

Boy Scouts of America and National Park System: Development of Bonds and Ideals early 1900's

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Boy Scouts of America and National Park System: Development of Bonds and Ideals early
1900's

Boy Scouts of America and National Park System: Development of Bonds and Ideals in the early 1900's

In 1907, Lord Baden Powell started the Scouting Movement, which came to the United States three years later. Shortly after Boy Scouts of America originated in the United States, the National Park System was established on August 25, 1916. These two organizations served different needs for the public, but they shared a common agenda. Both entities provided a way for the general public to explore nature under the guidance of a structured organization. Through the working relationship of the Boy Scouts of America and the National Park Service both organizations experienced a period of growth and development which would not have happened as quickly had they not worked as closely with each other. Shared activities such as trail building and tree planting, along with shared ideals championed by individuals in matters concerning conservation and preservation lead these two organizations partner together, and grow.

The naturalist John Muir championed National Park Service. John Muir grew up in Wisconsin after moving to the United States from Scotland. He spent much of his adult life traveling to different wilderness areas across both North and South America. John Muir one of the main authors and activists for protecting the wilderness. While protecting the rights of these wilderness areas, he wrote several books regarding the wonders of Yosemite.¹ Muir was well known in political circles too, once visited by Theodore Roosevelt. Roosevelt came to Yosemite

¹Sally Miller, and Daryl Morrison. *John Muir: Family, Friends, and Adventures*. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press. 2005)

to go camping with Muir, and to talk about the need to protect the wilderness through politics, as well as many other aspect of life in the United States.²

The BSA, one of the premier youth organizations in the United States, began in England, but took flight in America in the 1920's. This was a mirrored image to the booming economy during that decade. During the 1920's, other successful youth groups grew, such as the Young Mens Christian Association (YMCA). What distinguishes the BSA from other youth groups is the character building that comes with it. *Building Character in the America Boy* compares many of these youth groups and offers a comparison and contrast between the BSA and the YMCA groups, "For competitive purposes, the Boy Scout's sharply defined and demonstratively patriotic image served better than the less precise impression people had of YMCA boys' work. Furthermore, the uniformed Boy Scout, busy with helpful projects, personified boyish energy under close adult control..."³ This character building is a result of the life lessons, hard work ethics, responsibilities, and understanding of nature the BSA.

Lord Baden Powell started the Scouting Movement as an experiment in 1907, when he took a group of young men between the ages of 11 and 18 to Brown Sea Island, which is off the coast of England. Brown Sea Island would later become the first Scout Camp.⁴ Later on, as the legend goes, William D. Boyce, an American, was walking around London one night and ended up lost in the city streets. He ran into a Scout who gave him directions to his destination. The Scout refused to accept a tip from Boyce for his help and explained why; using the Scouting

²Dayton Duncan, and Ken Burns. *The National Parks: America's best idea : an illustrated history*. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 2009)

³Macleod, David I., and Bruce Gore. 1983. *Building Character in the American boy: the Boy Scouts, YMCA, and their forerunners, 1870-1920*. (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.1983) Pg 186.

⁴Tim Jeal. *The boy-man: the life of Lord Baden-Powell*. (New York: Morrow. 1990)

Values he was taught. Boyce, later greatly moved by this experience, started the Boy Scouts of America in 1908. In the BSA, the highest rank a scout can earn is the rank of Eagle Scout. This is accomplished by earning merit badges and other awards along the way, along with leading and planning a service project. The BSA has had a storied history ever since this legend involving Boyce and the unnamed Scout, much of which would not have been possible without the National Park Service.⁵

The National Park Service, established in 1916, aimed to protect wilderness areas across the nation for future generations to experience and enjoy. The National Park Service is often seen as the organization that protects last untamed frontier in the country. These parks serve as a way to preserve natural areas against modernization, industrialization, and deforestation. President Woodrow Wilson originally signed off on the National Parks Service bill, and passed it into law. Since Wilson, several other Presidents have influenced the National Parks Service, including Taft, who wanted Congress to create the Bureau of National Parks. The National Park Service name was later changed to the National Parks System (NPS) after several government agencies joined together under President Franklin Roosevelt. The NPS was established to set aside land in its natural state, to preserve for both present and future generations to enjoy, just like past generations enjoyed the outdoors.⁶

