

# Scouting Frontiers



Scouting Frontiers  
Youth and the Scout  
Movement's First Century

Edited by

Nelson R. Block and Tammy M. Proctor

**CAMBRIDGE  
SCHOLARS**

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P U B L I S H I N G

Scouting Frontiers: Youth and the Scout Movement's First Century,  
Edited by Nelson R. Block and Tammy M. Proctor

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DEDICATED TO  
LINDA FREEDMAN BLOCK  
AND  
TODD SHIRLEY

AND TO OTHER UNSUNG HEROES  
WHO SUPPORT THEIR LOVED ONES' OBSESSIONS  
SUCH AS SCOUTING AND GUIDING HISTORY

It is curious what can be overlooked by historians and sociologists. Search through the library shelves and you will find endless volumes on the theory and practice of socialism, on trade unionism, and on every aspect of child welfare and education. But you will find almost nothing about youth movements, except the occasional volume of instruction or propaganda. Yet if we are thinking of the real *social* revolution of our century, that is to say, not so much the rise and fall of standards of living, but the most significant changes in *behavior*—clothing, sex relations, hobbies, sports and holidays—then we have to admit that the youth movements have been the most successful revolutionaries of the lot. But you will hunt high and low for an authoritative work which takes notice of this phenomenon. Because the apologetics of youth movements are callow, their arguments crude, and their practices puerile, they are dismissed or ignored by scholars.

—Leslie Paul, *Angry Young Man* (1951)

There are tons of history lying in every village if only we would dig for it.  
—R.S.S. Baden-Powell, *The Scouter* (March 1924)

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FOREWORD

UNDERSTANDING SCOUTING AND GUIDING  
AFTER A HUNDRED YEARS

ALLEN WARREN

It is surprising that this volume, and the conference from which it derives, should be the first to examine two of the most distinctive global social phenomena of the twentieth century—that of the Scouting and Guiding; movements that had their beginnings in Edwardian Britain, but then spread across the world, appearing in almost every established or emerging state over the following century. Broadly, except where explicitly banned, Scouting and Guiding is to be found in every country of the world. As a twentieth century global presence, they have similarities with organizations such as the Olympic movement, the YMCA and YWCA, and the Red Cross. Yet, they have attracted little scholarly attention except in a few specific locations, or as part of the biographical interest in their founder, Robert Baden-Powell.

Nor is this lack of academic interest because Scouting and Guiding are marginal to the main social, cultural and ideological concerns of the last century. Few could argue that education, the global and local environment, militarism, totalitarianism and liberty, gender, race, sexuality and class, as well as faith and secularization, were not of central importance in the last hundred years. And this is not to ignore the changing enthusiasms and fashions of the academic community in trying to explain both past and present experience, whether from a liberal empirical, Marxist, modernist or post-modernist perspective.

Part of the problem arises from this global presence itself. To understand any movement that spread so rapidly in the years following 1908 requires linguistic skills and a range of cultural understanding that few historians or social scientists possess. This is simply because Scouting and Guiding can be researched at every level; they are simultaneously highly local, national and international organizations. What is true of one part of the globe is totally different in another—even within the same

country, let alone continent. Yet they have an ethos and self-conscious identity that can emphasize common values over recognized diversity and difference.

Another difficulty is that Scouting and Guiding are pre-eminently ‘movements’, not simply organizations or constituted associations. While many children and adult leaders or supporters might be involved for a few years, there are also many hundreds of thousands of men and women world-wide at any one time, whose participation is life-long. They may have joined once, they may often renew their Promises annually, but fundamentally they ‘belong’, locally, nationally and internationally. Their belonging and commitment is akin to that of faith communities, or the labor and environmental movements. These are value-based social phenomenon, which the academically trained researcher, usually and often necessarily an outsider, finds it difficult to understand. By the same token, members of these movements interested in their own histories and their significance tend to be rather uncritical in their assumptions, and poor in their understanding of the social and historical context of their study.

This raises another challenge. Both Scouts and Guides are highly aware of their own histories, and about the way they customarily do things, again locally, nationally and internationally. This is not surprising as all voluntary organizations have to rely heavily on a strong sense of identity, values and traditions. This makes it difficult for them at times to work with other agencies, which do not have the same ethos. But it is also necessary, as unlike state or commercial activity, voluntary movements only have their ethos to give them the strength and power to operate in the diverse and challenging world around them. It is therefore not surprising that “keeping the faith” can make it painful on occasion for such organizations to adapt to changing social or political conditions. A number of chapters in this volume make it clear how difficult this can be.

As part of this self-consciousness, long serving volunteers take a great interest in archival material, they collect artifacts and memorabilia, become fascinated by uniforms, badges and insignia, and are drawn to folk art and woodcraft, to camp fire songs and other forms of music and performance. They also invest great significance to a sense of place, usually in the outdoors, which has been the site for their unit’s regular camps and programs. Stories are told and retold about their experiences, folk lore and wisdom is handed on from generation to generation of youth member and adult volunteer alike, so that for each the experience is apparently unique and special. All of this usually occurs far from the world of national and international policy makers within the movements, who themselves face the challenge of steering and leading (but not

explicitly directing) the adult and youth members. In their turn, the grass-roots membership will be quick to notice what they see as deviation from the core values, and either vociferously object, vote with their feet, or simply ignore the instructions from the headquarters. These unique and essentially local or personal stories are not easy to capture within an academic volume, although Jay Mechling has done so very successfully in his earlier study, *On My Honor*. They were present at the conference in contributions from Stephen Zimmer on the Philmont Scout Ranch, Bill Dyar on the woodcraft Silver Bay Camp and from Kenneth Davis on the Order of the Arrow among others. Such contributions are very valuable, and it may be that in any future collaborative publication a model like that used by the British *History Workshop Journal* would be worth considering.

