-integrated Scouting.48
A few local officials took it upon themselves to make special efforts to recruit white nationality groups. Their decision seems to have been motivated by the belief that immigrant boys were inclined to inferior character and juvenile delinquency, especially if left to their own devices and poor environmental influences. James West reported in a 1919 *Boys’ Life* article that Manhattan’s East Side troops served as “a practical illustration of the power of scouting for Americanization.” From 1912 to 1919, thirteen thousand boys from various immigrant groups had “passed through the ‘Americanization mill’ of the Scout Movement beside the East River, and come out good American citizens.” West argued that these transformed immigrant boys taught important Scout hygiene and patriotism lessons to their parents; some delivered war literature to “foreign homes.” West noted that area member retention and growth was high, with eight hundred boys in twenty-five troops in 1919 – all led by ex-Scouts. C.E. Meinecke stated in 1928 that, since Buffalo was more than sixty percent immigrant, local officials had been using Scouting since 1923 to instill “honorable citizenship” into Polish boys destined “to become so-called ‘American citizens.’” He argued that each “foreign group” required special study and methods. Buffalo leaders insisted that immigrant Scouting could help prevent juvenile delinquency. They paid a field director to work full-time with Polish boys and hold special Scoutmaster training sessions for Polish men. The Buffalo council reported that eight hundred Polish boys had been reached by 1936.49

Despite such initiatives, a cursory 1929 survey of local councils by the Inter-Racial Service found that the participation of white nationality groups in Scouting remained limited. The report tallied one hundred Spanish troops and one hundred Polish troops in the United States. It noted an unspecified “large number” of Lithuanian, Italian,
and other immigrant troops, but the fact that these groups were not prominent enough in Scouting to give even a rough count suggests that the number of each was considerably less than one hundred troops. The IRS, however, soon lost interest in recruiting white nationality groups – perhaps a casualty of the dislocations and budget cuts caused by the Depression. Moreover, some local council Executives at national training conferences in the 1930s questioned if the purview of the Inter-Racial Service, originally designed to promote black and Native American Scouting, should include white nationality groups. The 1936 Commission on White Nationality Groups performed the first extensive study on Scouting amongst immigrants. It concluded that Scouting was still not readily available to them because BSA leaders had largely failed to actively cultivate the support of immigrant institutions for sponsoring troops.50

BSA leaders believed that Scouting’s masculine and civic teachings and outdoor environment could help balance the character of white immigrant boys and transform them into useful, loyal worker-citizens. BSA sources suggested that Scouting’s modest manliness and leadership training might have to be simplified for white nationality groups with somewhat inferior character and corrupt living environments. Administrators made several concessions in the early 1910s in terms of special field commissioners, troop exclusivity, and instructional languages to prevent splinter organizations and to attract new immigrants from southern and eastern Europe to the BSA. Despite making few substantial outreach efforts to recruit white nationality groups, BSA national leaders continued to promote Scouting as the great American melting pot long after the broader Americanization movement had subsided.
The character of urban, town, and open country boys

BSA national leaders viewed class and ethnic issues as intertwined with the different environments in which boys lived. The Norman Rockwell sketch in Figure 5.2 and the play it accompanied in a 1915 issue of Boys’ Life located the modest Scout camp orderly between the excessively-modern, urban working class tough and the backward rural farmer, neatly capturing BSA national leaders’ belief that extremes of population density skewed boy character development and undercut Scout recruitment chances. The sketch and play suggested that rural and big city environments both fostered narrow character in boys. In the play, the Scout enlightened the other two figures by explaining the BSA’s balanced manliness.51

Figure 5.2 Norman Rockwell sketch, Boys’ Life (Oct. 1915): 20.
In the 1910s and 1920s, Scout officials spoke in terms of three demographic categories of boys: urban, town, and open country or rural. BSA leaders saw the small-to medium-sized town environment as most conducive to modest manliness, but they also believed that these areas were at risk in a modernizing society. Administrators worried that exposure to immigrant culture and precocious lifestyles made big city boys selfish and prone to juvenile delinquency. BSA sources suggested that open country farm boys were resourceful and self-reliant, but also individualistic and backward. BSA supporters argued that it was difficult to teach Scouting’s group hierarchy, civic service, and scientific efficiency to farm boys. Administrators’ belief about the different characters of these three groups of boys helped shape the BSA’s vision of modest manliness, programming decisions, and recruitment patterns.⁵²

Ostensibly, boys in big cities should have been the primary target for BSA leaders since they endured greater exposure to such perceived character-damaging influences as immigrant street culture, mass entertainment, and overly-specialized jobs. Social Gospel leader Lyman Beecher Stowe declared in 1911 that while American boys had previously developed into strong, resourceful, and well-rounded men, “[t]he specialization of industry and its consequent concentration in great cities and large towns has produced in our day a quite different boy.” Stowe argued that gambling, smoking, and watching movies and professional athletes made the city boy “physically weak, unreliant, unresourceful and ill developed in body and mind.” He suggested that Scouting’s outdoor life and varied training might remedy this: “In a word, the object of the Boy Scout organization…is to restore that which city life takes away from the majority of boys, opportunity for character development through wholesome play and contact with
natural objects.” Serving a larger number of boys from the same council office and summer camp made it cheaper to run urban Scouting in terms of cost per boy. Furthermore, the higher concentration of boys in big cities should have made it easier to recruit the full number recommended for troops and council-wide competitions.\textsuperscript{53}

The BSA’s critical perspective on city life and its people seems to have deterred rather than attracted urban youth; the organization recruited a much lower percentage of available urban boys than town boys. BSA national leaders suggested that urban environments’ sensory overload and immigrant cultures and parents spawned “street gamins,” “wharf rats,” and “toughs” who were less capable of modest, balanced manliness and thus a threat to the character development of leading boy members. Administrators claimed to provide an antidote to the strains of the modern city, but Scouting’s outdoor adventure was out of the reach of many tenement boys. Towns with between one and five thousand residents supported Scout troops (per one hundred available boys) in 1925 at a rate nearly three-and-a-half times greater than that of cities with over one million residents.\textsuperscript{54}

Boy Scouting was impractical and of little appeal to many city boys. The high cost, time demands, and militaristic tone of Scouting turned away many urban working class and immigrant boys and parents. Outdoor skills held little relevance for urban boys without the requisite free time or access to nature areas. Scouting faced greater competition in big cities in terms of leisure offerings; the nickelodeon, dance hall, amusement park, and heterosocial youth culture may have pulled many city boys away from Scout membership. Early BSA national leaders also rejected program changes that might have encouraged more urban boys to participate in Scouting. Administrators
increased fees and uniform requirements and discouraged boys who wanted to Scout alone in order to accommodate their work schedules. From the perspective of BSA leaders, Scouting outside of the troop context would have reinforced urban working class boys’ assumed selfishness and unwillingness to obey authority. The BSA national Badges and Awards Committee denied a 1916 request that an exception be made for city boys on the Bird Study merit badge requirement of identifying fifty birds in the open: “He suggests that museum work be supplemented by field work for city boys. This is not in the spirit of scouting, which aims to bring the city boy out in the country, therefore, it is recommended that no exception be made.”

The BSA recruited best in small-to medium-sized towns, particularly those with between one and five thousand residents. Towns had enough boys to form viable troops and were relatively homogenous and socially cohesive. Native-born white, town boys were the standard point of BSA reference; they were usually referred to as “boys” without any modifying terms. The organization’s leaders argued that Scouting could protect town boys from pernicious influences during the susceptible period of adolescence so that racial-character evolution could take its natural course. BSA officials cited dead-end jobs, unsupervised leisure time, and the feminized home, church, and school as primary threats to town boys. Scouting’s solution was to protect town boys from feminine influences by having Scoutmasters develop their modest manliness via troop socialization, outdoorismanship, and civic service.

Budget and adult recruitment factors also contributed to Scouting’s success with town boys. Town councils spent more money on each boy member than did big city councils, suggesting that local residents donated proportionately more money to
Scouting. This meant either that town boys had to pay less of their own money to Scout, or that town councils provided a richer Scouting experience by supplementing boys’ regular contributions. Both scenarios would have aided recruitment. Councils in towns and small cities maintained a higher ratio of adult supervision. This was partly due to having smaller troops, but finding “worthy,” willing Scoutmasters also seemed easier in towns. These and other advantages helped the BSA achieve greater Scout recruitment rates and rank advancement in towns than in urban and rural areas.57

**Scouting for the country boy**

Related to historians’ belief that Boy Scouting emphasized primitive virility is their assumption that the organization idealized the “country boy myth,” a nostalgic remembrance of the freedom of nineteenth century rural boyhood. The country boy myth praised the life of boys in rural areas for being uncontaminated by urbanization, industrialization, immigration, and feminization. Rural boys also had an intimate knowledge of nature and easy access to hiking and camping areas, so one might assume that they would have made ideal Scout recruits. In many ways, however, rural masculinity and mores were at odds with BSA ideology and practice. A 1925 survey estimated that the organization recruited only one out of every fifty-seven available rural boys. The national average was then close to one Scout for every eight available boys, so BSA rural recruitment was dismal compared to town and even urban rates. The few BSA authors and speakers who addressed rural manhood, especially as the organization matured after 1911, tended to depict the small, independent farmer as ignorant,
inefficient, and unscientific – the opposite of Scouting’s modest manliness and those attributes needed in a modern society and workforce.\textsuperscript{58}

The glaring mismatch between the BSA’s masculine and civic teachings and the vast number of rural residents created distinct problems for an organization whose leaders claimed to provide a universal program appealing and welcoming to all American boys. BSA national administrators tried to justify poor rural recruitment rates with the claim that country boys had less need for Scout character training. They were too busy doing heavy farm work under their fathers’ supervision to become feminized by mothers and teachers. Farm boys were immune to the dangerous, unsupervised leisure time of town and urban schoolboys. BSA officials viewed rural areas as safe from the corruption of street life, mass leisure, and “foreign elements.” On the practical side, farm boys were too spread out to form full troops, which meant they could not partake of the gang method central to Boy Scouting. Two New York State Scoutmasters argued in 1916 that rural recruitment was also hindered by the lack of competent merit badge examiners, effective methods to deliver instruction, willing Scoutmasters, and Good Turn opportunities. They noted that Scout hiking and camping did not appeal to rural boys who were already doing that on their own. The relatively high cost of Scouting discouraged rural boys from joining, much as it did working class and non-white boys. At the same time, BSA national administrators suggested that the rural environment produced boys unfit for an increasingly urban, industrial, and interdependent society. If BSA masculine and civic training was inappropriate for rural boys, then what type of program could properly develop their character?\textsuperscript{59}
William D. Boyce, the BSA’s founder, had argued from the organization’s birth that it needed to do more for isolated boys. He hoped to provide Scouting opportunities for the army of boys who sold his newspapers in rural areas and small hamlets across the country. Chief Scout Executive James West and the rest of the BSA National Council disagreed, insisting that the troop experience was essential to Scouting and that the BSA’s farm merit badges and the federal 4-H Club youth program met the needs of rural boys. Boyce, frustrated by their disdain for rural boys and by the BSA’s growing bureaucracy, created the independent Lone Scouts of America organization [LSA] in January 1915. He based his new organization on the British Lone Scout program, created by maverick Scout leader John Hargrave in 1913. Hargrave had borrowed heavily from Ernest Thompson Seton’s Woodcraft Indians program. Boyce hired Frank Allan Morgan, the popular Scoutmaster of Chicago’s largest BSA troop, to develop the LSA’s seven progressive degree booklets and to edit the new Lone Scout magazine. Morgan stated that the focus on primitive Indian lore and outdoormanship was appropriate for rural boys. Rural boys instantly gravitated to Lone Scouting. Moreover, urban working class boys and other boys outside the American mainstream flocked to Lone Scouting. The LSA registered thirty thousand boys in its first few months and one hundred thirty-three thousand in its first year.60

Lone Scouts, who joined as individuals, enjoyed much more autonomy than troop-based Boy Scouts. There was no immediate adult supervision or intermediary local or regional offices. Lone Scouts did most of their work individually using Boyce and Morgan’s degree pamphlets and magazine. Boys paid a one-time fee of five cents (or sold a small number of Boyce’s newspapers), worked the program at their own pace and
schedule, supervised their own examinations, and asked the LSA national office for the appropriate badge insignia when they passed. Boy writings about their activities and concerns gradually made up most of the content of *The Lone Scout* magazine. Members sent in so many letters and articles that the post office had to establish a separate branch for the magazine. With Boyce’s encouragement, the boys also set up over two thousand independent, amateur Lone Scout newsletters, ranging from one hand-written page to fifty, near-professional typed pages.\(^6\)

The creation of the LSA apparently motivated the BSA to start its own rural branch, but BSA officials seemed to have serious misgivings about the applicability of Boy Scouting to farm boys. The program was originally called the Lone Scouts, perhaps an effort to persuade Boyce to give up his separate organization. BSA leaders settled on the name Pioneer Scouts by August 1916. Any individual boy could join Boyce’s LSA, but the BSA’s Pioneers accepted only those who could demonstrate that it was impossible to join a regular Scout troop. A 1916 *Scouting* article explained that the BSA did not want a boy who “didn’t get along with the fellows…doesn’t like the scoutmaster,” or was just too lazy to hike a few miles to go to troop meetings. Even after they were admitted, Pioneers had to make every effort to join an existing troop or to start a new one. The BSA heavily curtailed Native American imagery in the Pioneer Scouts. Pioneers followed the regular Boy Scout advancement plan and had to find a teacher, pastor, or employer to judge them on tests.\(^6\)

In short, BSA Pioneering eliminated the very things that made Boyce’s Lone Scouting distinct and appealing to rural and other isolated boys. Either BSA administrators did not actually want such boys in their organization, or they believed it
was inappropriate to focus boy socialization on individualism, self-reliance, and primitivism. Even with the World War I boom in general BSA membership, the number of Pioneers barely topped one thousand in 1918. The creation of an official “Pioneer Division” headed by Armstrong Perry in 1919 did little to increase rural membership because BSA administrators refused to loosen requirements or invest significant money or time into developing a more appropriate program. For the BSA’s first thirteen years, its national leaders had great difficulty and little interest in recruiting rural boys.\textsuperscript{63}

BSA administrators began making more of an effort to recruit rural boys in 1923. New “area councils” covered a larger geographical region and more “open country” boys than did traditional, city-based councils. The BSA hired Regional Deputies in 1923 to organize troops in tiny hamlets around the country. BSA rural outreach received a boost from railroad companies that began paying special Executives to promote Scouting in sparsely-populated areas along their lines. Several factors may help explain these policy initiatives. Officials had prided themselves on the organization’s rapid membership growth; rural boys were a largely untapped source of BSA recruits. BSA bureaucrats obsessed with statistics on growth, efficiency, and comprehensive council coverage seemed displeased about the large number of boys not under local council leadership. Finally, BSA administrators had tried but failed since 1916 to get Boyce to merge his Lone Scouts organization into the BSA. The idea of the BSA’s founder having to run a separate Scouting organization to serve the needs of rural boys was likely a sore spot for BSA administrators.\textsuperscript{64}

Stanley Harris, a BSA Field Officer stationed in the predominantly rural southeast who later served as the director of the Inter-Racial Service, devised the area council to
reach out to open country boys formerly under the loose supervision of the national office. Until the 1920s, local councils primarily served towns and cities. Mortimer Schiff, President of Sears, Roebuck and Company and a long-time BSA Executive Board member, pledged six thousand dollars in matching funds to each of the twelve regional councils for open country outreach efforts. The offer resulted in the 1923 hiring of twenty-four regional council deputies, whose job was to move from hamlet to hamlet drumming up troops and Scout committeemen like traveling salesmen. They met with town mayors, school boards, clergy, and businessmen to encourage the formation of area councils with a circuit-riding Executive who serviced several surrounding towns.65

In contrast to early Boy Scout troops and councils which were started on local initiative, BSA growth in isolated areas often had to be top-down from the regional and national offices. The areas covered by local council increased dramatically in the second half of the 1920s, but this did not result in a major change in rural recruitment rates. A 1920 BSA Five Year Field expansion program had estimated that a population of twenty thousand residents was needed to support a local council, but experience proved that this was often not enough. Many area councils failed due to conflict over national Scout requirements: providing volunteer training, centralized council camps, and offices to sell supplies and keep records. Friction between neighboring towns made agreement on area councils, leadership, and distribution of funds difficult.66

Starting in 1923, select railroad companies paid special Executives to promote Boy Scouting in small settlements along their rail lines in hopes of deterring vandalism that damaged railroad property and developing good future workers. The Railroad Scout Executives, much like the BSA Regional Deputies, tried to organize roughly two troops a
month in towns of five hundred to one thousand residents. They met with the local school superintendent, ministers, bank president, department store owner, and other businessmen to get support for each troop. Railroad workers belonging to company unions sometimes served on the troop committees. Wallace D. Macbride, the Delaware and Hudson Railroad Scout Executive, reported that railroad administrators were worried about the character development of boys who visited illegal brothels and speakeasies to wake railroad employees up for night duty and bring them beer and groceries. Local boys shot out or threw rocks at train windows, injuring passengers and crews. They planted obstructions to derail the trains. Boys walking the tracks to pick up spilled coal or to take shortcuts were sometimes run over and killed. BSA national officials agreed in 1929 to cooperate with policemen from the Delaware and Hudson Railroad in dealing with boys who were involved in trespassing or other minor delinquencies – especially in places “where there was a preponderance of foreign people.” The Scout Executive hinted that delinquents might be paroled into Scouting instead of being arrested. Railroad owners also hoped that Scouting would transform some small hamlet boys into loyal, efficient employees. Figure 5.3 captures Boy Scouts of Missoula, Montana running the Rocky Mountain Division of the Northern Pacific Railroad for a day in 1925. Railroad workers helped Boy Scouts perform the tasks of mechanics, trainmasters, dispatchers, engineers, roadmasters, agents, and foremen.67

[Figure removed for copyright compliance.]

Figure 5.3 Frank Rigney sketch, New York Times (Aug. 9, 1925): XX13.
The railroad companies enjoyed reasonable success with Scouting for their relatively small investment. The first and apparently most involved of the eight companies, the Missouri Pacific, reported that it had recruited almost five thousand Scouts in 178 troops between 1923 and 1929. Scouting helped cut railroad losses from boy vandalism and trespassing dramatically, but the Depression curtailed this type of open country outreach. By 1931, only the Delaware and Hudson and the Missouri Pacific were still paying Scout Executives. As BSA area councils grew in number and geographical coverage, they took over supervision of some troops started by the Railroad Scout Executives. BSA area councils, regional deputies, and Railroad Executives represented an improvement over the Pioneer branch in bringing Scouting to farm boys; however, the BSA’s high costs, fixed schedule, and continued emphasis on troop hierarchy over self-reliance resulted in only modest gains in rural recruitment.

The BSA’s failed transformation of Lone Scouting

BSA national leaders’ most important and revealing open country outreach effort was the failed 1924 absorption of William D. Boyce’s independent Lone Scouts organization. The takeover stemmed partly from BSA administrators’ desire to expand Scout membership by reaching out to marginalized groups in society, but the particular way in which BSA national leaders merged the Lone Scouts into the parent organization revealed either a true lack of awareness of rural life or a stubborn desire to radically transform the character of country boys. BSA administrators also hoped to monopolize American Scouting and protect the organization’s royalty income. On the surface, the merger instantly increased the BSA’s rural membership and presence. Despite being
informed by their own officials of why Lone Scouting succeeded where Boy Scouting failed in rural recruitment, BSA administrators insisted on converting the rural program into traditional troop Boy Scouting and promptly lost most of Boyce’s membership.

Prior to the merger, Lone Scouting’s emphasis on self-reliance, autonomy, and Indian lore made the program far more attractive to rural boys than the BSA’s Pioneers had been. The BSA Pioneers peaked at 1,224 boys, while Boyce’s Chicago office boasted 523,470 LSA members to date at the time of the merger with the BSA. This figure included every boy who ever subscribed to the Lone Scout magazine or paid the small, one-time membership fee. Since a Lone Scout did not register annually, it was difficult to pinpoint “active” membership. Perhaps one hundred and fifty thousand boys considered themselves active members at the time of the merger with the BSA.69

Starting with the key May 1910 meeting, BSA administrators had worked to absorb splinter Scout organizations in order to have a monopoly on American Scout programming and prevent competition. A recent biography of Boyce argued that the creation of the LSA prompted BSA administrators to resume efforts to get a federal charter, which was achieved in June 1916. One key benefit of the federal charter was a legal monopoly on the use of the word “Scout” and its derivatives in the United States. This helped BSA administrators discourage new Scout organizations from forming. However, trying to eliminate the LSA proved to be trickier. The LSA was started by the BSA’s corporate founder prior to the granting of the federal charter, so it had some “vested right” to its name. Moreover, the LSA did not directly compete with the BSA for membership since the LSA was designed primarily to serve a rural clientele whom most
BSA administrators had shown relatively little interest in recruiting. BSA officials’ half-hearted efforts to persuade Boyce to merge the LSA into the BSA made little headway.\textsuperscript{70}

Perhaps the most important impetus for absorbing the LSA was that its existence came to threaten what had become an essential independent source of income for the BSA national office: product royalties for use of the name Scout. From 1916 to 1924, BSA administrators had used the monopoly on the word Scout provided by the organization’s federal charter to persuade over four hundred companies to stop producing items carrying the name Scout or to pay the BSA a royalty for doing so. In 1924, the BSA national office drew almost sixty-four thousand dollars (approximately eighteen percent of its income for the year) from royalty fees on these Scout items. The BSA drew another sixty-five thousand dollars from Scout supplies and publications that it sold directly. In other words, over a third of the BSA national office’s income hinged on its monopoly of the word Scout in manufactured items and publications.\textsuperscript{71}

This practice ran aground in 1923 when the Winchester Arms Company refused to pay the BSA a royalty for producing its “Winchester Scout” rifle. Winchester defense lawyers argued that the BSA, by knowingly permitting the Lone Scouts and the Girl Scouts of America organizations to exist, had forfeited its monopoly on the word “Scout.” Furthermore, the Girl Scouts had made arrangements with several companies to produce knives, axes, and other items with Scout names. If Winchester lawyers could convince a judge that the BSA had indeed forfeited its legal monopoly on the word Scout, then other organizations could form their own Scout programs and other companies could produce Scout items without paying the BSA a royalty. To undercut Winchester lawyers’
claims, BSA national leaders quickly ramped up their efforts to take over the LSA and to put the Girl Scouts out of business.72

Boyce agreed to the merger, and at first it appeared that the BSA might retain Lone Scouting’s successful rural character training methods. Armstrong Perry, the veteran Scoutmaster and former Secretary of the Brooklyn YMCA who had headed the BSA’s small Pioneer Division since 1919, delivered the first prominent speech on Lone Scouting by a BSA official at the 1924 national training conference for local council Executives. He stated that Boyce’s old program had allowed boys to be “self-governing” and “not dominated by adults.” Perry noted that, though “crude and boyish,” the LSA publications and rallies were the boys’ own work, were paid for out of their own pockets, and showed initiative. Boy leadership also reduced office overhead and the need for large membership fees. Perry argued that the polished, adult-led BSA rallies and publications contradicted the methods by which many of America’s great historical leaders had learned to do things for themselves. He voiced the concerns of many existing Lone Scouts with the BSA merger: “All of a sudden, without a moment’s warning, you hear that your organization has been turned over to another, in which the governing principle is not self-government but adult leadership.” Perry excerpted a letter from a North Carolina Lone Scout who demanded to know on whose authority the merger was enacted, since the LSA was “advertised as an organization of, for and by boys.” Perry concluded that the BSA had “no right to assume that the merger has passed over to us, as so many chattels, 50,000 boys or more to do with as we please.” He urged other BSA leaders to be democratic and take the opinions of existing Lone Scouts into account.73
Earlier at the conference, rural boys’ work expert Dr. Charles J. Galpin had suggested that the BSA cooperate with existing farm boys’ organizations instead of trying to promote traditional, troop-based Boy Scout character training in rural areas. He reported that he had written agricultural college leaders to ask if regular Boy Scouting could be “powerfully injected” into rural boys. They all replied, “No!” They explained that the farm boy did not need Boy Scouting, could not afford it, and was already being better served by organizations such as Lone Scouting and the 4-H Club. Dr. Galpin pointed out that existing rural youth organizations had broad popular and governmental support and totaled between three and four hundred thousand members. Farm parents appreciated the low cost of these programs, their emphasis on modern farming methods, and the fact that they kept boys under parents’ supervision instead of turning them over to “strangers.” Galpin concluded that any effort to challenge rural organizations with traditional Boy Scouting would end in certain failure.74

In 1926, the BSA national office hired O.H. Benson, the influential rural educator and “Father of the 4-H Movement,” to direct a new Department of Rural Scouting. Benson cooperated with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, agricultural colleges, farm journals, the Grange, rural schools, the 4-H Club, and other agencies in his efforts to bring Scouting to rural boys. One of Benson’s first projects was to interview over four hundred boys on why they had chosen to be Lone Scouts instead of regular Boy Scouts. Some rural boys, as expected, stated that there were not enough other boys around to make a regular Boy Scout troop. Benson’s farmhouse-to-farmhouse survey along a “typical” Iowa road found that some boys “had tried to join scout troops but had given up
the idea because of parental objections, transportation reasons during the winter, and work and chores during the summer [Scout camping] months.75

Benson’s survey also revealed that urban working class, handicapped, and younger Lone Scouts were ostracized by the BSA’s adult-led troops for adolescents. He reported that many urban working class boy interviewees who labored all day “have found it impossible to belong to scout troops and have therefore accepted lone scouting as their opportunity to become scouts.” A 1925 estimate reported that forty percent of LSA members lived in cities with over two-and-a-half thousand residents. Physically handicapped Lone Scouts told Benson they “can not without embarrassment undertake the work of a vigorous troop program and therefore naturally welcomed the lone scout method.” There was a large number of eager boys under twelve who might have joined the BSA if they had been allowed. A July 1927 Scout Executive article by Field Officer Malcolm C. Douglass, entitled “Scouting for the Other Boy,” echoed these findings. Douglass added that Lone Scouting also attracted “super-sensitive” boys who lacked self-confidence and the “seclusive boy,” who preferred “puttering with mechanisms, or perhaps reading or preparing various collections rather than the more ordinary hobbies: baseball, football and the other popular sports.”76

These four men, working first-hand with rural Scouting, concluded that Boyce’s Lone Scout character ideals and training methods effectively reached rural, urban working class, handicapped, individualistic, and “seclusive” boys whom regular troop Boy Scouting had consistently failed to attract. They argued that officials had a duty to study and use Boyce’s methods and alternative policies to help these groups find a home in the BSA. The 1927 administrative study of the BSA by consultant Mark M. Jones
found that the organization could not meet the needs of either rural or big city boys and that the whole program therefore needed to be reconsidered and revised. Despite these glaring reports, other BSA administrators narrowed Lone Scouting’s focus to recruiting farm boys. Moreover, BSA administrators soon transformed Boyce’s unique program into a domesticated form of adult-led troop Boy Scouting, causing Lone Scouting to quickly lose vitality and membership.\footnote{77}

BSA national leaders falsely claimed in a 1927 issue of the Scout Executive that they had discovered that rural boys did not need a different type of program like Boyce’s old Lone Scouting, but rather regular BSA troop Scouting on a smaller scale. The author argued that the BSA had met the LSA half-way by adding twelve more farm merit badges that year. The BSA had offered farm merit badges since 1911, so administrators probably knew that creating more of them without changing the basic Scout program and requirements would not attract many rural boys. The farm merit badges remained unpopular.\footnote{78}

BSA national leaders worked diligently in the late 1920s to force Lone Scouting into the Boy Scout mold by increasing adult supervision, deemphasizing Indian lore, and encouraging Lone Scouts to form troops and participate in BSA local council activities. BSA leaders eliminated the once-distinctive Lone Scout degree programs and tacked their names onto regular BSA rank tests. They made Lone Scouts adopt the BSA Oath and Laws and its more expensive handbook. The BSA raised Lone Scout membership fees from the original one-time outlay of five cents to fifty cents annually. Boyce’s LSA had allowed males of all ages and had quite a few active members in their twenties and thirties when the BSA took over. BSA administrators suggested that older Lone Scouts
instead become Tribe Chiefs or Guides. The BSA continued to exclude boys under twelve, which had been almost a third of Lone Scouting’s membership.  

The change instituted that most upset veteran Lone Scouts was the diminution of authority and independence granted to the boys. James West correctly identified that the major problem with the merger was that “[t]he essence of the Lone Scout plan is the boy absolutely on his own resources – ‘of boys, for boys and by boys.’ The essence of the Boy Scouts of America plan is in the provision and requirement of responsible adult male leadership.” BSA sources falsely claimed that Lone Scouting still operated through “self-government” after the takeover. A Grand Council with elected boy representatives from the different geographical regions of the country had guided Boyce’s Lone Scout organization. After the merger, the BSA national office moved all Lone Scouts into Region 13, which consisted of boy members in the territories and foreign countries. This reinforced the idea that rural Scouting was outside the American norm, literally placing Lone Scouts beyond the bounds of the nation with non-citizens and citizens abroad. BSA administrators appointed their own adult representative for this “region,” claiming that it was too far for any actual members of these groups to communicate or travel. The national office’s Region 13 representative also served as the new Chairman of the Lone Scout Grand Council. All Lone Scout business and official action had to be originated by him, whereas in Boyce’s program the Lone Scouts whom members elected to the Grand Council had the power to originate actions. Elected Lone Scout boy officers could make suggestions for consideration under the BSA, but it was up to the Chairman whether or not to place it on the agenda for discussion. In other words, the Lone Scouts’ Grand Council went from being run by democratically-elected boys and young men to being
completely controlled by an adult appointed by the BSA national office. The BSA national office also tried to commandeer local Lone Scout publications by deciding which ones to officially endorse.80

BSA national leaders pigeon-holed farm boys into a domestic role similar to that which they envisioned for Girl Scouts and, by 1930, for preadolescent Cub Scouts. The BSA’s version of Lone Scouting emphasized rural boys’ home duties and orientation, “The Lone Scout Program is a very distinct family circle program of Scouting…Lone Scouting is a distinct ‘Back-to-the-home’ movement, where boys who become Scouts are from the beginning encouraged in every way to ‘hike back home’ with Scouting and all of its benefits and through the home to build a better and finer Scout community.” BSA national leaders prodded town and urban adolescent boys to leave the feminized, sentimental home behind to learn advanced character for modern careers and leading citizenship. On the other hand, they argued that Lone Scouts, Cub Scouts, and Girl Scouts should stay in or return to the home. Such statements may have been an effort to alleviate rural parents’ expressed concern that troop Boy Scouting would undercut parental authority. Encouraging rural Scouts to stay on the family farm recalled the Country Life Movement promoted by Liberty Hyde Bailey and Theodore Roosevelt that romanticized farm life to bolster rural populations.81

Even after the takeover of the LSA, some BSA national leaders maintained a pejorative view of the traditional farmer. In a speech at a 1929 Scoutmasters’ training session at Columbia University, the BSA’s Director of Professional Training differentiated between the farmer and the agriculturalist. The haphazard farmer threw any type of seeds carelessly on the ground and was only able to eek out a meager living,
while the agriculturalist “studies his seed, properly evaluates their possibilities and then creates a type of environment and soil which allows the potentiality of the seed to unfold to its fullest possibility. If we, as agriculturalist Scoutmasters learn to create the proper environment and to know the true educational type of cultivation necessary to grow real projects in our Troops and Patrols, I am sure our work will be more effective.” The speaker suggested that the self-reliant, traditional farmer was an inappropriate role model for boys while the scientific, efficient agriculturalist exemplified the traits of good Scoutmasters. Some farmers eagerly adopted modern agricultural methods, but the speaker’s characterization of traditional farmers certainly would have put off many rural boys and parents.  