Trail Building Across the Nation

One of the major linking component to the development of both the BSA and the NPS was the building of official trails throughout the National Parks. During the 1920's in particular,

⁵ History of Boy Scouts Highlights, 2015, accessed January 2014, http://www.scouting.org/About/FactSheets/BSA_History.aspx

⁶A brief history of the National Park Service, 2003, accessed January 25, 2015, http://www.cr.nps.gov/history/online_books/kieley/kieley4.htm.

many of the trails were built from labor provided by local Boy Scout troops. This did not happen in just one National Park, but across the entire nation, in dozens of National Parks. The validity given due to positive media attention directly lead to a period of growth and development of both organizations in both local and national newspapers. The BSA Scouts built these trails, on both the troop and on the Council level. This wasn't completed as a project from the National office of the BSA, but in the actions of the local Scouts taking it upon themselves to help these early National Parks. Some Scouts built these trails as their Eagle Scout Service Project, which is usually one of the final requirements before a Scout achieves the rank of Eagle. The NPS and the BSA gained positive media attention from this "partnership". While the NPS gained miles of trails, in which the general public could use, in addition to local Boy Scouts, over the next several decades.

NPS, with help from local Boy Scouts in the 1920's, built miles of trails in a multiple parks. Some parks like Yellowstone and Yosemite gained more media attention, than other National Parks that the Boy Scouts built trails due to the national recognition from their names. However, no matter the park or location, the importance of these trails remained the same. Some trails built linked several National Parks, as in the case of the Appalachian Trail. This trail, spanning several National Parks and several states, existed because of help from both the local Boy Scouts and other laborers.

The BSA began publishing the Boy Scouts of America Fieldbook in 1944. This book provides the outline with the amount care and attention to detail that the scouts put into constructing these trails. In the third edition published in 1967, Chapter 30 is all about Trail Building and Maintenance. This chapter outlines the steps the Boy Scouts take to develop, build trails, and later come back to maintain the trails they built. Two of the most important facets of

building a trail are where the trail is designed to go and the scenic overlooks meant to be seen. The next step of building a trail includes surveying the land. Surveying the terrain enables the crew building a trail to identify paths to scenic outlooks, the potential difficulty of the climb, and areas where erosion would be possible and need to be avoided. Before construction on a new trail begins, the surveying and marking the path of the trail has to be done, because it will save time during construction against unforeseen issues, such as, unstable soil conditions. One technique used in trail building tends to be the use of switchbacks. Switchbacks, a part of the trail that goes back and forth up a slope, helps to prevent erosion and decrease damage to the floral terrain. The temptation for hikers to create social trails to avoid following the switchbacks can be high, while building a trail remember to spread out the switchbacks as much as physically possible and to build trails around steep slopes when possible.⁷

In 1925, a group of Eagle Scouts built over six miles of new trails in Yellowstone National Park. While six miles of trails does not seem very expansive, the location of the trails made it very impressive. These new trails constructed, in some of the park's most spectacular and most natural landscapes. The Scouts built these trails, which included constructing bridges and boardwalks to cross streams, creeks, and other water features. The work that these Eagle Scouts completed directly led to more groups of Scouts to be form together over the next several years building trails in Mount Rainer National Park and Glacier National Park.⁸

A follow up article published in 1926 by the New York Times, described how these groups of Eagle Scouts over a two year span had been building a series of trails in Yellowstone, Mount Rainer, and Glacier National Parks. The work these Scouts started unfortunately had not

⁷Boy Scouts of America, *Field Book Boy Scouts of America*, (Irving, Texas, 1967.) Pg. 489-499.