Recognizing these research challenges, it is perhaps less surprising that few scholars have had the courage to try to understand these movements outside a single local or national context. This volume is therefore very much to be welcomed as the first attempt, by no means comprehensively, to present these particular histories in a global context. Its aim is to suggest ways of thinking about them as social and cultural phenomenon so that we can understand better how such diversely situated organizations locally can at the same time operate reasonably coherently nationally and internationally. A better understanding of why and how this has been achieved in the twentieth century may well contain messages for the twenty-first; and not just for the movement itself, but for others trying to understand that deeply ambiguous contemporary concept of 'globalization' more sensitively, historically and usefully.

What follows are a number of reflections as to how we might achieve this understanding more comprehensively. They come from a professional historian, who has also been an 'insider' within the UK Scout Association throughout his life and who had the privilege of giving the opening introduction to the conference.

A number of general issues need to be addressed from the beginning.

The first centers on the role of Robert Baden-Powell himself. Here at least there has been considerable academic research and argument, not least involving the present writer. Baden-Powell's ideas, personality and life have been thoroughly trawled and his reputations assessed. What has been less examined is how his ideas were received, directly and indirectly. Here understanding is likely to be more complex. Few historians deny Baden-Powell the status of Founder of the Scouts and Guides, or that *Scouting for Boys* in its many and various editions contains the fundamental purpose and method. It has also been long recognized that Baden-Powell had gathered ideas, yarns and stories, pieces of home-spun

advice, and guidance to workers with boys from a variety of sources including his own life-story, and then used his status literally to sell an idea that was taken up in ways far beyond his initial expectations. The cultural and social ground in Britain at least was also well-prepared to receive a text, whose idiosyncratic style and approach, if not its whole content, could have been put together by no one else. Thereafter, our understanding of the movements' growth needs to be less biographical and in that sense, historians and members need 'to get away from B-P'. Despite his long life (1857-1941) as Chief Scout of the World, and that of his much younger wife, Olave, as World Chief Guide (1889-1977), the explanation for both movements' growth locally and nationally outside the sphere of direct British influence must be found elsewhere. We need to know a great deal more about how the movements were established and acquired an identity in wholly different environments, in continental Europe, Russia, the Middle East (and the chapters in this volume contribute significantly here), in South America, about which we know surprisingly little, and in China, Japan and the south east Asia more generally.

The second issue highlights the real need for a comparative approach; across space and time, and as between the different histories of the Scouting and Guiding movements themselves. Numerous comparative questions will suggest themselves to readers, but the question is where to begin.

Some tentative possibilities suggest themselves. Firstly, can a distinction be drawn between those societies which received Scouting and Guiding and in which English was the first language, and those for whom it was not? At first sight, it does seem that the movements evolved differently in continental Europe, in parts of the Middle East and in Russia and the Far East. Having said that the case of the United States has to be addressed and one of the strongest, underlying themes of this volume is how different was the evolution of Boy Scouting and Girl Scouting in the US from that of the UK. The dilemma here is whether it is the British or American example that provides the exception that tests any general hypothesis.

Secondly, do we have to identify clearly the significance of 'faith communities' as a critical factor in the local character of Scouting and Guiding across the globe? Both movements internationally, and in many cases nationally and locally, are inter-faith in their operations. Baden-Powell himself had little understanding of, or sympathy for, the Christian denominational differences of his own day, let alone those of the non-Christian world. This was an advantage to some degree as he could use his

status as Chief Scout of the World to reinforce his claim that Scouts and Guides of whatever faith were all Scouts or Guides first, as when they gathered in their great international camps or jamborees that were to become their great global show pieces, like the Olympics, roughly every four years. But these great displays of solidarity did not disguise the fact that in almost every national association there had been a tension between those who saw Scouting and Guiding as an attractive, informal educational youth program supporting evangelism and church survival, and those for whom the less dogmatic concept of 'spiritual' growth was only one of the critical elements within a comprehensive program of personal development, that would ultimately enable the young adult to make an individual decision about faith and worship.

In its turn, this leads thirdly to the question of whether, fundamentally, these movements are a training method operating in diverse cultural environments around the world, or whether they are more comprehensive and complicated social and cultural movements that use a particular training method. There is no simple answer; both are nearly always in play and can often be in tension in any debate about priorities or fundamentals. Is faith, or fatherland, or world citizenship at the core of the movement? Is provision for younger children to be welcomed or restrained? Should a program for young adult members over the age of eighteen (usually known as Rovers or Rangers) be provided, and, if so, should it be a concluding training stage with awards for achievement, or should it be seen more as a distinctive philosophy of living for a self-governing fraternity. Once again both are possible, and both are often present at the same time.