The BSA was not nearly as successful as Boyce had been at recruiting or retaining rural boys. After transferring some boys to troops and eliminating boys under twelve and the “deadwood” who no longer appeared active, the BSA’s Department of Rural Scouting tallied 68,756 Lone Scouts at the end of 1927. Despite expanding efforts amongst rural boys, the BSA reported only 14,361 registered Lone Scouts in 1928. Many Lone Scouts resented the program changes enough to quit. Significantly, many former LSA members continued their advancement programs and communication with each other outside of the purview of the BSA. The Elbeetian Legion and the Lone Indian Fellowship formed to maintain Lone Scout ties and publications. There may have been more active rogue Lone Scouts than official BSA Lone Scouts. Some Lone Scouts continue their relationships today; members hold reunions and have set up a museum dedicated to Lone Scout activities, newspapers, and memorabilia in North Carolina.
The BSA’s failed attempt to transform the Lone Scouts suggests that self-reliance and primitivism continued to appeal to boys on the margins of American society. Boyce’s Lone Scouting thrived amongst rural, working class, handicapped, individualistic, and secluded boys because it emphasized self-reliance and individualism while offering a flexible program and schedule. BSA national leaders lost most Lone Scout members by turning the program into a domesticated version of troop Boy Scouting. They pushed Lone Scouts to join troops and learn modern social cooperation and hierarchy. BSA national leaders commandeered the content of Lone Scout newsletters and stripped elected Lone Scout representatives of most of their powers. BSA national leaders probably knew that these changes would decrease rural membership since the BSA Pioneers – a program that was very similar to what Lone Scouting became under the BSA – barely topped one thousand members during its decade of existence. In spite of BSA administrators’ claims to be working to expand rural Scouting, the changes they made to Lone Scouting suggested that they continued to hold a deprecatory view of rural manhood and paid little real attention to rural boy character needs prior to the Depression.84

The development of distinct but subordinate Scout programming for new white immigrant, urban working class, and rural boys between 1923 and 1930 represented a continuation of the BSA’s vision of modest, balanced manliness and its hierarchy of character rather than a change in philosophy. One plausible explanation is that most BSA national leaders believed that all of these groups of boys belonged in a separate, dependent category of character and membership. As psychologist G. Stanley Hall had
argued, adolescence witnessed the differentiation of the sexes, the races, and individuals. Only native-born white, adolescent town boys were seen as fully capable of developing advanced character and leading citizenship. BSA national leaders’ modest outreach efforts with new white immigrants and urban working class boys and their failed absorption of the LSA only reinforced the second-class manhood and citizenship of this “underprivileged majority” of American boys.
Chapter Six

Secretaries and straphangers: Women in the BSA and the Girl Scout controversy

[Figure removed for copyright compliance.]

**Figure 6.1  *Saint Nicholas* (Feb. 1923): 387.**

A 1923 Girl Scout pageant by Fannie Moulton McLane and the accompanying sketch in Figure 6.1 published in *Saint Nicholas* children’s magazine declared that girls could learn male and female roles by emulating Scout heroes, a prospect which many early BSA national leaders saw as an unnatural infringement on men’s rights and duties. The Pilgrim Mother and the corresponding pioneer woman served as liminal figures between men’s and women’s realms in Girl Scout lore. McLane commended the Pilgrim Mother’s faithfulness, reverence, and conscience – qualities often seen as feminine ones in this era. She placed even more stress on values and scenarios generally understood to be men’s realm, particularly the Pilgrim Mother’s bravery facing religious persecution,
the transatlantic ocean voyage, the wilderness, and “the hate of savages.” Frontier living had made American men hardy and self-reliant, but it had also required the Pilgrim Mother and pioneer woman to take on masculine roles. McLane asserted that girls who Scouted could learn a male Roman citizen’s honor, duty, patriotism, and self-control. She claimed that Scouting linked girls to the virtues of the medieval knight: “In our Scout’s honor find we his ideal. His knightly honor; in our scouting code, the Code of chivalry. We alike are bound To loyalty, to helpfulness to man, To courtesy and to fair gentleness, To stern obedience and to duty’s call.” Both Boy and Girl Scout leaders argued that the Scout was the descendent of archetypal heroes from western civilization and American history, but most BSA national administrators insisted that Scouting and its ancestry were exclusively masculine.¹

The gender model which many BSA leaders seemed to rely on was a modernized version of middle class, Victorian separate spheres. This ideal asserted that men and women had completely different innate abilities and proclivities, which corresponded to distinct roles for men and women in the family, work, politics, and society. Men, who were thought to be naturally competitive and self-reliant, earned the family’s income by working outside the home in the cut-throat business world. These qualities also enabled men to survive and succeed in the corrupting realm of politics and public life. Women’s “naturally” moral, religious, refined, and passive constitutions suited them for the home, church, and school. Good women nurtured children into proper roles, while providing their husbands with a peaceful home refuge from business and politics. One key tension within the separate spheres arrangement was that middle class men who devoted themselves to paid work outside the home and politics were less involved in raising their
sons than men had been in colonial America and the Early Republic. Social scientists, educators, and cultural critics articulated increasing concern at the turn of the twentieth century that American boys were being feminized by spending all their time with women and girls in the home, school, and church. “New Women” exacerbated this tension by broadening their work, educational, political, and leisure activities. The era’s disruption of the separate spheres ideal was an assertion of women’s power and privileges, so many American men responded defensively to what they perceived as attacks on their authority and status.²

GSA leaders and the BSA officials who criticized their program both recognized that Girl Scouting represented a culmination of recent attacks on the Victorian separate gender spheres model. The name Girl Scout and the symbolism and activities associated with it allowed members to challenge the notion that only males had the natural capacity to be self-reliant and assertive and to lead society. The GSA taught girls that they could and should do anything that boys and men did. Though the early GSA provided members some instruction in home and childcare duties, the program emphasized girls experiencing outdoor adventures to develop qualities needed for professional careers, public life, and political leadership.

For many early BSA officials, the participation of girls and women in Scouting represented a threat to proper gender roles and social order. BSA leaders who criticized Girl Scouting insisted that men and women had different innate abilities and life roles, so girls and boys needed to be socialized differently. They also argued that the existence of Girl Scouting and the presence of women in the BSA threatened to undermine Boy Scouting itself. In large part, Boy Scouting had been created to give men and boys a
symbolic and physical space isolated from what was seen as an increasingly feminized society. A regular dose of manly Scouting in weekly troop meetings, hiking, and camping promised to immunize boys as well as their male leaders. What good would Scouting do if women and girls were allowed in?

In the 1910s and 1920s, such men took two major approaches to solving this dilemma: limiting women’s role in Boy Scouting proper and trying to force the Girl Scouts to give up the name “Scout” and merge into the conservative Camp Fire Girls organization. Unlike Boy Scout organizations in many other countries, the BSA excluded women from teaching and leadership roles and confined them to the positions of secretary, donor, and auxiliary helper. Because female secretaries were less expensive than male office workers they continued to play a role in the BSA as did mothers who volunteered their assistance to the organization. Women supporters of Boy Scouting articulated their own vision of “modest manliness” which they hoped the organization would teach boys, one that combined male and female virtues and priorities. BSA officials who attacked the Girl Scout program argued that girls’ training should emphasize household and child rearing skills to complement men’s role instead of encouraging girls to interfere in men’s affairs. Advocates of Girl Scouting insisted that girls could learn to take on men’s civic and leadership roles and professional careers while still fulfilling women’s traditional housework and childrearing duties. BSA national officials’ efforts to limit women’s and girls’ participation in Scouting can be seen as part of the broader social backlash against women’s recent enlargement of their “traditional” sphere. It is important to note, however, that BSA officials were themselves divided on the issue of Girl Scouting. National administrators tended to be more
conservative than some local BSA officials on the matter. However, some of the most vociferous opponents of Girl Scouting were local Boy Scout leaders.

**Women’s roles in Boy Scouting, “a world in which petticoats are scorned”**

BSA national leaders promised that Scouting enabled boys to sever their dependence on mothers, sisters, and women teachers at school and church so that they could learn men’s self-reliance, scientific efficiency, and civic leadership. Many officials rejected women instructors and policy-makers in the BSA on these grounds and tried to limit them to inconspicuous, non-member support roles. They believed women’s primary role in Scouting was that of the mother who admitted that she could not teach her son advanced masculine character and turned him over to a Scoutmaster and Troop Committeemen to develop. BSA administrators happily reprinted and distributed Thorton Burgess’s 1914 *Good Housekeeping* article, “Making Men of Them,” in which the author argued that good mothers understood that it was a boy’s nature to want to “slip the apron-strings” and seek masculine fellowship in a Scout gang: “[I]n his new-found emancipation a leader, a ‘hero’ whose merest nod is a law by the simple virtue of masculine superiority, is inevitable. The boy has become a citizen of the world, a world in which petticoats are scorned and an attempt at petticoat rule is resented.” BSA officials’ desire to minimize costs, however, made women volunteers and lower-paid female clerical workers essential to the organization. In fact, it is difficult to find any aspect of local Boy Scouting in which women were not involved in some manner. The BSA national and local councils employed women as secretaries and camp cooks. Elite women donated camping land and substantial monies for Scout facilities, equipment, and
activities. The most common form of women’s contribution to Boy Scouting was volunteer help, but this role became controversial in the 1920s as Mothers’ Auxiliaries formalized and took on greater teaching and administrative functions in the BSA.\textsuperscript{3}

BSA administrators seemed more worried than Boy Scout officials in European countries about the presence of women in the organization. Ironically, the BSA most needed women in areas in which its leaders veered away from international Scout practice. Boy Scout organizations in most other countries kept bureaucracy and the number of paid staff to a minimum in order to keep costs low and to allow Scoutmasters and local officials self-government. The somewhat stronger emphasis on expert management and scientific efficiency in American society during the Progressive Era encouraged the BSA to adopt a more bureaucratic and centralized form of governance. Most BSA administrators believed that the organization had to be run like a corporation in order to teach boys values fitting for modern life and leadership. Moreover, they thought that extensive record keeping and statistical analysis was needed to properly evaluate Scouting’s effectiveness and to demonstrate its worth to supporters, parents, and government officials. However, BSA administrators’ desire to centralize control and increase record-keeping while minimizing expenses necessitated hiring cheaper women secretaries or recruiting women volunteers to help run the Scout offices. Since most of the BSA’s paid staff worked in the offices and some locales had more than one secretary, a large portion of the early BSA’s employees was likely women. This contradiction between the BSA’s rhetoric of male self-reliance and women’s essential contributions to the organization was apparent as early as 1912.\textsuperscript{4}
Women secretaries had a big hand in many aspects of Scout administration and practice, but male Scout leaders depicted women staffers as acting strictly in a subordinate, supportive capacity. BSA editors published a wealth of instructional material for men holding various positions in the organization, but it took fifteen years before an article appeared on the ever-present office secretary’s role. Helen Patterson’s 1925 article in *The Scout Executive*, entitled “The Secretary and Her Job,” detailed the typical BSA secretary’s numerous duties: handling personal matters of the Executive, acting as stenographer and purchaser, mimeographing, keeping the calendar, maintaining records, bookkeeping, writing monthly reports, and selling Scout supplies and equipment. Women even filled in as local council administrators: “[W]hen the Scout Executive is
absent from his office, his secretary must represent him from time to time, using her own judgment in dealing with the situations which arise.” The 1917 BSA Annual Report picture in Figure 6.2 captured female national office staffers organizing records of World War I government savings stamp sales by Boy Scouts, a service which supposedly demonstrated boy members’ self-reliance and worthiness for leading citizenship. Other annual report pictures juxtaposed groups of BSA women secretaries with nearby offices of the men in charge. The BSA’s first official history in 1937 listed hundreds of leaders and titled staff persons to date, but only three appeared to be women.5

Mabel Greene, perhaps the most important woman in the early BSA, illustrates the essential roles women performed without corresponding recognition. Due to her good judgment and knowledge of the organization, Chief Scout Executive James West increasingly elicited her opinion on administrative matters. He relocated her to an office almost adjacent to his. Greene was asked to comment on Norman Rockwell’s new ideas for his iconoclastic Boy Scout paintings. She drafted many speeches, articles, and reports for West and other BSA national leaders, either anonymously or using the signature “M.R. Greene.” She even wrote President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s key 1934 national radio speech calling Boy Scouts out for Depression service. Greene became the de facto editor of Scouting upon Edgar Martin’s death in 1940. This magazine was written for adult troop leaders, a post from which women were excluded.6

Boy Scout leaders in most countries preferred camping by troops or patrols and having boys learn to cook for themselves. By contrast, the early BSA’s large council camps (often hosting over one hundred boys) and their increasing emphasis on efficiency and food sanitation encouraged the use of central mess halls with paid adult cooks. To
keep the cost of camp low, most BSA local councils hired the cheapest experienced cooks available: women, black men, and ex-army cooks. Some women and blacks cooked for Boy Scout councils in which they could not be official members, supposedly because they were not capable of self-reliance and advanced character. This discrepancy was particularly striking since providing for one’s own needs while camping was supposedly the key way in which Boy Scouts proved their self-reliance. The decision to modernize and centralize had again necessitated the hiring of women.

BSA administrators excluded women from leadership roles in the organization. Unlike British Boy Scout officials, BSA administrators decreed that women were not allowed in any official or honorary leadership capacity. Men who donated significant sums of money to the BSA were given positions on local and national councils, but female donors were ineligible. The mid-1920s witnessed a spate of gifts including land, buildings, and equipment from wealthy American women to local Scout councils. Despite the increasing number of sizable donations to the organization, the American Scoutmaster handbook reasserted the policy that only male citizens could serve on Scout councils. At the first BSA Executives national training school in 1925, one attendee suggested that a truly representative local Boy Scout council should include a considerable number of women since they were increasingly involved in community affairs. Mr. Schuck, the national office representative who facilitated the session, asked what an Executive should do if a women’s group had raised part of the BSA local council’s funds and demanded representation on the council in return: “They say women now have a vote, and why should we not vote in this cause for boyhood? What would you say?” One man suggested telling the women to take care of their Girl Scout council
instead. Another man noted that the BSA’s standard local council constitution limited it to adult men. Mr. Shuck replied, “I guess that settles it.” The 1926 Executive handbook instructed local council administrators to reject any troop charter that included women in any official capacity.  

The reciprocal relationship between the BSA and government officials, however, allowed two women who served as Arizona state representatives to become honorary Scout members in 1922. Many women served the BSA as secretaries or volunteer helpers, but neither of these positions equated with official membership in the organization. In a common ritual in this era, Arizona Boy Scouts inducted state congresspersons and the governor as Tenderfoot Boy Scouts in a mass public ceremony. In return, government officials frequently designated Boy Scouts – but not Girl Scouts or Camp Fire Girls – to be honorary mayors, police chiefs, and other public office holders for an hour or a day. The Arizona women representatives disrupted this mutual recognition that men dominated political leadership. The ceremony, though honorary, may have made them the first and only female BSA members prior to 1930.  

Boy Scout officials in some other countries permitted women to lead troops when there were not enough men, but BSA national administrators refused. Letting women lead Scout groups would have exacerbated the feminization of boys that the BSA promised to fix. Boy Scout founder Robert Baden-Powell and the British national office allowed women to lead packs of eight-to eleven-year-old boys in a new branch he created for them in 1915, Wolf Cubbing. The success of women pack leaders and Vera Barclay’s admirable leadership of the Wolf branch prompted Baden-Powell to permit women to lead troops of adolescent Boy Scouts in “exceptional circumstances.” A number of
British women became Scoutmasters during World War I, and some continued their role
after the war. The BSA proudly rejected this measure, despite leader shortages.
Throughout the 1910s and 1920s, BSA administrators reported that boy recruitment was
limited primarily by the shortage of willing Scoutmasters. Since BSA officials
discouraged individual boy applicants, their decision to not allow female Scoutmasters
must have had the effect of preventing some boys from joining the organization. BSA
administrators’ refusal to adopt the international method of using women to lead younger
boys was probably the major reason that the organization failed to develop a Cub
program until 1930, although some local BSA leaders followed Baden-Powell’s program
and used women to run unofficial Wolf Cub packs prior to that date.9

BSA administrators seemed pleased when Mothers’ Auxiliaries began forming
since they encouraged women to provide volunteer support for Scouting without giving
them official membership or leadership positions. Mothers’ Auxiliaries formalized
services women had always provided to Scouting and continued to provide in troops
lacking such clubs. BSA publications carefully distinguished the domestic support role
played by Mothers’ Auxiliaries from men’s leadership and outdoor roles in the
organization. A 1914 Scouting article, for example, described how the South Orange,
New Jersey Mothers’ Club helped with banquets and encouraged their sons’ general
progress, “though, of course, its influence does not extend to the Troop administration,
but concerns itself with the expression of the aim of the movement in the home.”10

A prominent Scout Mothers’ Club in Montclair, New Jersey provided a broader
spectrum of support, but the activities could still be construed as belonging to women’s
domestic sphere. A 1917 Scouting article stressed that this group did not interfere in
regular Scout activities or troop management, leaving such matters “to the boys
themselves, and to the men, as the guides of the boys in the development of their male
manhood.” The Scoutmaster, however, was invited to every mothers’ meeting. The
Mothers’ Club hosted a monthly reception for parents and provided kitchen utensils and
arranged parents’ visits for Scout summer camp. They performed a systematic study of
the influences and needs of Scouting. A 1922 article noted that this club had branched
into Boy Scout recruitment, publicity, welfare, and Americanization projects. Such
efforts reflected women’s recent expansions into social work professions, but were still
supportive of Scout men’s primary teaching role. The Montclair Scout Mothers was one
of several women’s Scout auxiliaries that took classes on adolescent psychology and its
application to Scouting methods and activities. The 1924 BSA Annual Report argued
that Scout Mothers’ Auxiliaries helped “give mother a better knowledge of the
psychology of her boy.” The wording suggested that Scouting approached boys from a
scientific or psychological perspective which sentimental mothers lacked.11

Not all Scout Mothers’ Clubs were alike; some used the connection with Scouting
to venture into new gendered territory. A Terre Haute, Indiana mothers’ group mainly
baked cakes for the boys, while a group of Scout Mothers across the state in Shelbyville
formed patrols mirroring their sons’ grouping and went hiking and camping (as did the
Paterson, New Jersey group in Figure 6.3). A 1925 council-level Mothers’ Club in Grand
Rapids, Michigan was one of the most extensive. One thousand, eight hundred mothers
contributed dues and held fundraisers to pay for a permanent summer camp. They
created formal committees which revealed the wide scope of their activities and their
high level of organization: Executive, Finance, Philanthropic, Program, Reception, Library, and Press.\textsuperscript{12}

\textbf{Figure 6.3} \textit{Handbook for Scoutmasters} (1922), 211.

Scout Mothers’ Auxiliaries, as helpful as they were, eventually risked undermining the BSA’s claim to be building self-reliant men. Mothers’ Auxiliaries in Yakima, Washington noted in 1923 that they helped raise funds for boys’ fees and camping equipment. Mothers’ Clubs also bought new uniforms or repaired discarded ones for boys and even Scoutmasters. Boy Scouts were supposed to earn the money for these items themselves; that was what distinguished the organization from youth programs like the Boys’ Club that provided free recreation and educational activities to keep working class and destitute boys out of delinquency. Mothers’ Auxiliaries’ growing contributions to the BSA might still have been explained away as support functions \textit{if} the primary teaching of Scout skills could be cordoned off as a masculine preserve. BSA magazines, however, noted women’s role in encouraging and helping boys to learn Scout
skills. A fair amount of Scout learning and teaching apparently occurred at home under women’s supervision – not just at male-only troop meetings and camps. These incursions by women into the masculine domains of Boy Scouting prompted the national Badges and Awards Committee to make a study of the field in 1926 to determine the extent to which women were being used in Scouting and whether or not Mothers’ Auxiliaries should be encouraged.\(^{13}\)

Increasing local awards of ribbons and pins for Mothers’ Clubs in the mid-1920s demonstrated that women made essential contributions to Boy Scouting and that boys’ advancement was partly a reflection of their mothers’ efforts. In 1924, a Memphis Mothers’ Unit reported wearing colored ribbons according to their sons’ respective ranks. The BSA national Badges and Awards Committee waffled for seven years on the idea of creating a pin for the Mothers’ Auxiliaries. BSA leaders wanted to acknowledge the contributions of women volunteers in a way that maintained a distinction between women’s and men’s abilities and roles. The BSA Constitution was amended in June 1927 to allow awards for women, if they were specifically designated as female honors. A key example was the creation of the Silver Fawn award for women who contributed to the organization on a national scale, which allowed BSA administrators to restrict the prized Silver Buffalo to men.\(^{14}\)

In light of BSA administrators’ efforts to minimize recognition of women’s contributions to the organization and their leadership ability, one may wonder why women supported Boy Scouting. Like male supporters of Scouting, women (at least those whose letters appeared in BSA publications) hoped that the program would teach boys a modest manliness. Women BSA supporters’ understanding of modest manliness,
however, combined masculine and feminine virtues and priorities. Women and men expressed appreciation that Scouting provided adult leadership for the boy who might otherwise be led into trouble by a street gang of peers, but the notion that boys needed men’s leadership in particular was missing from most women’s arguments. For many men, Scouting’s *raison d’être* was transferring adolescent boys from women’s to men’s supervision.

Women sometimes praised Scouting for teaching feminine virtues or women’s clubs’ reform interests to boys under a masculine guise. In 1913, Mrs. Bernice Babcock wrote that Scouting taught the “sort of manhood that combines gentleness with strength.” Another woman commended a local Scoutmaster for getting boys to protect birds instead of shooting them. She added that she had tried to teach boys these values, but they had rejected them coming from a woman. Sophie Liebenau Walker supported the BSA for teaching boys to serve as guides for a women’s suffrage parade, clean urban slums, and promote public health and peace. These were key objectives of middle class and elite women’s reform clubs in this period. BSA literature occasionally mentioned local troops helping women’s clubs with such projects. In return, some women’s groups assisted in BSA membership and fundraising drives.¹⁵

Most BSA literature stressed the need for adolescent boys to escape the feminized home, but some women hoped that the program would instill the part of the Third Scout Law on being helpful that boys should “share the home duties.” A 1914 letter from a Dallas mother stressed that, in addition to physical development and First Aid, Scouting taught boys “a new independence from doing their own cooking and looking after their own comfort.” The mother may have hoped that her son’s new skills would relieve her
of some domestic burdens. The role of the adolescent Boy Scout in home duties was a touchy subject. The 1911 *Washington Post* sketch in Figure 6.4 and the article it accompanied suggested that the main reason Scouts needed to learn the feminine tasks of cooking, sewing, dishwashing, and bed-making was to be self-sufficient while camping. While the boy in the picture was older than his sister and had relevant Scout training, he still saw doing the dishes at home as her job. In a 1928 *Scouting* article, the Scoutmaster who described sharing in the home duties as “[t]he little phrase that haunts the Third Law” argued that writing a poem or card for Mother’s Day could fulfill this obligation and make the home duties “into something romantic and almost spiritual.” Romanticizing mom’s home duties only reinforced the idea that it was women’s work.16

Figure 6.4 *The Washington Post* (Jan. 29, 1911): MC7.
The 1920 ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment giving women the right to vote and the expanding role of women in higher education and the paid labor force failed to stir BSA national leaders to change the policy excluding women from leadership posts. The BSA’s continued rejection of women leaders and instructors was even more striking given women’s increasing role in Boy Scout and Wolf Cub programs in many other countries in the late 1910s and 1920s. BSA national administrators clung to the idea of Scouting as an outdoor arena where men could socialize boys free of interference from feminine influences. The BSA’s centralized bureaucracy, large-scale camping, and budget stringency, however, necessitated the inclusion of women office staffers and volunteer helpers. BSA national leaders maintained separate gender roles within the organization by creating distinctly female awards for supporters and insisting that women could serve only as secretaries, non-member donors, and auxiliaries.

**Self-reliance vs. “self-forgetfulness”: The Girl Scout controversy**

BSA national administrators’ two-decade long project to force the Girl Scouts of America organization [GSA] to give up the name “Scout” and merge into the conservative Camp Fire Girls organization paralleled their restriction of women’s roles in Boy Scouting. The BSA’s attack on Girl Scouting and the GSA’s defense of their program involved fundamental questions about the natural makeup of girls and boys, their future adult roles, and the meaning and applicability of American citizenship rights and responsibilities. The 1910s and 1920s was the key period in which the results of women’s recent advances in paid work, higher education, and political activism would become known. In their efforts to dissuade girls from Scouting, BSA critics argued that
the character traits required for civic and social leadership were exclusively masculine. They insisted that girls’ participation in Scouting skewed girls’ development and also disrupted boys’ character training by feminizing Boy Scouting. The resulting girl “tomboys” and boy “mollycoddles” would have difficulty fulfilling their sanctioned family roles. In turn, this threatened to tear society apart by interfering with the division of civic rights and duties envisioned by the separate gender spheres model. GSA officials and supporters retorted that Scouting should be used to teach civic duty and leadership to both boys and girls. GSA leaders argued that girls could take on men’s responsibilities while still learning the traditional duties of housewives and mothers. This controversy is especially intriguing because Boy and Girl Scout organizations developed and worked together closely in some other countries.17

Unpacking the Girl Scout controversy first requires distinguishing the visions of women’s role and proper gender relations promoted by British Girl Guiding, American Girl Scouting, and the American Camp Fire Girls. All three organizations responded to Boy Scouting’s success and promised to fill the need for a companion, character-building outdoor program for girls. The three girls’ organizations’ philosophies differed over not only women’s innate character and appropriate familial and social roles, but also the nature of democracy itself. Most influential BSA national administrators favored the Camp Fire Girls and its domestic emphasis over the increasingly feminist GSA and the mixed messages of British Girl Guiding. Many local BSA officials seemed to agree, while others supported Girl Scouting.

The name Girl Guides captures the duality of the British girls’ program, the first of the three to emerge. After a patrol of girl Boy Scouts with homemade uniforms
(including the girl in Figure 6.5) surprised Baden-Powell by showing up at the first major British Scout rally in 1909, he briefly allowed girls to join. However, the girl Boy Scouts often went leaderless because men refused to teach them and many women lacked outdoor skills. He then developed a separate Girl Guides organization with the help of his sister Agnes in 1910. Robert Baden-Powell explained that girls should model themselves after the versatile (male) scout soldier Guides serving on the northwest frontier of India, which suggested that girls should expand their traditional roles. He also emphasized that women acted as moral guides and helpmeets to husbands and sons, which implied a more conservative and domestic future for girls.¹⁸

[Figure removed for copyright compliance.]

Figure 6.5  250 Million Scouts, 129e.
Guiding, which soon boasted a small American branch, offered girls a semi-domesticated form of Boy Scouting. The Guides retained most of Boy Scouting’s symbolism and outdoor skill training, but replaced some of its military emphasis with home and child duties. Many female British Boy Scouts rejected the latter roles and the separate Girl Guides scheme, but most begrudgingly turned in their Boy Scout badges and became Guides. The Guides stagnated under Agnes’s leadership and it appeared that the organization might fail. By 1918, Baden-Powell had replaced his sister with his wife Olave. Olave, at first, simply wanted to help with the Boy Scouts. According to a biography of her written by Robert Baden-Powell’s secretary, Olave became interested in Guiding when her husband told her that she could not “bob” her hair short as was the new (flapper) fashion until each Guide district had been organized. Olave revived the Guide program by emphasizing service work and the outdoors – moving it closer to the original experience of the girl Boy Scouts. The two British organizations worked together on activities and methods through the leading couple.19

Most BSA national administrators and many local BSA officials rejected the Girl Guides, the Girl Scouts, and a fleeting American organization named the Girl Pioneers because all three suggested that men and women had overlapping natural abilities and life duties. BSA national leaders facilitated the merger of two small Girl Scout organizations, an American Girl Guides organization, and the Girl Pioneers (run by BSA National Scout Commissioner Dan Beard’s sister, Lena Beard) into the Camp Fire Girls in 1911 as the preferred American girls’ counterpart to Boy Scouting. Luther Gulick, a colleague of psychologist G. Stanley Hall and a leading advocate of city playgrounds and child-centered education, formulated the Camp Fire Girls [CFG] program in conjunction with
his wife Charlotte, the BSA’s Ernest Thompson Seton, and several independent girls’ camp directors. Gulick argued that his years of study of physiology, psychology (with Hall), ethics, and world religion led him to conclude:

That there is a fundamental difference [between women and men], and to copy the Boy Scout movement would be utterly and fundamentally evil...We hate manly women and womanly men, but all do love to have a woman who is thoroughly womanly...The bearing and rearing of children has always been the first duty of most women, and that must always continue to be. This involves service, constant service, self-forgetfulness and always service. I suggest then that the fire be taken as the symbol of the girls’ movement, the domestic fire – not the wild fire.

While the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts taught self-reliance and service to the nation, the early CFG stressed women’s “self-forgetfulness” through serving husbands and children at home. James West was particularly pleased with Gulick’s differentiation of women’s and men’s abilities and priorities. West was one of the first to promote the new CFG in an April 1911 BSA press release sent to newspaper editors across the country.20

The Camp Fire Girls program appealed to many BSA leaders because it used nature and primitive Indian lore to encourage girls to embrace women’s traditional housewife and childrearing roles. Charlotte Gulick, who did most of the editing of the CFG’s first handbook in 1912, argued that modern American society had decimated the creative appeal of women’s domestic arts. Industry provided ready-made clothing, food, and other items once proudly made at home by women and girls for their families. Charlotte declared that modern American girls were either spoiled and did not work at all or had to work outside the home too much for needed family income. She lamented that scientific motherhood’s reliance on expert advice instead of women’s own experience and instincts robbed girls of their time-honored opportunities to practice child rearing and
housework. To counteract these developments, the CFG discouraged girls from working outside the home and attempted to glorify and romanticize what its leaders admitted was otherwise housework “drudgery”: “It endeavors to make dishwashing, for instance, an honorable matter, worthy of a girl’s best efforts.” The CFG offered girls and their women leaders group craftwork and rituals to mitigate the isolated, monotonous, and privatized nature of modern American, middle class family life. The CFG’s outdoor setting did teach girls to be more active and wear less restrictive clothing than had previous generations. Some women even formed Camp Fire units for themselves to take advantage of these new freedoms.  

Since Native Americans rounded up on reservations could be portrayed as domesticated and passive by the early twentieth century, the Gulicks were able to adapt Ernest Thompson Seton’s primitive Indian lore to reaffirm women’s traditional domestic role. CFG leaders replaced Scouting’s “essentially masculine” militarism and rugged outdoor pioneering with feminine folk dancing, Indian pageantry and decorative craftwork, and designing and sewing Indian dress uniforms. CFG literature emphasized beauty, grace, and cooperation over Scouting’s strength, endurance, and competition.

BSA leaders helped the CFG absorb or contain a range of other girls’ organizations, but Juliette Low and her version of the Girl Scouts soon emerged as a greater threat. Robert Baden-Powell had originally recruited Low, a wealthy American socialite, to work for the British Girl Guides. After running Guide troops in Great Britain for poor rural and urban girls, Low returned home to Savannah and started the American Girl Guides organization with two troops in March 1912. With girl members’ support, Low soon began steering the program toward a more radical Girl Scout vision by copying
British Boy Scout activities and methods. She switched the uniform from the blue Girl Guides version to the khaki one used by the Boy Scouts. Low emphasized larger social and civic roles and new careers for females. The girls in her early troops supposedly insisted on changing the program’s name to Girl Scouts in 1913. Low incorporated the organization as the Girl Scouts of America in 1915. CFG administration was heavily influenced by men with BSA ties, but GSA leadership was dominated by women.23

BSA administrators chafed at Girl Scout leaders’ insistence that, in addition to women’s traditional domestic functions, girls could simultaneously perform masculine duties as well as – if not better than – men. Girl Scouting disputed the notion of separate spheres by showing that girls could be as self-reliant and adept outdoors as boys. The 1920 GSA handbook offered a prime example of the challenge to men’s authority and distinctiveness in its advocacy of Sacajawea as a role model for girls. According to the handbook, Sacajawea served as the chief guide and outdoorswoman for Lewis and Clark’s exploration of the Louisiana Purchase and Pacific Northwest territories. The author juxtaposed Sacajawea’s self-control, wisdom, and perseverance with the cowardly, inept, and divided men on the expedition. The passage credited her with being the pioneer who opened the northwest to white American settlement. Most strikingly, she did this as a sixteen-year-old carrying a baby in a papoose on the journey.24

BSA leaders who criticized Girl Scouting disapproved of girls learning the advanced Scout character and civic skills which would qualify them to be leading citizens. The CFG used primitive Indian lore to teach girls domesticity, but Girl Scouting followed Boy Scouting in stressing soldier and pioneer imagery to train girls in social and civic leadership. GSA publications instructed girls to provide service to others rather
than be a burden on society or dependent on men. Seven years prior to the ratification of women’s suffrage, Girl Scout rank tests taught civic knowledge, flag history, and practical patriotism. The CFG tried to romanticize artistic housework craft. The GSA taught girls to do housework in a scientific, efficient, and business-like manner so that they would have time left over to engage in larger social and civic roles.  