⁸"BOY SCOUTS BLAZED TRAILS OF THREE NATIONAL PARKS." *New York Times (1923-Current File)*, Oct 11, 1925, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/103506525?accountid=10628> (accessed January 30, 2015).

been completed in the original timeframe, so the Scouts were going back for at least another seasons worth of work and building more trails. This article noted Scouts cleared weeds, tall grasses, and other brush from areas, including the site of Daniel Boone's gravesite. In addition to the clearing, these Scouts built signs and others markers identifying areas. In both cases, the actions and work completed by the Scouts deserved high praised by both park employees and visitors alike.⁹

The trail building in Yellowstone, Mount Rainer, and Glacier National Parks continued for approximately two years, while work in new parks also began. Hot Springs National Park began to see Boy Scout trail construction during that 2 year span. Due to the amount of trail construction being done by these Scouts, "under the direction of the National Department of Camping of the Boy Scouts of America and the United States Forest Service," a settled agreement came to fruition. This agreement noted that the Forest Service would provide the necessary transportation and tools needed for the trail construction. Meanwhile, the Boy Scouts would continue providing labor needed to complete the work on the trails. If a Scout stayed on the "job" for at least five hours, he would receive a special patch marking his service and commitment towards the project.¹⁰

While majority of this work had taken place in the Mid-Western to Western National Parks, it did not mean work had not started in some of the Eastern National Parks too. The best example of work completed in the parks, took place on the Appalachian Trail. The Appalachian

⁹"BOY SCOUTS BUILD TRAILS IN WESTERN NATIONAL PARKS." *New York Times (1923-Current File)*, Jun 27, 1926, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/103726044?accountid=10628> (accessed January 30, 2015).

¹⁰"EAGLE SCOUTS BUILD TRAILS IN NATIONAL PARK FORESTS." *New York Times (1923-Current File)*, Aug 14, 1927, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/104111823?accountid=10628> (accessed January 30, 2015).

Trail, one of the most famous trails in the National Park System, runs up and down the entirety of the Appalachian mountain range. While Boy Scouts did not build the entire trail, they did build several links of the trail in multiple states. Boy Scouts constructed some of these sections of the Appalachian Trail along the Canadian border, in Vermont, Massachusetts, and several other states.¹¹

Using Yellowstone National Park as a measuring tool on amount of visitors each year, a direct correlation to the increased overall mileage new trails and the increasing number of visitors can be seen. In 1920, the number of visitors at Yellowstone numbered at 683,004. At the end of the decade the number of visitors grew to 2,179,983 visitors annually.¹² The new trails in the National Parks were not the sole reason more visitors came to the various parks, but an influence in the annual visitor growth. The trails allowed visitors to get out and explore the parks. Other factors included a growing economical market, later known as the Roaring Twenties, allowed those with money to travel and explore more than in previous decades.

The BSA also saw an increase in membership during the 1920's. In 1925, BSA membership reached one million youth Scouters and continued to grow. During the 1930's, the BSA expanded their youth programs by introducing the Cub Scout program designed for second to fifth grade boys or until the boy turned eleven. The expansion into Cub Scouts and the increased number of youth memberships again factored into a growing economy in the 1920's.

¹¹"BOY SCOUTS AID TRAIL MAKING BOTH IN THE EAST AND WEST." *New York Times (1923-Current File)*, Sep 11, 1927, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/104095139?accountid=10628> (accessed January 30, 2015).

¹²Yellowstone National Park Visitor Stats. Yellowstone National Park Visitor Statistics Page, 2014, accessed February 20, 2015, <http://www.yellowstone.co/stats.htm>

Champions for National Parks

Each organization had their own struggles in the latter half of the 1910's and the beginning of the 1920's. In the 1910's, each considered in their infancy and just beginning to grow and become established. The definition of what constituted a National Park turned into a major problem for the NPS. One example of the emerging standards used in 1927, a standard which established the historical importance of a specific area. "Other previously established standards are the area must be natural and unmodified to qualify to become a National Park."¹³ The issue of standards in relation to the NPS rose from the demand and need of the public for more National Parks and to experience the interests of outdoor recreation. Some of these public outcries for more parks came from Scouts looking for new regions to explore and places to go camping. Most of the general public and the political sphere remained unaware of the concern towards areas that would eventually become National Parks.

