

The History of Troop 1

For the past 118 years scouting has been active in American Society. Believe it or not, Catawba County has been a significant part of Scouting History. Specifically the History of Boy Scout Troop 1 of Corinth Reformed and Evangelical Church. The origin of Troop 1 dates back to the beginning of Boy Scouts of America and is considered as one of the first, or perhaps the first, Boy Scout Troop of America. This Troop has contributed a lot towards all of Catawba County throughout the 1900s to the present day. Troop 1 contains a rich history of the functions and establishing of scouting.

In order to understand the establishment of Troop 1, there must be a relative understanding of the origin of Boy Scouts. Contrary to the popular belief, the origin of boy scouts began in Africa. During the Boer War between England and South Africa, English General Robert Baden-Powell developed the concept of scouting. He taught skills such as knot tying, first aid, wilderness survival, tracking, and orienteering to his troops. He did this through a handbook he made for his men. After successfully defeating the Africans, he went back to England and granted the title, "Hero of Mafeking" for his valiant effort in the war. Sometime after he returned home, he published a new version of his handbook, which expanded on his philosophies. The newly published book was titled *Aids To Scouting* and became very popular.

(Brower 15-19)

Along with his newfound success, his book became increasingly popular in England and in other countries. Eventually, he was invited by William Smith to review an organization he created called the Boys Brigade. Impressed by Baden-Powell's advice on implementing citizenship into the Boys Brigade, Smith challenged Baden-Powell to make a program of his own. As a result, Baden-Powell developed the organization, "Scouting for Boys" where he

outlined the duties of scouting and skills in the wilderness. The idea was well-received in England and by 1909 the first meeting for the Boy Scouts was held. The concept of scouting began to spread fast around the world, eventually making its way to America in 1910. (Brower 19-21)

William D. Boyce, a Chicago newspaper publisher, discovered scouting when he was visiting London. During Boyce's time in London, he became lost in a fog and a boy scout helped Boyce find his hotel without asking for money. In fact, the scout refused to accept it. With a newfound appreciation for scouting, he met with General Baden-Powell. Boyce learned first hand about boy scouts from Baden-Powell and shared his newfound knowledge once he returned to America. Upon hearing about this new scouting program, President Theodore Roosevelt invited Baden-Powell to America and helped Boyce implement the Boy Scouts of America. (Wills 37-38) In doing so, changes in the scout oath were made from "to God and my king" to "to God and my country", and three more points were added to the first nine points in the scout law. Thanks to that single act of kindness from the boy scout, scouting was born in America. (Wills 43)

It was February 8, 1910, when Scouting was officially incorporated in America, and it was not long after that John Wesley Clay would hear of the news from the New York Times and form the first Boy Scout Troop right here in Hickory, North Carolina. On February 9, 1910, Clay organized the first Boy Scout Troop of America. However, the statement that this Troop was the first Boy Scout Troop of America is controversial. The National Council did not have records for the first three years on boy scout troops back then, so there was no hard evidence that Troop 1 of Hickory was the first boy scout troop. (Bridges 3)

Although Clay stated the date that the troop was started the day after scouting was implemented in America, there are many other troops who have stated they are the first boy scout troop. Stanley A. Harris of Watauga County claimed to have organized the first boy scout troop and several others across the nation have claimed this as well. Also, Claude S. Abernathy, a former member of Troop 1 stated, "No one knows just when or where the first troop was organized in the United States of America." Moreover, there is no way to prove which troop is the first, but it is still one of the earliest Troops besides that fact. ("Early" 14)

The first boy scout of Troop 1 was H.K. "Chip" Setzer, who worked for Clay at his company, Clay Printing Co, and the following boys joined after Setzer; John David Hunter, Cecil Bost, Donald E. Shuford, Frank Elliot, Howard Councill, Gordon Councill, William Councill, Edgar Bisanar, Joe Cilley, John Aiken, Sam Hawn, Weston Taylor, Charlie Clay, and Claude S. Abernathy. Shortly after the start of the Troop, Clay sold his business to J. Carl Miller, who kept the name Clay Printing Co. and Clay dedicated the rest of his life to being a scoutmaster and a missionary. (Clinard 1) There were four patrols in the troop, the wolf patrol, the eagle patrol, and the other two were forgotten. The patrols were made to divide the boy scouts and have them compete against each other in a friendly manner. (Rowe)

The troop made trips on ponies to areas along the Catawba River, now present-day Lake Hickory and the troop would set up camp there. On a side note, in 1927 the Oxford Dam was built on the Catawba River ultimately creating Lake Hickory. They would take ponies to ride out there and do scouting activities along the river. Activities such as, knot tying, tent making, etc. which were derived from the original Boy Scout Handbook from 1910.

The handbook was used to teach the boy scouts how to identify animal tracks, types of plants, citizenship, first aid, knots, scoutcraft (wilderness survival), camping skills, and chivalry.

Also, the book contained the requirements for merit badges necessary for rank advancement. Over the years the book went through significant changes until it no longer contained merit badges. Today, instead of using the book, Troop 1 uses printed out worksheets and the handbook is used to teach scouts skills that are relevant to the 21st century. Overall, the book was used frequently for all scouting troops, not just Troop 1.