BSA officials seemed miffed that the GSA offered its members more leadership opportunities and independence from direct adult supervision and bureaucracy than did American Boy Scouting. This discrepancy was partly due to the fact that American Girl Scouting was modeled after British rather than American Boy Scouting. Lower and local functionaries had more power and independence in the GSA and the British Boy Scouts than in the BSA. GSA and British Boy Scout leaders emphasized the patrol system, in which groups of six to eight youth functioned semi-independently under the leadership of an elected peer. Until the late 1920s, most BSA officials downplayed the patrol system and boy leadership. Most early BSA troops operated as large units of twenty or more boys under the direct supervision of the adult Scoutmaster. The GSA encouraged each girl to make moral decisions based on the particular situation, while the BSA placed somewhat more stress on obedience to superiors. Like British Scouting, the GSA was open to girls as young as ten. Since Girl Scouts started the program sooner and functioned more independently, they made American Boy Scouts look immature. Ironically, the GSA emphasized military names, forms, and drill more than labor, Socialist, and pacifist critics allowed the BSA to do.

The GSA’s relative egalitarianism also conflicted with BSA leaders’ visions of social hierarchy and democracy. The GSA reached out to non-whites and the
handicapped before the BSA did, offering alternatives for the swim test necessary to advance in Scout ranks for those without access to swim areas and the physically handicapped. BSA administrators’ insistence on maintaining strict standards for the Second and First Class Scout rank tests effectively barred most non-white and handicapped boys from advancement and probably discouraged many of them from joining. GSA national leaders argued that democracy meant inclusion and equality. The GSA promoted tolerance by having its troop leaders undercut the “undemocracy” of girl cliques who expelled girls they did not like. By contrast, BSA leaders argued that granting local councils and individual troops self-determination to exclude non-whites and other undesirables exemplified democracy.\textsuperscript{27}

It appeared at first that Low’s organization might never amount to much. She had six hundred members by late 1912, while the CFG boasted thirty-six thousand girls and over one thousand adult leaders. Low footed most of the GSA’s early bills, but early CFG funding came from the same elite families who supported the BSA: the Rockefellers, Sages, and Carnegies. The tide turned during World War I, when Girl Scouts provided a broader range of services to the nation than did Camp Fire Girls. With the ratification of the women’s suffrage amendment in 1920, teaching girls civic responsibilities made increasing sense. As the GSA expanded and took on more masculine roles, criticism from BSA leaders grew stronger and shriller.\textsuperscript{28}

\textit{“Citizen Scouts”: Boy and Girl Scout comrades in war service?}

America’s entry into World War I and the gender role tensions that accompanied it marked the first of three high tides in BSA national leaders’ attempts to force the GSA
to give up the name Scout and merge into the CFG. The war accelerated women’s entry into the paid workforce, positions of authority, and public activism. These processes raised women’s status and expectations of equality, but they also sounded an alarm to those who upheld traditional gender roles. As men entered combat, women took on more leadership in the home and performed manufacturing and other jobs traditionally defined as men’s work. Many feared that women would want to keep these roles after the war. The proposed women’s suffrage amendment began to pick up steam in recognition of women’s contributions to the war effort and their special concern for children and moral issues, but many men as well as women worried that women voting and holding office would detract from motherhood and family cohesion. Once the emergency passed and the soldiers came home, would dominant gender roles return to a separate spheres model or would women continue to expand their realm? Girl Scouting took on increasing significance in the minds of both its supporters and its detractors during the Great War because it spoke directly to the fundamental questions of how paid work, family responsibilities, public status, and political authority should be distributed. Whether and how the GSA would emerge from the war seemed to hold the key to future American gender norms.29

The first wave of BSA criticisms of Girl Scouting, which crested during World War I, stressed three related concerns. First, Girl Scouting interfered with the natural development of both boys and girls. This contributed to a second problem, the disruption of proper family roles and the gendered division of civic rights and responsibilities. BSA national leaders believed that Scouting should only train select boys to be civic leaders by drawing them away from domestic influences. The third complaint of BSA leaders who
rejected Girl Scouting was that the existence of the girls’ program feminized Boy Scouting, thereby undercutting its ability to develop boys’ manly character and to recruit members, leaders, and donors. GSA officials responded that men’s and women’s civic responsibilities overlapped significantly and that training both boys and girls in Scouting was essential for a modernizing society. GSA supporters argued that girls could take on a larger service and leadership role while still fulfilling their domestic duties. The GSA Executive Board Chairman even proposed a coeducational “Citizen Scouts” program for older teenagers managed jointly by the GSA and the BSA. At stake was whether girls and women should learn to serve the nation or just their families and husbands.

The most consistent complaint of BSA officials was that Girl Scouting warped both girls’ and boys’ natural development. BSA leaders who criticized Girl Scouting argued that men and women had different innate abilities which correlated with different familial and social roles. Many BSA leaders rejected the overlap between the two programs, insisting that boys and girls needed distinct and separate socialization activities and goals. GSA leaders argued that the organization helped outfit girls for women’s expanding role in modern society, but BSA spokesmen insisted that Scouting turned girls into tomboys who could never develop into proper women. BSA national administrators argued that, for the good of American girlhood, the GSA, CFG, and other girls’ programs should merge into a single organization emphasizing the roles of housewife and mother. In the BSA’s worldview, domestic duties were incompatible with civic leadership.

The BSA’s 1916 federal charter, which granted it a monopoly on the word Scout, gave the organization some legal ground for requesting that the Girl Scout organization give up the Scout portion of its name. One alternative mentioned occasionally by local
BSA officials was for the GSA to change to the British girls’ program name, the Girl Guides. However, most BSA leaders who criticized Girl Scouting did not want the GSA to simply change its name while retaining a Scout-like program. Girl Guiding stressed more domestic duties than did the GSA, but there was still much of the form and imagery of Boy Scouting in Girl Guiding. Most BSA spokesmen preferred that Girl Scouts give up all semblance of Scouting and become Camp Fire Girls.

BSA officials seemed equally concerned with the effect of Girl Scouting on boys’ development, particularly on Boy Scouting. Spurred on by some vocal local Scoutmasters and council Executives, BSA national leaders argued that the very existence of the GSA feminized Boy Scouting and discouraged boys from joining. Without a Scoutmaster’s companionship and outdoor living, it was thought that boys’ development would go astray. Many feared that boys who did not Scout would become feminized by staying at home with their mothers and sisters or turn into savage juvenile delinquents by hanging out with gangs of bad boys on the street.31

GSA supporters who rejected the proposed merger with the CFG argued that some local BSA officials and the general public believed that having both boys and girls Scout promoted a healthy comradeship between the sexes. A Cincinnati Captain (the GSA’s equivalent to the BSA Scoutmaster) stated that local Scoutmasters “assured me the boys accepted us as co-workers.” A Boston Captain reported that local Boy Scouts were proud of the GSA’s name and felt that the common name and work encouraged “comradeship” between them. The Philadelphia Girl Scout council noted that the local BSA council chairman sent a card congratulating them on their splendid work and added that area Boy Scouts “are watching you with the kindly eyes of friendly rivalry & your
success only spurs them on to do even better themselves if possible.” These Captains argued that the existence of both Boy and Girl Scouting eased gender tensions in society and resulted in greater financial contributions to both organizations.\(^{32}\)

BSA leaders who criticized Girl Scouting dismissed this notion of cross-gender comradeship, instead arguing that coeducational Scouting distorted proper development of both boys and girls and turned away supporters. Critics declared that coeducational Scouting was no better than boy socialization in the feminized home, school, and church. Some argued that Girl Scouting interfered with BSA recruitment of volunteers and donors; there may have been some truth to that. James Russell, the Dean of Columbia University’s Teachers College who had once been a key BSA supporter, began to criticize the BSA as he shifted his support from the CFG to the GSA. BSA local council Executives reported that some men justified their decision to not help the BSA by arguing that “[m]y wife does all the scout work for my family” by working for the GSA.\(^{33}\)

This latter scenario wreaked havoc on many BSA leaders’ conception of proper familial and civic roles. It appeared that such men were letting their wives “wear the pants in the family” by taking an active leadership role in Scouting and its citizenship training project. BSA leaders who rejected Girl Scouting argued that family roles should correspond with citizenship rights and responsibilities. As men were the primary breadwinners and final authority in their families, they should also lead society and government. The increase in women’s work and public and family leadership during the Great War threatened to shatter this fundamental gender division of duties and rights. BSA spokesmen insisted that Scouting should train only boys to be tomorrow’s leading citizens, while girls should learn to embrace their domestic role as Camp Fire Girls.\(^{34}\)
For Girl Scout leaders, the term “Scout” laid claim to equal status and citizenship for women. Even before the women’s suffrage amendment – or, rather, in preparation for it – Girl Scouting required members to demonstrate knowledge of elected officials and understanding of how local, state, and federal government operated. Several GSA leaders voiced their desire to keep the name Scout specifically because of the term’s connotation of national service. GSA officials argued that members’ services to the nation during the war demonstrated girls’ ability to be leading citizens. Caroline Slade, a GSA Executive Board member, wrote to her colleague Anne Hyde Choate in February 1918, “at this time of all others in the history of the world” with the country’s need for full productivity and with the coming of full citizenship for women, it was essential that the GSA not change its name: “[T]he name ‘Scout’ expresses in a peculiarly adequate way the significance of the larger opportunities which are coming to us, and typifies the vigorous participation in civic affairs which we anticipate for the coming generation of American women.” Slade insisted that females Scouting and providing service to the nation would not interfere with their home duties:

The use of the prefix ‘Girl’ emphasizes the continuance of our responsibilities in the home…The terms ‘Girl Scout’ and ‘Boy Scout’ signify very aptly the fact that while the scouting activities for boys and girls are different, the ideals of service are identical. To require the girls to yield the name of scout would, I fear, seem to cut them off arbitrarily from a rich field of wholesome pleasure and usefulness to which they feel they have a right, and which the word ‘scouting’ has come to represent.

Girl Scouting forced men to share their realm without yielding any of women’s province to men, so it appeared that men’s sphere was shrinking while women’s was expanding.35

GSA Executive Board Chairman James Russell suggested in 1918 that the GSA and BSA start a joint coeducational program of “Citizen Scouts” for seventeen-to twenty-
year-olds, since neither organization retained older teenagers well: “And in so far as men and women have the same physical and psychological foundation, and to the extent that they have a common purpose in life, we believe that they should have identical training.” He charged that BSA leaders’ criticism of Girl Scouting was unfounded discrimination akin to the opposition to women’s higher education and suffrage. Russell and Slade characterized Scouting’s opportunities for outdoor recreation and national service as a fundamental right which girls deserved as much as boys. Russell argued that a girl was bound to look like she was aping boys “whenever she is denied equality of rights to those ideals and standards which she feels belong as much to her as to her brother.”

BSA national administrators attempted to present a united front against Girl Scouting, but local BSA officials responded in a variety of ways. A few actively sabotaged Girl Scouting efforts in their areas. Many seemed to hope that patient and reasoned persuasion would convince the GSA to change its name and program. Some local BSA officials straddled the fence, suggesting that they did not see Girl Scouting as a major obstacle to their efforts. Still others defied national office directives by helping GSA leaders. A small number of BSA officials served on GSA boards, helped start Girl Scout troops, or assisted GSA local councils in fundraising and membership recruitment drives. Some girls and women interested in Scouting looked to BSA officials for advice on organizing and outdoor programming, especially before the increase in GSA training in the 1920s and in areas lacking local GSA councils. Female BSA office secretaries sometimes served as liaisons between the two parties. A few BSA Scoutmasters even tried to run their own girls’ troops, a practice which some GSA leaders resisted. Occasionally, a local BSA official defended the right of girls to be Scouts against the
criticisms of other BSA leaders. Over one hundred Philadelphia Scoutmasters resolved in 1917 that the GSA was much needed and did not conflict with BSA interests. The first wave of BSA efforts to stop girls from Scouting ended in May 1918 when GSA administrator Emily Hammond rejected the merger with the CFG as well as the BSA’s suggestion to submit the name issue to outside arbitration. Hammond stressed that any girls’ organization needed to prepare them for both home duties and national service and that girls viewed Scouting and the opportunities related to it as a right. She concluded that the GSA would support an attempt to merge the existing girls’ organizations into one body only if it retained these “essential principles of scouting.”

The Great War reinforced the expansion of American women’s role in ways that helped popular opinion catch up with the GSA’s advocacy of civic and career training. America’s war effort required patriotic sacrifices from women as well as men. Girl Scouts practiced drill and performed a wide range of war services and rescue work, while Camp Fire Girl were primarily limited to food conservation and canning at home. Women had proven their abilities in volunteer efforts, the paid workforce, professional careers, and higher education. The women’s suffrage amendment of 1920 spurred interest in women’s citizenship training. Girl Scouting had always taught girls this larger civic and economic role. James Russell helped attract financial supporters to relieve Low of some of the monetary burden she had been carrying for the national office. GSA membership jumped from three thousand in 1916 to eighty-two thousand in 1920.

All BSA spokesmen could do was issue a policy statement that the two organizations were not connected in any way. It maintained that “programs for boys and girls must naturally proceed along different lines” due to their different inherent makeup.
and needs. The policy forbade local BSA leaders from helping with Girl Scouting or participating in joint hikes and activities due to the difficulty of supervision, “the accentuation in the minds of boys of sex questions, the diversion of the activities of the boys from Scouting to social activities, and the great possibility for embarrassment.” Some local BSA officials defied this policy and continued to aid Girl Scouting in their areas, although they may have done so more discreetly.40

**Flappers and straphangers**

The multivalent “New Woman” of the 1920s posed a renewed threat to Boy Scouting and the separate gender spheres model which underlay it. In part, the New Woman symbolized women’s recent advances in paid and professional work as well as activist women’s push for greater political rights and responsibilities. The passage of women’s suffrage meant that a powerful women’s voting bloc might emerge to revolutionize American politics and party alignment. A graver concern was the proposed Equal Rights Amendment, which would have eliminated all legal distinctions between men and women. In addition to social conservatives, a number of women political activists shied away from the Equal Rights Amendment because it would have voided all the hard-fought labor and legal protections for women achieved in the previous three decades. A second core dimension of the New Woman of the 1920s was the flappers’ invasion of men’s cultural and leisure prerogatives and spaces. To a significant degree, the flapper phenomenon became truly worrisome only when “respectable” middle class women began emulating styles and leisure activities that working class urban women had nurtured since at least the 1890s. Flappers tended to be young, single, urban women
who worked and often lived outside their parent’s homes. Flappers parlayed the
independence from domestic responsibilities that modern work and mass leisure offered
into a new model of womanhood. Flappers’ short, “bobbed” haircut and slender, form-
fitting clothing rejected Victorian women’s long hair style, cumbersome hoop dresses,
and confining corsets while facilitating participation in paid work, sports, and the
outdoors. Flappers insisted that women could and should smoke, drink, club-hop, and
enjoy leisure and sex as much as men (and lower class women) had. The flapper was not
simply a personal matter of style, but rather a key part of the broader social critique of the
separate gender spheres model.41

Local BSA leaders mounted the second attack on the GSA in the early 1920s,
arguing that Girl Scouting interfered with men’s rights, proper gender relations, and civic
training for boys by producing flappers unfit for motherhood and spurring women to seek
political power. This conflation suggested that the Girl Scout, the woman suffragist, and
the flapper were one and the same threat to moral and social order. To conservatives, the
flapper’s drinking and sexual promiscuity threatened to undercut women’s moral center
and devotion to family. Men and women opposed to women’s suffrage similarly argued
that political power would make women too selfish and individualistic to be good
mothers. GSA supporters, on the other hand, hoped to distinguish the responsible Girl
Scout citizen from the superficial flapper. They maintained that Scouting would teach
girls to expand their public sphere without losing sight of their domestic responsibilities.
A challenge to the BSA’s royalty income helped prompt the third attack on Girl Scouting
between 1924 and 1926. Despite the legalistic approach employed by BSA officials in
this wave, concerns about maintaining traditional gender spheres remained paramount.
Some BSA officials were as concerned about the effect Girl Scouting had on its women leaders than on girl members; both challenged men’s authority and privileges. A few local BSA officials decried women’s use of Girl Scouting as a path to political empowerment. Benjamin Owen, the BSA council Executive in Butte, Montana, reported in 1922 that he had convinced a group of local club women to start a CFG unit instead of a GSA one due to the “psychological differences” between girls and boys. He also persuaded the local newspaper editor to promote the CFG and not print anything on the GSA. After Owen left, the League of Women Voters’ representative who chaired the meeting held a caucus at which the women reversed their decision and decided to form a Girl Scout troop instead. Owen argued that the change was politically motivated, since the League of Women Voters planned to run all the women who were to be GSA local officials for government posts. These women seemed to be violating the Scout policy on non-partisanship. More importantly, Owen and the women recognized participation in Girl Scouting as a stepping stone to political leadership. Owen stated that Butte Scout men were going to take legal action against the GSA if the national office did not.

Cincinnati BSA council Executive Roberts claimed that the Girl Scout and her counterpart, the woman voter, interfered with men’s rights, chivalry, and boys’ civic training. At a series of meetings in summer 1922, he tried to convince the local GSA leader, Louise Price, to give up the name Scout. According to Price, Roberts argued that Girl Scouting contributed to “the breaking down of chivalry and cited the ‘woman straphanger’ since the ballot came through, said respect and courtesy for women was breaking down because of woman’s attitude.” By standing up and hanging on to the ceiling strap on public street cars, a woman straphanger rejected a gentleman’s chivalric
offer of his seat to weaker female passengers and asserted her able-bodied equality with men. Roberts criticized women who tried to “assume rights and privileges of men,” wore breeches, and bobbed their hair. Price countered that men who treated women poorly due to the suffrage issue were guilty of sham chivalry. At the BSA Executives national training conference later that year, Roberts argued that Girl Scouting interfered with boys’ civic and leadership training by discouraging them from providing community service. He claimed that his boys would not participate in a service project if the Girl Scouts were already involved. He argued that this made the Girl Scouts look more willing to serve the community, which undermined the BSA’s claim that it produced the country’s leading citizens. Roberts also complained that Girl Scouting undercut the Cincinnati BSA council’s budget request from the local Community Chest (the forerunner of today’s United Way Foundation), whose officials wanted to divide Scout funding between the two organizations.43

Supporters argued that the Girl Scout represented an improvement on the flapper, incorporating what was best while eschewing what was worst in this symbol of modern womanhood. The sketch in Figure 6.6 accompanied an October 1921 New York Times article entitled, “From Flapper to Girl Scout.” The flapper has exchanged her seductive dress and bare knees for a modest, civic-minded Girl Scout uniform. The Girl Scout still seems to have short hair, but the outdoor campaign hat suggests that the cut served functional and civic purposes rather than personal frivolity. The change in clothing was accompanied by a shift to a more respectful, respectable, and upright posture and demeanor. The woman in the sketch might be a Girl Scout adult troop leader rather than a younger girl, suggesting that Girl Scouting was a significant identity marker for women
participants as well as girl members. The article’s author, Helen Bullitt Lowry, stated that both the Girl Scout and the flapper were feminists who asserted women’s equality to men. She noted that Scouting allowed girls to learn skills and knowledge once reserved for men. A pageant performed by an American troop at the 1926 International Girl Scout and Girl Guide Conference in New York depicted Girl Scouts rescuing unprepared flappers lost in the woods. Agnes Wayman, head of the Physical Education Department at Barnard College, argued at the 1927 GSA National Council annual meeting that Girl Scouting could help steer young women away from the flapper’s poor habits of using too much cosmetics, dieting, smoking, and wearing scanty clothes. These arguments suggested that Scouting could moderate girls’ character in a manner similar to how Boy Scouting hedged excessive masculine individualism and aggression.44

Figure 6.6 New York Times (Oct. 23, 1921): 39.
Most GSA national and local officials were strongly opposed to giving up the name Scout; the few who expressed willingness to change names appeared to do so only as a practical response to pressure by local BSA leaders. For example, GSA and BSA leaders of Arcadia, California agreed in 1921 to share a large tract of nearby government land for a camp. They planned to cooperate in raising money to build two cabins. A Pasadena Boy Scout leader, however, opposed Girl Scouting because of its “illegal” name and said he would only help if the girls’ organization gave up the name Scout. The Arcadia GSA official wrote to the national office, asking GSA administrators to switch the program’s name so that she could get local BSA leaders’ support instead of their scorn. GSA leaders who were willing to give up the name Scout appeared to see it as a functional concession that might earn the girls’ program broader public support and enable members to do more camping and hiking.45

At a special “Problem Hour” discussion at the 1922 BSA Executives national training conference, spokesmen critical of Girl Scouting downplayed the benefits of Scouting for girls and stressed how the GSA was harmful to boy development and the BSA. Most BSA Executives who voiced an opinion at the discussion hour argued against Girl Scouting. Some reported that boy members feared being likened to Girl Scouts or competing with girls. Another Executive complained that some of his boys quit because they were discouraged that Girl Scouts, who could start two years sooner, advanced faster for their age. One Executive argued that the local newspaper caused confusion when it failed to specify that an article entitled, “Scouts dress dolls for YWCA,” referred to Girl rather than Boy Scouts. Several local Executives stated that boy members came to the council office and threatened to quit if nothing was done about Girl Scouting.46
The tide of the discussion began to shift, however, when several local Executives stated that they had no problem with Girl Scouting. One Executive praised GSA leadership and outdoor skills training at their joint camp. The Detroit council Executive argued that the presence of Girl Scouts at BSA banquets motivated older Boy Scouts to attend. Perhaps sensing that more Executives would voice support for Girl Scouting, James West curtailed the conversation by moving on to another topic. The majority of Executives sided with West, passing a motion that the GSA should be encouraged to change its name and program. Such requests had been unsuccessful to this point, so the motion appeared to be a helpless protest. It is possible that the few dissenting opinions expressed in the discussion prevented a more vigorous solution to the Girl Scout “problem” from being enacted. In November, though, the BSA Executive Board appointed a committee to look into accusations by GSA President Lou Henry Hoover (the future First Lady) and former President William Howard Taft that the BSA’s attack on Girl Scouting was simply a personal vendetta of James West. It is unclear what actions the committee took, but no significant results were achieved in 1923.47

Threats to the BSA’s royalty income and its legal monopoly of the word Scout helped spark the third major wave of BSA attacks on the GSA between 1924 and 1926. Defense lawyers for the Winchester Arms Company argued that it did not have to pay the BSA a royalty to produce its “Winchester Scout Rifle” because the BSA had forfeited its monopoly of the word Scout granted in its 1916 federal charter by knowingly allowing the GSA and the Lone Scouts of America organizations to exist and to produce their own Scout items for distribution and sale. By 1924, a third of the BSA national office’s income came from royalties on Scout-labeled products and publications. Administrators’
increasing efforts to persuade William D. Boyce to merge his independent Lone Scouts of America organization into the BSA succeeded. In March, the BSA’s lawyers advised its leaders to force the GSA to give up the name Scout and its production of Scout-labeled items or grant just the GSA a legal exemption for using the word. BSA national leaders preferred the lawyers’ first suggestion; granting girls the right to Scout would have been tantamount to conceding that women had equal innate abilities to men and could serve as social and political leaders.48

BSA officials who criticized the GSA maintained that Scouting and civic leadership were intertwined and inherently and exclusively masculine. They feared that the education of girls in self-assertion and self-reliance would undermine motherhood and family life. F.N. Cooke, Jr., who had compiled BSA officials’ criticisms of Girl Scouting as evidence against Lou Henry Hoover’s accusation that James West harbored an ungrounded personal vendetta against the GSA, claimed that the name Scout and activities associated with it had always been “essentially masculine” and virile: “To impose these upon girlhood may be to the detriment thereof. Contrariwise, to promote the sharing of things fundamentally masculine seems likely from our experience to curtail their fullest effective influence upon boyhood.” One of the supporting documents Cooke collected, an “Analysis of Situation” written by a BSA official in Oklahoma, stated that Scouting’s emphasis on “self-reliance, manly character and the responsibilities of citizenship” was inappropriate for girls. The author argued that training girls to take on men’s responsibilities without emphasizing domesticity was dangerous, since it would create “bold, aggressive, dominating women for future generations” and shatter home life. He characterized old BSA supporters who now split their financial contribution and
volunteer time between Boy and Girl Scouting – as well as men’s clubs that sponsored Girl Scout troops instead of Boy Scout ones – as suffering from a “misplaced sense of gallantry.” The author reported that local Girl Scouts and their leaders were becoming antagonistic and aggressive and tried to compete with Boy Scouts on membership, fundraising, and earning ranks and badges. He concluded that the existence of the GSA made it difficult to get boys to “believe in woman’s part in the infinite scheme,” suggesting that Girl Scouting interfered with God’s plan to keep women in their traditional domestic place.⁴⁹

Upon reading James West’s new legal argument for getting the GSA to change its name and the appended complaints by BSA leaders that Cooke had collected, GSA administrator Sarah Louise Arnold countered that the Scouting heritage “belongs alike to youth of both sexes” just as did the multiplication table and the Ten Commandments. Arnold, like James Russell, argued that girls should be allowed to Scout for the same reasons that they had been allowed to attend public schools. She concluded that parents and the American public should decide on this issue, since it was essentially a question of democracy. GSA administrators prepared a legal brief to defend the organization’s name. In the eyes of Girl Scout advocates, at stake was not only girls’ opportunity to Scout, but also women’s claim to have contributed to the development of the nation and girls’ right to do so in the future.⁵⁰

BSA national leaders never took the GSA to court, perhaps because they had a weak legal case against Girl Scouting. James West had admitted to Western BSA council Executives at their 1920 regional conference that it was difficult to take away a “vested right” of any group using the name Scout before the 1916 federal charter granted the
BSA a monopoly on the word. West argued that the BSA would have to find a way to show that the GSA was misrepresenting the BSA, like it had done with the United States Boy Scouts organization. In this successful 1917 New York suit, the BSA argued that the public confused the militaristic United States Boy Scouts with the BSA’s “peace Scouting.” Even when the GSA applied for two trademark patents, the BSA Executive Board voted in March 1926 not to take legal action. The special BSA committee on the Girl Scout problem continued to meet, but it stuck to the persuasion and negotiation methods that had failed to produce results for a decade. West wrote to the international association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts to ask delegates to resolve that all girls’ organizations should give up the name Scout, but this failed to pass. GSA founder Juliette Low promised in a 1926 letter to Lou Henry Hoover not to give up the name Scout at least until West died or was removed from office, suggesting that personal animosity between GSA and BSA national leaders may have gone both directions.51

Despite Low’s remark, there were signs of increasing cooperation between the two organizations in the second half of the 1920s. Elite philanthropists who had previously directed their gifts to the BSA and the CFG began granting the GSA money. The GSA National Council decided in 1927 to change the “too militaristic” and “mannish” two-piece khaki uniform and military campaign hat to a “smarter” gray-green dress and a more feminine hat. A 1927 study advised BSA headquarters to reverse its policy and encourage local leaders to exercise greater patience since there would be no immediate resolution to the Girl Scout issue and because “the need is for closer cooperation between the local units of both movements” instead of antagonism.52
By this time, the GSA had clearly established its dominance over other girls’ groups – so the notion of it merging into a smaller organization seemed increasingly far-fetched. Although it did not overtake the Camp Fire Girls in membership until 1930 when the GSA enrolled two hundred thirty-seven thousand to the CFG’s two hundred twenty thousand, the GSA was clearly in the ascendancy among girls’ organizations by the mid-1920s. The Girl Scout name controversy resurfaced briefly in the early 1940s as West retired from the BSA, but his departure seemed to take the wind out of the critics’ sails. Congress settled the issue permanently by granting the GSA its own federal charter in 1950, the second and last American youth organization to be so honored.53

A changing political and economic climate contributed to the growth of the GSA and the defusing of tensions between the BSA and GSA by the late 1920s. The achievement of women’s suffrage lent credence to Girl Scout civic training, but the feared women’s bloc in voting failed to emerge. Women tended to vote as their husbands did, suggesting that women’s increasing civic role would not lead to political upheaval. Momentum for the women’s Equal Rights Amendment, which was never that strong, dwindled. The number of female office-holders soon stagnated. Despite the surge in the percentage of women (especially mothers) who worked outside the home in World War I, most were soon re-contained in underpaid female sectors such as domestic service, farm work, teaching, nursing, and secretarial work. However, women’s sphere had expanded enough by the late 1920s to make the GSA’s combination of domesticity, paid work outside the home, and civic training seem appropriate. The Camp Fire Girls’ focus on primitive Indian lore and domestic training alone seemed less and less relevant. The CFG has maintained a smaller but still significant following to the present, but perhaps
only because it drifted toward teaching broader social and civic roles to girls over the decades.54

Several other factors help account for why BSA critics failed to eliminate Girl Scouting, why the GSA overtook the Camp Fire Girls organization, and why women were able to carve out a somewhat larger role for themselves in Boy Scouting. First, girl members and their women leaders fought hard to participate in Scouting; at stake was nothing less than the right to claim good character, leading citizenship, and historical agency in the progress of the country and the race. GSA leaders fended off several waves of BSA criticisms to protect girls’ right to learn civic skills and provide national service. Divided opinion amongst BSA local officials also undercut efforts to exclude girls and women from Scouting. Some BSA leaders did not see Girl Scouting as a major threat, and a few actively assisted the GSA or took public stances in support of girls’ right to Scout. Moreover, one of the BSA’s popular appeals was that its leaders promised to help solve growing cultural and partisan tensions in American society. Not wanting to tarnish the BSA’s image as a social unifier by starting an all-out gender war against Girl Scouts likely moderated the public actions BSA critics were willing to take to achieve the elimination of the GSA. BSA officials were on firmer ground and enjoyed greater success policing gender boundaries within their own organization. Women did manage to quietly increase their role in the BSA, peaking in the registration of Den Mother leaders for Cub packs in 1936. However, the BSA’s core Scoutmaster position of leading troops of adolescent Boy Scouts remained in men’s hands for the next half-century.
Epilogue

Scouting into the Great Depression

This dissertation argues that the Boy Scouts of America’s balanced, “modest manliness” became the dominant model of manhood in early twentieth century American society rather than the virile, primitive masculinity emphasized by the existing gender historiography. Modest manliness effectively combined a dose of virile, competitive self-reliance with Victorian self-control and modern virtues like expert management, scientific efficiency, cooperation, and hierarchical loyalty. BSA sources argued that possession of this balanced manhood best demonstrated the superior character of native-born white, middle class men and their exclusive ability to lead modern society. BSA governance balanced bureaucratic professionalism with charismatic volunteerism, blending nineteenth and twentieth century models of men’s authority. The hybrid manhood that emerged from debates between bureaucratic “typewriter men” and charismatic “ax men” enabled the organization to draw a remarkable range of supporters from across the socio-economic spectrum. Scouting simultaneously paid tribute to native-born white men’s traditional virtues, assuaged fears of feminization, and helped members adjust to an interdependent society and corporate industrial workforce.