The assortment of influential people who championed the parks in the late 1800's and the early 1900's paved the way for development. These Champion who advocated for the perseveration of natural areas are: John Muir, Theodore Roosevelt, Rudyard Kipling and Frederick Remington. Remington gave a powerful statement that humanized mother nature for the protection of natural areas:

Americans have a national treasure in the Yellowstone Park, and they should guard it jealously... Let us respect her moods, and let the beasts she nurtures in her bosom live,

¹³John C. Miles, *Guardians of the parks: a history of the National Parks and Conservation Association*. (Washington, D.C.: Taylor & Francis in cooperation with National Parks and Conservations Association. 1995)

and when the man from Oshkosh writes his name with a blue pencil on her sacred face, let him spend six months where the scenery is circumscribed and entirely artificial.¹⁴

This quote from Frederick Remington gives a perfect example of the personification of nature. He gives nature motherly instincts, along with other emotions and feelings, to help relate the need to protect something that is alive and helpless to outside threats. These outside threats include ignorance of issues, modernization, economic profit, along with other possible threats. Remington is giving a voice to nature, urging others to protect her, for the future generations.

William T. Hornaday, a zoologist, and another leader in outdoor conservation efforts in the early 1900's. His work later led to a series of awards in the BSA, celebrating various levels of conservation. The William T. Hornaday award, first established as a Boy Scout award in 1937, came about after almost two decades of being an award for public work of conservation. The BSA website gives the purpose of the William T. Hornaday Award as, "Understanding and practicing sound stewardship of natural resources and environmental protection strengthens Scouting's emphasis on respecting the outdoors," along with multiple other ideals towards conservation of the outdoors.¹⁵

Men like Remington, Muir, and Hornaday spread the message of conservation, preservation of natural areas, and the development National Parks. Newspapers picked up on the story and carried it to the everyday American. The perfect example of someone who learned about the need to protect these natural areas and National Parks is Theodore Roosevelt. He took

¹⁴Dayton Duncan, and Ken Burns. 2009. *The National Parks: America's best idea : An Illustrated History*. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 2009) Pg 68.

¹⁵ William T. Hornaday Award, <http://www.scouting.org/scoutsourc/Awards/HornadayAwards.aspx>. (accessed March 3, 2015)

it to heart and after meeting John Muir and began to push legislation through to better protect NPS.

John Rockefeller generally known as a highly successful businessman during the Industrial Revolution, though also known for giving significant donations to the BSA and the NPS. Rockefeller himself or through his foundation gave millions of dollars over time to these organizations to build their infrastructure. Rockefeller's donations to the BSA provided the funding to build numerous Boy Scout Summer Camps. A total of more than \$180,000 amid two separate donations given to the BSA helped to build summer camps in New York and New Jersey alone.¹⁶ One of the two donations was \$100,000 from the Rockefeller Foundation, which went not only to building a summer camp but also initiating the Boy's Life magazine.¹⁷ One of Rockefeller's multiple donations to Acadia National Park totaled four million dollars. His donations to Acadia National Park went towards building roads, bridges, and other infrastructure needed to develop the park. The donations that Rockefeller gave to Acadia National Park show his dedication to building the infrastructure necessary to build a National Park.¹⁸

Outdoor and Conservation BSA Awards

The BSA developed another program for young boys in the late 1920's and early 1930's. This program became known as Cub Scouting. When first introduced, Cub Scouting had four

¹⁶ "\$82,503 AND A CAMP FOR THE BOY SCOUTS." *New York Times (1857-1922)*, Dec 12, 1915, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/97647010?accountid=10628> (accessed January 30, 2015).

¹⁷"ROCKEFELLER FUND TO AID BOY SCOUTS." *New York Times (1923-Current File)*, Jul 10, 1923, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/103142244?accountid=10628> (accessed January 30, 2015).

¹⁸By The, Associated Press. "Senate Aids \$4,000,000 Gift by Rockefeller to Acadia Park." *New York Times (1923-Current File)*, Mar 11, 1932. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/99668946?accountid=10628>. (Accessed March 3, 2015.)

ranks; Wolf, Bear, Webelos 1, and Webelos 2. Unlike Boy Scouts in this ranking system, a boy advanced ranks after one year as he moved into the next school grade. After completing the rank of Webelos 2, a boy could cross over into Boy Scouts if he desired. As a young boy progresses through Cub Scouts into Boy Scouts, the level of difficulty surrounding requirement for badges and awards increase.

