

History of Scouting

Scouting history will never be complete without first taking a quick little peak into the life and adventures of *Robert Stephenson Baden-Powell*, the founder of the Scouting Movement. He was born in London England to Baden Powell and Henrietta Smyth on February 22, 1857. His father is a reverend and a professor of geometry at Oxford University, while his mother was a life-long student of music and of the arts.



FUN FACTS

*Robert's last name was really **Powell**. When his father passed away, his mother renamed them **Baden-Powell** in honor of his father.*

At the age of 13, he studied at a local school named *Charterhouse*, through a foundation scholarship. Although a scholar, Robert admittedly revealed that he never did very well in school and it is no more evident when his application to Oxford University – where his father was a geometry professor – was rejected.



At the age of 19 and with not so much of an educational future, he took the army entrance examination. He passed with honors and was sent to India to join his regiment the *13th Hussars*. His regiment was transferred back and forth, from India to Africa and back to India. Before long, he was promoted to the military rank of colonel commanding a new regiment.

Life in India was not easy for a British soldier. For one, they were thousands of miles away from home and the environment was so different to what they are accustomed to in England. Many of the soldiers, despite their academic training, lacked the resourcefulness and were too dependent to their officers.

Robert devised a plan and formed his soldiers into even smaller units he called as *patrols*. He encouraged the soldiers not to be too reliant on their officers and trained them as army scouts under the leadership of non-commissioned officers. Such a practice was considered unorthodox during those times. However, Robert's efforts were recognized by the British Army that his training methods was instituted as part of the British Army training and ended up publishing a manual "*Aids to Scouting*".

The Boer War (Siege of Mafeking)

In 1899, Robert was reassigned back to Africa to oversee a British controlled town called *Mafeking*, which was the center of trade in those parts of Africa. On October 11, 1899, war broke out between the British and the Dutch farmer colonialists known as the *Boers*. Immediately, the Boers laid siege to Mafeking blocking all routes in and out of town and much awaited supplies and reinforcements.



Through his ingenuity, Robert defended Mafeking for 217 days with just a handful of trained soldiers and rapidly diminishing supplies until British reinforcements were able to break through the Boer lines. His unbelievable defense of Mafeking made his name known throughout the British Empire and earned him the military rank of Major General.

Nearing the end of the Boer War, he spearheaded the organization of the South African Constabulary and also become Inspector General of the British Cavalry.

The Early Days of the Movement

Robert returned to England in 1903 where he was surprised to learn that British schools were using his military book to teach young boys lessons on deduction and observation. It was very surprising because the book was intended to train soldiers and not young boys. With the recommendation of his friend, Sir William Smith, Robert began revising his military book into a book that is suitable for boys.



Before working on his revised version of the book, Robert invited a group of boys to join a camp in *Brownsea Island*, off the coast of England from July 31 to August 9, 1907. This camp will be the major deciding point of whether or not his theories on Scouting can be applied to young boys. As he did with the British army soldiers, he divided the boys into patrols – Wolves, Bulls, Curlews, and Ravens – and had various activities that taught the boys leadership, team-play, resourcefulness, and more.

With the success of the camp, Robert was able to publish his book “*Scouting for Boys*”. The literature started to appear on newsstands in January 1908 in pamphlet form and was released in book form on May 1, 1908.

It has to be understood however that it was not Robert’s intention to create an organization. His intention was for existing youth organization and schools to use his book as a guide in building their own programs. That was why he remained active with the British Army during these times and even received the rank of Lieutenant General in 1908.

Many young boys all over England have placed his Scouting ideas into practice. Others have formed their own patrols and in most cases a number of patrols have banded together to form troops under the leadership of adults. Scouting during

FUN FACTS

*Sir William Alexander Smith is the founder of a Christian youth organization called the **Boys' Brigade**.*



FUN FACTS

Robert's decision to retire from the military and focus of Scouting was partially because of the influence of the King.

this time as dispersed and everyone was doing their own thing. An organization was seriously needed and it was becoming evident to Robert that he retired from his military career and focused more on Scouting.

This need for organization was realized in 1909 when Robert Baden-Powell invited all those interested in Scouting to join him in Crystal Palace to join him for the first ever Boy Scout rally. To their surprise however 11,000 boys showed up in Crystal Palace. Thus the Boy Scout movement officially started.

Robert Baden-Powell was named *World Chief Scout* during the First World Jamboree in 1920.

