

Way We Were

February 8, 2018

On my honor, to do my best

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The 108th anniversary of the Boy Scouts of America is on February 8. The organization was created in 1910 with the goal to train boys in responsible citizenship, character development, and self-reliance through outdoor programs, educational activities, and community partnerships.

The organization operates through local chartering organizations, the largest of which is the LDS Church, whose partnership with the BSA dates back to 1913. Local groups are run by volunteers and supported by paid professional Scouters.

Park City's first organized group of Boy Scouts assembled in 1914. Interest manifested in February of that year and under the guidance of Hoyt E. Henriques, a small troop was formed. That same month about fifteen boys passed their first examination on the history and use of the flag. A local doctor, Dr. Browning, also led them in a first aid class during which he showed the Scouts how to care for bruises, cuts, sprains, and broken bones, and even what to do in case of poisoning, choking, or drowning. "Above all," the paper reported after the fact, Dr. Browning emphasized "the prime necessity of keeping ones head in time of accident." The class was largely attended by Parkites from all walks of life, not just the Scouts themselves.

By March, twenty-four boys had enrolled in the local troop. Enough interest came from still more who wanted to join that leaders requested any further enrollment be postponed until they'd had the opportunity to train new leaders. Of the twenty-four, five had already taken and passed their Tenderfoot examinations.

With the United States' entry into World War I in 1917, Boy Scouts across the country stepped up to exercise their unparalleled skills in responsible citizenship and community partnerships. "Every Scout to Save a Soldier," became a rallying cry as Scouts organized fundraisers, book donation drives, and sold war bonds in their local communities.

Parkite Bert Blinkerd, who'd left town for military training in the fall of 1917, wrote in a letter home to his mother that "the Park City boys at Camp Lewis would appreciate more reading matter." The local Boy Scouts teamed up with the library committee to collect magazines and books to send to training camps and overseas.

Park City Boy Scouts were also instrumental in influencing townspeople to purchase Liberty Bonds that would finance the United States' role in the war. Summit County residents and businesses purchased nearly \$300,000 worth of bonds in 1917.

Membership in local Scout troops has waxed and waned over the years. After a decline in the 1930s, the Park City Scouting scene saw a huge boost in the late 1940s and 1950s with

the involvement of local photographer and community leader Kendall Webb. Park City's first Cub Scout pack was organized and met in 1951.

The BSA continues to be one of the most popular organizations for young people in the United States.

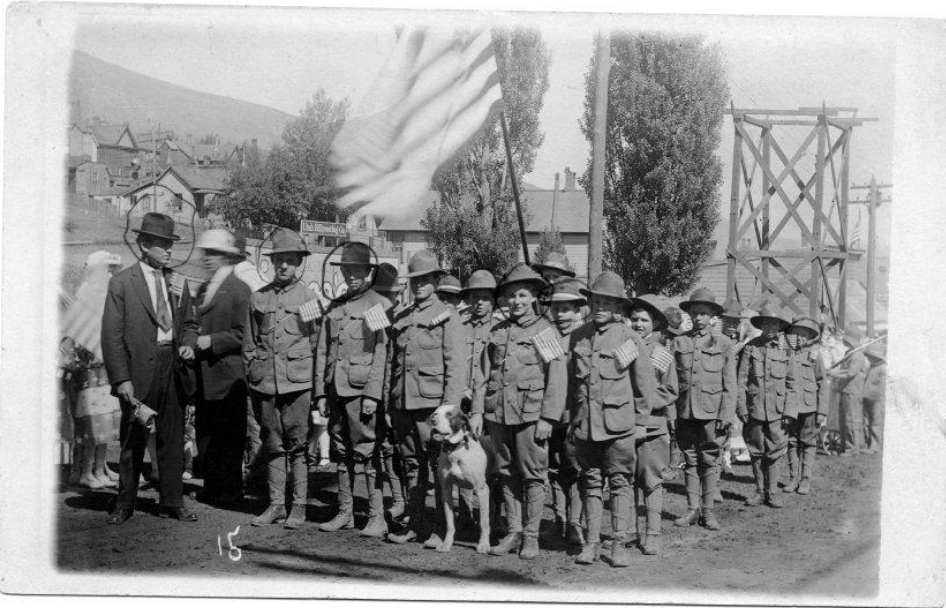


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Credit: Park City Historical Society and Museum, Thomas F. Hansen Collection

Caption: Park City's first official Boy Scout troop formed in 1914. During WWI the boys, pictured here, led the community through parades and rallies, fundraisers and book drives.

Sources:

Park Record, February 7, 21 and March 7, 1914; October 26, November 2, 1917; May 2, 1919; March 22, 1951

Alvin Townley, *Legacy of Honor: The Values and Influence of America's Eagle Scouts*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 2007.