Since the ideology of the BSA, as a whole, stays deeply connected with the experience of being outdoors, every rank in the program has a badge/award to address nature or conservation in some form or fashion. The Nature badge, for a Wolf Scout, involves identifying different types of trees, flowers, and wildlife.¹⁹ The Bear Scout has two badges that deal with the outdoors and conservation. The first badge, the Florist Badge, has requirements of planting flowers and making a garden. The second badge, the Wildlife Conservation Badge, also entails planting flowers and other plants, but has a requirement of woodland creatures and their usefulness to the environment.²⁰ Webelos Scouts have a variety of different badges and pins that involve the outdoors and conservation efforts. These pins/badges include Naturalist, Geologist, Forester, and Outdoorsman.²¹

In Boy Scouts the Cub Scout awards/pins system changes over into Merit Badges. Merit Badges, an important requirement, helps in advancing and gaining knowledge on a variety of ideals, occupations, and meanings associated to the BSA core. One of the most challenging merit badges can be the Camping Merit Badge. To complete this merit badge, a Scout has to camp in the outdoors for at least fifty nights and make a shelter out of natural materials. The Scout has to learn to differentiate between a good location for a campsite and a bad location for

¹⁹ Boy Scouts of America, *Wolf Cub Scout Book*, (New York, New York, 1948.)

²⁰ Boy Scouts of America, *Bear Cub Scout Book*, (New Brunswick, New Jersey, 1954.)

²¹ Boy Scouts of America, *Webelos Scout Book*. (New Brunswick, New Jersey, 1967.)

a campsite. Another merit badge that offered, the Conservation Merit Badge, requires dealing with deforestation and reducing dependency on natural resources, such as coal. The Forestry Merit Badge, deals with identifying different species of trees and other floral, then giving the usefulness to industry of the different species of trees. There are other merit badges that focus on wildlife that inhabit the forests.²²

These badges, pins, and merit badges found and outlined in the Cub Scout and Boy Scout programs in the early 1900's show an emphasize on the outdoors and a Scout's relationship with nature. Lord Baden Powell and other leaders of the Scouting Movement try to give the young men they developed this program the message of being responsible in the outdoors and gain experience in of the many occupations of the time.²³ The sheer number of badges and other awards, associated with the outdoor, show the unseen connection to the NPS. This unseen connection consists of the ideals shared by these organizations of conservation, protecting the natural areas, and experiencing the benefits and wonders of those areas.

Conservation Efforts and Programs

Conservation efforts, one of the main ideals shared between the BSA and the NPS, can be seen by the amount of badges and awards in the BSA directed towards the outdoors and the effort given by NPS to prevent majority of visitor impacts. NPS can often be classified as protected areas, defined as “an area of land and/or sea especially dedicated to the protection and maintenance of biological diversity, and of natural and associated cultural resources, and managed through legal or other effective means.”²⁴ Under the classification of a protected area National Parks have to consider the effects of various impacts. The impacts that can affect the

²² Boy Scouts of America, *Boy Scout Handbook*, (New Brunswick, New Jersey 1911.)

²³Tim Jeal, *The Boy-Man: The Life of Lord Baden-Powell*. (New York: Morrow. 1990)

²⁴J. Pigram, and John M. Jenkins. *Outdoor Recreation Management*. (London: Routledge. 2006)

areas in the NPS often varied and sometimes hard to be seen, but efforts towards conservation limit those impacts. Impacts to the NPS that come from social, physical, and economical sources can deter positive growth due to the amount of resources that have to go into correcting these impacts. Examples of these can be: a social impact can be litter, physical impact can be erosion, and economic impacts could be not having the necessary funding to replace old trail signs. Common impacts can be social trails. Some examples of these consist of unofficial trails (social trails) built by foot traffic over time, damaging the flora, and allowing more erosion to take place over time. Other physical impacts can include campsite health, erosion, and wildlife. Campsite health, defined as the amount of impact left on a campsite, includes no greenery/leaf cover on the ground exposing the dirt, broken limbs off of trees, campfire rings, and litter.²⁵

One way both organizations work towards conservation and preserving what remains involves planting trees. Trees have many benefits to the environment, such as preventing erosion, generating oxygen, replacing lost forests, and creating new livable habitats for woodland creatures. In 1929, the number of trees planted by the BSA Scouter surpassed the previous record for trees planted by any single organization in a year's time. Majority of these planted trees took place in some type of a park, whether it be a national, state, or local/city parks.²⁶ Though planting trees can be only one example of the conservation efforts conducted by the BSA and the NPS, there are multiple other examples.