Finally, in raising these comparative questions the historian needs to ask whether the Scouting and Guiding movements are movements with aims and traditions in common or whether they have evolved so differently over the last hundred years that they should be treated distinctively. Do our relatively recent understandings of gender and sexuality help our understanding here? Once again, both approaches can be found by quarrying the lives and writings of both Robert and Olave Baden-Powell. These issues are not surprisingly to be found running through a number of the essays that follow.

In exploring these comparative questions no simple model of explanation will emerge, social movements of this sort defy neat explanatory categorization, and yet they demand our understanding. Comparative analysis of individual, national and global experience will help that process. But professional historians need also to be wary not to over-prioritize their own method of working in relation to those who approach the past in more personal ways, as the presence at the conference of a

number of non-academic delegates rewardingly demonstrated. Academic history is a form of disciplined and verifiable knowledge about the past, generated to increase understanding about the past for all those who are interested. It has its rules of evidence, usually archival, which necessarily gives priority to the articulate, to national and international leaderships and policy makers and what they leave behind them. But historians need to remember that such governing bodies have relatively little real power in requiring their respective movements to behave in the ways which they think best; something which has clearly been a considerable difficulty within the Boy Scouts of America over the last decade and which is referred to by a number of the contributors to this volume. But this is not unique to the United States; it is inherent in human associations that come together voluntarily and whose work is essentially local in the first instance; the child or adult volunteer does not join a world organization, they join a local group or unit because what it offers is attractive to them, only later do they come to understand the more national and global movement of which they are part.

To give just one or two examples from the UK Association will make the point. It was never the intention of Baden-Powell to establish training sections for younger boys (Wolf Cubs) or for young men (Rover Scouts), nor did he intend that women should become adult leaders within the Scouts almost from the beginning. Similarly, he had no plans initially to found a parallel movement for girls and women that would provide a training and development program for girls exclusively. In all of these examples, a combination of local circumstances in the context of the First World War extended both movements in new directions. Even before the War, many women had founded Scout troops in rural areas, and quickly assumed the leadership of units attracting younger participants more generally. As a result Baden-Powell had to prepare a handbook of instruction for what became the Wolf Cubs, using Kipling's Mowgli stories as the imaginative framework for the program and training methods. As far as young men were concerned, Rover Scouting had its origins in a number of quite highly politically charged Patrol Leader Conferences in Britain from 1916 onwards, which Baden-Powell and his governing committee found difficult to handle. Nor was the subsequent Rover Scout section an easy development, containing, as it did, a tension between providing a training program for those over 18 and the creation of a fraternity committed to the ideals of honor and service, often combined with an enthusiasm for woodcraft ritual and the outdoors. Baden-Powell's later attempt, for instance, to impose a uniform headgear on Scottish Rovers (the Scout hat) rather than allowing the Scottish bonnet almost



split the whole UK national association in the early 1930s; an example that shows the complex interaction between national, regional and local.

Nor did such difficulties cease with the retirement of the Founder. To take a recent example, it was never the intention of the UK Scout national leadership to set up a training section for young children aged six to eight, but from the mid 1980s units began appearing in Northern Ireland, something which could be tolerated in the uniquely difficult political and sectarian situation in that province at the time. But they soon spread to the mainland UK. At first the national headquarters discouraged their formation as they did not want the Association to become overwhelmingly a child-centered organization, wishing the adolescent age range, the Scout section, to remain at the core. Units of 'Beaver Scouts' continued to increase however. The Association procrastinated, saying that such work with young children could be regarded as legitimate social service, but that Beaver Scouting was not a new section. Grass-roots criticism started being voiced by the local Beaver leaders that they wanted their contribution to be properly recognized, and that they were being treated as second class citizens. The national Association was in a dilemma, should they recognize that the movement had a power to develop loyally, enthusiastically and organically as conditions changed, or should they stick to their guns and risk division and distress. Not surprisingly, they finally accepted the former.

So far in this Foreword, I have suggested that a more comprehensive comparative analysis of the histories of these two movements, will aid our understanding. But other more thematic approaches are possible as I hinted in my opening sentences. At one level Scouting and Guiding are relatively simple social and educational phenomena in providing voluntary training and development programs for children and young adults, often based outdoors, and with an under-girding value system. Emphasizing standards of personal conduct, health, honor, loyalty and faith, alongside a commitment to helping others, the philosophy and approach are brought together through their respective Promise and Laws, to which members commit themselves. At another level, these movements provide a lens through which to observe in a close and particular fashion how many of the great events and ideas of the twentieth century were received, mediated, and used. Only by adopting both the comparative and thematic approach, by looking through both ends of the telescope as it were, will we gain the full understanding of their interest and significance. In a short Foreword, only a few such themes can be discussed, but many more are highlighted in the individual essays that follow.

Firstly, taking the theme of education. Mass education has clearly been a 20<sup>th</sup> century phenomenon, both in terms of curriculum, programs, and state development, but educational debates have also been at the core of twentieth century conflicts, locally, nationally and globally, in practice and in the battle of ideas. Scouting and Guiding are educational movements with wide national and international appeal, both to governments wanting to command and control and to those wishing to support plurality and diversity. They seem to have inherent power, otherwise why should totalitarian regimes ban them, and why should they reappear so quickly once such regimes fall?