The general public and government officials praised the BSA for its claim to offer a universal vision of character and civic ideology for all boys that would ease class and cultural conflict in American society. Administrators argued that Boy Scouting could balance the narrow, snobby character of both rich and poor boys into a modest and democratic manliness. Leaders also promised that Scouting could infuse over-stimulated big city boys with the virtues of the outdoor life while helping modernize “backward”
open country farm boys. However, most BSA administrators through the 1920s seemed to believe that not all social groups were equally capable of developing Scouting’s advanced character and leading citizenship. BSA national leaders tried but failed to persuade the feminist Girl Scouts to merge into the domestic-oriented Camp Fire Girls organization. BSA officials’ programming and membership policies intentionally limited the participation of non-white, working class immigrant, and rural boys in early Scout troops. With the easing of race and class tensions, rapid economic growth, and increasing peace gestures by the mid-1920s, BSA national administrators changed policies to gradually recruit this “underprivileged majority.” Requiring black and Native American men to undergo extensive training before receiving their Scoutmaster commissions and placing restrictions on Scout privileges such as rank advancement, uniforms, and camping, however, kept such groups confined to second class membership, manhood, and citizenship. Some rural and working class boys resisted the BSA’s takeover of the Lone Scouts of America and the corresponding diminution of self-reliance and boy self-government – suggesting that groups on the margins of society rather than native-born white, middle class and elite men clung more to nineteenth century masculine ideals.

BSA administrators employed natural resource conservation imagery and activities to reinforce their hierarchical vision of character and citizenship. They argued that women were too superficial and sentimental to distinguish between “harmless” animals worthy of protection and “pests” that needed to be exterminated. BSA leaders suggested that Native Americans showed a natural affinity and sympathy for nature, but that they were too primitive and selfish to scientifically manage natural resources for the
BSA sources judged blacks to be primarily fit for manual labor jobs in the outdoors such as picking cotton or draining resin from pine trees. Scout administrators suggested that the character of white, working class immigrants suffered from a lack of connection with nature and their engrossment in mass entertainment and urban street life. Outdoor Scouting under the leadership of good men might mitigate but could not completely make up for these boys’ supposed character deficiencies. BSA leaders suggested that balanced, modest Scouts should apply the lessons of natural resource conservation to managing society. BSA sources stated that Scouts, as America’s future leaders, should control the nation’s natural and social resources.

BSA officials continued to debate the respective influence of biological inheritance and cultural environment on boy character development in the 1930s. One might expect the Great Depression to have derailed the BSA, but the organization managed to adapt and increase its membership. Council budgets dwindled as Community Chest drives and other donations decreased. The national office staff had to be reduced and the remaining personnel took pay cuts in 1932. BSA regional and local offices were forced to adopt similar cutbacks in staff and expenditures, especially since many local councils had engaged in deficit spending in the second half of the 1920s. An average of two councils disbanded in each state, with some regions losing nearly half their councils. Stronger councils, however, tried to pick up the abandoned areas. Some troops lost their meeting place as schools closed or limited their hours. A number of Scoutmasters lost their jobs and moved in search of work, leaving some troops leaderless. Then again, some college students and fathers who were out of work had more time to volunteer for Scouting. Troop leadership helped uphold their masculine identity and
cultural continuity during the economic chaos of the 1930s. Shortages of male Scoutmasters in the Depression also helped ease women’s entry into BSA leadership via Cubbing. Den Mothers could officially register in 1936 and headquarters published a handbook for them in 1937. Some councils set up Scout leader training sessions which husbands and wives attended together. Even with reduced budgets and staff, the number of total BSA members increased from 834,000 in 1929 to over one million in 1935, and 1,358,000 in 1939 (though 200,000 of the latter figure were new Cubs under twelve).¹

Economic turmoil expanded two key components of the BSA’s character-building program: Good Turns and camping. In response to President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s special radio address urging Boy Scouts to help in the national emergency, BSA members across the country provided a wide range of Good Turn services that garnered momentum and support for the organization. They acted as messengers and gathered data for social workers and relief agencies. San Diego Scouts, for example, distributed thirty thousand forms in 1931 to prospective employers who might have odd jobs available. Boy Scouts around the country collected nearly two million clothing, food, and household items. Such services reinforced the belief that Boy Scouts were the leaders of the future. The Depression also witnessed a boost in Scout camping. Food and shelter were sometimes better and cheaper at Scout camp than in the outside world, so many parents were glad to send their sons. Over twenty-seven thousand Scouts from around the country attended the first National Scout Jamboree in 1937, camping for ten days in the shadow of the Washington Monument in the nation’s capital. The quadrennial encampment became a highlight of many members’ Scouting careers. In 1938, oil tycoon Waite Phillips donated thirty-five thousand acres in New Mexico that was developed into Philmont, the
BSA’s first national high adventure camp. Today, it serves as the heart of Scout camping.²

A special BSA Commission on Inter-Racial Activities reported to local council Executives at their 1936 national training conference that the Depression had made the organization’s leaders more aware of the obstacles to Scout participation faced by non-whites, immigrants, and poor boys – but few changes in national policies resulted. This commission was divided into three sub-committees: Negro Work; White Nationality Groups; and Indians, Mexicans, Japanese, and Chinese. Weaver Marr, the Atlanta council Executive who chaired the sub-section on Negro Work, argued that Scouting could and should help black boys who faced prejudice and real restrictions in life opportunities, especially in times of economic turmoil. However, he and other BSA national leaders stated that the organization’s ambitious membership recruitment goals of reaching one of every four boys did not apply to blacks. Despite the fact that the Depression impoverished men of all races and undermined the notion that manly character and self-reliance were racial traits, the commission concluded “[t]hat local conditions and attitudes continue to be the determining factors in the method of promoting the Scout Program. Local custom shall determine the extent to which activities shall be [racially] separate.” It recommended adhering to the requirement that black Scoutmasters undergo extensive training before receiving their troop commissions. The Commission and Inter-Racial Service Director Stanley Harris upheld the suggestion that, in racially segregated areas, white local councilmen should continue to control black Scouting. Harris explained that a sub-committee of black men might be formed that
would be “just a little Council within a Council. It has only an advisory relationship and an activities relationship; no legislative authority.”

Local Executives’ divided reactions to the commission’s recommendations at the 1936 conference highlighted the ongoing tension between the belief that America was a classless society that should offer equal opportunity to all and the belief that non-whites and white immigrants were less capable of advanced character development and leadership. One Executive maintained that the BSA should not show favoritism by making a special pitch to recruit any particular social group of boys, but Linn C. Drake of Washington, D.C. argued against local council autonomy on race issues since “it certainly is not their province to refuse to recognize that there is a problem.” In the rural councils’ discussion session, one Executive asked if black Scoutmasters felt that having to undergo formal training was racial discrimination. Mr. Nelson responded, “Fortunately, [black men] don’t know the [white] men aren’t required to do it.” In the large city councils’ discussion session, Mr. Green stated that he would only vote for requiring black Scoutmasters to take training courses if the resolution was changed to include men of all races. Chairman Wright used his procedural authority to end the discussion and dissent on the policy: “That is not to the motion. I am sorry for I think the point is well taken.” At the mixed rural-urban councils’ discussion session, Mr. Briggs argued, “I do not like to see that go into the records of our National policies, that it makes a distinction between a colored man and a white man in getting a Scoutmaster’s Commission.” George Jones of Johnstown, Pennsylvania added, “Why should they be penalized because they are black?” Alfred J. Tiles of Houston agreed that Scoutmaster training should be required of men of all races. This sub-group of Executives voted to
reject that particular recommendation of the commission. Despite such dissent from some local Executives, the existing national race policies were upheld.4

Harry K. Eby, the Chicago council Assistant Executive who chaired the commission’s sub-committee on “White Nationality Groups,” stressed in his report at the 1936 Executives’ conference that, although the United States had been built on immigration and different cultural groups merged into American society, Scouting was still not readily available to new white immigrants. He stated that most of the small number of new white immigrant Scouts belonged to “mixed” community or Rotary-sponsored troops, which he characterized as ineffective: “The result is an isolated and an unrelated connection with the institutions, the organizations and the objects of the nationality groups…Scouting appears as something from the outside, something foreign to them.” Eby’s report suggested that each white nationality group be encouraged to run their own troops, so at least some BSA leaders had shifted by the mid-1930s from “Americanizing” immigrants back to encouraging them to maintain some measure of cultural distinctiveness. Eby argued that immigrant parents saw Scouting as a waste of time which could be better spent earning money for the family. He added that other organizations offered better and free recreational opportunities for immigrant boys. Eby stated his sub-committee’s recommendation that work with white immigrants be distinctly separate from Inter-Racial work, since “[t]hey are not distinct races. They are people of the white race, whose ancestry is traceable to other nations.” Regardless of the distinction, the commission highly recommended that immigrant men still be trained before receiving troop commissions. Eby concluded that the BSA National Council should embark on an immigrant recruiting plan similar to its rural outreach efforts. In
their discussion sections, local Executives expressed continued division on such basic issues as whether or not to translate information pamphlets on Scouting to ease the fears of immigrant parents. Some leaders’ continued desire to Americanize immigrants via Scouting prevented adoption of Eby’s suggestions.5

The Depression prompted a few minor adjustments in the BSA’s class-based policies, but continued belief in the importance of self-reliance, thrift, and voluntary service to balanced, modest manliness limited the changes most BSA leaders were willing to make. Some evidence suggests that financial shortfalls in the Depression prompted a few local councils to racially integrate Scout camps or leadership to save money. The national office finally reduced the price of the uniform to ease costs for members. Some troops eliminated the uniform requirement and weekly dues. Local Scout leaders and institutional officials increased the number of troops in reform schools, handicapped institutions, and working class Boys’ Clubs. BSA officials attempted to start more troops in destitute areas, but sociological studies found that the vast majority of Scouts still came from better-off socioeconomic groups. Some local leaders suggested that the Second Class rank requirement to deposit a dollar be waived for poor Scouts, but James West refused. West stated that Troop Committeeemen should instead create jobs so that boys could earn the money. At the 1939 BSA national training conference, an Executive from Buffalo (one of the few councils to make a sustained effort to recruit working class immigrant boys) maintained that boys learn the value of “honest labor” by having to pay their own way in Scouting: “We must stand up and teach the point that in good citizenship you earn your way through life.” The Buffalo council, however, was experimenting with using paid professionals trained to deal with a particular immigrant
group to organize Scouting in each cultural area. Other Scout leaders remarked that this method was too expensive or violated the organization’s principle of voluntary troop leadership. West strongly reiterated that donated money should not be used to pay registration fees or uniform costs for “less chance boys.” Attendees had difficulty even pinpointing a definition of the less chance boy and what methods were best used to approach him. Some stated that the less chance boy was characterized by his family’s and community’s levels of income, while others suggested including all white immigrants and non-whites in the category of less chance boys. Attendees also debated if companies or labor unions could effectively sponsor Scout troops and whether or not a labor representative should be put on the local council.6

After a decade of economic depression, BSA administrators still upheld a number of policies that limited non-white, immigrant, urban working class, and rural boys’ participation. The belief that native-born white, middle class, town boys were most capable of developing the balanced, modest manliness needed for leading citizenship continued to guide BSA policies and programming. Even as large economic forces proved their power over individual character and will, Scout administrators’ hierarchical vision of manhood prevailed. BSA members and supporters demonstrated their continued belief in Scout character training by working to increase the organization’s membership and social relevance in the 1930s. Balanced, modest Scout manliness maintained its hold on mainstream American society through and beyond the upheavals of the Great Depression.
Notes

Introduction


2 “Coolidge Praises Boy Scout Ideals,” quotations at 18.


Clyde Griffen argued that hypermasculinity served as a fantasy escape for men in this period. He pointed to Margaret Marsh’s essay on “domestic masculinity,” middle class suburban men’s supposed concession to their wives to be more playful with the children and involved in home life, as the primary balance to compensatory virility in the formation of modern masculinity. Doing “women’s work” at home, however, would have done little to offset the real challenge to men’s authority by feminism and women’s entry into higher education and professional work. Clyde Griffen, “Reconstructing Masculinity from the Evangelical Revival to the Waning of Progressivism: A Speculative Synthesis,” in Mark C. Carnes and Clyde Griffen, eds., Meanings for Manhood: Constructions of Masculinity in Victorian America (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 191-203. Robert Griswold argued in a review of Kimmel’s Manhood in America that the book failed to demonstrate the masculine identity and concerns of common men in their daily lives. Robert L. Griswold, untitled review, Journal of Social History 30.4 (Summer 1997): 999-1001.

For examples of masculinities works citing Boy Scouting as evidence of the dominant model of virile, primitive, strenuous masculinity, see Roberts, “The Strenuous Life,” 111-114; Filene, 241; Pleck, 25-26; Stearns, Be a Man, 19, 22, 68; Rotundo, American Manhood, 227-228, 258; Kimmel, Manhood in America, 168-170; Kasson, Houdini, Tarzan, and the Perfect Man, 191; Rodgers, The Work Ethic, 143-147; and Summers, Manliness and Its Discontents, 126-127. Joe Dubbert may have come closest to the mark when he argued that the BSA combined Victorian character with Progressive ideals, but he still lumped the BSA in with Tarzan, the fictive western cowboy, sports, and war as evidence of a fin de siècle emphasis in American masculinity on aggression, competition, physical prowess, and courage. Dubbert, 148-153, 191-192. On the Scout racial lineage, see Boys’ Life (Feb. 1926): 15; Handbook for Boys (1928), 33, 192; and Handbook for Scoutmasters (1929), 242-243.


13 Reforms such as the city manager and city council forms of government provided urban services to the population in a more efficient manner, but attempted to isolate government power from the perceived dangers of mass democracy. In another prominent type of reform effort, female social workers established settlement houses that helped improve city hygiene and safety. Overall, they also attempted to replace the cultural ways of new immigrant workers with middle class moral values. On progressive reform, see


Hantover provided a useful chapter on the development of nineteenth and early twentieth century youth organizations. He noted that early twentieth century youth organizations, relative to nineteenth century ones, placed more emphasis on centralized control, age and sex segregation, scientific rationale for moral goals, adolescent theory, and differentiated gender norms. He argued that the BSA’s major contribution was to combine the separate elements of previous youth organizations. Hantover, “Sex Role,” 14-53. On the era’s youth organizations, see also Macleod, *Building Character*; and William E. Hall, *100 Years and Millions of Boys: The Dynamic Story of the Boys’ Clubs of America* (New York: Farrar, Straus, Cudahy, 1961).

Charles Rosenberg argued that nineteenth century advice literature for middle class men contained an irreconcilable duality between the virtues of the Christian Gentleman and the Masculine Achiever. This dissertation argues that the BSA combined both of these ideals with modern masculine values such as scientific efficiency, social cooperation, and loyalty to hierarchical authority. Charles E. Rosenberg, “Sexuality, Class and Role in 19th-Century America,” *American Quarterly* 25.2 (May 1973): 131-153. On the self-made man ideal stressing that success lies within the individual’s character rather than on outside conditions, see Irvin G. Wyllie, *The Self-Made Man in America: The Myth of Rags to Riches* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1954). BSA leaders used the term “character” interchangeably with manliness and manhood. For one of many examples of intentionally equating the terms, see 1920 ECR, 152-162.

On 1920s changes, see Dumenil; Michael Parrish, *Anxious Decades: America in Prosperity and Depression, 1920-1941* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1992); Burl Noggle, *Into the Twenties: The United States from Armistice to Normalcy* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1974); Frederick Lewis Allen,


Chapter One

1 For BSA histories stressing the importance of its bureaucracy, see Wigginton; Dean; and Rowan.

2 As for many other narrative aspects of Boy Scout history, the first and most recent official histories of the BSA provide good starting points for anyone researching the origins and development of the organization. These two books have been exceedingly helpful in formulating this chapter. Peterson; and Murray. For additional details on the Mafeking siege and the spontaneous growth of Boy Scouting in England, see Ralph D. Blumenfeld, “The Boy Scouts,” The Outlook 95 (July 23, 1910): 617-618. As the author of the most comprehensive biography of Baden-Powell, Tim Jeal provided a thorough account of the Mafeking siege and the origins of British Boy Scouting in The Boy-Man: The Life of Lord Baden-Powell. Jeal attempted to refute the criticisms of Baden-Powell by authors such as Rosenthal, who attacked Baden-Powell on matters of pedophilia, racism, and military strategy. Rosenthal.

3 On boys writing B-P about Scouting before the formation of the British Boy Scout organization, see Blumenfeld; and Wyatt Blassingame, Story of the Boy Scouts (Champaign, Illinois: Garrard Publishing Co., 1968), 21. On British schools and governess training centers using B-P’s Aids to Scouting, see Melissa Biegert, “Woman Scout: The Empowerment of Juliette Gordon Low,” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Texas, 1998), 141; and James Galt-Brown, “Baden-Powell and His Boy Scouts: The Reasons for Their Creation, Growth and Success in Great Britain, 1906-1920” (Ph.D. dissertation, Mississippi State University, 2002), 229-231. According to historian Will Oursler, Baden-Powell himself was fond of relating a more personal creation story. Riding home from work, Baden-Powell heard his son call out from the branch of a tree overhead, “Father, you are shot. I am in ambush and you have passed me without seeing me. Remember, you should always look up as well as around you.” With his son was his new governess, recently hired from Miss Charlotte Mason’s Teachers’ Training College at Ambleside. The governess explained that the newest educational methodology suggested using Baden-Powell’s army scout manual to train children in observation and deduction. See Will Oursler, The Boy Scout Story (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1955), 27-29.

4 Oursler, 27-28; Blassingame, 31-32; and Macleod, Building Character, 89-93. James Galt-Brown provided a useful examination of the influence of the Boys’ Brigade and Woodcraft Indians on Baden-Powell and the British Boy Scouts. Galt-Brown also emphasized the role of British Secretary of State for War, R.B. Haldane, in the development of the British Boy Scout organization. Haldane placed most of the existing branches of the Boys’ Brigades under his department in 1906. He offered them government land, army camping equipment, and military officers to inspect their troops. Galt-Brown speculated that Haldane might have offered Baden-Powell command of the Northumbrian Division of the new Territorial Army in exchange for starting his own organization which would serve as an additional feeder for British military recruitment. The new position provided Baden-Powell with an income while he started the Boy Scouts, but he refused to place the Boy Scouts under Haldane’s War Department. James Galt-Brown, “Baden-Powell and His Boy Scouts: The Reasons for Their Creation, Growth and Success in Great Britain, 1906-1920,” (Ph.D. dissertation, Mississippi State University, 2002), 20-22, 84-136, 233-235, 295.


11 It is difficult to calculate the exact number and location of these early troops. Robert Peterson stated that early troops were formed in 1908 in Burnside, Kentucky; Montclair, New Jersey; and Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. 1909 saw troops added in at least Missouri, New York, Oklahoma, Chicago, and Michigan. Early 1910 brought troops in Ohio, Indiana, Boston, and St. Louis. Peterson, 29-30; “Baden-Powell’s Boy Scout Plan Invades America,” New York Times (April 24, 1910): SM11; and Luther Price, Boy Scouts of Glen Ridge, N.J.: Historical Sketch Montclair Times (May 1935 entry from volume of articles from Montclair Times newspaper at BSA National Archive), 5.

12 Sir Arthur Pearson’s sizable profits from publishing Baden-Powell’s Scout manual and magazine in Great Britain could also have drawn Boyce’s interest. Boyce first asked British Boy Scout officials if they would start a branch in the U.S., but they declined since they were too busy promoting Scouting within the British Empire. They suggested that Boyce incorporate a separate American organization so that he could avoid some of the legal and business problems that they had experienced in Britain. For accounts of Boyce’s London inspiration for bringing Boy Scouting to America, see Blassingame, 38-41; Oursler, 13-15; Macleod, Building Character, 146-147; C. W. Hackensmith, “Scout Memorabilia: William D. Boyce and the Scouting Movement in America,” The Pennsylvania Journal of Health, Physical Education and Recreation (March 1972): 31-33; John F. Sullivan, Boyce of Ottawa: “Items on Grand Account” 2nd ed. (Marseilles, IL: North Central Graphics, July 1985), 8-9; and Harriet Hughes Crowley, “The Great African Safari Bust: Or, How the Boy Scouts Came to America,” American Heritage 26.3 (April 1975): 28-31, 73-75. For details of the BSA’s founding, see also Oursler, 36-43; Janice A. Petterchak, W.D. Boyce and American Boy Scouting (Rochester, Illinois: Legacy Press, 2003), 63-64, 73-75; and William D. Boyce,
“Memorandum concerning how Scouting came to America as told by W.D. Boyce,” folder “History of the B.S. of A.,” BSA National Archive. On Boyce’s failed early BSA efforts, see Sullivan, 9; and Robert Peterson, “The Man Who Got Lost in the Fog,” Scouting (Oct. 2001). The presence of William Randolph Hearst’s American Boy Scouts organization may also have motivated Robinson and Seton to join with Boyce. For Seton’s early work promoting Boy Scouting prior to merging efforts with the BSA, see “Baden-Powell’s Boy Scout Plan Invades America.” For the influence of Hearst’s organization and the early BSA office disarray, see Macleod, Building Character, 146-159. For the pre-BSA YMCA Scout troops, see Robert Peterson, “The BSA’s ‘forgotten’ founding father,” Scouting (Oct. 1998). YMCA local branches hosted many of the first BSA enlistment stations. Even as late as 1918, five out of six district Scout heads and over one-fourth of local council executives were former YMCA employees. On YMCA-BSA relations, see also Murray, 15-32; Petterchak, 72; and Community Boy Leadership (1921): 361-363.

13 A temporary governing board, led by Seton, was appointed until the National Council Executive Board plan was put into place. Bonus and Verbeck retired from their commissions in 1912, while Beard continued as sole National Scout Commissioner until his death in 1941. Oursler, 55. For a description of the key meeting, see Oursler, 34-36; Macleod, Building Character, 146; and James E. West, “Historical Statement Concerning the Early Days of the Boy Scouts of America,” for BSA National Training School, (September 24, 1934), folder of same title, BSA National Archive. Robinson provided a brief timeline of the early meetings and the Silver Bay demonstration camp. Edgar M. Robinson, letter to Herschleb, 24 August 1942, in folder “First Troops,” Boy Scout National Archive. See also Boyce’s account, “Memorandum Concerning How Scouting Came to America.”

14 The tensions between competing models of Scout masculinity and different notions of the types of boys that the organization would target were evident at the first significant BSA camp session, a demonstration program held at the YMCA’s Silver Bay facility in upstate New York in August 1910. One hundred and twenty YMCA boys and twenty YMCA men from twenty different cities participated. Drawing on plans he had made with Robinson prior to their joining forces with Boyce, Seton instructed the boys in Indian lore and outdoor skills. Dan Beard later claimed that the camp centered on him teaching pioneer lore to the boys, but most other sources conflict with Beard’s interpretation. To further complicate matters, the YMCA men who accompanied the boys were trained separately in Baden-Powell’s version of Scouting by a leading British official named Wakefield. Before the merger with Boyce’s BSA, Edgar Robinson’s original plan for the Silver Bay encampment had been for Seton to demonstrate his Indian program to YMCA boys. See Peterson, “The BSA’s ‘forgotten’ founding father”; “Baden-Powell’s Boy Scout Plan Invades America”; and Robinson letter to Herschleb, 24 August 1942; William Edel, “The First Scout Camp in America,” Scouting (October 1994): 28-29, 49-50; and Oursler, 40-41.

15 For central office moves, including the 1928 relocation to a much larger space in the new No. 2 Park Avenue Building, see “Boy Scouts of America Move National Office in New York,” Weekly Bulletin of Scout Activities (December 10, 1927). On West’s background, see Rowan; Oursler, 47-52; and Boys’ Life (June 1926): 46. The National Council originally offered the Executive Secretary position to Edgar Robinson, who turned the offer down to return to his work with the YMCA. See Peterson, “The BSA’s ‘forgotten’ founding father.”

16 On elite BSA funding, see Petterchak, 70-71; and Macleod, Building Character, 147-148. For Robinson’s role in bringing in the Woodcraft Indians and Sons of Daniel Boone, see Petterchak, 68. The position of Chief Scout Citizen was abolished after Theodore Roosevelt’s death in 1919. For Seton and Robinson’s recruitment of other youth organization leaders and Roosevelt, see Peterson, “The BSA’s ‘forgotten’ founding father.” For Beard’s influence on Roosevelt, see Beard, Hardly A Man, 355-359. On Baden-Powell’s endorsement of the BSA, see “To Dine Baden-Powell: Boy Scouts of America to Honor the Head of Their English Cousins,” New York Times (Sep. 23, 1910): 8; and “Boy Scout Leaders Dine Baden-Powell,” New York Times (Sep. 24, 1910): 8.

17 On the 1916 federal charter and National Defense Act, see Peterson, 88. Congress did not honor the Girl Scouts of America with a federal charter until 1950, making it the only other U.S. youth organization to receive a federal charter. Boyce attempted to get a federal charter for his organization in 1910 through his old friend and Speaker of the House, Joe Cannon. The charter did not pass and was not brought before Congress again until 1915. For Boyce’s account of the organization’s founding and the first attempt to get a federal charter, see Boyce, “Memorandum Concerning How Scouting Came to America”; and Petterchak,
110-111. The organization’s annual reports to Congress carried a growing list of companies “discouraged” from using the word “Scout” in their product names without paying royalties to the BSA. For example, see 1924 BSA Annual Report, 25. Characterizing the BSA as a non-profit, educational entity, the Commissioner of the Internal Revenue Service designated the corporation and donations to it as exempt from taxation in 1917. 1917 BSA Annual Report, 63.


19 Using 1925 as an example, the BSA tapped 163,760 adult volunteers and fewer than one thousand paid staff. Around ninety-nine percent of adult Scouters from 1910 to 1930 volunteered their services, but foreign Scout officials still criticized the BSA for its unusual dependence on a paid bureaucracy. For ratio of volunteers to paid staff, see 1925 BSA Annual Report, 143; and Handbook for Scoutmasters (1929), 534. Peterson tabulated just four thousand professional Scouters amongst 1,130,000 adult Scouters (0.35 percent) in the BSA in 1984. Peterson, 214. For Wilson’s January 14, 1918 letter to BSA President Livingstone, see 2-sided poster entitled, “295,262 Boys Through Scouting Help Uncle Sam Win the War: Training for Citizenship through Service Boy Scouts of America, Eighth Anniversary, Feb. 8-12, 1918,” folder of same name, BSA National Archive. See also pamphlet, “Scout Leaders Reserve Corps Boy Scouts of America ‘Wanted 100,000 Men For Leaders of Uncle Sam’s Boys: Special Campaign February 8-12, 1918,” folder of same name, BSA National Archive.

20 On Municipal Research analysis, see Macleod, Building Character, 155-156. On the Bureau of Municipal Research’s mindset, see Haber, Efficiency and Uplift, 110-114.

21 Mark M. Jones, “Report on a Survey of the Boy Scouts of America 1927,” 96-97, 105-107, 116-119, BSA National Archive. With the exception of the Finance and National Court of Honor committees, the Executive Board appeared to control most of the National Council’s somewhat limited functions. The “Constitution of the Boy Scouts of America” explained the makeup and powers of the National Council and its Executive Board. This chapter used the version of the Constitution and By-Laws reported in Handbook for Scout Masters (1913; New York: BSA, 1919), 356-404.

22 Although the BSA’s structure was occasionally modified, its basic operations remained consistent. See “A Glimpse of National Headquarters,” Scouting (May 15, 1913): 3; and Handbook for Scoutmasters (1929), 505-519. On West’s Executive Board sub-committee and national Scout departments and their problems, see Macleod, Building Character, 150-157. The Mark M. Jones study concluded that West was responsible for far too many duties, “It is not only because it is evident to us from our study of National Headquarters that the over-concentration of work at the Chief Scout Executive’s desk is a basic problem of Scouting, but we also find it to be a matter of wide-spread concern throughout the movement in the United States. Almost every expression of opinion with respect to Scouting sooner or later brings forth the opinion that the Chief Scout Executive is endeavoring to handle too much and to exercise too much personal control.” The study concluded that morale was low due to personal squabbling and West’s micromanagement. It advised that West distribute eighty percent of his duties to three or four new division heads (Jones study, 273-275, quotation on 124). The national office somewhat carried out this advice by forming the Divisional System in the early 1930s, but West still maintained control over many decisions. BSA national leaders revised the handbooks every few years, so they serve as a useful gauge of changes in Boy Scout gender and civic ideology. Counting Seton’s original hybrid, the Boy Scout handbook has seen twelve major editions. The national office developed a multitude of popular magazines and pamphlets to flesh out its philosophy, program innovations, and local practices. BSA headquarters established its own printing operation to handle production demands. The BSA also created a press bureau to distribute favorable promotional materials. It produced posters, mailing cards, films, news reels, radio programs, and other items to recruit members and support. Many newspaper editors throughout the country carried stock BSA press bureau articles, and some devoted additional weekly space to Boy Scout news written by the local councils or boy members. On the development of BSA handbooks and other publications and media, see Kahler, 170; Macleod, Building Character, 149, 172-175; Oursler, 126-128; Murray, 392-417; and Peterson, “The Perfect Book for a Desert Island”; Peterson, The Boy Scouts, 61; Dean, 33; John T. Dizer, “The Birth and Boyhood of Boys’ Life,” Scouting (Nov.-Dec. 1994); Harold P. Levy, Building a Popular Movement: A Case Study of the Public Relations of the Boy Scouts of America (New York: Russell Sage
23 The BSA national office cut expenditures temporarily in the early 1920s until the quota system gelled. The 1923 and 1929 expenditure figures used here represent adjustments to include the total funds spent by Supply, Magazines, Publications, and Field Departments. Annual reports in this period switched to reporting spending by these departments in terms of profits and losses instead of how much total money each took in or spent. To track national office income and expenditures, see 1912 BSA Annual Report, 46; 1915 BSA Annual Report, 98; 1920 BSA Annual Report, 52-56; 1921 BSA Annual Report, 33-35; 1922 BSA Annual Report, 38-39; 1923 BSA Annual Report, 38-41; 1926 BSA Annual Report, 35; 1929 BSA Annual Report, 64-70; and Jones study, iv-v, and 262. Murray divided BSA national fundraising efforts into three eras: “Period of Individual Solicitation - 1910-1915,” “Period of Large Scale Mass Campaigns - 1915-1919,” and “Period of Development of Predictable Income - since 1920.” Murray, 67-75. For details on the 1917 and 1919 national fundraising campaigns, see “Suggested Plan for Meeting the Needs of the Boy Scout Movement Plan Nationally,” Scouting (Jan. 15, 1920): 12-13; and “Appendix to the Report of the Finance Committee,” p. 17-18, File 132, “Boy Scouts of America – Boy’s Life Trust Fund 1920-1932,” Microform Reel 9, Series 3: Appropriations, 1917-1945, Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial Collection. For the shift to the quota system, see also Oursler, 77-78; and Shaver, 174-177. The local councils paid their expenses through a combination of boy and troop dues, private donations, admission fees at Scouting exhibitions, and contributions from local Community Chests (the forerunner of today’s United Way). For the changing percentage of councils participating in Community Chests and the reliance of local councils on appeals to a “cultivated group,” see Arthur Schuck, “Local Finance Past and Future,” The Scout Executive (July 1926): 4; “Studying the Community Chest,” The Scout Executive (June 1927): 6; and Waldo Shaver, Notes from a Pioneer’s Journal of Scouting Stories (privately published, 1977), 77-81, 164-165. BSA headquarters established an Education Department in 1916 to produce training literature and to direct the increasing number of national and local training conferences for Scoutmasters and local council administrators. An expanding number of colleges and universities across the country offered summer sessions on Scoutmastership for class credit. For useful discussions of the early training conferences and classes, see Handbook for Boys (1919), 318-323; Murray, 337-351; Robert Peterson, “The Training of Pioneer Scout Leaders,” Scouting (Oct. 1998); “Nationally Certified Courses,” The Scout Executive (Feb. 1927): 2; and 1925 BSA Annual Report, 160-161.

