

The Boy Scouts of America

The Boy Scouts of America was incorporated on February 8, 1910, under the laws of the District of Columbia by W. D. Boyce. On June 21, a group of 34 national representatives of boys' work agencies met, developed organization plans, and opened a temporary national headquarters in a YMCA office in New York. In September, Robert S.S. Baden-Powell, the founder of Scouting, visited America and interpreted the program. President William Howard Taft accepted the office of honorary president; Theodore Roosevelt became honorary vice-president and chief Scout citizen. The National Council office was established at 200 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y., on January 2, 1911. By 1912, Scouts were enrolled in every state. Scouts mobilized for the first of a series of national civic Good Turns, including the promotion of a safe and sane Fourth of July. Other community Good Turns began. Sea Scouting for older Scouts was started. Boys' Life was purchased to become an official BSA magazine. Membership during the year, Scouts and Scouters, 97,495. Total members to date, 126,860.

In 1929, the Third World Jamboree, held at Birkenhead, England, where 1,300 Scouts and Scouters represented the Boy Scouts of America, was attended by 50,000 Scouts representing 73 different lands. The Cub Scout program was formally launched in 1930, and there were 5,102 Cub Scouts at the end of the year. With the declaration of war, the Government requested Boy Scout service for the distribution of defense bonds and stamp posters; collection of aluminum and wastepaper; defense housing surveys; victory gardens; distributions of air-raid posters; cooperation with the American Red Cross; etc. Membership on December 31 was 4,284,469. On December 31, 1993, total BSA membership was 5,355,401. By the end of last year, membership was down to 3,351,969. Although the Scouts have initiated a number of programs over the last two decades aimed at minorities and low-income groups, it's an unfortunate sign of the times, perhaps, that membership declines. The breakdown of the traditional family, traditional values, etc., are all taking their toll on the Scouts.

I never made it through the Cub Scouts, personally, but as a teacher, I usually have one or two students a year who approach me, seeking help in their goals of becoming an Eagle scout. It's quite an achievement, and it's a great organization.