Secondly, warfare has been the twentieth century's affliction and the causes and consequences of wars are fundamental historical questions. Scouting and Guiding were no less affected than any other parts of the societies drawn into conflict. In the case of the United Kingdom, the First World War affected both movements fundamentally, the Second World War less so. Is this true for the other combatants? We also we need to know more about other conflicts and not just those with global reach. How did the Vietnam War, for instance, affect Boy and Girl Scouts in the United States, what part did Scouts and Guides play in the wars of colonial liberation and with what impact on the post-war situations in those societies. This volume has some fascinating material on this question. War and the threat of war also changes values, before, during and after the conflict. Scouts and Guides are uniformed, disciplined and often patriotic organizations, what did this mean for them and the society of which they were part? For example, the Australian experience, perhaps surprisingly, is very different from that of the UK, where because of Baden-Powell's particular national status and very individual views about military training per se, the UK Scouts were able to negotiate the military and civilian pressures for compulsory cadet training, before and during the First World War. As a result both Scouts and Guides were able to adapt to the new pacific mood of the years following the end of the War, less compromised than in the Australian case.

Turning thirdly to questions of state despotism, authoritarianism and liberal democracy, the presence of Scouting and Guiding often is an interesting litmus test on how a political regime is evolving. At one level, the issue again appears simple; National Socialist and Communist regimes tend to ban youth organizations other than their own, authoritarian regimes usually try to reach an acceptable accommodation and for some associations that is the price of survival or indeed growth. Liberal democratic regimes, on the other hand, seem to welcome these voluntary, non-governmental movements as part of the tapestry of freedom they

publicly espouse. But once again reality is not so straight-forward, otherwise how would it happen that within months of the collapse of communism that Scouting in Poland emerged as one of the largest of the 'new' associations in Europe, other than by accepting that Scouting and Guiding had continued, usually under the cover of the Catholic Church throughout the communist period. Or to take another example of the Scouting movement in South Africa during the years of apartheid, during which it was not banned but not encouraged. Often the people on the ground determine the organization's priorities; on some occasions simply who was the Chief Scout or Guide at the time. Thus Charles Martin, Chief Scout of South Africa in the early 1980s engineered the coming together of the various ethnic Scout Associations in that country and saw himself as pushing the regime rather than challenging it outright. Others would have assessed what was both possible and desirable differently. Nor is understanding of liberal democratic regimes any simpler, as much of the debate over the founding of the Scouts in Britain demonstrates, with many historians seeing Scouting and Guiding as socially and culturally regressive while others see motives as much more complex and diverse. Current debates about the place of Scouting and Girl Scouting in the USA shows that this is not just a debate about origins, although the essays in this volume on the USA show that no satisfactory explanation of current debates can be understood without deep historical knowledge of what the founders intended. We also need to know a lot more about non-western democratic societies to understand the place of Scouting and Guiding within those polities.

Questions of race, gender, faith and class (great academic historical categories) are similarly complex. Baden-Powell and his wife are not much help here and, as non-intellectuals, would have found much contemporary scholarly debate incomprehensible. On race, Baden-Powell was at best naïve and 'of his time'; on gender he had enthusiasms, which combined both imperial visions and hostility to convention, views fully endorsed by his wife. On matters of faith, Baden-Powell had almost no knowledge or understanding of the Christian faith, let alone other world religions, something which caused him considerable difficulty in the early years of the UK Boy Scout Association, problems interestingly not paralleled in the early history of the Girl Guides. Both Robert and Olave were eccentric representatives of their age and class within a very domestic national and global imperial context. While they both became unofficial world citizens, it was largely within a frame set by the British Empire and Commonwealth as is seen in their itineraries. For instance, Olave was constantly on the move as World Chief Guide in the more than

thirty years following her husband's death in 1941, a kind of quasi-royal presence, encouraging, rallying, keeping alive the Founder's flame. While in old age, she appreciated the reverence given to her husband's memory by the Boy Scouts of America, fundamentally she remained a great imperial lady. More generally on race, it would be interesting to know more about Scouting and Girl Scouting in the American South as well as in French, Portuguese and Dutch imperial and post-imperial settings.

On gender and associated sexualities, the naïve historian of Scouting and Guiding is entering a mine-field of academic argument and risks becoming simply the provider of evidential cannon fodder for others. But, in fact, these movements provide interesting sites of engagement for these questions. Any study of women, for instance, and particularly single women, in the first thirty years of the last century in Britain and probably more widely, will see that Guiding, and to a lesser extent Scouting, provided a vehicle of gender self-expression that could be both conventional and liberating. We need to know a great deal more about the role of women in these movements from non-western cultures. For young men and their leaders, it is too easy to present their involvement as simply a process of adopting a conventional definition of 'what it is to be a man'. Here I differ from some of the scholars in this volume. This is not to deny the potential power of the voluntary associations in developing the young adult's identity. But it is to emphasize particularity and local connection, both good and less good.

Oral testimony is important here. I will give a single if rather exceptional example from my own experience. In 1990 as a volunteer member of the national committee of the UK Association, I was responsible for the recruitment of a community development director to take charge of the Association's innovative work in isolated, deprived and culturally diverse communities within the UK. We advertised and among those applying apparently was a man in his seventies, who in his letter of application commented on how pleased he was with this development as he had been introduced to his life's work of social action as a young man serving as a Rover Scout and social missionary before 1939 in the East End of London. The experience had influenced his whole life. The application was a tease, but a more interesting one when it emerged that the applicant was Alex Dickson, subsequently founder of the UK's Voluntary Service Overseas (model for President Kennedy's Peace Corps) and Community Service Volunteers. The example simply makes the point that local voluntary association has some surprising and unconventional outcomes.