24 James West estimated in February 1911 that there were two hundred informal local Scout committees across the U.S. Oursler, 44. Harold Pote argued that the National Council Executive Board chartered local councils after mounting difficulty keeping up with requests for help from local Scoutmasters. Harold F. Pote, Fifty Years of Scouting in America and the Pioneers (privately printed, 1962), 7-8, folder of same name, box “Local and Regional Histories: Personal Histories Misc. Alaska - Missouri [Box 1 of 2],” BSA National Archive.

25 Macleod argued that the registration system was an important method of national control over local Scouting. On West’s limitation of councils to one municipality each, see Macleod, Building Character 150-152. For the 1913 changes, see also “Fact Sheet: Historical Highlights,” (Irving, Texas: BSA, 2001), 1. The council offices administered programming at the local level, provided direction to area Scoutmasters, and served as local channels of Scout public relations. For the functions of a typical local BSA council, see El Paso example in The Scout Executive (February 1922): 2; Cedar Rapids Area Council’s annual calendar in The Scout Executive (May 1930): 7; and organizational chart in Handbook for Scoutmasters (1929), 501.

26 Sears, Roebuck and Company President and philanthropist, Mortimer Schiff, provided matching funds to help the national Field Department set up regional offices with paid Executives that corresponded to the twelve geographical divisions used by the Federal Reserve Bank. For duties of the regional councils, see Community Boy Leadership (1922), 189-193. On BSA regional council development, see Oursler, 78; 1918 BSA Annual Report, 75; Wigginton, 65-66; and Murray, 276-279. George J. Fisher, President of the New York City Kiwanis Club in the late 1920s, served as head of the expanding Field Department and Deputy Chief Executive to James West from 1919 to 1936. Dean, 72-73; Oursler, 78-79; and Pote, 11. Unfortunately, the regional offices this researcher contacted for information kept very few older records.
The BSA has a schedule instructing that the offices throw out most types of documents after a period of seven years.

27 On the formation of new local councils, see Jones study, 129-131. On council statistics and foci, see also Murray, 259; Oursler, 78; Handbook for Scout Masters (1914), 13; and “Fact Sheet: Historical Highlights.”

28 Murray, 259. During the 1930s, First Class Councils began to consolidate while the number of Second Class Councils and Scouts not under council remained quite low.

29 The wide array of religious, educational, and civic organizations that sponsored Boy Scout troops (or at least those allowed by local white council leaders) demonstrates the broad appeal of early Scout gender and civic ideology. Churches have dominated troop sponsorship throughout the organization’s history, being responsible for roughly half of the troops each year. However, churches’ portion dropped from a peak of sixty-eight percent of total troops in 1915 to forty-seven percent in 1930. Schools, primarily public ones and their Parent Teacher Associations, sponsored roughly ten percent of Scout troops during the 1910s and 1920s. Macleod argued that this figure underplays school support for Scouting since many schools offered the Boy Scouts free meeting space but hesitated to take the full responsibility of formally sponsoring a troop. Macleod noted that seventeen percent of Scout troops in 1921 met in schools, while only seven percent of troops were actually sponsored by schools. Macleod, Building Character, 199-200. Fraternal organizations such as the Lions and Rotary Clubs and the American Legion increased their sponsorship of Scout troops from four percent of the BSA’s total in 1916 to sixteen percent in 1930. Institutions such as libraries, playgrounds, industrial plants, government agencies, police departments, and community centers together sponsored another five or so percent of troops during this era. Groups of interested citizens with no designated institutional affiliation sponsored most of the remaining as “community troops.” For the comparative statistics, see 1930 BSA Annual Report, 232-235. The change in percentage of total troops sponsored by churches from 1915 to 1925 reported in 1925 BSA Annual Report, 443. For service club troop sponsorship, see Dean, 74. Unfortunately, most sponsors failed to keep permanent records on their troops. Out of over fifty Honolulu troop sponsors contacted by this researcher in 2004, for example, only one had kept any Scout materials from the 1910s and 1920s. Perhaps this indicates that the sponsoring institutions’ role has been somewhat minimal in Scouting.

30 Macleod, Building Character, 153; Oursler, 240; Handbook for Scout Masters (1914), 17-18; Community Boy Leadership (1922), 8-9; Handbook for Boys (1928), 591; The Troop Committee: An Active Committee Insures Progress (New York City: BSA, 1928), 6-8; and “The Duties of a Troop Committee,” Scouting (April 1927): 12.


32 On West’s management style, see Rowan, 14-17, 188-197, 209. On the BSA’s dependence on paid staffers, see 1925 BSA Annual Report, 143; and Handbook for Scoutmasters (1929), 534.


34 On Carey’s petition, see Macleod, Building Character, 156; and Rowan, 91. On Seton’s criticism of West and Seton’s expulsion, see Rowan, 58-67. BSA administrators, partly due to their desire to cleanse the organization from any debt to Seton’s writings, curtailed use of the Indian model in national Scout publications and conferences through the mid-1920s. However, a number of local BSA officials and troop leaders continued to depend on Indian lore to maintain boys’ interest in Scouting. Indian lore survived in Scout camping and local Scout fraternal societies like the Order of the Arrow. BSA Indian lore’s emphasis on handicraft and colorful ritual continued to provide a pre-industrial balance to modern values like efficiency and scientific thinking. On West’s appraisal of Seton, see Melinda Wigginton, “The Boy Scouts of America: Founded in Progressivism and Still Progressing.” (Master’s thesis, University of California Santa Barbara, 1984), 56-58. For academic accounts of Seton’s ouster, see Robert Peterson, The Boy Scouts: An American Adventure (New York: American Heritage Publishing Co, Inc., 1984), 82; Carolyn D. Wagner, “The Boy Scouts of America: A Model and a Mirror of American Society.” (Ph.D. dissertation,


Educators accounted for a relatively consistent twelve percent of Scoutmasters; college students hovered around three to five percent except for during World War I. Skilled “mechanical” workers increased from seven percent in 1911 to over thirteen percent in 1925. The “miscellaneous” occupation category dropped from twenty-one percent in 1911 to less than one percent in 1931. Farmers and upper middle class professionals such as engineers, lawyers, and doctors accounted for the remainder. For leaders’ occupational statistics, see Macleod, *Building Character*, 150-160, 201-207; Dean, 106-109; 1911 BSA Annual Report, 10; 1912 BSA Annual Report, 19; 1915 BSA Annual Report, 39; 1916 BSA Annual Report, 34; 1917 BSA Annual Report, 70; 1925 BSA Annual Report, 143; and 1931 BSA Annual Report, 221.

Ex-Scoutmasters were still a majority of the Executives in 1922, but the tide was turning in favor of businessmen with no youth work experience. 1922 ECR, 78. On the qualifications of the ideal Scout council Executive, see *Community Boy Leadership* (1922), 21-43, 102-106, 195; “Qualifications of the Scout Executive,” *The Scout Executive* (March 1920): 1; *The Scout Executive* (Nov. 1920): 8-9; “Boy Scout Executives Self-Analysis Chart,” 1924 ECR, 433-436; and “The Ideal Secretary,” *The Scout Executive* (Feb. 1926): 5. On professional administrators, see Haber, 103-110. On scientific management, see Dubofsky, 83-141; and Glenn Porter, *The Rise of Big Business, 1860-1920* 2nd ed. (Arlington Heights, IL: Harlan Davidson, 1992), 100-110.

Starting in 1925, the national office ran a month-long training school each year that prepared an increasing percentage of new local council Executives. On the compromise between the ax-men and typewriter-men at the 1925 training school, see Freeman, “Typewriter vs. Ax.” The Board replaced some of Beard’s friend and supporters, who had been serving as merit badge experts. This included Frederick Vreeland, who had also complained about West’s dictatorial powers and his obsession with membership growth over quality of programming. Rowan, 96-97, 117-119. Jones study.


Dean, 59.


Dean, 59.


Dean, 59.
phenomenon. Some local councils have kept annual troop charter applications, but these contain limited types of information.


43 On Seton and European Boy Scout leaders’ greater use of the patrol system than the BSA, see Wigginton, 28-29; and E. Urner Goodman, “Character Values of Scouting, and How Obtained,” in Ray O. Wyland, Principles of Scoutmastership (New York: BSA, 1930), 176. On Baden-Powell’s boy-run patrols, see Baden-Powell, Scouting for Boys volume I (1908), 2, 35-36; and volume VI (1908), 175-179, 357. On Beard’s focus on self-governing boys in his Sons of Daniel Boone, see Beard, The Buckskin Book of the Boy Pioneers of America (New York: Pictorial Review, 1911), 12; and “Constitution of the Boy Pioneers of America,” Folder 3, Box 209, Beard Papers. See also “Discussion of Patrol System,” 1922 ECR, 409-415.


47 Lorne Barclay and William Hillcourt deserve particular credit for leading the BSA patrol method movement. Barclay, the BSA’s national Director of Education, was won over to European-style patrols by his study of French Scouting methods. Hillcourt, who wrote the first BSA handbook for boy Patrol Leaders in 1929 and an important Patrol Leaders’ column in Boys’ Life, had been a Danish Boy Scout and leader. For the increasing use of the patrol system in the BSA, see Lorne Barclay, “Better Troops Through Patrol Organization,” Scouting (Nov. 1922): 11-12; “Landmarks in the Patrol System,” Scouting (March 1923): 8; C.A. Edson, “The Measure of a Good Troop,” in Wyland, Principles of Scoutmastership, 214; The Patrol Method: Patrol Helps for Scoutmasters (New York: BSA Service Library, 1930); and 1924 ECR, 186-193. In 1924, about half of local council Executives reported that twenty-five percent of their troops used the patrol method. A smaller percentage reported that at least half their troops used the patrol method. “Training Patrol Leaders,” 1924 ECR, 191.

48 On character dividing boys into natural leaders and followers, see Arthur A. Carey, The Scout Law in Practice (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1915), 23; “Report of Committee on Troop and Patrol Organization,” in transcript of “Western Round-Up” of Scout Executives” (Berkeley, California, Jan. 21-24, 1920), 99, BSA National Archive; “Scouting for the Few - or the Many,” The Scout Executive (March 1922): 1; and Barclay, “The Patrol Method,” 3, 9-10. For pre-selecting patrol leaders, see “The Patrol and the Patrol Leader,” Scouting (Jan. 15, 1917): quotation on 6-7. See also Handbook for Scoutmasters (1929), 189-190, 662-663. For intentionally keeping Patrol Leaders ahead of the other boys, see William Hillcourt, “A Troop Revolution,” Scouting (April 1927): 9; and Barclay, “The Patrol Method,” 9-10. Most BSA publications advised the Scoutmaster to appoint the Patrol Leaders himself. If the Scoutmaster allowed the boys to vote on their leader, then he was instructed to subtly manipulate the election, reserve the right to veto the results, or administer a test in Scouting efficiency to ensure an appropriate boy was chosen. Regardless of the method of selecting Patrol Leaders, the resulting semi-permanent hierarchy of boys was the same. On methods of choosing a Patrol Leader, see “The Patrol and the Patrol Leader,” Scouting (Jan. 15, 1917): 6; and Handbook for Scoutmasters (1929), 189-190, 662-663. Scoutmasters responding to a 1920 questionnaire split evenly on whether they appointed or allowed the election of Patrol Leaders. For this statistic and explanation of the exam method, see “How Scoutmasters Choose Patrol Leaders,” Scouting (Jan. 1, 1920): 13-14. Progressive educators pushed for a similar specialization of function in student output to match the inequality of social classes and future roles. David Tyack, “Bureaucracy and the Common School: The Example of Portland, Oregon, 1851-1913,” American Quarterly 19.3 (Fall 1967): 475-498.


The exact number of Scouts is difficult to ascertain before the registration system was installed in 1913. Peterson, The Boy Scouts, 55-56. The number of boy members dropped slightly to 896,484 for 1930. The inclusion from 1924 to July 1927 of an inflated rural membership figure of 480,000 boys absorbed from the independent Lone Scouts of America organization, and its subsequent correction helps account for the 1925 jump and the apparent decrease in total membership after mid-1927. For statistics on annual and cumulative BSA membership and ratios of Scouts to available boys, see 1930 BSA Annual Report, 211-213. For the number of Scoutmasters per year through 1926, see Handbook for Boys (1928), 590-596. For the U.S. having more Boy Scouts than the rest of the world combined, see Handbook for Boys (1928), 593.

Administrators reluctantly developed a separate Cub branch with an Indian motif in 1930. Cubbing for seven-to eleven-year old boys overtook the number of traditional Boy Scouts in the 1950s – a dominance it has maintained to this day. For age statistics, see Macleod, Building Character, 280-296. For Cub growth, see Peterson, The Boy Scouts, 104-108, 135, 163. For Sea Scouting, see Macleod, Building Character, 296-297; Peterson, The Boy Scouts, 100-105; and Community Boy Leadership (1922), 475-486.

For initial growth areas, see 1911 BSA Annual Report, 6; 1913 BSA Annual Report, 12; 1914 BSA Annual Report, 16; and 1915 BSA Annual Report, 40. For trends in state and regional troop density from 1919 to 1929, see 1921 BSA Annual Report, 110-137; 1924 BSA Annual Report, 151-191; 1925 BSA Annual Report, 169-170; and 1930 BSA Annual Report, 215-218.

For Scoutmasters’ nationality statistics, see 1911 BSA Annual Report, 10; 1915 BSA

51 Jones study, 78-85, quotation on 12. Since American church denominations roughly corresponded with cultural background and more than half of all Scout troops were sponsored each year by churches, BSA troop sponsor statistics provide one indication of the relative percentages of ethnic and racial minorities in the BSA. Methodists, Presbyterians, Episcopalians, and Congregationalists (who tended to be native-born whites with English and Scottish ancestry) sponsored the highest percentage of troops relative to their total number of members. Lutherans (often German and Scandinavian) and Catholics (mostly southern and eastern European, Irish, and Mexican) had low rates of sponsorship. Due to their heavy black and rural Southern membership, African Methodist Episcopal and Baptist churches were poorly represented in Scouting. The Mormons were the first church to officially adopt Boy Scouting in 1913. It quickly became a regular part of Mormon youth education and socialization. The Mormons now form the single largest block in Scouting and heavily influence national Scout policies. Outside of increased Mormon sponsorship and a modest increase in Catholic sponsorship, the relative portions of Old Stock and new immigrant church Scout troops remained relatively consistent from 1910 to 1982. On church troop sponsorship, see Macleod, Building Character, 193-198 and 303-304; Peterson, The Boy Scouts, 98-100: “Scouting & the Church” chart, Handbook for Scoutmasters (1929), 216; Henry P. Fairchild, Conduct Habits of Boy Scouts (New York: BSA, 1931), 34-35; Hantover, “Sex Role,” 177-179; and Harry K. Eby, “Commission Report on White Nationality Groups,” 1936 ECR, 840-848. Scoutmasters claiming American and English nationalities made up roughly ninety percent of applicants in the period under study. German and Scotch Scoutmasters tallied the next highest percentages, while southern and eastern European immigrants were markedly underrepresented amongst Scoutmasters relative to their growing portion of the United States population. The annual reports failed to tabulate Asian and African nationalities. Either they were statistically insignificant, or the national office did not wish to publicize certain groups’ involvement in Boy Scouting. For Scoutmasters’ nationality statistics, see 1911 BSA Annual Report, 10; 1915 BSA
Chapter Two

1 The BSA has retained the twelve Laws, Oath, and Motto as adopted in May 1911 to the present day, although some explanations of their meanings have been modified. For Woodcraft Indian laws, see Ernest Thompson Seton, “Indians and Scouts,” Social Activities for Men and Boys (New York: Young Men’s Christian Association Press, 1910), 263. For the Boy Pioneer laws, see Dan Beard, The Buckskin Book of the Boy Pioneers of America (New York: Pictorial Review, 1911), 8-9. For Baden-Powell’s original laws,

2 On the “New Negro,” see Summers.


6 *Programs for Scout Masters* (1912 “Proof Copy”), 10.

7 *Programs for Scout Masters* (1912 “Proof Copy”), 69-77, quotations on 71, 71-72.


9 *Programs for Scout Masters* (1912 “Proof Copy”), 119-139, 174-179, quotations on 139, 178.

10 Some countries had begun to use the two systems in combination because of the flaws of the Bertillon system. *Programs for Scout Masters* (1912 “Proof Copy”), 151-157, quotations on 157.
The new edition retained most of the recapitulation-based troop meeting schedule from the 1912 handbook. The Bertillon section may have been eliminated simply to save space, since the remaining physiognomy program – in which the boys examined each other’s faces for racial and ethnic differences – represented a simplified version of it. Scoutmasters could easily have learned the details of the Bertillon System from the old handbook or Bertillon’s book. The revised handbook also cut the instructions on getting boys to ask their fathers and grandfathers about their lineage and history of physical development.

These citations refer to the 1914 version, but the major revisions occurred in 1913. For elimination of Bertillon explanation, compare Handbook for Scout Masters (1914), 196-198 to Programs for Scout Masters (1912 “Proof Copy”), 117-158. For retention of program of boys comparing facial features, see Handbook for Scout Masters (1914), 208-209. For elimination of family lineage and body development history, compare Handbook for Scout Masters (1914), 178 to Programs for Scout Masters (1912 “Proof Copy”), 71-72. For new adolescence chapter, see Handbook for Scout Masters (1914), 91-109, quotations on 94, 100, 103, 104. See also 1920 ECR, 77-78.

Handbook for Scout Masters (1914), 102-109, quotations on 103, 104, 102, 104-105.

Handbook for Scout Masters (1914), quotations on 107, 108.

For works arguing that recapitulation declined in the BSA in the 1920s, see Macleod, Building Character, 114-115, 294-297; and Wigginton, 68. For belief in heredity and environment combining to determine character, see Raymond O. Hanson speech, “The Boy’s Instincts,” 1924 ECR, 279; 1926 ECR, 536-537; and H.W. Hurt, “General Statement of Nature and Interests of Boys 8-12 Years of Age,” Feb. 15, 1927, folder, “Research on Boys of Cub Scout Age,” BSA National Archive. On changing theories of character, see Stocking, “Lamarckianism,” 251-256; and David Southern, The Progressive Era and Race: Reaction and Reform, 1900-1917 (Wheeling, IL: Harlan Davidson, 2005), 55-56.


The soldier had long represented bravery and loyalty in Western culture. In early twentieth century Anglo-American popular culture, the military scout evoked images of British imperial soldiers, Native American warriors, or the white American pioneers and soldiers who vanquished them. Scouting for Boys IV (1908), 213, 222, 239. This researcher found only two BSA notations of Spanish-American veterans. Boys’ Life (June 1912): 26; and The Cave Scout, “Tough Luck,” Boys’ Life (July 1923): 1. For examples of Revolutionary War soldiers, see cover sketches, Boys’ Life (July 1920); Boys’ Life (July 1922); and...


MacDonald made his original mark photographing women in the 1890s, but then decided to only photograph men for the remainder of his productive career. For biographical information, see “Guide to the Pirie MacDonald Portrait Photograph Collection, 1885-1942,” New York Historical Society. Pirie MacDonald, “Scouting and Recreational Leadership,” Scouting (Aug. 1, 1918): first quotation on 9. Carey also claimed that American boys’ “deep-seated love and respect for law,” which was “part of our Anglo-Saxon heritage,” allowed them to trust established authority: “In the public service it is often inevitable that we should be commanded to do things without understanding the reason for the command; and in such cases our duty requires that we should act in temporary blindness.” Carey, The Scout Law, 29-33, 117-120, second quotation on 117. The highest percentage of Scoutmasters with “Army and Navy” occupations recorded was 4.5% in 1912. The portion thereafter declined, with 2.6% in 1915, and 0.74 percent by 1916 (prior to America’s entry into World War I). The percentage hovered under one percent at least through 1925. See 1911 BSA Annual Report, 10; 1912 BSA Annual Report, 19; 1915 BSA Annual Report, 39; 1916 BSA Annual Report, 34; 1917 BSA Annual Report, 70; and 1925 BSA Annual Report, 160.


Figure 2.2 sketch in Community Boy Leadership (1922), 352. Carey, The Scout Law, 76-77. One early pamphlet emphasized that loyalty was difficult to achieve in America because the country lacked the personal or class relationships and the permanency that was at the base of loyalty in societies like Japan and feudal Europe. This and other BSA sources, however, criticized the notion of fixed class status by noble birth because it conflicted with the belief that American society offered freedom from social divisions. Charles W. Eliot, “Training of Boy Scouts” (New York: BSA, undated - probably early 1910s), 4-5.

Handbook for Scoutmasters (1929), 175-177; “Finding One’s Life Work,” Handbook for Boys (1928), 387-389; and Community Boy Leadership (1922), 502. On being other-directed, see Dumenil; Lears; and Susman. The aforementioned late 1920s surveys of community leaders, Scoutmasters, and Boy Scouts found that being cheerful and thrifty were amongst the laws least emphasized in Scouting. Perhaps it was difficult to directly stress work in a voluntary, leisure-time program for school boys. On the surveys, see Dividends of Scouting, 35; Scouting (July 1929), 231, 243; Johnson, “A Study of the Boy Scout Organization,” 68-71; and 1928 ECR, 561-569. The majority of merit badges the BSA offered were vocational, but boys preferred the outdoor and service merit badges required to earn Life, Star, and Eagle Scout ranks. Robert Peterson, “Evolution of the Eagle Scout Award,” Scouting (Nov.-Dec. 2002).

Richardson and Loomis, quotation on 353. See also The Cave Scout, “The Scout Who Will Stick,” Boys’ Life (Feb. 1915): 13; and “In the Scout Cave,” Boys’ Life (May 1922): 38.


Program for Scout Masters (1912 “Proof Copy”), quotations on 201.

A Buffalo Scout leader suggested a new clause for the Scout Oath in 1918, “On my honor I will be efficient in everything I do.” Although the BSA national Badges and Award Committee rejected this formal change, efficiency pervaded most aspects of the program (Minutes of “Badges and Awards Committee, July 30, 1912-Nov. 13, 1928,” (Nov. 26, 1918), p. 92). Macleod argued that Boy Scouting “matched the turn from moralism towards efficiency which observers have noted in Progressive Era ideology around 1910 to 1912. But it did not bring full-blown technocracy” (Macleod, Building Character, 144, quotation on 165).

Figure 2.3 in Handbook for Boys (1919), 475. Second ad at Handbook for Boys (May 1927), quotations on 495. Trying to be too thrifty with time, however, might lead to a poor work ethic. A 1930 article in The Lone Scout, the BSA’s magazine for rural members, accused boys who failed to work cheerfully and efficiently of being clock trimmers, time watchers, and short-cut operators. “Self-Sympathy,” The Lone Scout (Apr. 1930). BSA literature suggested that troops hang up a clock with a Scout on its face and the twelve Scout laws linked to the twelve hours of the day in their meeting rooms. Meeting Rooms for Troop and Patrol, (New York: BSA, 1931), 29. See also William D. Murray, “Why a Boy Is Like a Watch,” Boys’ Life (March 1921): 1; Handbook for Boys (1928), 14; and E.P. Beebe’s speech for the Convention of Efficiency Society, “Scouting and Raw Material,” Scouting (Jan. 1, 1916): 15.


“-And Spending,” Boys’ Life (April 1929): quotation on 24. Dan Beard argued that a boy who blew money was a “profligate, a thoughtless, shiftless spendthrift,” a pattern which might lead him to become “an irresponsible chap like the bums, failures and misfits one finds seated on the park benches or chewing the rag in the dark back rooms of beer saloons. A Scout is a gentleman, hence a Scout is thrifty” (Dan Beard, “A Scout is Thrifty,” Boys’ Life (Sep. 1917): 22). See also Handbook for Scout Masters (1914), 85; and Carey, The Scout Law, 135.


Exhibition Rally” program (Honolulu: Honolulu Star-Bulletin for Honolulu Council Boy Scouts of America, Oct. 31, 1914): 6, Hawaiian Mission Children’s Society Library, Mission Houses Museum, Honolulu. Figure 2.4 in Greg Bowers, “On My Honor”: 70 Years of Scouting in York & Adams Counties (York, PA: York Council, BSA, 1983), 37. It is difficult to find an early BSA troop meeting plan, camp schedule, or rally program which did not include setting-up drill. The 1929 Scoutmaster handbook suggested that they were over-rated, but few local Scout leaders seem to have agreed at this time. Handbook for Scoutmasters (1929), 314-315.

The pamphlet argued that “[f]ilth of mind” was a greater obstacle to health than foul air, spoiled water, lack of sleep, and improper nutrition. Personal Health (New York: BSA, 1933 from 1929 original), 1, 4. Handbook for Boys (1928), 382.

Physical Development (New York: BSA, 1929), 23-24, quotations on 24. See also Personal Health, 2.


For one of many arguments against over-exertion, see Carey, The Scout Law, 44-46. George J. Fisher, “Health and Endurance,” The Official Handbook for Boys (1911), 219-233. Despite discouragement from the national office, a few local Scout leaders continued to run track meets and sport leagues. See Boys’ Life.
Evolution of the Eagle Scout Award. Macleod argued that BSA badge topics were obsolete for real required for rank advancement were more popular than scientific, cultural, agricultural, and vocational training, but instead taught middle class aspiration. He pointed out that easy badges and those Henry S. Curtis, “The Boy Scouts,” 

Rodgers, Handbook for Boys control and the “ability to care for themselves in all exigencies of life.” Boy Scouts of America, “Articles of Incorporation,” (Feb. 8, 1910), Folder 6, Box 209, Beard Papers. The BSA’s 1916 federal charter was repeated verbatim in the next two major handbook editions. Handbook for Boys (1919), 305-319; and Handbook for Boys (1928), 495-512.

The BSA’s 1910 articles of incorporation declared that the organization’s object was to teach boys self-control and the “ability to care for themselves in all exigencies of life.” Boy Scouts of America, “Articles of Incorporation,” (Feb. 8, 1910), Folder 6, Box 209, Beard Papers. The BSA’s 1916 federal charter argued that the organization taught boys how to do things for themselves and be self-reliant. Federal Charter, (June 15, 1916), Handbook for Boys (1919), viii. Daniel Rodgers argued that self-reliance and the nineteenth century work ethic were increasingly untenable in America’s modernizing economy and workforce, but lived on in abstracted forms such as middle leisure, escapist fiction, and political rhetoric. Rodgers, The Work Ethic.

Scouting for Boys I (1908), 20. The Official Handbook for Boys (1911), first quotation on 14. On the revision of the Oath, see 1922 ECR, 29. BSA sources explained keeping oneself to mean self-reliance and taking responsibility for one’s actions instead of depending on direction from others or external rewards. The BSA promoted physical strength in terms of all-around fitness and endurance over bulging biceps. Being mentally awake emphasized being observant, promptly obeying orders, and helping in emergencies. Morally straight referred to being honest and not smoking, drinking, masturbating, or having sex outside of marriage. See Handbook for Scoutmasters (1929), 33-34; and Carey, The Scout Law, 47-59. While previous historical accounts of the BSA have credited YMCA leaders or James West for the American addition to the Boy Scout Oath, it appears that the initiative or at least the necessary support for the new segment came from outside BSA national leadership and was linked to Eugenics ideology. Macleod equated the Americanized Boy Scout Oath with the YMCA’s existing fourfold plan of balanced spiritual, mental, social, and physical development. Macleod, Building Character, 29, 149. For crediting West for the change to the BSA Oath, see Rowan, James E. West, 38. Despite the presence of YMCA International Boys’ Work Director Edgar Robinson on the revision committee, the original version of the Scout Oath the committee sent out to leading educators, clergymen, and businessmen for suggestions did not contain the additional clause. In the collection of letters sent to the BSA revision committee, Hall’s wording best approximated the revised Oath. For the BSA committee’s original draft of the Scout “Vow,” see “Standardization Scout Oath and Law” volume, hand-numbered p. 90, BSA National Archive. G. Stanley Hall letter to BSA national office (Feb. 10, 1911) in “Standardization Scout Oath and Law” volume, second quotation on hand-numbered pp. 47-48. G. Stanley Hall letter to James West (April 21, 1911) in “Standardization Scout Oath and Law” volume, third quotation on hand-numbered p. 164.

The service merit badges went a step further by training boys to be self-reliant and prepared enough to help others. For merit badge development and Woodcraft and Campcraft activities, see Handbook for Boys (1911), xiii-xiv, 16-18; Handbook for Boys (1919), xiii-xiv; Handbook for Scoutmasters (1929), 176-177; Henry S. Curtis, “The Boy Scouts,” Educational Review 50 (Dec. 1915): 495-497; and Peterson, “Evolution of the Eagle Scout Award.” Macleod argued that BSA badge topics were obsolete for real vocational training, but instead taught middle class aspiration. He pointed out that easy badges and those required for rank advancement were more popular than scientific, cultural, agricultural, and vocational
badges. He noted that most boys never earned advanced ranks, so badge work was not a part of every member's experience. Macleod, Building Character, 251-259, 376, 537.


53 Figure 2.5 sketch in Boys’ Life (Aug. 1921): 27. See also R.A. Cameran sketch with Clarence Elmer poem, “De Bigges’ Pile,” Boys’ Life (Sep. 1919): 4.


56 The Square Deal recalled Theodore Roosevelt’s successful 1904 Presidential campaign slogan, by which he meant that the federal government would deal with everyone fairly and equally. Figure 2.6, Frank Rigney cover sketch, Business merit badge pamphlet (New York: BSA, 1928): cover.

57 The handbook for Scout Executives emphasized that Scouting stressed team play and community effort, but later noted, “Competition, if judiciously handled, is a most subtle and effective method to use with boys” since it stimulated advancement and boy interest (Community Boy Leadership (1922), 17, 161-163, quotation on 233). See also Handbook for Scoutmasters (1929), 333, 673-675. Charles Eliot’s 1913 speech provided one of many examples of the BSA belief that cooperation promoted work efficiency. Charles Eliot, “President-Emeritus of Harvard Speaks in Praise of Scout Work,” Scouting (Dec. 15, 1913): 3. On the balance between the individual and cooperation in the BSA, see Macleod, “Act Your Age,” 8-9; Macleod, Building Character, 105; and Wigginton, 1-24. On the “social efficiency” craze in the 1910s, see Haber, Efficiency and Uplift, ix-xii, 53-74. On Taylorism, Fordism, and Trust Busting, see Gabriel Kolko,
According to the late 1920s surveys of community leaders, Scoutmasters, and Scouts, the emphasis the Boy Scout program placed on courtesy and helpfulness was exceeded only by its stress on being trustworthy. The laws on being friendly, reverent, and kind to animals were amongst the least emphasized of the twelve. On the surveys, see Dividends of Scouting, 35; Scouting (July 1929): 231, 243; Johnson, “A Study of the Boy Scout Organization,” 68-71; and 1928 ECR, 561-569.


“A Scout is Courteous,” Boys’ Life (April 1926): quotations on 22. See also The Official Handbook for Boys (1911), 15; and Handbook for Boys (1928), 35. In a 1924 survey sent to parents of San Francisco Boy Scouts asking them about the effect of Scouting on their boys, the most common reply was that it made

---


60 Principles of Scoutmastership, 56, 227-234, quotations on 228. For other warnings against badge-grabbers, see Stuart P. Walsh, “A Scout’s Business” speech, 1926 ECR, 105; and Troop Spirit (New York: BSA, 1930), 3, 6-7. On competing without developing a haughty or defeatist attitude, see also Handbook for Patrol Leaders (1929), 52-53.

61 Emphasis in original. Programs for Scout Masters (1912 “Proof Copy”), 89-90, quotation on 79-80.

62 Emphasis in original. Programs for Scout Masters (1912 “Proof Copy”), 7, 47-52, 201, quotations on 185. See also Handbook for Scout Masters (1914), 33, 62; and 1926 ECR, 105. Rank attainment stats for nine hundred and fifty thousand boys. Twenty percent reached Second Class, and 0.34 percent of the boys reached Life or Star Scout rank. Community Boy Leadership (1922), 229-231.