Two of the programs designed to limit the impact in nature consist of the BSA Outdoor Code and the Leave No Trace program. The BSA Outdoor Code, "As an American, I will do my best to, be clean in my outdoor manners. Be careful with fire. Be considerate in the outdoors. Be

²⁵J. Pigram, and John M. Jenkins. *Outdoor Recreation Management*. (London: Routledge. 2006)

²⁶ "BOY SCOUTS' TREE PLANTING TO EXCEED PREVIOUS RECORD." *New York Times (1923-Current File)*, Jun 23, 1929.

conservation minded,” first appeared in the fifth edition of the Boy Scout Handbook. The Outdoor Code outlines every Scouter’s responsibility in the outdoors, whether within the NPS or just out in the woods.²⁷ The Outdoor Code tells a Scout to treat the outdoors as a national heritage and something that needs to be protected for future generations. Both private lands and public lands need to be protected and treated with the same level of care.²⁸

Many of the ideas found in the Outdoor Code apply to what later became the Leave No Trace Program. The Leave No Trace Program had developed out of the BSA’s Outdoor Code. Yet the Leave No Trace Program encompassed more details and includes more issues which impact nature. The basic premise of Leave No Trace consists of to take nothing but pictures, leave nothing but footprints, and kill nothing but time. Now this describes a brief basic overview of the Leave No Trace Program, but it does cover some of the most important parts. A few of the other elements of the Leave No Trace Program consists of campfire management, litter control, interacting with wildlife.²⁹

The BSA and the NPS grew up together in the early 1900’s. Both organizations began within ten years of one another. In the 1920’s, almost ten years after the BSA began, and roughly four years after the establishment of the NPS, the partnership and relationship between the two began to show. This decade served an important role in both organizations as it provided the NPS with a system of trails in multiple parks across the country and provided the Scouts with areas to practice conservation and service projects. The volunteer efforts given by the Boy Scouts helped to build the system of trails. The more well-known trails that Scouts

²⁷ Woodbadge Course NE-111-188 September 2009, accessed February 20, 2015, <http://wbne-3-188.blogspot.com/2009/09/outdoor-code.html>.

²⁸ Fritz Hines, *Introduction to Family Camping*, (Irving, Texas, 1984.)

²⁹ Leave No Trace, accessed February 15, 2015. <http://leavenotrace.info/wp-content/files/LNTHistoryPaper.pdf>

built reside in Yellowstone, Mount Rainer, and Glacier National Parks and also sections of the Appalachian Trail. Due to the amount of work completed by the Boy Scouts year after year and how it has spread across the country, there came positive media attention for both the BSA and the NPS.³⁰ Membership for the BSA, in 1925, grew to over a million scouts.³¹ The yearly visitor totals for Yellowstone grew from about 80,000 visitors in 1920, to over two million visitors in 1929.³² Also, in addition to this physical connection between the BSA and NPS of trail building and tree planting, written and spoken connections between the two now exist. The work of conversationalist such as John Muir, Theodore Roosevelt, William D. Hornaday, and John Rockefeller, led to protecting natural areas and building infrastructure to accommodate the growing number of visitors to the NPS each year. The efforts taken by both organizations for conservation and preservation clearly identified the BSA Outdoor Code and the Leave No Trace Program developed by the NPS.

³⁰"BOY SCOUTS BLAZED TRAILS OF THREE NATIONAL PARKS." *New York Times (1923-Current File)*, Oct 11, 1925, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/103506525?accountid=10628> (accessed January 30, 2015).

³¹History of Boy Scouts Highlights, 2015, accessed January 2014, http://www.scouting.org/About/FactSheets/BSA_History.aspx.

³²Yellowstone National Park Visitor Stats. Yellowstone National Park Visitor Statistics Page, 2014, accessed February 20, 2015, <http://www.yellowstone.co/stats.htm>.

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