Nor is this simply to qualify the 'masculinity' agenda of much contemporary scholarship about the Scouts in particular. John Howard, for

instance, in his pioneering study on male homosexuality in the American South, has shown how churches and youth groups, camps and excursions became occasions of contact, support and engagement for young gay men in hostile environments in the decades prior to the campaigns over civil rights. More commonly, they also provided respectable environments for hetero-sexual introduction. Church youth groups, Ranger and Rover gatherings, even the Young Conservatives, provided acceptable courtship grounds for concerned parents. What actually happened there might be a different matter.

On issues of class, now a rather unfashionable historical category, the experience of Britain may be the exception, but the rapid expansion of Scouting and Guiding in terms of securing support from a range of sources of social and political authority is itself an interesting comment on the history of Britain. Traditional aristocratic society, retreating from its dominating position in Victorian England, gave both movements considerable support through patronage, active engagement and the provision of camping grounds. In its early years members of the professions, educated at private schools were often active in both movements and they became a feature of many of the schools themselves. For example, both Eton and Ampleforth Colleges had a long Scouting tradition. Unsurprisingly, many male and female teachers were also leaders in either Scouts or Guides. Local civic leaderships in major cities like Sheffield and Birmingham provided active support and in one rural county at least one of the local members of Parliament was also the County Commissioner. Nationally, the Royal Family quickly associated itself with Scouting and Guiding with all the children of George V taking honorary positions and wearing uniform, attending rallies and camps. Traditionally Scouts in uniform have lined the short route taken by the monarch for the Armistice Day ceremony at the Cenotaph in Whitehall. From the mid-1930s the monarch reviewed his King Scouts annually at Windsor Castle prior to a service of personal rededication in St George's Chapel, neatly bringing together themes of socio-constitutional endorsement, chivalric Christian commitment and patriotism. Studies of such conjunctures in other Scout and Guide associations would be similarly revealing.

Finally, any history of Scouting and Guiding has to consider them in relation to changing attitudes to nature, the outdoor environment and the reaction against the city. Scouting started by Baden-Powell holding an experimental camp on Brownsea Island in Poole Harbor. Scout and later Guide camping rapidly became a *sine qua non* of the training methods. From 1920 both movements have regularly held large national and

international camps (“jamborees” in Scouting language) as great public demonstrations of the movements’ claims to be vehicles for international harmony and reconciliation—a League of Nations of Youth as the gathering at Arrowe Park, near Birkenhead, was called by the press in 1929. Any research done into the local Scouting or Guiding experience will find plentiful sources, archival and oral material, that affirm the significance of the camp—“the Scoutmaster’s great opportunity” as Baden-Powell called it—in the explaining both how important it is within the ethos of the movements, but also how powerful a vein of public sentiment was tapped by that engagement. Cross cultural research into the role of camping within Scouting and Guiding associations across the world would be similarly revealing. Just a single example will show how complex these apparently simple activities can be.

Rover Scouts were the section formed for young men over the age of eighteen; committed formally to honor and service, they were like a small local Scout fraternity, with a mix of activities associated with the Scout movement, not all of which were universally approved of by those in some sort of authority over them. They were encouraged to keep logs of their activities and in the case of one Crew on the outskirts of London in Kent this tradition was continued from the late 1920s, right through World War II and up to the 1960s. Each year the Crew camped near Chiselhurst over the Whitsun holiday weekend. It became a hallowed tradition. With the coming of the War members were increasingly called up with younger leaders taking their place. The area was that over which the Battle of Britain was fought in 1940. The work of many hands, the Log is not reflective and contains almost no comment about politics, religion, morals or even the rights and wrongs of the war effort. There are no illustrations, except on a single occasion, a small black and white photo of the camping ground at Chiselhurst is pasted in. A simple inscription states, “What we are fighting the War for”. In 1946 as old Crew members were demobilized, they gathered at the campsite for the Whitsun weekend as they had always done. No history of the Scout and Guide movements will be fully convincing without examining the multiple and multi-layered experiences of adults and children as worked out in the environment of the camp.

These then are some of the reflections upon hearing and later reading the following essays. It is to be hoped that it will not be another hundred years before other volumes are brought together about these intriguing movements.

## PREFACE

In the first *Handbook for Girl Guides* (1912), Agnes and Robert Baden-Powell exhorted girls to not “only look at the path before you, but frequently turn and look back. Notice the features of the country behind you, to see what your road will look like coming back again.” With that modest goal in mind, this book brings to a broader audience some of the ideas presented in papers at the conference, *Scouting: A Centennial History Symposium*, held at Johns Hopkins University in February 2008.

The trail to the Symposium was long and winding. Nelson Block first proposed it in 1996 to a couple of friends who had the happy duty of watching over two of the world’s finest collections of Scout literature and memorabilia—Steve Zimmer, director of the Museum and Seton Memorial Library at the Boy Scouts of America’s Philmont Scout Ranch in northern New Mexico, and Paul Moynihan, archivist for The Scout Association, then in London, and now at Gilwell Park. Paul suggested that he enlist the help of Tammy Proctor, who had researched her recently completed Ph.D. dissertation at his archives. The idea was to hold the conference at Philmont Training Center and to include oral history sessions with Betty Clay, Lord and Lady B-P’s daughter, and Dee Barber, Ernest Thompson Seton’s daughter, each woman giving her recollections of her father.