63 According to the late 1920s surveys of community leaders, Scoutmasters, and Scouts, the emphasis the Boy Scout program placed on courtesy and helpfulness was exceeded only by its stress on being trustworthy. The laws on being friendly, reverent, and kind to animals were amongst the least emphasized of the twelve. On the surveys, see Dividends of Scouting, 35; Scouting (July 1929): 231, 243; Johnson, “A Study of the Boy Scout Organization,” 68-71; and 1928 ECR, 561-569.


69 “A Scout is Courteous,” Boys’ Life (April 1926): quotations on 22. See also The Official Handbook for Boys (1911), 15; and Handbook for Boys (1928), 35. In a 1924 survey sent to parents of San Francisco Boy Scouts asking them about the effect of Scouting on their boys, the most common reply was that it made


71  Carey, The Scout Law, 96-103, quotations on 96, 98.

72  On the BSA national office allowing local councils to exclude non-whites, see minutes of the Executive Board of the Boy Scouts of America (November 22, 1910), folder 1, “Boy Scouts of America,” Box 211, Beard Papers; Moore letter to West (Sep. 15, 1911) and West reply (Sep. 18, 1911) in folder “Religious Community Negro 1979,” BSA National Archive; 1920 ECR, 101; and Macleod, Building Character, 212-214. For local council restrictions on black Scout uniforms, see Peterson, The Boy Scouts, 99; and Bolton Smith letter to Leonard Outhwaite (Sep. 6, 1928): 2 in Folder 971, “Boy Scouts of America – Negro 1928-1931,” Box 96, Subseries 8 Interracial Relations, Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial Collection.

73  For whitewashing faces, see sketches in Handbook for Boys (1928), 43; and Boys’ Life (March 1916): 36.

74  The Official Handbook for Boys (1911), first quotation on 16. Second quotation in “Mark Twain Top Notch,” Folder 3, Box 209, Beard Papers. Emphasis in original. Today’s BSA handbook, on the other hand, specifies that defending the rights of others demonstrates bravery and that one should befriend those of other races. The Boy Scout Handbook (1998), 49, 53. For an unusual use of Scout bravery to critique organized capital, see Henry S. Curtis, “The boy scouts,” Educational Review (Dec. 1915): 501. This article was written by a non-Scout educator for a magazine outside the BSA’s control.


76  Figure 2.9 is H.S. Wainwright painting, Boys’ Life (April 1922): 2. For real incidents of Boy Scouts standing up against street toughs, see “Show courage,” Boys’ Life (Oct. 1912): 28; and Boys’ Life (Jan. 1914): 18. For an intriguing discussion of the tough and the sissy in early American summer camping, see W. Barksdale Maynard, “‘An Ideal Life in the Woods for Boys’: Architecture and Culture in the Earliest Summer Camps,” Winterthur Portfolio 34.1 (Spring 1999): 16-18.


78  Principles of Scoutmastership, 240-241, quotation on 140. See also Carey, The Scout Law; and 1922 ERC, 30, 238-239. For the patriotic and reverent pioneer, see Sidney Risenberg sketch, Boys’ Life (Nov. 1926): 16.

79  The Official Handbook for Boys (1911), quotation on 16. For West’s role in creating the Law on reverence, see 1922 ECR, 29-30. On troop sponsorship, see Macleod, Building Character, 23, 43-44, 93. Although the BSA added the Twelfth Law on reverence, national leaders rarely utilized a missionary hero. Older church youth organizations using a missionary model such as Christian Endeavor and Lend-A-Hand achieved only a modest following. This researcher encountered only one image of Jesus in over one hundred thousand pages of national and local BSA texts. Frank F. Gray, “Boy Scouts of America: Montclair Council, A Comprehensive Review of the Development of the Local Movement from its Inception in 1909,” (Montclair, NJ: Montclair Council BSA, 1916).

Chapter Three

1. 1913 BSA Annual Report, quotations on 2. The phrase “conservation of boyhood” may have been created by Dan Beard. The first use of the term located in BSA sources was Dan Beard, “Boys of Today – Men of Tomorrow,” Boys’ Life (Jul. 1912): 24.


4. For works arguing that the outdoor living craze and Scouting represented primitive virility, see Filene, Him/Her/Self, 100-102; Kimmel, Manhood in America, 167-171; Testi; Rotundo, American Manhood; Gorn; Rodgers, The Work Ethic; Roberts, “The Strenuous Life”; and Bederman, Manliness & Civilization. BSA publications generally excluded preservation concepts like spiritual contemplation and developing a warm friendship with nature. Instead, Scout authors and artists emphasized scientifically discovering nature’s secrets to master it for material development. For works arguing that Boy Scouting was linked to the preservation of wilderness and reinforcing white men’s primitive virility, see Stearns, Be a Man, 68; Rotundo, American Manhood, 227-228, 258; Nash, Wilderness and the American Mind, 147-149; Kasson, 186-195; and Hantover, “Sex Role,” 3-5, 13, 118-119, 124, 247-257 and 265-266. For works arguing that men reinforced their virility through natural resource conservation, see Thomas Dunlap, Saving America’s Wildlife (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988); and John Reiger, American Sportsmen and the Origins of Conservation (New York: Winchester Press, 1975).


6. “Dan Beard Says: ‘Now Is the Time!’” Boys’ Life (Dec. 1913): quotation on 4. BSA sources frequently used conservation terms to describe membership attraction and retention efforts. 1920 ECR, 981, 988. On the Scout social hierarchy, see 1922 BSA Annual Report, 1-2; and Richardson and Loomis, 41-42, 357-359. BSA administrators’ increasing emphasis on conservation and a balanced, modern manliness paralleled shifts in mainstream environmentalism and broader American society. The pioneer and his independent assault on the frontier wilderness had moved from being the dominant reality to being memorialized in fiction and film. Conservation advocates defeated preservationists on the Hetch Hetchy dam issue in 1913. Federal officials continued to set aside “pristine” national parks and monuments, but mainly in areas unfit for commercial development. Conservation concepts were institutionalized and became established practice in government land management agencies by the 1920s. Leasing public lands for large-scale, private, commercial development was widespread. Industrialization and urbanization seemed increasingly inevitable and accepted by most Americans. The progressive “efficiency craze” of the
1910s, which included such projects as the Americanization of immigrants and the scientific management of factory labor through the engineering methods of Frederick Taylor and Henry Ford, resembled conservation priorities much more than those of preservation or pioneering. On the efficiency craze, see Haber, Efficiency and Uplift, ix-xii.

7 A Handbook of Woodcraft, Scouting and Lifecraft (1910), 122-127, Figure 3.1 sketch on 63. The second major edition of the handbook, in which most of Seton and Baden-Powell’s writings were replaced, retained the sketch and a section on building log cabins. It also contained the Pioneering merit badge requirements. Handbook For Boys (1911), 39-40, 59-66. For Second Class tests and quotation, see Handbook for Scout Masters (1914), 38-42. By the 1919 boys’ handbook, the Pioneering tree cutting requirement had been eliminated but Beard’s new log cabin instructions insisted, “You must have logs with which to build and it may be necessary to cut down the trees yourself” (Handbook for Boys (1919), 58-59, 87).


9 George B. Sudworth, “Using the Axe, Hatchet and Knife in the Woods,” Scouting (Nov. 1, 1917): quotations on 6. This critique of pioneering also came from inside the organization. Joseph Carstang complained at a 1917 Scoutmasters’ Conference that boys at the national Scout demonstration camp at Palisades Interstate Park hacked trees with axes too often: “I think the Scouting Axe is the most misused thing we have got. I have done more camping without an axe than with one. I think when these Scouts are taught that they can do without an axe…” (“Hiking and Trekking” discussion group, transcript of 1917 Scoutmasters’ training conference (Columbia University: Feb. 2, 1917), hand-numbered p. 284). A BSA staff writer cautioned boy readers, “[L]et’s watch those scouts who are occasionally careless with their axes. If we see a fellow ‘pulling the George Washington stunt,’ let’s take the trouble to explain the evils of tree-damaging to him so effectively that he will never forget them” (The Cave Scout, “Trees and Fighting,” Boys’ Life (Sep. 1915): 13). See also The Cave Scout, “On Camping,” Scouting (May 1, 1917): 13.


11 Figure 3.2, Eugene La Forrest Swan, “Our Friends, the Trees in Camp,” Scouting (May 1921): 8. See also Dan Beard sketch, Scouting (Nov. 13, 1919): 37.


13 Figure 3.3 in Weekly Bulletin of Boy Scout Activities (Jul. 1, 1925). For timber company camps, see “Offers Camp Site,” Weekly News Bulletin of Boy Scout Activities (Jun. 25, 1927); and 1929 BSA Annual Report, 23. For cooperation with Fraternal Order of Lumbermen, see “Forest Protection Work,” 1924 BSA Annual Report, 19-20.


15 For the original First Class Scout test, see Handbook for Scout Masters (1914), 38-41, 53. For the initial rejection of the tree repair alternative, see minutes of Badges and Awards Committee (Jun. 13, 1927), 284. For the accepted tree repair alternative and other recommendations, see Handbook for Boys (1928), 275-276; and Handbook for Scoutmasters (1929), 101-102, 167-173. Examples of more judicious axe use in Camping merit badge pamphlet (New York: BSA, 1928), 7, 26, 32. The 1914 Scoutmaster handbook told boys to get a landowner’s permission before cutting down trees for this rank test. The 1929 version stated,
“Living trees or shrubs should be spared even if the express consent of the owner of the property was given.” *Handbook for Scout Masters* (1914), 53; and *Handbook for Scoutmasters* (1929), 62.


Against Nature. Animal breeding concepts applied to human society. BSA national leaders, however, did not expressly egalitarianism, but rather eugenics. In large part, eugenics was simply natural resource conservation and crusade to stop the use of wild bird feathers in women’s fashion. Women’s support—combined with that of politicians, student groups participating in “Bird Day,” and natural scientists such as John Burroughs and George Bird Grinnell—achieved the proscription of feather imports in the Underwood Tariff of 1913. Robin Doughty, Feather Fashions and Bird Preservation (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975). On school children’s Bird Days during the Progressive Era, see Kevin C. Armitage, “Bird Day for Kids: Progressive Conservation in Theory and Practice,” Environmental History 12.3 (July 2007): 528-551. Even some women found that distinguishing between manly and feminine behaviors was often the most effective vehicle for teaching boys wildlife conservation ideologies. Clara B. Ward praised the BSA for teaching local boys to study and protect birds instead of shooting them with air-guns. Ward noted that she had previously tried to teach the boys to follow these practices herself, but the boys had refused because she “‘looked at things as girls did,’ and boys at their age do not want to be ‘girlish’” (Ward’s letter excerpted in “Interest in Birds,” 1913 BSA Annual Report, 35).


27 The theory of human relations that most closely resembled conservation was neither democracy nor egalitarianism, but rather eugenics. In large part, eugenics was simply natural resource conservation and animal breeding concepts applied to human society. BSA national leaders, however, did not expressly advocate eugenics.


29 Handbook for Boys (1919): quotations on 165, 227-228. In the description of the extraction of turpentine and resin from longleaf pines in his section on tree identification, Sudworth implied that the role of blacks in forestry was limited to manual labor: “Negro laborers gather the resin and transport it to the ‘still,’ as they call it, where it is distilled.” This passage is significant because it was one of the only references to blacks outdoors in early BSA publications besides safari tales (George B. Sudworth, “Native Forest Trees,” Handbook for Boys (1919), 170-171). The 1930 BSA Textiles merit badge pamphlet made a similar argument, “The negroes of the South have learned better than any other class of people how to pick cotton, and they enjoy it” because they hold work competitions and sing while they work. Boy Scout readers were left to conclude that the natural position of blacks outdoors was as manual laborers. “Picking of Cotton,” Textiles (New York: BSA, 1930), 25. See also black orange pickers in Citrus Fruit Culture merit badge pamphlet (New York: BSA, 1931), 60. The next major handbook revision eliminated most of Sudworth’s
racialized remarks about forestry behavior. *Handbook for Boys* (1928): 283-329. Hornaday was once a big-game hunter and leading taxidermist. In his other writings, he explained that the rare, true gentleman sportshunter shot only a few animals for the experience of the hunt and only those that were in abundance. The game hog, regardless of whether a sport or subsistence hunter, shot the full legal limit of game and more, even when a species was endangered. He cited women who wanted to wear furs and feathers as contributors. See William T. Hornaday, *Our Vanishing Wildlife: Its Extermination and Preservation* (New York: Charles Scribner's, 1913). On Hornaday's combination of ethics with scientific nature study, see Armitage, "Bird Day."

30 Figure 3.4 in *Scouting* (May 1, 1918): 13. Scouts often built levees against floods. In one of many examples, Louisiana Boy Scouts contributed ten thousand sacks to build levees in the Ouchita Valley against the Mississippi River floods. See 1927 BSA Annual Report, 134; and Oursler, 86-87. A 1918 U.S. Forest Service article argued that the German Kaiser’s wasteful and selfish slaughtering of tens of thousands of game animals was linked to his initiation of the human bloodbath of the Great War. *Scouting* (May 1, 1918): 12. Other Scout “conservation drives” during World War I included collecting rubber, newspapers, and scrap metal; collecting peach pits and nut shells to use in soldiers’ gas masks; growing castor beans in waste places to make airplane motor oil; and selling war bonds and savings stamps. Boy Scout bond salesmen were considered the “gleaners after the reapers” because they re-canvassed areas already tapped by adults to eek out the remaining small contributions. On BSA World War I conservation drives, see Murray, 101-136; and “Boy Scouts Enter Castor Bean Drive,” *Los Angeles Times* (Mar. 26, 1918): 15.

31 Figure 3.5 Liberty Tree sketch in *Scouting* (Aug. 1, 1918): 16. Many native-born white Americans were concerned about whether German-American and Italian-Americans would be loyal to America or their countries of origin during World War I. The Americanization movement tried to force immigrants to adopt American culture and values, use the English language, and be patriotic. The BSA identified over twenty million board feet of black walnut trees. On the name Liberty Tree and black walnut drive statistic, see Oursler, 59; and Murray, 124-126. In one of countless examples of tent caterpillar extermination, the 1928 Annual Report noted in a “protection of wild life” section that Kansas City Boy Scouts burned 2,500,000 bag worms which threatened the trees and foliage. 1928 BSA Annual Report, 136.


34 For wording of BSA sixth law, see *The Official Handbook for Boys* (1911), 15. Beard concluded that the Sixth Scout Law also implied “kindness of patriotism,” which meant that boys should not “slander, oppose or betray a Government founded on the principles of kindness.” Italics in original. Quotations in Dan Beard, “From Dan Beard’s Duffel Bag,” *Boys’ Life* (Jun. 1917). See also Beard letter to James West (Jan. 11, 1912), folder 6, “correspondence West 1912 Jan.-Mar.,” Box 128, Beard Papers.


but the wolf has proven himself to be so destructive as an outlaw and must be dealt with accordingly."

_Handbook for Boys_ (1928), 350-351.


39 Minnie Maddern Fiske letter to the editor, “Ethics of Trapping,” _New York Times_ (Jan. 30, 1920); first and second quotations on 14. “Should the Boy Scouts Be Taught to Trap?” _The Literary Digest_ 64.8 (Feb. 21, 1920): 109-110, second quotation on 109. See also Harry Cutler letter to Mortimer L. Schiff (Nov. 19, 1919) and W.K. Horton (general manager of the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals) letter to James E. West (Dec. 3, 1919), folder “correspondence West 1919,” Box 130, Beard Papers. Mighetto argued that this era’s anti-hunting and anti-trapping arguments evolved from sentimental nature study works that emphasized the human qualities of animals. As Hornaday’s aforementioned conservation chapter in the Scout handbook demonstrated, however, anthropomorphism was used by BSA supporters to justify trapping certain animals. Mighetto, _Wild Animals._


42 Figure 3.7 in _Conservation_ merit badge pamphlet (New York: BSA, 1920): cover. Figure 3.8 also seemed to warn the Report’s Congressional and public readers of the dangers of urban working class boys growing up without the benefit of Scouting. Figure 3.8 sketch in 1925 BSA Annual Report, 46-47. See also _Service Clubs and Scouting_ (New York: BSA, 1929): inside cover. A 1925 article noted, “A great advance in the conservation of nature’s most beautiful resources held in perpetuity for the boys of America. More important than saving forests for its products is saving the woods for our youth. We should quickly secure the beauty spots before they are gone.” “Future of Scouting,” _Scout Executive_ (Oct. 1925): 1.

43 For a typical Muir versus Pinchot account, see Fox, _John Muir_. Susan Schrepfer argued that men believed mastering nature was sublime, while women associated home-like imagery with sublime nature. Susan Schrepfer, _Nature’s Altars: Mountains, Gender, and American Environmentalism_ (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2005). Glenda Riley argued that women writers and activists emphasized living with nature and preserving its spiritual beauty over mastering it. Glenda Riley, “‘Wimmin Is Everywhere’: Conserving and Feminizing Western Landscapes, 1870 to 1940,” _Western Historical Quarterly_ 29 (Spring 1998): 4-23. See also Rome, “Political Hermaphrodites.”

44 Eastman dedicated his book (originally titled _Indian Scout Talks_) to Boy Scouts and Camp Fire Girls, a conflation most BSA national leaders rejected. Charles A. Eastman, _Indian Scout Craft and Lore_ (1914; reprint, New York: Dover, 1974), 1-3, 20, 47, 57-61, 166-170, quotation on 189. On Seton’s environmental views, see Betty Keller, _Black Wolf: The Life of Ernest Thompson Seton_ (Vancouver and Toronto: Douglas & McIntyre, 1984), 111-118, 130-133, 151-186, 204. The BSA’s failed three-decade effort to force the Girl Scouts to merge into the Camp Fire Girls will be examined in Chapter Six.


46 Emphasis in original. _Handbook for Scoutmasters_ (1929), quotations on 91-100, 133. See also _Handbook for Boys_ (May 1919), 6-7.

47 Beard, _The Buckskin Book_, 4-5, first quotation on 5. See also Dan Beard Outdoor School essay (undated), folder 1, “Dan Beard School Advertisements,” Box 217, Beard Papers. “In the Scout Cave,”
Chapter Four


On Baden-Powell’s Zulu hero, see Scouting for Boys I (1908), 48. Macleod argued that character-building youth organizations like the BSA adapted “a longstanding form of social control: the stereotyping of women and minorities as irrational and dependent,” but did little to explore this point and its implications for the BSA’s masculine ideology. Macleod, Building Character, 54. The black American slave might have modeled such important Scout traits as being trustworthy, loyal and obedient; however, BSA leaders believed that voluntary obedience and patriotism defined good masculine character. Like stereotyped Old World European peasants or dogs, slaves obeyed out of necessity. Dan Beard, “The First Scout Law,” Boys’ Life (Jan. 1917): 16. Philip Deloria helped popularize the academic use of the term “Playing Indian.” Philip Deloria, Playing Indian (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998). To this researcher’s knowledge, “playing Negro” is his term. The BSA rarely made use of Asian-American anti-Scouts, a disparity which can likely be contributed to several factors. Early BSA membership and its national leadership centered on the East Coast, where blacks and “new immigrants” were common and
Asian-Americans were relatively scarce. Baden-Powell praised Japanese military prowess and nationalistic fervor. Hawaii’s Scout troops, dominated by Asian-Americans, were amongst the national leaders in member retention, rank progress, and merit badge accumulation.

5 1920 ECR, quotations on 83, 21. See also opening for the 1922 conference in Atlanta by the President of the Atlanta BSA Council on 1922 ECR, 3.

6 Figure 4.1 in Boys’ Life (Nov. 13, 1919): 26; and 1919 BSA Annual Report, 61. See also “Robert Crusoe Jones” sketch, Boys’ Life (Aug. 1921): 27; and R.A. Cameran sketch with Clarence Elmer poem, “De Bigges’ Pile,” Boys’ Life (Sep. 1919): 4. For servile black women, see T.S. Christopher sketch, Boys’ Life (May 1923): 55.


10 George D. Pratt moved the resolution, which was seconded by Lee Hamer and approved by the rest of the Board. The minutes did not record specific discussion, so this researcher was unable to determine why the issue surfaced or why the decision was reached. Minutes of Executive Board of the Boy Scouts of America (Nov. 22, 1910), folder 1, “Boy Scouts of America,” Box 211, Beard Papers. For one of many defenses of this policy as local council “self-determination,” see 1920 ECR, 101. Macleod noted that national headquarters actually rejected charter applications from black troops in areas not under council supervision. Macleod, Building Character, 212-214. The standard BSA troop charter application in the 1910s did not ask for the race or color of the boys. It did ask for the color and nationality of the Scoutmaster, so most exclusions were probably based on his background or the presumed racial composition of the troop sponsoring institution.

11 For New Orleans Scouting, see Moore letter to West (Sep. 15, 1911) and West reply (Sep. 18, 1911), folder, “Religious Community Negro 1979,” BSA National Archive. For separate New Orleans Scout organization identity and merger possibility, refer to West’s report to Executive Board meeting (September 22, 1911): p. 5, folder 1, Box 211, Beard Papers. The National Council concurred with West by voting that each local council would have jurisdiction over unique social circumstances in its area. See Minutes of the BSA National Council Annual Meetings (New York City: Feb. 11, 1913): p. 119, BSA National Archive. Macleod argued that the institutional sponsor requirement helped segregate Scouting, since the institutions themselves were often already segregated. Macleod, Building Character, 212-214. Partly due to the absence of local council intermediaries, Beard’s Boy Pioneers and Seton’s Woodcraft Indians organizations were more open to minorities.

12 Minutes of BSA Executive Board (Dec. 21, 1914): p. 2-3, quotations on 3. For further discussion of the “Colored Question,” see minutes of BSA Executive Board (Jan. 29, 1915); (May 24, 1915); p. 3; (June 30, 1915): p. 3; and (Nov. 8, 1915): p. 2, folder 4, Box 211, Beard Papers. See also minutes of BSA Executive Board (Oct. 4, 1915): p. 5, folder 5, “correspondence West 1915 Aug-Dec.” Box 129, Beard Papers.
Minutes of BSA Executive Board (Jan. 14, 1918): p. 4, Folder 7, Box 211, Beard Papers. “The Louisville Plan for Colored Boys,” The Scout Executive (Oct. 1924): 5. Macleod, Building Character, 213-214. The Louisville method resembled a failed 1912 plan for black Scouting in St. Louis. The President of the BSA’s St. Louis council, Judge Daniel G. Taylor, reported to James West on his attempt to convince his white Scoutmasters to admit blacks in segregated troops: “I am going to present the matter from the highest ideals of a social democracy…Either the negroes [sic] are entitled to the benefit of the Scout Movement or the whole Movement means nothing.” Taylor’s plan apparently fizzled, as no major recruitment of black boys resulted. Quotation in Judge Daniel Taylor letter to James West (Nov. 14, 1912), folder 10, “correspondence West 1912 Sept.-Dec.,” Box 128, Beard Papers. For Board’s discussion of the “St. Louis situation,” see meeting programs for BSA Executive Board (Sep. 22, 1911): p. 2; and (Oct. 28, 1912), Folder 1, Box 211, Beard Papers. See also minutes of BSA Executive Board (Oct. 25, 1912): p. 3, folder 10, “correspondence West 1912 Sept-Dec.,” Box 128, Beard Papers.

The issue of black Scouting in Atlanta first surfaced in May 1917, at which time the Executive Board adhered to its traditional policy of letting local councils decide. Minutes of BSA Executive Board (May 21, 1917): p. 6, folder 5, Box 211, Beard Papers. Rosa Lowe letter to James West (April 24, 1918), folder 45, “correspondence West 1918 April-May,” Box 130, Beard Papers. On public health’s popularity, see Michael Katz, “Child Saving,” History of Education Quarterly 26.3 (Fall 1986): 418-419.

Lewis also noted that similar headway was being made amongst Italian-American miners and farm laborers in the Middle West and northwest. W. M. Lewis letter to James West (May 2, 1918); West letter to Rosa Lowe (May 3, 1918); West letter to Henry Atwater (May 7, 1918); Beard letter to West (May 8, 1918); and quotation in West reply to Beard (May 9, 1918), folder 5 “1918, April – May,” Box 130, Beard Papers.

In a letter Smith sent two days later to W. M. Lewis of the National Committee of Patriotic Societies, he suggested that Boy Scouts take counter-propaganda pamphlets from the Committee on Public Information to black homes, since boys would be less suspicious than adults. Smith argued segregated socialization was best since integrated environments caused blacks to feel inferior due to “inevitable class distinction.” He hoped President Wilson would proclaim a national policy of segregation which, in his terms, would blend the best of Abolition ideology with that of Southern whites’ thinking. Bolton Smith letter to Rosa Lowe (May 8, 1918); and Bolton Smith letter to W. M. Lewis (May 10, 1918), folder 5 “1918, April – May,” Box 130, Beard Papers.

James West letter to Rosa Lowe (May 18, 1918), folder 5, “1918, April – May,” Box 130, Beard Papers. James West letter to Rosa Lowe (May 3, 1918); and James West letter to Dan Beard (May 22, 1918), folder 5, “1918 April – May,” Box 130, Beard Papers. “Mr. Jones” was almost certainly Thomas Jesse Jones, who worked for the U.S. Bureau of Education and the Phelps-Stokes Fund for educating the underprivileged. Quotation in minutes of BSA Executive Board (May 27, 1918), folder 6, “1918, June-Sep.,” Box 130, Beard Papers. Bolton Smith tried to convince BSA national leaders and the general public that Scouting should be segregated to avoid white violence against blacks. West praised Smith’s line of thinking in a letter to Dan Beard. James West letter to Dan Beard; and attached copies of Bolton Smith recent speeches (Jun. 12, 1918), folder 6, “1918 June-Sep.,” Box 130, Beard Papers.

Quotations in Rose Lowe letter to James West (May 18, 1918), folder 5, “1918, April – May,” Box 130, Beard Papers. NAACP local secretary R. Kelly Bryant letter and memo to John Shillady, national NAACP Secretary (Jul. 28, 1919); and James West telegram (June 10, 1919), “NAACP Administrative Subject File: Discrimination, Boy Scouts 1919,” Reel 23, Series A: Africa through Garvey, Marcus, Part 11: Special Subject File, 1912-1939, Papers of the NAACP (Bethesda, MD: University Publications of America).

Publicity threat in Mary White Ovington letter to James West (Aug. 9, 1919); and West reply to Ovington (Aug. 11, 1919). Details of the meeting and DuBois’s opinion in Mary White Ovington memo (Aug. 16, 1919) to John R. Shilady, Secretary of the national NAACP, “Interview with Mr. James West, Chief Scout Executive, Boy Scouts of America, Tuesday afternoon, August 12, 1919.” Troop policy request in Ovington letter to West (Aug. 14, 1919). All in “NAACP Administrative Subject File: Discrimination, Boy Scouts 1919.”

The author also argued that “acceptance of race prejudice strengthens race prejudice.” It is unclear if this letter was sent, or whether or not it was a response to West’s letter and policy disclosure of the same date. National NAACP office letter (probably Ovington) to BSA Executive Board (Aug. 20, 1919), “NAACP Administrative Subject File: Discrimination, Boy Scouts 1919.”

Bolton Smith or Stanley Harris may have authored this memo. “The extension of the privileges of Boy Scouts to the Negro Boys” (marked “Copied 8/9/18”): quotations on pp. 1, 2. Memo attached to West letter to Ovington (Aug. 20, 1919), “NAACP Administrative Subject File: Discrimination, Boy Scouts 1919.”

“The extension of the privileges of Boy Scouts to the Negro Boys,” quotation on 4.

It is unclear what happened with the black Rocky Mount troop. Ovington wrote the local NAACP secretary two months later to ask what happened, but the file contained no response from Rocky Mount. Ovington letter to R.K. Bryant (Oct. 22, 1919). For NAACP’s plan for extending black Scouting, see Ovington letter to R. Kelly Bryant (Aug. 23, 1919). All three documents in “NAACP Administrative Subject File: Discrimination, Boy Scouts 1919.” A second discrimination case against the BSA in 1921 revealed that the NAACP was not of one mind on Southern black Scouting. The Charleston, South Carolina NAACP chapter wrote to the local Boy Scout council that it had not followed through on the promise to help black boys it had made in exchange for recent fundraising help from local black teachers and community leaders. The local NAACP President suggested that the Scout council allow blacks to form a “parallel movement” with a black committee responsible for raising its own funds. The committee would choose a paid black Executive subject to the white council’s approval and supervision. The author requested that blacks have one representative on the local council and other Scout planning bodies. The white Scout leaders refused to enter into discussion with the NAACP. The local NAACP retired quietly, hoping to take the matter up again when local Scout personnel changed. Annual Report of the Charleston Branch to the national NAACP office (Charleston, WV: Jun. 1921): pp. 3-4, NAACP Branch Files folder, “Charleston, W. VA 1920-1921,” Part 12: Selected Branch Files, 1913-1939, Series C: the Midwest, Papers of the NAACP: (Bethesda, MD: University Publications of America).

1920 ECR, 91-102, quotations on 97-98, 102. Earlier in the conference, Horne had posed a question on if the organization of colored BSA troops was a “major problem.” Stanley Harris chided, “The objection, Mr. Horne, is to keep from organizing. That is the only problem down south.” The audience laughed (1920 ECR, 92). George Fisher, West’s second-in-command, instructed local Executives to not count blacks in areas where they were excluded from Scouting when tabulating the percentage of available boys recruited. “Standards and Measuring Results (Commission),” 1920 ECR, 1000-1001.


Smith had been a member of the Executive Board since 1918, the same year he helped reject Rosa Lowe’s request for the expansion of Scouting for black boys. Minutes of BSA Executive Board (Nov. 28, 1921), folder 3, “Correspondence West 1921,” Box 131, Beard Papers. The Outlook (Nov. 9, 1921): 383-384, quotations on 384. See also Smith letter to Beard (Dec. 20, 1921), folder “Smith, Bolton,” Box 111, Beard Papers.

Quotations in Smith letter to Ruml (Jan. 15, 1925). Smith again claimed that Scouting could help improve white attitudes toward blacks in 1928. Smith letter to Ruml (Feb. 11, 1928), folder 971, “Boy Scouts of America – Negro 1928-1931,” Box 96, Subseries 8, Interracial Relations, LSRM Papers. Radical black journalist Ida B. Wells argued that whites really lynched blacks to terrorize them and prevent them from seeking political power, wealth and dignity. On lynching of blacks in this era, see Bederman, 45-76.

21 Memo of Harris interview with Leonard Outhwaite (Feb. 19, 1925). Quotation in Smith letter to Ruml (Mar. 4, 1925). In a conference later that year with LSRM officials, James West agreed with Smith that it would be better to proceed on a broad geographical basis and include other “difficult groups that were not colored.” Memo of interview with Leonard Outhwaite (BSA national office: Nov. 19, 1925). For the idea of including a lumber camp village troop, see James West and Stanley Harris, “Memorandum of suggested plan of procedure for the development of special work among racial groups throughout the United States.” See also John D. Traywick letter to Harris (Mar. 10, 1925). All documents in folder 969, “Boy Scouts of America – Negro 1925-1926,” Box 96, Subseries 8, Interracial Relations, LSRM Papers.