A problem of being one of the first boy scout troops of America was that there were no boy scout uniforms. Unfortunately, uniforms were not being manufactured nationally and because of that Troop 1 had to improvise. In this dilemma, Scoutmaster Clay bought a load of khaki cloth, gave it to each boy's mother, and each mother made a uniform for her boy. The troop also made their own tents and flags from the cloth Clay provided. The boy scouts wore their uniforms at every troop meeting, on camping trips, and during the scouting food drives.

(Rowe)

For the scouting food drives, the scouts would travel around Hickory on horses delivering food to the poor. Also, they would have their troop meetings in the building that Clay used to own, the Mott-Menzies Building. The scouts were very helpful in the community and would constantly do good deeds no matter the weather, rain, snow, or shine. These acts of kindness involved helping the elderly cross the street or picking up trash. Scouting not only helped the boys become better citizens but made life in Hickory a lot more cheerful. Most of the boys grew up to hold well-respected jobs, but the Councill brothers and John Aiken died early in their lives.

Eventually, J.W. Clay would leave Hickory and Troop One in order to serve as a missionary in South America. After he left South America, he moved to Winston-Salem and started a printing service there. As a result of this, the troop became inactive until it was brought back into existence in a disorganized manner. Arthur Moser and Ernest Abernathy became the

second scoutmasters in Troop One as they tried to reorganize the troop. Moreover, Dr. Eugene De Forest Herald became the third scoutmaster in 1914 after Arthur Moser and Ernest Abernathy. Sadly, the troop once again became inactive because of World War I. However, this did not last long, because the troop would be brought into commission again.

Six years after the troop was left abandoned and forgotten, Claude S. Abernathy Sr., a former boy scout in Troop 1, would arrive in Hickory. During World War I, Abernathy joined the Air Force and was an active member and Sunday school teacher of Corinth Reformed United Church of Christ. At the time there were no scouting troops in Hickory which disappointed Abernathy because scouting was a major part of his adolescence and was one of the reasons he joined the military. This prompted him to reactivate the Troop in 1920 and reinvigorate Boy Scouting in Hickory. (Carpenter 1)

The restarted troop was given number 230, but it was later changed back to Troop 1. He recharted the troop at Corinth and it has been there ever since. Soon after the troop was reactivated, other scout troops started to pop up around the Piedmont district and many young boys began to join Troop 1. Troop 1 remained as the only boy scout troop in Hickory until 1932, where Brooks M. Todd founded Troop 2. Abernathy not only restarted the scouting troop but inadvertently revived scouting in Hickory.

As the Scoutmaster for Troop 1, Abernathy became a well-respected member in the community and made several accomplishments in the world of scouting. He served as scoutmaster for at least 59 years and was a scoutmaster for about 500 boy scouts. Additionally, he helped over 100 of the scouts in Troop 1 achieve the rank of Eagle Scout, the highest and most difficult rank you can achieve in Boy Scouts. In order to become an Eagle Scout you must have achieved all other scout ranks, prepare and accomplish a service project in the community,

demonstrate how you live through the scout law and oath in your everyday life, obtain 21 merit badges (13 of these being eagle required), be in a leadership position in the troop, be interviewed by your Scoutmaster, and go to an Eagle Scout Board of Review. One notable eagle scout in Troop 1 was Neil W. Clark Jr., who had a park named after him in Hickory.

The troop had been very active in the scouting community and went to several scouting events in the Piedmont District. They went to Jamborees, Camporees, and the Piedmont Boy Scout Camp, the fourth scout camp in the United States. The purpose of these events were to bring boy scouts from all over the state and have the boys partake in scouting activities, games, camping, cultural activities, etc. (Barrett) Fifty-nine years after Troop 1 was restarted, Claude S. Abernathy Sr. died in 1979 at the age of 82 while still holding the position of scoutmaster. He obtained several achievements as a scoutmaster including the rank of Eagle Scout, Silver Beaver, Wood Badge, Scouter's Key, and the Order of the Arrow. ("Abernathy Day")

After Abernathy died in 1979, there were several other men who took the position of scoutmaster between 1979 and 1984. These scoutmasters were Joe Davidson, Fred Abernathy, Bo Walker, Schuford Abernathy III, and Richard Boyd. They were scoutmasters for around 6 to 12 months until 1984 when Bob Killian was elected scoutmaster. Bob Killian was a scoutmaster for 30 years. While Killian was scoutmaster the troop would go take trips to Murrays Mill, rappel off Rocky Face Mountain, go to Camporees, camp near the coast, and took many other camping trips. The troop took trips to Shortoff Mountain when it wasn't pouring down rain, the second weekend of every month. Additionally, they would go camping at Wilson's Creek during the months January through February and South Mountain twice a year. (Killian)

Killian retired from the position in 2014 and was chronologically succeeded by Mike Cline, Harold Dufour, and Brad Lasecki. In 2016 Troop 351 merged with Troop 1 which had a

big impact on troop activities. The troop began to plan backpacking trips every month and began to focus on the physicality of scouting. However, the troop still does work from the scout handbook and the scout leaders are dedicated to helping scouts achieve their merit badges and ranks. The significance of this paper is to not just report on the history of Troop 1 but to understand its long lineage in this county. Scouting has made the community of Hickory a more welcoming and friendly place throughout the years. It's important that the community realizes just how lucky they are to have such helpful and reliable scouts in Hickory.

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