But the Boy Scouts of America had other things to do and declined the offer to hold a history conference there. Nelson then realized such a conference should be held not at a Scout venue but at a university, that it should be organized without any Scout or Guide affiliation, and that it should be timed to coincide with the centennial of Scouting. The one-hundredth birthday of the Brownsea Island adventure was already being commemorated with the Centenary World Scout Jamboree, so we chose February 15-16, 2008, a weekend during the two-and-a-half months marking the centennial of the fortnightly publication of *Scouting for Boys*, the event that turned an experiment into a movement.

We quickly enlisted the help of our mentors. Matthew A. Crenson, one of America’s leading political scientists and Nelson’s undergraduate advisor at Johns Hopkins, had studied the life of BSA’s first Chief Scout Executive James E. West for his book, *Building the American Orphanage: A Prehistory of the American Welfare System*. Dr. Crenson arranged to

have Johns Hopkins host the Symposium and agreed to serve as a co-chair. Tammy set a high academic tone by recruiting as our keynote speaker her graduate advisor at Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey, John R. Gillis, a pioneer in youth and childhood studies, who had written about Scouting and other youth movements in his landmark book, *Youth and History*.

The Symposium brought together thirty scholars from ten countries. In addition to the articles collected here, our program included fascinating presentations on a wide variety of other topics. A panel on “Scouting as Conservator of Traditions” included Steven A. Zimmer on Philmont, Kenneth P. Davis, author of books on the Order of the Arrow and Wood Badge, and William Dyar, interpretive historian and an expert on Seton’s work, on Woodcraft. Bodil Formark of The National Graduate School of Gender Studies (Sweden) presented her work in progress on Swedish Girl Scouting, while Jeffrey Charnley gave a fascinating talk on the impact of Scouting on Gerald R. Ford’s life.

In order to highlight the importance of archives, the panel “Documenting Scouting and Guiding in the Archives” featured Paul Moynihan, Margaret Courtney, retired archivist of the Girl Guide Association (UK), Elizabeth Brantley, curator of BSA’s National Scouting Museum, and Susan A. Miller of the University of Pennsylvania, who had researched in the archives of the Girl Scouts of the USA.

As part of the international focus of the program, former Chief of Israeli Scouting, Zeev Zivan, discussed the recent development of the organization in Israel, while Yury Kudryashov’s (Pomor State University in Russia) paper focused on the rebirth of Russian Scouting. Our moderators and commentators included Benjamin Lammers of Caldwell College, Birgitte Sølund of Ohio State University, and Lia Paradis of Slippery Rock University. Veteran Scout antiquarian Ken Kittelberger displayed treasures from his collection.

The Symposium’s world-wide participation would have been impossible but for the generous support of our sponsors, the “Green Bar Bill” Hillcourt Trust, the David Weekley Family Foundation, Harry E. Bovay, Jr., ExxonMobil Corporation (through a kind introduction by Michael J. Dolan), the Office of the Provost of Wittenberg University and Johns Hopkins University. We greatly appreciate their interest in this project. We would also like to recognize Lisa Williams and Anna Hahn for their help with the conference and manuscript details.

The principal sponsor of the Symposium, the “Green Bar Bill” Hillcourt Trust, honors the memory of Grace and Bill Hillcourt, who left their life savings to “commemorating, preserving the history, and fostering



the growth of the national and international Boy Scout movement.” Bill had been a Scout since 1910, a protégé of Baden-Powell’s and a member of BSA’s national staff for almost 40 years. He was the author of three editions of the United States’ *Boy Scout Handbook* and other manuals, including the first edition of the *Handbook for Patrol Leaders* and monthly *Boys’ Life* articles for patrol leaders (whose badge of office is two green bars, hence Bill’s nom de plume). He directed the first Wood Badge courses in the United States and wrote the biography *Baden-Powell: The Two Lives of a Hero*. Bill spent his retirement years traveling the globe training Scout leaders and furthering the study of Scout history, often by correcting the errors of other historical writers. Grace, who had been a secretary to James E. West, typed and proofed Bill’s manuscripts, and supported him in his Scout work. Their generosity permitted the Symposium to include historians from many countries.

The conference participants also expressed a common debt of gratitude to those who have made a lifework of preserving and cataloguing the records of our history and making it available for study—the archivists and curators of the various Scout and Guide associations, especially those in the United Kingdom and the United States, such as Paul Moynihan, Graham Coombe, Patricia Styles, Margaret Courtney, Karen Taylor, Meghan Seki, Steve Zimmer, Seth McFarland, and Elizabeth Brantley, to name but a few. Paul received a standing ovation.

Finally, a word of thanks to the millions of volunteers who have made a difference in the lives of youth around the world through their work in Scouting and Guiding. Scholars like to dig through archives for written sources, but those adults who have given their time over the years truly made the Scout and Guide histories possible by bringing the ideas of Baden-Powell to life. These volunteers provided a living history for the movement, and we would like to express our gratitude for their dedication.

The Symposium and this book have been a wonderful hike together through Scouting and Guiding history. We are glad you could join us.

See you at the end of the trail.