31 On rejecting Smith’s proposal, see minutes of BSA Executive Board (Apr. 15, 1925): p. 3, in folder “correspondence West 1925,” Box 132, Beard Papers. For the separate black uniform idea, see “Clean Up,” Scout Executive Bulletins no. 15 (Nov. 21, 1925). Resolution for a separate black Scout-like organization in minutes of BSA National Council Annual Meeting (Washington D.C., Apr. 30-May 1, 1926): p. 537. For Outhwaite’s consultation of race and education experts and their responses, see Leonard Outhwaite letter to Dr. James H. Dillard, Will W. Alexander, and Dr. Thomas Jesse Jones of Phelps-Stokes Fund (Feb. 19, 1926); memo of Dr. James H. Dillard phone call with Leonard Outhwaite (Feb. 26, 1926); Harris letter to Outhwaite (Feb. 26, 1926); Alexander letter to Outhwaite (March 5, 1926); and Outhwaite letter to Alexander (March 8, 1926), folder 969, “Boy Scouts of America – Negro 1925-1926.” For Rockefeller Foundation’s support for the Inter-Racial Service, see 1926 BSA Annual Report, 87-88; 1929 BSA Annual Report, 104-105; and Ruml letter to West re LSRM resolution 666 (Mar. 12, 1926), folder 969, “Boy Scouts of America – Negro 1925-1926.” The LSRM and other elite philanthropists provided the funding for the Inter-Racial Service’s first six years. The Rosenwald Foundation, the New York Foundation, and Henry Doehs also contributed in 1929 and 1930.

33 Harris letter to Outhwaite (Dec. 16, 1925), folder 969, “Boy Scouts of America – Negro 1925-1926.”

34 Judge Taylor’s 1912 St. Louis plan for black Scouting and the 1917 Atlanta plan for black Scouting had foreshadowed the Louisville model. BSA local leaders split on the issue of whether the immediate supervisor for black Scouting should be a black or white man. The Committee consisted of Bolton Smith, Stanley Harris, Dr. Thomas Jesse Jones (a former U.S. Bureau of Education and African education commissioner then serving as the educational director of the Phelps-Stokes Fund for educating the underprivileged), Leo Favrot (an expert on black, rural Southern education then working for the Rockefeller-led General Education Board that promoted non-white education), and Deputy Chief Scout Executive Dr. George Fisher. On Jones’s background, see C.G. Woodson, “Thomas Jesse Jones,” The Journal of Negro History 35.1 (Jan. 1950): 107-109. See both versions of the minutes of the committee’s meeting: minutes of Interracial Committee of the BSA (May 3, 1926), “Boy Scouts of America – Negro 1925-1926”; and minutes of “Inter-Racial Relations Committee” (May 3, 1926), folder 970, “Boy Scouts of America – Negro 1927,” Box 96, Subseries 8, Interracial Relations, LSRM Papers. Black Louisville Scouts excelled in recruitment rates, advancement, community support, Good Turns, patriotism, and reducing Scoutmaster turnover. Harris found that local whites’ attitude toward black Scouts was positive and that their presence increased rather than decreased the number of whites in the program. Stanley Harris report on Louisville visit on March 12-14, 1925 (submitted March 26, 1925), folder 969, “Boy Scouts of America – Negro 1925-1926.” See also “The Establishment of Interracial Work in the Boy Scouts of America: Based on an Interview with Stanley Harris at Boone, North Carolina on May 11, 1966,” folder, “1928 Committee on Inter-Racial,” BSA National Archive; “The Louisville Plan of Organization of Scouting for Negro Boys,” folder 969, “Boy Scouts of America – Negro 1925-1926”; and “The Louisville Plan for Colored Boys,” Scout Executive (Oct. 1924): quotation on 5. On separate offices, see Scout Executive (May 1920): 7. For further details on the Louisville Plan, see The Scout Executive (Aug. 1920): 3; and “Report of Committee on Inter-Racial Activities. 1927” p. 3, folder 971, “Boy Scouts of America –
370

Negro 1928-1931,” Box 96, Subseries 8, Interracial Relations, LSRM Papers. See also James West policy bulletin no. 14’s strong plea for local white leaders to organize black troops and suggestions on how to go about it. Division of Relationships, “Highlights of the Interracial Service,” p. 71 [BSA; undated, probably late 1970s], folder, “Religious Community Negro 1979.” The Chattanooga and Chicago plans filled out the IRS’s repertoire of models for expanding black Scouting. The Chattanooga Plan, similar to the Louisville Plan but with only a part-time black administrator and no separate black office, was designed to save expenses on black Scouting for smaller Southern councils. The Chicago council started special recruitment of blacks in 1925, hiring a black man to head the new (Frederick) Douglas Division. He promoted Scouting amongst black institutions and quickly recruited nearly six hundred black boys and two hundred black men. Chicago blacks could use the white Scout headquarters for services. Harlem started a similar program with black leaders shortly thereafter. The IRS suggested that the Chicago model might work for other diverse urban Midwestern and Northeastern councils. On the Chattanooga Plan, see 1927 BSA Annual Report, 89; and 1928 BSA Annual Report, 78-79. On the Chicago Plan, see “Memorandum to Pres. R. Douglas Stuart Subject: Scout Work Among Negro Boys” (Nov. 28, 1930) to BSA Chicago Council President, “Boy Scouts correspondence,” Box 4, Series 1, Julius Rosenwald Papers, University of Chicago Library Special Collections Research Center. On efforts following the Chicago model, see George Fisher letter to Leonard Outhwaite (March 1, 1927); and “Review of Work among Negro Boys in the South as of September 1, 1927”: p. 5. Folder 970, “Boy Scouts of America – Negro 1927.”

For the Inter-Racial Committee’s affirmation of segregated black troops led by black Scoutmasters, see minutes of Interracial Committee of the BSA (May 3, 1926). Louisville council leaders informed IRS Director Stanley Harris in March 1925 that black troop leadership was “better in comparison than the leadership for white boys, and compared very favorably without taking into consideration the advantages of the white Scoutmasters.” They noted that technical training in Scoutcraft and outdoorsmanship was slower for blacks, but that black men grasped the “spirit” of Scouting quicker than white Scoutmasters (Stanley Harris report on Louisville visit on March 12-14, 1925). Both documents in folder 969, “Boy Scouts of America – Negro 1925-1926.” For one of many claims that it was hard to find enough quality minority troop leaders, see R.M. Wheat, “Colored Department of the Louisville, KY., Council,” Scout Executive (Feb. 1924): 4. For the necessity of training black Scoutmasters, see 1929 BSA Annual Report, 106-107; and 1930 BSA Annual Report, 99-100. Stanley Harris stated in 1936 that the IRS consistently suggested that local councils require black men to take Scoutmaster training courses before commissioning them. 1936 ECR, 532. Quotation in Bolton Smith letters to Leonard Outhwaite (Sep. 6, 1928), folder 971, “Boy Scouts of America – Negro 1928-1931.” See also Bolton Smith letter to Julius Rosenwald (Oct. 11, 1928), folder 6, “Boy Scouts corr.,” Box 4, Series 1, Julius Rosenwald Papers.

On the early black Scoutmaster training sessions, see The Scout Executive (Sep. 1927): 6; The Scout Executive (July 1928): 5; and Stanley A. Harris, “Scouting Celebrates Its Silver Jubilee,” The Southern Workman 64.4 (April 1935): 105-107. See also ; and “Report of Stanley A. Harris to the Committee on Inter-Racial Relations” (Feb. 25, 1927): p. 2; and “Review of Work among Negro Boys in the South as of September 1, 1927,” p. 6, folder 970, “Boy Scouts of America – Negro 1927.” On black colleges hosting black Scoutmaster training, see “A Training Innovation,” Scout Executive (Sep. 1927): 6; 1927 Annual Report, 90; and 1928 Annual Report, 76-77. On General Education Board support for black Scouting, see minutes of Inter-Racial Relations Committee (Feb. 28, 1927); Stanley Harris letter to George Fisher (May 21, 1927); and “Report of Stanley A. Harris on Hampton School” [undated], folder 970, “Boy Scouts of America – Negro 1927.” On the General Education Board’s general support for segregated education, see Southern, The Progressive Era and Race, 102-105. On black administrators, see “Highlights of the
Interracial Service,” [BSA, undated probably late 1970s], p. 74, folder, “Religious Community Negro 1979.”

Quotations in Stanley Harris report on Louisville visit on Mar. 12-14, 1925. Wheat was a veteran Methodist Episcopal minister. Local blacks feted Wheat for his ten years of service to black Scouts in 1930: “The celebration was held in the largest Negro church auditorium in Louisville, and this was packed and jammed, and people were turned away…These people have been very appreciative all these years, and there has never been the slightest let-up in their loyalty to him personally, or their loyalty to his leadership” (“The Colored People of Louisville Pay Tribute to R.M. Wheat,” Scout Executive (April 1930): 8). See also R.M. Wheat biographical sketch, Scout Executive (April 1929): 8.

On blacks’ desire to wear uniforms, see Stanley Harris letter to Leonard Outhwaite (Jan. 6, 1927), folder 970, “Boy Scouts of America – Negro 1927.” On black troop names, see Bowers, 70 Years of Scouting in York, 35. A former U.S. ambassador to Liberia, a West African country started in the early nineteenth century as a settlement for freed American slaves, founded a unit in Brooklyn that may have been the first black troop in America. Scouting magazine recognized the troop in 1936 as one of the small number that had served continuously for twenty-five years. See “25-Year Troops,” Scouting (March 1936): 33.


Bailey letter to James Weldon Johnson (Apr. 29, 1926); national NAACP Assistant Secretary letter to Bailey (May 6, 1926); and national NAACP Director of Branches letters to Bailey (May 11, 1926) and (May 22, 1926). Quotation in national NAACP Assistant Secretary to BSA national headquarters (May 6, 1926). George Ehler letter to W.E. Bailey (May 4, 1926). All in folder, “NAACP Administrative Subject File: Discrimination, Boy Scouts 1926.” The result of the conflict was unclear because the NAACP archive file on the case ended at this point. For other black responses to segregated Scouting and required black Scoutmaster training, see Bolton Smith letter to Leonard Outhwaite (March 9, 1928); Wright letter to Stanley Harris (July 8, 1928); and W.H. Evans (Dean of Men for Prairie View College in Texas) letter to Stanley Harris (July 20, 1928), folder 971, “Boy Scouts of America – Negro 1928-1931.”


Quotation in Stanley Harris letter to Leonard Outhwaite (Jan. 6, 1927), folder 970, “Boy Scouts of America – Negro 1927.” On Klan Scout protests, see Peterson, The Boy Scouts, 98-100; Minor S. Huffman, Sam Houston Scouts: Seventy Five Years of History in the Sam Houston Area Council (Houston: Sam Houston Area Council BSA, 1985), 33; and “Knights of the Ku Klux Klan To National Offices of the Boy Scouts of America” protest note and James West letter to George L. Nye (Oct. 16, 1924), folder “correspondence West 1924,” Box 131, Beard Papers.

In the past, BSA administrators had discouraged charities and philanthropists from subsidizing Scout costs for poor boys. It was apparently typical for Southern councils to front half or more of the registration fees when starting black troops in the second half of the 1920s. This still left the larger costs of the uniform and camping fees, but many Southern councils did not allow blacks access to these things. On subsidizing black fees and on recognizing pool discrimination making black advancement difficult, see R.M. Wheat, “Colored Department of the Louisville, KY., Council,” The Scout Executive (Feb. 1924): 4; and “The Louisville Plan of Organization of Scouting for Negro Boys.” On Richmond pool discrimination, see On My Honor: 75 Years of Scouting in Central Virginia, 92-96.

Stanley Harris report on Louisville visit on Mar. 12-14, 1925. The Richmond, Virginia council eventually allowed black boys to wear uniforms, but appointed a separate outfitter to make and sell them.
For the 1920s black uniform restrictions, see Peterson, *The Boy Scouts*, 99; and Harris interview, “The Establishment of Interracial Work.” Bolton Smith reported in 1928 that in his hometown of Memphis, “[I]t will be sometime probably before we will feel that the [black] boys will be safe in wearing the uniform” (Bolton Smith letter to Leonard Outhwaite (Sep. 6, 1928): p. 2, folder 971, “Boy Scouts of America – Negro 1928-1931”).

47 Compare 1928 BSA Annual Report, 74-79; and “Report of Committee on Inter-Racial Activities: Boy scouts of America, 1928” (Bristol, TN: The King Printing, Co.).

48 For relative Inter-Racial Service success by state, see “Report of Stanley A. Harris, National Director, Inter-Racial Activities to the Committee on Inter-Racial Relations, Boy Scouts of America Held at the National Office, New York, February 25, 1927,” folder 970, “Boy Scouts of America – Negro 1927.” Stanley Harris concluded in a March 1927 report, “An unofficial negro Scout organization of 150 or 200 boys can easily be turned into two or three effective troops and all of the questionable ones left out” (“Report on Inter-Racial Activities” (March, 1927): p. 4, folder 970, “Boy Scouts of America – Negro 1927”). For the conversions of two unofficial black troops in Fort Smith, Arkansas and Oklahoma City, see “Review of Work Among Negro Boys in the South as of September 1, 1927,” pp. 2-5, folder 970, “Boy Scouts of America – Negro 1927.” On the IRS promoting the Louisville model, see 1926 BSA Annual Report, 88; and 1927 Annual Report, 89-90. On segregation via institutional troop sponsorship, see Macleod, *Building Character*, 212-214. For the segregated nature of the Inter-Racial Service’s recruitment of black boys in the South, see Peterson, *The Boy Scouts*, 99; “Hubert S. Martin on Scouting in America,” *Scouting* (March 1929): 77; and “The Louisville Plan of Organization of Scouting for Negro Boys.” The Inter-Racial Service hired a black assistant in 1927 to meet with black leaders and help with training black Scoutmasters. He was probably the first non-white on the BSA national office staff, outside of perhaps janitors or maintenance men. J.A. Beauchamp had previously been a school teacher and Scoutmaster in Jacksonville, Florida. For Beauchamp’s background, see 1927 BSA Annual Report, 88-90. On hiring a black assistant, see Stanley Harris report to I-R Committee (Feb. 25, 1927): p. 3, folder 970, “Boy Scouts of America – Negro 1927.”


51 Caption incorrectly reads Chemans schools. The artist was probably Frank Rigney. Figure 4.2 sketch in *Boys’ Life* (Feb. 1922): 22. Native American BSA troops played both Indian and pioneer, suggesting that they could retain tribal cultures and demonstrate their advanced characters. 1930 BSA Annual Report, 101; and “Indian Boy and Girl Scouts,” *Scholastic* (Oct. 24, 1936): 31.


For the cooperation with federal officials, see “Report of the Committee on Interracial Activities,” 1929 BSA Annual Report, 104-109; “Plan Extension of Boy Scout Program To All Indian Boys,” Weekly Bulletin of Boy Scout Activities (June 20, 1931); minutes of BSA Executive Board (Jun. 10, 1929): p. 5, folder 3, “correspondence West 1929,” Box 134, Beard Papers; and Division of Relationships, “Highlights of the Interracial Service,” [BSA, undated - probably late 1970s], p. 70, folder, “Religious Community Negro 1979.” For the circular to superintendents, see Flandreau Indian School Superintendent George E. Peters letter to Sioux Area Council Scout Executive B. W. Stayton (Nov. 19, 1929); and Charles Rhoads letter to George Peters, Superintendent of Flandreau School (May 22, 1930), Decimal Correspondence 1916-54, Code 898, Flandreau Indian School, Record Group 75, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, National Archives and Records Administration, Central Plains Region. For composition of the Division of Indian Work board, see 1930 BSA Annual Report, 99. The Carlisle Indian School, which had closed in 1918, served as the dominant model for reservation boarding schools. Carlisle was similar in approach to the Hampton and Tuskegee Institutes for blacks. All were intensive Americanization programs intended to train non-whites for subordinate positions in mainstream society and the labor force. All three schools stressed military drill, manual labor, often-outdated trade skills, loyalty, efficiency, obedience, and Christianity. The Native American schools which would form the largest number of BSA troops were those modeled most directly after Carlisle: Chemawa in Oregon, Chilocco in Oklahoma, and Haskell in Kansas. On Native American boarding schools, see Iverson, “We Are Still Here”, 17-26.

1930 BSA Annual Report, 101; and 1931 BSA Annual Report, 130, 148.


1929 BSA Annual Report, first quotation on 110. 1930 BSA Annual Report, second quotation on 101. In the second half of the 1920s, BSA national leaders also increased emphasis on Indian lore and history throughout the organization. In 1929, IRS officials requested that councils develop a pageant of local Native American history to teach Scouts about the early history of the “community” and to stimulate their interest in Native American traditions. This contrasted with the early BSA focus on white settlement of local communities. In 1930, the BSA started a Cub branch that emphasized Indian lore for boys under
twelve. BSA national leaders adopted a merit badge for Indian Lore in 1931 that instructed Boy Scouts to learn about local Native American history and culture and to visit the “survivors” to see their present condition in person. For BSA’s encouragement of local Native American pageants, see 1929 BSA Annual Report, 110. On white settlement focus, see Programs for Scout Masters (1912 “Proof Copy”), 4-8. See also 1930 BSA Annual Report, 98; and 1933 BSA Annual Report, 177. The BSA national Badges and Awards Committee considered the Indian lore merit badge as early as 1927. See minutes of BSA Badges and Awards Committee (Oct. 10, 1927): pp. 300-301. For the Indian Lore tests as passed, see Handbook for Boys (Nov. 1932), 427-428. The badge was not very popular until the 1950s. Fred Duersch, Jr., Merit Badge Field Guide (Logan, UT: Downs Printing Inc. for Fred Duersch, 2003), 133-180.

For instruction to integrate Native Americans in Scouting, see 1929 BSA Annual Report, 108-109; and 1931 BSA Annual Report, 149. A 1936 article stated, “Prior to 1931 there were practically no troops of Scouts to be found in Indian Schools” (“Indian Boy and Girl Scouts,” 31). For Native American Scout statistics, see 1929 BSA Annual Report, 109; 1930 BSA Annual Report, 130; and 1932 BSA Annual Report, 141. For total national membership statistics, see 1932 BSA Annual Report, 188-189. Native American boys were roughly seven times as likely to Scout as blacks after four years of respective IRS recruitment efforts. In 1929, blacks Scouted in segregated troops at a rate just 0.28 times their portion of the population. By 1932, Native American boys were represented in Scouting in segregated troops alone at a rate 1.85 times their portion of the population. Since the number of blacks in integrated troops was not calculated, the figures for segregated troops were used. 779 black troops existed in 1929. Using the twenty-two boys per troop national average yields 17,138 boys. 1929 BSA Annual Report, 104-105, 229; and 1932 BSA Annual Report, 141, 188-189. According to the 1930 U.S. census, 9.7 percent of the total population was black and 0.27 percent was Native American.


Chapter Five

1 “Report of the Commission on the Underprivileged Boy,” 1922 ECR, quotations on 365-370. Early indications incorrectly hinted that the commission would report that Scouting could be of particular help to underprivileged boys and that the organization should make more of an effort to recruit them. See E.E. Voss, “Alley Rats,” The Scout Executive (Oct. 1921): 7.

2 1922 ECR, 365-370.

3 East Side may have referred to Manhattan’s East Side, an area dominated by working class new immigrants in which Scout recruitment had been very successful the past decade. This, however, was a unique effort made by local officials which did not seem to be replicated in many other areas. 1922 ECR, 365-370.

4 “Why Your Boy Should Be a Scout,” Year Book 1918 of the Old Colony Council Boy Scouts of America (Braintree, MA: Old Colony Council BSA, 1918), 23. On working boys being self-reliant, see “Arnold Advises more Scouts as End to Bad Boys,” Chicago Daily Tribune (Dec. 27, 1922): 7. For another of the many statements on the underprivileged poor and overprivileged rich, see Community Boy Leadership (1922), 4.

5 Most historians of Anglo-American Boy Scouting who mentioned elite support highlighted their desire to control the working class to maintain social order; however, neither organization tried very hard to recruit working class boys. It is therefore difficult to see how this could have been the primary driving force behind Boy Scouting. On BSA elite support, see Wagner, 103-104; and Wigginton, 66. On British Boy Scout elite support, see Jeal, 412-415, 501, 573; and Rosenthal, The Character Factory, 86, 118, 182-185.

The first BSA handbook retained a British Scout section on thrift that blamed the poor for their situation. *A Handbook of Woodcraft, Scouting, and Lifecraft* (1910), 49-50. See also *The Official Handbook for Boys* (1911), 15-16.

In the middle of the script, Pug’s gang of toughs (the “Wharfrats, Motherless Knights Erring of the Square Table”) baited a marching Boy Scout patrol by calling them mama’s boys and sissies. The Scouts in the play exhibited their superior manhood by maintaining self-control and staying focused on their duties. A fight nonetheless ensued, during which one of the working class boys fell off a bridge and began to drown. The Scout Patrol Leader, Scudder, saved him as the unprepared Pug and nearby adults looked on helplessly. The toughs had neither the training nor the moral fortitude to save one of their own in a real emergency. The scene depicted a common real-life scenario; Scoutmasters complained of working class boys ridiculing Scouts for wearing uniforms and parading. The title of the original screenplay by Wilder, who helped start Boy Scouting in Hawaii, was “The Grail: A Story of the Boy Scouts.” Wilder played the role of the Scoutmaster in the 1917 Edison Company release of his script, renamed “The Knights of the Square Table.” BSA headquarters and publications endorsed the film heartily. Kevin Harty, “The Knights of the Square Table: The Boy Scouts and Thomas Edison make an Arthurian Film,” *Arthuriana* 4.4 (Winter 1994): 313-323. For BSA headquarters’ support, see “Knights of the Square Table: A Great Film by Scout Commissioner James A. Wilder,” *Scouting* (July 15, 1917): 11; and the movie ad in *Boys’ Life* (Sep. 1917): 31. Story and excerpts from original screenplay. James Wilder, “The Grail: A Story of the Boy Scouts,” pp. 4-26, Scenes 125-205, quotations on 11, 12, Scene 183-184, Scene 200, folder 24, “Script for movie, The Grail,” Box 1, James Wilder Papers, Hawaii State Archives.


Hantover stressed that BSA national leaders did not actively or publicly recruit working class and destitute boys because they did not want to scare away middle class boys and parents. He stated that Americanization was not a priority for the BSA until the 1920s, and boys in less chance areas were not recruited until the 1930s (and even then timidly). Hantover, “Sex Role,” 183, 203-204. See also *Handbook for Scout Masters* (1914), 87.


15 Baden-Powell, Scouting for Boys (1908): Part I, 41, 49-51; Part II, 133; Part IV, 245, 262; Part V, 276-278, 319-322; and Part VI, 343, 361.


17 1912 BSA Annual Report, 36-37. According to a history of the St. Louis Scout council, AFL head Samuel Gompers’s visit to the city during the summer of 1912 may have influenced the union’s change of heart. Gompers reportedly argued that Scouting taught boys to shoot laborers and that the labor movement wanted poor boys to hate rich boys. The local Scout council president, Judge Daniel G. Taylor, retorted that Scouting had peaceful aims and advanced labor’s ideals without the class hatred and bloodshed Gompers feared. The author claimed that Gompers was persuaded about the BSA’s good intentions and that the labor press ceased its attacks shortly thereafter. See William J. Brittain, The Spirit of Scouting ’76: Challenge and Triumph – 65 Years of St. Louis Area Scouting (St. Louis: St. Louis Area Council BSA, 1976), 11-13; and “Boy Scouts Will March,” The Washington Post (Sep. 18, 1911): 5. The recipient of Debs’s letter was probably Walter Lanfersiek, an influential leader in the Socialist Party. Community Boy Leadership (1922), 371-378, quotation on 375. On conflict between Socialist groups and the BSA, see Charles Bonaparte letter to James West (Aug. 21, 1911) and West reply (Aug. 22, 1911), folder 4, correspondence West 1911 Apr-Aug,” Box 128, Beard Papers; “Baden-Powell Hooted,” New York Times (Mar. 10, 1912): 1; “Enlightening the Socialists,” Los Angeles Times (Mar. 10, 1912): 13; “Socialism and the Boy Scouts,” Boys’ Life (April 1912): 24; W. Bruce Leslie, “Coming of Age in Urban America: The Socialist Alternative, 1901-1920,” Educational Studies 85.3 (Spring 1984): 468-471; Michael Bruce Johnson, “A Diamond in the Rough”, Columbia: The Magazine of Northwest History 9.3 (Fall 1995): 13; and Rowan, 47-48. On labor unions’ shifting tactics and the dominance of the AFL, see Montgomery, The Fall of the House of Labor; Dubofsky; and Brody.


21 Minutes of BSA National Council Annual Meeting (1911): first quotation on p. 68. On new uniform, see Rowan, 105. For uniform debate, see Handbook for Scoutmasters (1929), 361-367; and Scout Executive Bulletin (Sep. 24, 1923). James West, “National Council Official News,” Boys’ Life (Oct. 1923): second quotation on 30. For 1927 study suggestion on a cheaper uniform, see Jones study, 190-191. For increasing pressure to buy a full, standard uniform as late as 1930, see Murray, 164-166.

22 1922 ECR, 210-215, quotations on 212, 211.


24 On National Council resolution, see “Scouting in Poorer Sections,” Scouting (June 1926): 9. Inter-Racial Service reports occasionally noted troops in lumber camps and coal mining towns, but these appear to have been started by local Scout leaders or business owners. See “Review of Work among Negro Boys in the South as of September 1, 1927,” pp. 2-3, folder 970, “Boy Scouts of America – Negro 1927.” See also The Scout Executive (Feb. 1928): 4. BSA national leaders’ lingering fears of socialism may have undercut their willingness to make adjustments to attract working class and destitute boys. Radical labor groups occasionally locked horns with BSA leaders for teaching boys to fight against working class interests.


28 On working class men’s motivations for supporting Scouting, see Hanotver, “Sex Role,” 147-247; and Macleod, Building Character, 138-151, 182, 206-211, 223-224. The ICOC voted to contribute seventeen thousand dollars to be divided among the various companies based on the percentage of coal mined by each in the area. Shaver explained that he borrowed the idea for extracting support from business owners from John D. Rockefeller, Jr. In 1920, Rockefeller raised money amongst the New York Stock Exchange Board of Governors on a prorated basis to fund a Page Boys’ Association to make the boy runners more honest. Shaver, Notes from a Pioneer’s Journal: Selections of Stories, 48-57, 93-95. The corporation operating the Dawson Mine in New Mexico supported a troop of the sons of miners. “Scouts to the Rescue,” Los Angeles Times (Dec. 23, 1923): X14.


30 Settlement house and industrial school Scout troops probably emphasized trade work more than other troops. Judge Ben Lindsey letter to Miss Julia Lathrop of Hull House (Oct. 24, 1911) and Jane Addams reply to Lindsey (Oct. 28, 1911), Correspondence 1911-1912 Aug., Frames 488 and 501, Reel 6, The Jane Addams Papers (Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms International, 1984). The Wagoner troop also ran a boy-led Scout Court, a Scout savings bank, and horse and bicycle patrols. See H.H. Townsend, “What


35 On the charge that Catholics were excluded from BSA leadership, see Robert Peterson, “The Beginnings of a Partnership,” *Scouting* (May-June 2004). James West, “No Religious Test,” *Boys’ Life* (March 1912): quotation on 31. For growing Catholic support for Scouting, see *Handbook for Boys* (1928), 591; “Cardinal Farley Approves Boy Scouts of America,” *Boys’ Life* (June 1912): 31; and “Roman Catholics and Boy Scouts,” *The Outlook* 102 (Sep. 21, 1912): 99-100. David Peavy’s website was helpful in formulating a timeline for this section.

www.catholicscouting.org/NCCS_History/NCCS_Chronology/nccs_chronology.html, accessed on December 18, 2005. Lorne Barclay explained that while local and national councils could not restrict membership because of religious differences, troops and their sponsors could. *Western Regional Conference Roundup* (Berkeley, CA: Jan. 21-24, 1920), 69. Macleod argued that Boy Scout headquarters’ made it a national policy and actively defended this troop sponsor right. Macleod, *Building Character*, 191-192. For the national policy of exclusion and its defense, see “Policies and Regulations of the Boy Scouts of America: A Series of Interpretations, no. 6, Restricting Membership in Scout Troops” (1924), folder, “Troops – (Permanent),” BSA National Archive; and “What is Scope of Troop Management by the Sponsoring Institution?” *Scouting* (Sep. 1923): 6. Churches with expensive recreational facilities only wanted boys with parents who contributed monetarily to the church. Other church leaders wanted to exclude outsiders because of the criticism from non-member parents of “proselytizing” during Scout meetings. Richardson and Loomis, *The Boy Scout Movement*, 16. The BSA later developed special committees for Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish boys. The committees emphasized the development of separate Scouting for boys of different religious faiths, including such
measures as kosher camp kitchens for Jewish boys. See 1929 BSA Annual Report, 154-155; and Sleutelberg, 14-15.

36 Brother Barnabas Macdonald, a leading social worker and advocate for underprivileged children, played a key role in promoting Scouting amongst Catholics. On Catholics not wanting to stand out in World War I, see Lorne Barclay speech, Western Regional Conference Roundup (1920), 68-69. For the Pope’s approval of “distinctly Catholic units” in the U.S., see J. Card. Gasparri letter to Michael J. Slattery of the National Catholic War Council (Oct. 7, 1919), folder 7, Box 211, Beard Papers. On continued Catholic hesitation to join Scouting, see transcript of First National Training School of BSA local council Executives (New York: BSA, 1925): pp. 1258-1259. See also Oursler, 228-229.

37 Scouting (July 1, 1913): 4.

38 Four Jewish men were on the National Council by February 1911. Sigmund Eisner, the owner of the company that made the BSA uniform and other items, was Jewish. Schiff’s wife and son donated the Schiff Scout Reservation, which became an important leader training center in the 1930s. James West was an outspoken critic of anti-Semitism in the 1930s. See Oursler, 121; Dean, 127; and Arnold M. Sleutelberg, “A Critical History of Organized Jewish Involvement in the Boy Scouts of America, 1926-1987” (Rabbinic thesis, Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion, New York, 1988), 8-12, 38-39. On Kuhn, Loeb and Company, see Hays, Response to Industrialism, 51. The Young Men’s Hebrew Association’s formation of a Scouting Committee in 1915 did increase the number of distinctly Jewish troops. That year, only forty BSA troops of the 7,375 total were sponsored directly by Jewish synagogues. The percentage increased after that date. Robert Peterson, “The Beginnings of a Partnership,” Scouting (May-Jun. 2004).

39 Macleod noted, “The Polish national council backed out of a 1914 agreement to merge its Boy Scouts with the BSA, demanding instead special rules and a handbook in Polish.” Macleod, Building Character, 215. However, the BSA had already announced its agreement to translate the handbook into Polish. The real sticking point for the BSA was the Polish National Alliance’s demand for an independent Scout branch with its own rules. For the BSA’s initial agreement with the Polish National Alliance to translate the handbook into Polish and allow Polish language use in Scout training, see “Polish Boys Unite with Boy Scouts of America,” Scouting (Aug. 1, 1914): 1. For the BSA’s rejection of the Polish National Alliance’s independent branch bid, see “Training Course for Polish Scouts,” Minutes of BSA Executive Board (Oct. 5, 1914): pp. 3-4, folder 4, Box 210, Beard Papers. See also James West, “The Polish Scouts,” Scouting (May 15, 1914): 6; “Little Stories About Scouts in Other Lands,” Boys’ Life (Aug. 1914): 19; and “Polish Boys Unite with Boy Scouts of America,” Scouting (Aug. 1, 1914): 1-2. The Polish Scouts of America appear to have been formed around 1912 at the PNA’s Alliance College in Cambridge Springs, Pennsylvania. It was probably merged into the umbrella Harcestwo Scout organization in Poland around 1918, which would have conflicted with the BSA’s monopoly of Scouting in the U.S. On the Harcestwo and its relationship to the Polish Scouts of America, see Donald E. Pienkos, PNA: a Centennial History of the Polish National Alliance of the United States of North America (Boulder, CO: East European Monographs, 1984), 230-231. The issue of whether or not to translate Boy Scout materials into foreign languages to attract immigrants surfaced occasionally but failed to result in a conclusive policy. In 1911, the Executive Board refused a request by a preacher to translate the BSA handbook into Spanish for Cuban boys. The Board argued that it could not spend money on Cubans contributed “for the American boys.” The BSA handbook was translated into Spanish in 1913 for the Boy Scouts of Mexico, but it is unclear who funded and performed the translation. Scouting (April 15, 1913): 5; and West’s report to the Executive Board (Sep. 22, 1911): p. 5, folder 1, Box 211, Beard Papers.