The Girl Guide Movement

The Boy Scout movement was swiftly growing unchecked and Robert Baden-Powell realized the need for organization by inviting interested young boys to Crystal Palace. At the time of that Boy Scout rally the skies were getting dark and rain started pouring. They had all the boys to go into the palace and counted all 11,000 of them.

Among these boys they found girls wearing similar uniforms as the boys. Robert wondered and asked them “Who are you?” they replied “We are the Girl Scouts!” and immediately Robert replied “The devil your are! No – Girl Scouts!”.



Eventually Robert gave in and wrote a book suitable for girls and called them Guides to give them distinction from the Scouts. He first thought of having the girls join the boy movement, but later he was persuaded by his mother not to.

Robert requested the assistance of his sister Agnes to organize the movement. Agnes served as the first president of the Girl Guiding movement and moved from the presidency to vice-president to give way to Princess Mary, an enthusiastic supporter of the movement.

FUN FACTS

Robert and Olave Baden-Powell have the same birthday, February 22.

Lady Olave Soames, wife of Robert Baden-Powell, was likewise active with the movement. She served as County Commissioner and later was given the title of World Chief Guide in 1918.

Boy Scouts of America

William D. Boyce, a Chicago publisher and businessman, got lost in a London fog on his way back to his hotel. After groping in the dark for quite sometime, he stopped under a street lamp to reckon where he is.



A voice of a young boy greeted him and offered to be of assistance. The American gratefully accepted the young boy's offer and was able to guide him back to his hotel. William then reached into his pocket and offered the boy some money for assisting him. Surprisingly the boy refused to accept it saying that he is a Scout and would not accept anything in return for his good turn. William was impressed with the boy's action.



He visited the British Scouting office the very next day and met with Robert Baden-Powell himself. He went home to America with a suitcase filled with Scouting literatures, uniform, and badges. On February 8, 1910, William and a group of outstanding Americans founded the Boy Scouts of America.

Philippine Scouting

Scouting in the Philippines goes hand-in-hand with the American occupation of the islands. Evidence of Scouting was found by the Boy Scouts of America and was part of their first annual council meeting membership report in 1911. Aside from this report, Robert Baden-Powell himself mentioned the existence of Scouting in the island in the British Scouting magazine during his 1912 visit to the islands.

Most of these early Scout troops were never documented. The earliest documented Scout troop in Philippine history was the *Lorillard Spencer Troop*. The troop was organized by a United States Navy 2nd Lieutenant by the name of *Sherman Kaiser* on November 15, 1914, in Zamboanga and was composed of young Muslim boys. It was named after the son of its benefactor *Caroline Spencer*, who was an American charity worker who came to the Philippines, particularly to Mindanao, and was given Sherman Kiser as an escort by the United States Navy during her visit to the island.

Other troops organized were the *Red Rose* Girl Scout troop by *Mrs. Gertrude Angen*, an American missionary. The troop was organized in 1918. The troop was registered with the Girl Scouts of the United States of America.

More and more troops were being organized by American servicemen and missionaries all over the island. These troops were likewise registered with the National Scout Associations in the United States. However, the distance between the Philippine islands and the mainland USA made it hard of troops in the Philippines to receive support and real organization.

This disorganized nature of the troops is what prompted the Rotary Club of Manila to write the Boy Scouts of America in New York to formalize the movement in the island. On October 5, 1923, the *Philippine Council* of the Boy Scouts of America was organized.

Boy Scouts of the Philippines

With the granting of Philippine independence almost realized, it was already evident that the next step up for the Philippine Council was the eventual turn-over of the organization to the Filipinos. Filipino, as well as American members of the Philippine Council worked closely together to further this vision. On October 31, 1936, a bill sponsored by Iloilo Assemblyman Thomas Confesor was passed into law as Commonwealth Act 111 creating the Boy Scouts of the Philippines.

The Boy Scouts of the Philippines was incorporated with seven charter members: Joseph Emile H. Stevenot, Arsenio N. Luz, Carlos P. Romulo, Vicente Lim, Manuel Camus, Jorge Vargas, and Gabriel Daza.

Exequiel Villacorta became the first Chief Scout Executive (the highest Scout professional position now called Secretary General).

Joseph Stevenot, Executive Vice President and General Manager of the Philippine Long Distance Company (PLDT), spent a great deal of his own time and lobbied for the Boy Scouts of the Philippines bill in the National Assembly and with President Manuel L. Quezon.



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