## INTRODUCTION

# BUILDING AN EMPIRE OF YOUTH: SCOUT AND GUIDE HISTORY IN PERSPECTIVE

TAMMY M. PROCTOR

In 1917 during Scouting's tenth anniversary year, Olave Baden-Powell, soon-to-be Chief Guide of the World and wife of Scouting's Founder, authored a short book for women interested in Guiding and Scouting in Britain. *Training Girls as Guides* was less of a traditional manual for Scouting than a manifesto about the importance of the Scout ideals in a changing society. Writing in the midst of World War I, Baden-Powell felt a particular urgency as she witnessed what she perceived to be a loosening of moral standards and a weakening civic ethic as the war entered its fourth year and revolution raged in Russia. Echoing many of the ideas of her husband and citing the words of other movement officials, Baden-Powell tried to reflect on what made the Scouts both important and capable of continuing long into the future. She wrote to potential leaders, explaining that the movement was not just about efficiency or drill, but it inculcated:

The spirit of true citizenship in its highest sense with all that it embraces of humanity and the brotherhood of man, a still better thing, and it seems to me to be the essence of what we want to instill into young minds . . . [but] to tell young people that 'citizenship is the direction of individual energy for the benefit of the community under the guidance of constituted authority' would be utterly futile . . .

In fact, Baden-Powell continued, such a statement would lead to a group of "vacant little faces". However, "the day the little Guide joins her company and puts on her uniform for the first time this fact wants no

explaining—it becomes a delightful and thrilling reality for her . . .”<sup>1</sup> Rather than having adults explain obedience and authority to them, girls could understand the principles of Scouting through donning uniforms, living in the patrol system and participating in the activities associated with learning the law and promise. This active acquisition of skill, knowledge and moral values was key to the Scout and Guide ethos.

This core program of self-reliance, good citizenship, respect for authority, and doing for others has remained a central focus of Scouting around the world, and it has helped make it the most successful youth movement in world history. In fact, from its start as an experimental camp with about two dozen British boys in 1907, the movement has grown to encompass more than thirty-eight million Scout and Guide members worldwide.<sup>2</sup> Only a handful of nations in the world today are without recognized Scout organizations. Aiming to bridge gaps between youth of different backgrounds, *Scouting for Boys* brought together a whole variety of turn-of-the-century ideas regarding education, civil society, character building, and health. In the movement, Maria Montessori’s ideas regarding learning for children co-existed with physical culture, woodcraft, folklore, and imperial adventure yarns. Self-sufficiency and outdoor life were promoted alongside patriotism and a sense of community service. Part of the appeal of Scouting was its eclectic and broad-ranging interests, which allowed local leaders and boys to find something to interest them among the mix of ideas. Schoolmasters often stressed its educational models, while former soldiers worked on drill and physical training. Variety was central to the Scout vision, so self-sufficiency and outdoor life were taught alongside patriotism and a sense of community service. Robert MacDonald, in his book on Scouting, argues that two distinct and somewhat contradictory ideological messages made up the heart of the Scout program—initiative and discipline. For him, these twin voices gave Scouting its power and its flexibility.<sup>3</sup>

In short, from its 1907 camp at Brownsea Island to its serialized handbook, *Scouting for Boys*, to its slowly developed organizational structure, the Scout movement was born flexible. Its iconoclastic founder, Robert Baden-Powell, tinkered with his ideas and schemes for Scouting

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<sup>1</sup> Olave Baden-Powell, *Training Girls as Guides* (London: C. Arthur Pearson, 1917), 66.

<sup>2</sup> The WOSM (World Organization of the Scout Movement) cites 28 million members in 155 countries and WAGGGS (World Association of Girl Guiding and Girl Scouting) cites 10 million members in 144 countries.

<sup>3</sup> Robert H. MacDonald, *Sons of the Empire: The Frontier and the Boy Scout Movement, 1890-1918* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), 130.

throughout his life, changing direction when it seemed that political currents or financial realities dictated that he do so. When faced with a group of girls interested in Scouting, Baden-Powell helped forge a scheme that made Scouting available for girls, but which preserved his notion of an organization that inculcated manliness. As younger children clamored to join their older siblings and friends, Baden-Powell and his fellow organizers created the Wolf Cubs to cater to younger children and provide appropriate levels of “scouty” activities for them. And the list goes on . . . Rover Scouts for older youth, Sea Scouts, Lone Scouts and Guides for children in remote locations. This flexibility and willingness to change, adjust, and adapt helped Scouting survive the rocky times of its early growth period. It also allowed a British imperial organization to expand abroad. While at heart its program of character building, adventure, and service remained a solid core, the personnel, focus, and activities of Scouting has continually transformed to meet the needs of the youth involved. Each revised edition of Scout literature featured changes that had proven necessary as Scouting grew and developed from a small experiment to a world movement. As Scouting expanded and developed, leaders and the youth themselves negotiated contested issues of identity in order to shape the movement to meet their own goals and aspirations. These contestations made for an incredibly diverse and vital international organization.

The Scout movement celebrated its one-hundredth year in 2007-2008, yet one of the world’s most enduring and widespread voluntary organizations remains understudied by scholars. Perhaps the daunting task of finding sources has made scholars reluctant to choose Scouting as a research topic, and certainly the international nature of the movement further complicates scholarly analysis. For others, the sheer familiarity of Scouting as a mildly beneficent commonplace of middle-class culture has made it seem insufficiently exciting. Nelson Block, in his chapter, traces some of the vagaries of scholarship on Scouting and its leaders, while raising questions about why so few scholars have chosen to examine this important youth organization.