40 Macleod failed to note the BSA’s successful agreement with the Polish Falcons. “Training Course for Polish Leaders Is Successful,” Scouting (Aug. 1, 1914): 8. For the Falcons’ initial request for training and preliminary communications with the Polish National Alliance, see “The Polish Scouts,” Scouting (May 15, 1914): 6. Actually, the Polish Falcons (then a branch of the PNA) appeared to have initiated efforts to bring Scouting to Polish-Americans. In 1912, the fraternity invited the founder of the Boy Scout organization in Poland as a guest speaker. Scheidlinger, 746-748. For the Falcons’ relationship to the PNA and later Polish Scouting developments, see Pienkos, 147-149, 229-235. The BSA again hoped that the PSA might merge with the BSA in the mid-1930s. See 1936 ECR, 881.
The training course split time between Scouting, gymnastics, and military science. “Training Course for Polish Leaders Is Successful,” Scouting (Aug. 1, 1914): 8. In 1917, the BSA National Council tried to persuade Italian-American representatives to promote Scouting amongst Italian boys in New York City. West suggested that the BSA national office fund the extension of Scouting to Italian boys, a measure the Executive Board would refuse to take for blacks in the 1920s. See “Italian Movement in the United States,” in “Report of the Chief Scout Executive to Executive Board” (April 9, 1917): pp. 9-10; and “Italian Boy Scouts,” minutes of BSA Executive Board (Apr. 9, 1917): p. 4, Beard Papers.

National Scout Commissioner Dan Beard, the organization’s most outspoken proponent of Americanization, argued that political and religious oppression had conditioned poor Europeans to lie in order to survive. He insisted that new immigrants, now that they were in an open and democratic American society, had to unlearn the bad behaviors caused by living under monarchy or the Papacy. Dan Beard, “From the National Scout Commissioner,” Scouting (Jan. 29, 1920): 12. Dan Beard letter to William D. Murray (Dec. 19, 1914), folder, 5, Box 209, Beard Papers. Macleod argued that the BSA exhibited a mild but understated nativism toward white ethnic minorities which increased during World War I. After the war, labor unrest and the Red Scare reinforced BSA caution about new immigrants and labor unions for several years. Macleod, Building Character, 190-198. On the era’s Americanization ideas and efforts, see Gerstle, American Crucible; Higham, Strangers in the Land; and Gary Gerstle and responses, “Liberty, Coercion, and the Making of Americans,” Journal of American History (Sep. 1997): 524-580.

Figure 5.1 in 1915 BSA Annual Report, 113. For BSA sources promoting 100 Percent Americanism, see Frank Rigney sketch, Scouting (May 15, 1919): 3; 1919 BSA Annual Report, 61; The Scout Executive (March 1923): 1; and Handbook for Scoutmasters (1929), 548.


“Service and Americanization: Principles and Suggestions for Fourth,” Scouting (June 19, 1919): 6-7, first quotation on 6. In a rare gesture to cultural pluralism, Scouting magazine suggested later that year that American boys learn something of foreign cultures, history, and literature so that they could better relate to immigrants in their efforts to Americanize them. Dan Beard, “Around the Campfire with Dan Beard,” Boys’ Life (Nov. 13, 1919): second quotation on 36. See also “A Basis for Sound Americanism,” Scouting (Jan. 29, 1920): 10-11.


For national conference protest note, see “Knights of the Ku Klux Klan To National Offices of the Boy Scouts of America.” Quotation in James West letter to George L. Nye (Oct. 16, 1924). Both documents in folder, “correspondence West 1924,” Box 131, Beard Papers. The St. Louis council rejected an offer of fifteen thousand dollars from the KKK in its 1922 campaign drive. The BSA national office approved the Donora, Pennsylvania council’s decision in 1924 to reject a troop charter from a Scoutmaster who, even after being told not to by the council, had his troop band participate in a Klan demonstration. The national office’s decision, however, may have stemmed more from its policy of local council self-determination and the policy that Scouts should not get involved in political matters than a desire to voice support for minority equality and rights. For St. Louis donation, see James West letter to Dan Beard (Nov. 20, 1922), folder “correspondence West 1922.” Box 131, Beard Papers. For Pennsylvania troop charter rejection, see James
West letter to Dan Beard (Oct. 18, 1924) and Beard reply (Oct. 20, 1924), folder “correspondence West 1924,” Box 132, Beard Papers.

48 Minutes of BSA National Council Annual Meeting (Mar. 29-30, 1922); p. 273; and minutes of BSA Executive Board (Apr.-May 1922); p. 4, folder 7, “correspondence West 1922,” Box 131, Beard Papers. 1924 ECR, 542-543. On the Inter-Racial Service’s espoused interest in promoting Scouting amongst white immigrants and Japanese boys, see 1927 BSA Annual Report, 91; 1929 BSA Annual Report, 109-110; 1931 BSA Annual Report, 146; 1932 BSA Annual Report, 144; and “Memorandum: Conversation, Mr. Packard, Mr. Bolton Smith, Mr. Stanley Harris Subject: Boy Scouts of American Inter-racial Committee November 11, 1931,” File no. 971, “Boy Scouts of America – Negro 1928-31,” Subseries 8, Box 96, Series 3: Appropriations, 1917-1945, LSRM Papers. 1929 BSA Annual Report, quotation on 110. See also Western Regional Conference Roundup (1920), 130-131.


51 Figure 5.2 sketch in Boys’ Life (Oct. 1915): 20.

52 The smallest area designated a town or hamlet in BSA sources during this period had at least twenty-five residents. The best town dividing line as far as pinpointing optimal BSA recruitment rates was between one and five thousand residents. BSA sources did not distinguish suburban areas, so they must have lumped them into a neighboring city or counted them as separate towns. Since most suburbs were neither congested nor filled with working class immigrants, BSA officials probably saw them as conducive to good character like town life. For a good example of the BSA’s three-part vision of American boyhood, see 1925 BSA Annual Report, 143, 162-169. For other BSA criticisms of urban and rural environments, see Henry Curtis, “The Boy Scouts,” Educational Review 50 (Dec. 1915): 498-501; and John L. Alexander, Boy Scouts pamphlet (Minute Tapioca Co. for the BSA, 1911), unnumbered page entitled “Camp Life.”


55 Minutes of BSA national Badges and Awards Committee (Feb. 23, 1916): quotation on p. 43. BSA leaders rejected a 1927 study’s suggestion to revamp the entire Scouting program to better serve and attract America’s rapidly urbanizing youth. Jones study, 43-47.
56 Macleod, Building Character, 224-229.
57 For these statistics, see Community Boy Leadership (1922), 306. David Macleod credited social cohesion amongst small town elites for the success of Scouting. He argued that suburbanites’ strong social organization and relatively high social status aided recruitment there. Macleod, Building Character, 224-229.
60 Petterchak, 93-99. West told BSA Executives at their 1924 national conference that Boyce had tried to convince the BSA National Council at one of its annual meetings that the organization should do something for rural boys along the lines of the British Lone Scout program, but “he did not make much of an impression” (1924 ECR, 406-407). On LSA membership stats, see 1923 BSA Annual Report, 16-17.
63 Dean, 59, 66-67; and Petterchak, 95-96, 111-112.
64 One speaker at the 1928 BSA Executives national conference referred to the BSA membership outreach to new social groups in the 1920s as the “Four R’s”: rural, railroad, regional, and racial. 1928 ECR, 324.
compare the coverage maps in 1926 BSA Annual Report, 76; to 1927 BSA Annual Report, 96-97; and 1928 BSA Annual Report, 83.


The International & Great Northern Railway was the least successful, but it still tallied five hundred Scouts in thirty-three troops by 1928. The BSA rolled the railroad troops into the Department of Rural Scouting in 1926. The last railroad council ended during World War II. Morse, Councils of the Boy Scouts; Monroe, “The Railroad Scouters”; and 1929 BSA Annual Report, 129-131.

The BSA estimated that active LSA membership was between forty-five and sixty-five thousand in 1923, but this figure downplayed the number of Lone Scout devotees. On LSA stats, see 1923 BSA Annual Report, 16-17; and Petterchak, 106, 114, 136. On Pioneer stats, see 1926 BSA Annual Report, 142-146.

Citing a 1916 letter, Janice Petterchak argued in her biography of Boyce that James West never liked the idea of the independent Lone Scouts organization. On federal charter motivation, see Petterchak, 105, 110-111. Western Regional Conference Roundup (1920), 127-128. On the early stages of the actual LSA takeover process, see 1923 BSA Annual Report, 16-17; 1924 ECR, 406-407; and James E. West memo, “Memorandum about Lone Scouts of America: A possible opportunity for making the program of the Boy Scouts of America available at once to from 50,000 to 100,000 additional boys,” (Oct. 24, 1923), folder 10 “Vitalius, E.H.” Box 124, Beard Papers.

For list of companies BSA convinced to give up use of the word “Scout” or pay a royalty, see “Exhibit A” attached to West letter to Jane Deeter Rippin (Apr. 16, 1924), folder “correspondence West 1924,” Box 132, Beard Papers. For income figures, see 1924 BSA Annual Report, 37.

For BSA lawyers’ advice on the issue, see Ellis S. Middleton letter to BSA, Attention Mr. F. N. Cooke, Jr. (Mar. 18, 1924); Paul Sleman to Colin H. Livingstone (Mar. 19, 1924); and Clarence D. Kerr to West (Mar. 20, 1924), folder “controversy with Boy Scouts over use of name, 1917-1926,” Box 10, “Clubs and Organizations,” Lou Henry Hoover Collection, Herbert Hoover Presidential Library. West, “Memorandum about Lone Scouts of America.”


Dr. Charles J. Galpin, “Rural Boys” speech, 1924 ECR, 207-213.


Benson also identified a group of boys who joined Lone Scouting because they had “highly individualistic tendencies, who are not of the gang type.” O.H. Benson, “Survey of Lone Scouts,” 1926 BSA Annual Report, first and second quotations on 147. For 1925 statistic, see 1925 BSA Annual Report, 162. Malcolm C. Douglass, “Scouting for the Other Boy,” Scout Executive (July 1927); subsequent quotations on 5. See also Macleod, Building Character, 227-228. The Rural Department’s 1928 annual report noted similar motives in questioning one thousand recent Lone Scout recruits. The Boston Boy Scout council used Lone Scouting to reach working class boys such as Western Union telegraph workers. 1928 BSA Annual Report, 171. The council hoped to expand this method to newsboys and other working boys. The Rural Department estimated in 1927 that thirty percent of Lone Scouts were under twelve and had been dropped until coming of age. 1927 BSA Annual Report,173.

Jones study, 43-49.

Scout Executive (Jun. 1927): 1-2. For the farm merit badges and numbers earned, see 1927 BSA Annual Report, 169; and 1929 BSA Annual Report, 197. Upon the recommendation of the Assistant Secretary of
the Department of Agriculture, M.M. Hayes, BSA national leaders developed merit badges on Agriculture, Dairying, and Bee and Poultry Farming in 1911. “To Study Scoutcraft,” The Washington Post (May 21, 1911): ES2. For the early farm merit badges, see The Official Handbook for Boys (1911), 24-43. For the number of each merit badge earned from 1911 to 1981, see Duersch, 125-1280.


The BSA prodded Lone Scouts to join Local Tribes (small rural troops), Farm Journal Tribes or Mail Tribes (also known as “Corrie Scouts”). 1926 BSA Annual Report, 146; and “Tribe Meetings,” The Lone Scout (Oct. 1928): 6.


81 The BSA’s “Back-to-the-Home” slogan for Lone Scouting may have been an attempt to address the concern of rural parents that their boys wanted to move to the city. “Scouting in the Home Circle,” The Lone Scout (Feb. 1930): quotation on 1. See also “Along the Lone Scout Trail: A Handbook for Members of The Progressive Farm Tribe,” (New York: BSA, undated): 4. For a report from New York and New Jersey rural BSA officials that “urbanizing” and “grouping” rural boys through regular troop Boy Scouting would encourage farm boys to come to the city and would result in the decimation of farm life and productivity, see 1927 BSA Annual Report, 170. On Country Life Movement and farmers’ defensiveness, see Hays, Response to Industrialism, 82-83, 110-115.


83 For Lone Scout statistics, see 1926 BSA Annual Report, 142-146; 1927 BSA Annual Report, 173; and 1928 BSA Annual Report, 176. In 1928, 276 local councils reported 4,728 Lone Scouts and 9,689 farm boys belonging to some form of Boy Scout troop. 1928 BSA Annual Report, 172. On removing deadwood and the adjustment period, see “Why Lone Scout Membership Has Dropped,” 1928 ECR, 410-413. For Lone Scouting in and outside the BSA, see Petterchak, 137-138, 149-151; Macleod, Building Character, 227-228; and Peterson, The Boy Scouts, 85-88.

84 BSA national leaders continued to believe that different population densities required different training methods. Discussion sessions at the 1926 Executives national conference were divided into councils with no large city, councils with a large city, and councils with no rural territory. Scout Executive (Jan. 1926): 6.

Chapter Six

1 Italics in original. McLane offered the colonial dame and the sea-nymph to model traditional feminine virtues like domesticity, beauty, grace and a sentimental love of nature. The pageant also described the Indian man wresting a home and living from the wild as a model for Girl Scouts to learn to be lithe, silent, and durable. Figure 6.1 and long quotation in Fannie Moulton McLane, “Behind the Khaki of the Scouts,” Saint Nicholas 50.4 (Feb. 1923): 386-389. For a comparison of Girl and Boy Scout heroes, see Wendy Sterne, "The Formation of the Scouting Movement and the Gendering of Citizenship," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1993), 236-241.

2 In reality, there had been somewhat more overlap between women’s and men’s activities in the Victorian period than the separate spheres model projected. This was especially true for the working class, African-
its appropriateness, see minutes of BSA national Badges and Awards Committee (Nov. 9, 1926): p. 223, BSA National Archive.


21 James West, Lee Hanmer, and John Alexander were the BSA administrators who helped facilitate the CFG merger. Since Ernest Thompson Seton’s Woodcraft Indian organization became coeducational, his help in formulating the CFG program seemed to stem from his desire to promote Indian lore rather than wanting to keep girls’ socialization distinct from boys. Mrs. William Low of Washington D.C. and Clara A. Liseter-Lane from Des Moines, Iowa had started the two Girl Scout organizations that merged into the CFG, while Reverend David W. Ferry of Spokane, Washington ran the Girl Guides of America. On the merger of these girls’ organizations into the CFG program, see Biegert 161-162, 191-194; Groth, 90-94; Wallach, 264-270, 56-360; and Wo-He-Lo: The Camp Fire History (Kansas City: Camp Fire Girls and Boys, 1995), 4-32, quotation on 22. See also “Report of a meeting of the committee on organization of a movement for girls corresponding to the Boy Scouts at the home of Mrs. Seton held on September 27,
“correspondence Camp Fire Girls, Inc.,” Box 33, Beard Papers. In response to World War I and the women’s suffrage amendment, CFG leaders advocated a slightly expanded social role for females; however, they continued to teach girls that men and women were innately different and had distinct life duties.


22 Susan Schrepfer argued that the use of Native American lore in the CFG made sense in that both groups were politically disenfranchised and seen to have an intimate relationship with nature and its associations with purity and reproduction. Susan Schrepfer, Nature’s Altars: Mountains, Gender, and American Environmentalism (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2005), 156.


24 The handbook also presented pioneer girls and professional women as role models. Scouting for Girls (1926), 4-33, 66-82. The first two GSA handbooks were adaptations of the British Girl Guide handbook. BSA editors removed Baden-Powell’s and Seton’s stories of women with Scout-like virtues from the Boy Scout handbook revisions. For Baden-Powell’s stories of female heroism, see Scouting for Boys V (1908), 283-284, 325.

25 Scouting for Girls (1926), 4-13, 57-65, 80-104.

26 Biegert, 199, 225-227, 280-285; Groth, 82; and Scouting for Girls (1926), 13, 80-96.

27 Biegert, 223. Groth argued that the GSA used less Indian imagery than did the BSA or the CFG. Groth, 71. See also Sherrie A. Inness, “Girl Scouts, Camp Fire Girls, and Woodcraft Girls: The Ideology of Girls’ Scouting Novels, 1910-1935,” in Ray. B. Browne and Ronald J. Ambrosetti, Continuities in Popular Culture: The Present in the Past & the Past in the Present and Future (Bowling Green: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1993), 229-240. Quotation in “Notes Collected for Arbitration Committee meeting between Boy Scouts & Girl Scouts April 1918” [referred to hereafter as “Choate Arbitration Committee Notebook”] (entry for Jan 28, 1918), folder “controversy with Boy Scouts over use of name, 1917-1926,” Box 10, “Clubs and Organizations,” Lou Henry Hoover Collection, Herbert Hoover Presidential Library. On GSA alternative tests, see Scouting for Girls (1926), 4-13, 57-65, 80-104. The Manhattan Girl Scout council reported in 1924 a total of two hundred and twenty-eight troops: of which forty-two were Catholic, twenty-three Jewish, fifty-five settlement house, ten orphanage, one blind and one deaf. The number of GSA settlement troops in New York City may have equaled that in the entire BSA, and the total number of BSA troops was several times greater than that of the GSA. Florence Bragg of the GSA letter to Beardsley Ruml of the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial Foundation (Aug. 22, 1924), folder 140, “Girl Scouts-Manhattan 1921-25,” Box 12, Series 3: Appropriations, 1917-1945, Laura...

28 Biegert, 192-194; and Wallach, 264-270, 356-360.

29 On gender roles during the war, see Lois W. Banner, Women in Modern America: A Brief History (Belmont, California: Thomson Wadsworth, 2005), 64-69; Filene, 111-120; Kimmel, Manhood in America, 76, 90-91, 127, 142; and Muncy, Creating a Female Dominion.

30 For an early of many examples of BSA leaders’ insistence on distinct girl and boy socialization, see Wo-He-Lo, 27-28. For two of many examples of BSA spokesmen claiming that Girl Scouting produced tomboys, see Gladys M. Commander letter to Miss Clendenin (Sep. 2, 1921); and Director of the San Diego County GSA council, Barbara B. McMellon, letter to GSA national director Jane Deeter Rippin (May 4, 1923), file “Boy Scouts of America – Controversy – Correspondence/Comments,” GSA National Archive, New York City. As late as 1929, the Boy Scout handbook retained this notion of essential differences of men and women. The author stated that it was improper for girls to wear their boyfriends’ BSA badges because, “In the first place the Scout Movement is essentially masculine in all of its activities. Its leaders and members are men and boys. The Scouting Program comprises activities requiring a virility, forcefulness and energy characteristic of boys, but not of girls. It is inconsistent that girls or women should wear any of the insignia which properly belong only to men and boys” (Handbook for Boys (1929), 526-527).

31 For BSA national leaders’ difficulty lining up coherent support for this argument, see BSA Executive Board member Mortimer Schiff letter to former Assistant Superintendent of New York City public schools Dr. I.E. Goldwasser (Nov. 1, 1917); and Goldwasser reply (Nov. 4, 1917); both attached to Mortimer Schiff letter to Mrs. Arthur Choate (Nov. 7, 1917), folder “controversy with Boy Scouts over use of name, 1917-1926.”


33 For BSA officials helping local Girl Scouting, see Biegert, 230; and Macleod, Building Character, 183-184. For the Philadelphia Scoutmasters’ resolution, see Philadelphia BSA Executive Walter S. Cowing letter to Edith Harper (Oct. 30, 1917). On BSA Scoutmasters helping start GSA troops, see the following letters in Choate Arbitration Committee Notebook: Philadelphia (Nov. 1917); Athens, Ohio (Nov. 1917); Scranton, Pennsylvania (Nov 5, 1917); Jersey City (Feb. 1917); and New Orleans (Jan. 1914). On a BSA leader of a girls’ troop, see Brockport, New York Scoutmaster letter to GSA headquarters (July 13, 1914), excerpted in Choate Arbitration Committee Notebook. For GSA local leaders’ resisting BSA men’s help, see Nancy Waddell letter to Montague Gammon (Feb. 9, 1917), file “Boy Scouts of America – Controversy – Correspondence/Comments,” GSA National Archive. The defection may have reached into the highest echelon of the BSA. Edith Balet, a GSA National Field Scout Commissioner operating out of San Diego,
informed BSA Field Officer H.D. Cross that she had been helped by several BSA national leaders like Milton McRae (a BSA Vice-President) and Samuel Moffat (the first national Field Director), who gave her suggestions on how to organize troops and office administration. Balet told Cross that it was customary in her field work to approach the wives of local BSA council members to interest them in helping the GSA. Cross retorted that BSA national leaders denied her claims. For Edith Balet’s statement, see H.D. Cross, “Data for Mr. West” (April 25, 1918), folder “controversy with Boy Scouts over use of name, 1917-1926.”

38 Emily V. Hammond letter to Mrs. Livingstone (May 16, 1918); and Hammond letter to Ann Choate (Aug. 16, 1918), folder “controversy with Boy Scouts over use of name, 1917-1926.” See also Emily V. Hammond letter to Colin Livingstone (May 16, 1918), folder 5, “1918 April – May,” Box 130, Beard Papers.

39 Biegert, 187-191; Wo-He-Lo, 145-150; Choate and Ferris, 98-101, 134b; and Strickland, “Juliette Low.”

40 Quotation in “Policies and Regulations of the Boy Scouts of America.” See also Handbook for Scoutmasters (1929), 538; and Colin Livingstone letter to Mrs. J.H. Hammond and attached BSA policy statement (Jun. 24, 1918), folder “controversy with Boy Scouts over use of name, 1917-1926.”

41 On women’s roles in the 1920s, see Filene, 139-144; Banner, Women in Modern America, 71-99; Peiss, Cheap Amusements; Muncy, Creating a Female Dominion; and Susan Porter Benson, Counter Cultures: Saleswomen, Managers, and Customers in American Department Stores, 1890-1940 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986).

42 For West’s statement on the BSA’s weak legal case against the GSA, see Western Regional Conference Roundup (1920), 34-36. On Owen’s complaints, see Benjamin Owen letter to James West (Jun. 12, 1922), folder “correspondence West 1922,” Box 131, Beard Papers. On local BSA pressure against the GSA, see also Macleod, Building Character, 183-184; and Biegert, 161-163. See also J.E. Huchingson letter to John H. Piper, Regional Scout Executive in Kansas City (Nov. 16, 1921); and Stanley Harris letter to James West (Nov. 17, 1921), folder “correspondence West 1922,” Box 131, Beard Papers.

43 Rothschild, 119-120; Beard letter to West (Jul. 6, 1922), folder “correspondence West 1922,” Box 131, Beard Papers. On Roberts’ conversation with Price, see Miss Louise Price, “Resume of Conferences,” (June 2, 1922), GSA National Archive. Mr. Roberts speech at 1922 BSA Executives national conference, excerpted as “Exhibit B,” pp. 9-10, attached to West letter to Beard (Nov. 15, 1922), folder “correspondence West 1922,” Box 131, Beard Papers. See also Folder 7, Box 211, Beard Papers; and C.K. Warne letter to BSA national office (Nov. 12, 1921). “Extracts from letters,” Exhibit B, pp. 8-9, Cooke Collation. Chicago Boy Scouts, for their part, had joined a public crusade in 1914 to persuade men to give up their seats to women on street cars. “Boy Scouts Join the Crusade,” Chicago Daily Tribune (Mar. 29, 1914): E1.


45 Dorothy Shreve letter to Mary C. Clendenem (Sep. 19, 1921), file “Boy Scouts of America – Controversy – Correspondence/Comments,” GSA National Archive.

46 “Problem Hour: The Girl Scouts,” 1922 ECR, excerpted as Exhibit B, pp. 7-13, attached to West letter to Beard (Nov. 15, 1922), folder “correspondence West 1922,” Box 131, Beard Papers.

47 “Problem Hour: The Girl Scouts,” 12-15. On the BSA committee to investigate GSA complaints, see West letter to Beard (Nov. 15, 1922), folder “correspondence West 1922.” For Mrs. Hoover’s initial complaints, see minutes of BSA Executive Board (April 1922); and (May 1922), folder 7, “correspondence West 1922.” For Taft’s involvement, see William H. Taft letter to Milton McRae, Clarence H. Howard, and Charles P. Neill (Oct. 16, 1922), Exhibit D, attached to West letter to Beard (Nov. 15, 1922), folder “correspondence West 1922.”

48 For BSA lawyers’ advice on the issue, see Ellis S. Middleton letter to BSA, Attention Mr. F. N. Cooke, Jr. (Mar. 18, 1924); Paul Sleman letter to Colin H. Livingstone (March 19, 1924); and Clarence D. Kerr letter to West (Mar. 20, 1924), folder “controversy with Boy Scouts over use of name, 1917-1926.” For income figures, see 1924 BSA Annual Report, 37.

West letter to Jane Deeter Rippin (Apr. 16, 1924), folder “controversy with Boy Scouts over use of name, 1917-1926.” Sarah Louise Arnold letter to Jane Deeter Rippin (Dec. 20, 1924), folder “correspondence West 1924,” Box 132, Beard Papers. On the GSA legal brief, see Rothschild, 120.

On West’s explanation of the BSA’s weak legal case against the GSA, see Western Regional Conference Roundup (1920), 134-36. On the BSA response to GSA trademark patent applications, see minutes of BSA Executive Board (Mar. 8, 1926), folder 1, “correspondence West 1926,” Box 133, Beard Papers. On continued special BSA committee meetings, see James West letter to Reginald Parsons (Jun. 2, 1925), folder “correspondence West 1924,” Box 132, Beard Papers. On West’s letter to the international Girl Guide and Girl Scout association and Low’s quoted response, see Juliette Lowe letter to Lou Henry Hoover (Sep. 1, 1926), folder “controversy with Boy Scouts over use of name, 1917-1926.” See also Rothschild, 120.


The GSA reported 190,000 members in February 1929. On membership growth, see “Girl Scouting Shows Widespread Growth,” New York Times (Feb. 15, 1929): 32; and Biegert, 194, 203, 266. For 1930 statistics, see Myron M. Stearns, “Wolf Cubs,” Ladies’ Home Journal 48.2 (Feb. 1931): 29. By comparison, the BSA reported BSA 837,116 boys and adults combined that year. Groth argued that the controversy partly died because the Camp Fire Girls shifted toward teaching girls more open and modern roles by the time of its 1948 handbook revision. After failed merger discussions with the BSA, the CFG added boys in 1975 and changed its name to Camp Fire, Incorporated. By 1999, the GSA had 2.6 million girl members compared to Camp Fire’s three hundred sixty-seven thousand girls (and three hundred thousand boys). Groth, 44-45, 95. Rowan, 210. On 1941 episode at West’s retirement, see Rothschild, 120; and West letter to Beard (Nov. 4, 1939), folder 5 “correspondence West 1939,” Box 137, Beard Papers.

On trends in women’s history in this era, see File, 123-132.

Epilogue

1 On the Depression’s effects on the BSA, see Rowan, 137-143; Dean, 126-129; and Keith Monroe, “Depressed But Not Down,” Scouting (Nov.-Dec. 1985): 8-9. On Scout council deficit spending in the 1920s, see William J. Brittain, The Spirit of Scouting ’76: Challenge and Triumph – 65 Years of St. Louis Area Scouting (St. Louis: St. Louis Area Council BSA, 1976), 45. Membership statistics in “Historical Highlights” fact sheet (Irving, TX: BS A, 2001). In a small discussion session at the 1936 BSA national training conference for local council Executives, the majority of attendees reported using women as merit badge counselors when not enough men could be found. Arthur Schuck stated that the national office staff believed it was far better to only allow men to judge exams, since the real point of the merit badge program was to promote the boy-man relationship rather than to get the boys to learn the subject content or badge skill. 1936 ECR, 730-731.

2 On Good Turn efforts, see Rowan, 137-143; Dean, 126-129; Wigginton, 72-83; Murray, 174-200; Macleod, Building Character, 301-302; “Aid in Relief of unemployment,” 1930 BSA Annual Report, 31-33; and F. N. Robinson, “Report of Scout Service Emergency to the Executive Board December 21, 1931,” Exhibit I, folder 1, “West correspondence 1931,” Box 135, Beard Papers. On San Diego effort, see “City Plans Aid for Jobless,” Los Angeles Times (Jan. 11, 1931): A7. The National Jamboree was originally scheduled for 1935, but was cancelled due to a polio outbreak. Having President Roosevelt cancel the
Jamboree compelled the insurance company to make good on the “loss-of-use” policy taken out by the BSA on expenditures. According to BSA historian Keith Monroe, this likely saved the BSA from financial ruin, as leaders had already spend half a million dollars on the cancelled event. Monroe, “Depressed But Not Down.” On the National Jamboree, see Oursler, 104; and Keith Monroe, “The Jamboree That Wasn’t,” Scouting (Oct. 1988): 12-13. On Philmont camp, see Oursler, 137-144.

1 1936 ECR, 125, 518-532, 954, quotes at 524, 530. The published conference proceedings did not list a report by the sub-committee on Indians, Mexicans, Chinese, and Japanese.

2 1936 ECR, quotations on 560-562, 532-533, 562-563, 577-579.

3 1936 ECR, 840-846, quotations on 841-842, 845. For local immigrant recruitment efforts, see 1936 ECR, 80, 746-748. For discussion on methods to recruit immigrants, see 1936 ECR, 861-862, 877-881.

4 On some troops eliminating uniform and weekly dues requirement, see Minor S. Huffman, Sam Houston Scouts: Seventy Five Years of History in the Sam Houston Area Council (Houston: Sam Houston Area Council BSA, 1985), 42. On racially integrating Scouting to save money, see 1933 BSA Annual Report, 175. On the increasing number of reform school, handicapped, and Boys’ Clubs troops, see 1936 ECR, 741-743. On the bank deposit debate, see Keith Monroe, “75 Years in the Life of a Magazine,” Scouting (March-April 1987). On Scouting with “less chance” boys, see 1939 ECR, 52-66, 355-356, 802-811, quotation on 811.
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

PRIMARY SOURCES

1. Archival Sources
   Boy Scouts of America National Archives. Irving, Texas.
   Girl Scouts of America National Archives. New York City, New York.
   Lou Henry Hoover Papers. Hoover Presidential Library, West Branch, Iowa.

2. Newspapers
   Chicago Tribune
   Los Angeles Times
   New York Times
   Washington Post

3. Magazines
   Boys’ Life
   Lone Scouting
   The Scout Executive
   Scouting
   Weekly News Bulletin of Boy Scout Activities
4. Published Materials, Books, and Pamphlets


Boy Scouts of America Annual Reports (1910-1930).


Boy Scouts of America Merit Badge pamphlets, selected.

Boy Scouts of America Service Library pamphlets, selected.


Boy Scouts of America, transcript of “‘Western Round-Up’ of Scout Executives” (Berkeley, California: Jan. 21-24, 1920), BSA National Archive.


SECONDARY SOURCES


Huffman, Minor S., *Sam Houston Scouts: Seventy Five Years of History in the Sam Houston Area Council* (Houston: Sam Houston Area Council BSA, 1985).


Pote, Harold F., *Fifty Years of Scouting in America and the Pioneers* (privately printed, 1962).


Riley, Glenda, “‘Wimmin Is Everywhere’: Conserving and Feminizing Western Landscapes, 1870 to 1940,” *Western Historical Quarterly* 29 (Spring 1998): 4-23.


Rome, Adam, “‘Political Hermaphrodites’: Gender and Environmental Reform in Progressive America,” *Environmental History* 11.3 (July 2006): 440-463.


Weinstein, James, The Corporate Ideal in the Liberal State, 1900-1918 (Beacon Press, 1968).