Scouting has played a major role in the formation of civil society and the socialization of generations of youth in countries around the world. Historians of Scouting confront central issues of twentieth-century life—militarism, nationalism, sexuality, religion, age, and class—that have roiled the movement since its inception and continue to generate conflict and creative adaptation within Scouting. As Allen Warren makes clear in his Foreword to this volume, Scouting and Guiding reflect a whole host of concerns facing Britain and the modern world in the past century, and as

mass movements, they provide excellent opportunities for exploring class, age, gender, and race as categories of historical analysis. Elleke Boehmer, in her introduction to a recent edition of *Scouting for Boys*, also points to the ways in which Baden-Powell's organization and ideas helped shape popular imperialism, as a nationalist and "hyper-colonial" text, thereby helping to transform modern world history.<sup>4</sup>

With the centennial of Scouting, there have been a number of scholarly conferences, a World Scout Jamboree (world camp), and popular media stories about Scouting. This book grows out of one such conference, held at Johns Hopkins University in February 2008, but it goes beyond a disparate grouping of conference presentations. Instead, the book taps into the vast materials and experience of the Scout movement by focusing on the question of frontiers. Scouting saw itself as forging new frontiers for youth from its inception, but it also co-opted notions of the idealized frontiers of empire in its literature, games, and rituals. Once the movement had developed in Britain, its leaders faced a series of challenges about the boundaries and frontiers that Scouting was willing to negotiate—militarism, religion, race, class, age, gender. These thorny questions only became more difficult as Scouting moved beyond Britain and its empire to other nations of the world. In fact, the global focus of *Scouting Frontiers* highlights a gap in the historiography of Scouting. While several scholarly studies have focused on national Scout movements, none have attempted to cross national borders to talk about Scouting as an international phenomenon.<sup>5</sup>

Although the impetus for organized international Scout and Guide movements did not emerge until after World War I, international expansion had proceeded quite far in the early years. For instance, by

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<sup>4</sup> Elleke Boehmer, "Introduction," to Robert Baden-Powell, *Scouting for Boys* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), xxxvii.

<sup>5</sup> Examples of such national studies include David Macleod, *Building Character in the American Boy: The Boy Scouts, the YMCA, and Their Forerunners, 1870-1920* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983), Jay Mechling, *On My Honor: Boy Scouts and the Making of American Youth* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), Susan Miller, *Growing Girls: The Natural Origins of Girls' Organizations in America* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2007), Timothy Parsons, *Race, Resistance and the Boy Scout Movement in British Colonial Africa* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2004), Tammy Proctor, *On My Honour: Guides and Scouts in Interwar Britain* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 2002), Michael Rosenthal, *The Character Factory: Baden-Powell and the Origins of the Boy Scout Movement* (London: Collins, 1986), and Allen Warren's series of important articles on Scouting and Guiding in the British context.

1910, the Scouts had more than 130,000 members in Britain and its colonies, and additionally about 150,000 Scouts in foreign countries.<sup>6</sup> Starting in 1919 and 1920 respectively, the Guides and Scouts in Britain began working on the creation of international organizations for coordinating all Scout activities around the world. This expansion of Guiding and Scouting worldwide was a great boost for the movements in Britain, and it won them acclaim from educators, government officials, and social organizations. However, the extension of Scout and Guide program into other countries produced problems both abroad and home, as contradictions appeared in the ideologies and activities of the organizations.<sup>7</sup>

Scouting's global story is undoubtedly a success story that speaks to the power of its flexible structure. The emphasis on small groups, shaped at the local level, allowed a variety of types of Scouting to develop. For example, in his study of social service and civic society in India, Carey Watt has noted the overlap between Scouting's emphases on building character and healthy bodies and the similar concerns of Hindu reformers. Because Scouting allowed interpretation of its many principles and ideas, these Hindu educators and social reformers could take what seemed like quintessentially British concerns about health and purity and shape them to fit their own agendas.<sup>8</sup> In his chapter here, Watt demonstrates the broad application of emerging body culture ideas in Scout literature and training, with Baden-Powell drawing from such disparate cultures as Japan, India, and Sweden.

Baden-Powell's interest in melding cultural ideas led to a simultaneously dynamic and derivative organization, but the cultural variety of the organization also provided space for national Scout leaders to make Scouting fit their own agendas. Baden-Powell co-opted others' ideas in making Scouting work, while the leaders that followed him transformed his ideologies with their own borrowings and adaptations. David Macleod and Eitan Bar-Yosef, for example, demonstrate how particular national agendas and executive leadership could fundamentally reshape Scouting for a specific setting, while claiming a connection with the Founder's vision. In the U. S. case, Macleod traces how a legalistic bent among leaders helped mold a unified national organization, but also how it changed Scouting's future path. Meanwhile Bar-Yosef's Zionist

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<sup>6</sup> Boy Scout Association, *Annual Report* (London: Boy Scouts Association, 1911), 13.

<sup>7</sup> Tammy Proctor, "Gender, Generation and the Politics of Guiding and Scouting in Interwar Britain" (PhD diss., Rutgers 1995), 175.

<sup>8</sup> See Carey Watt, *Serving the Nation: Cultures of Service, Association, and Citizenship* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 152-55.