

The History of Sea Scouting in the United States

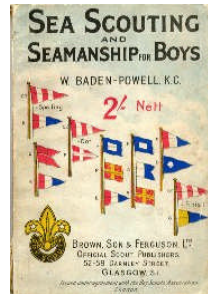


Sea Scouting had its beginning at a camp fire in England when Lord Baden-Powell voiced the hope that older Scouts would be interested in learning about boat management and seamanship. He stressed the need for young men to prepare themselves for service on their country's ships. (See also [the Early History of Sea Scouting](#).)

Following the campfire, there was activity in England that resulted in Lord Baden-Powell's older brother, Warrington, writing a book called *Sea Scouting and Seamanship for Boys*. It was enthusiastically received by the young men of Britain and soon found its way to the United States.



Sea Scouting in America was founded in 1912. That year, Arthur A. Carey of Waltham, Massachusetts, had Sea Scouts using the schooner *Pioneer* and was appointed Chairman of the National Council Committee on Sea Scouting. That summer, Charles T. Longstreth organized a Sea Scout patrol on his yacht in Philadelphia. Both of these men prepared pamphlets on Sea Scouting and Carey's *Cruising for Sea Scouts* was the first literature related to Sea Scouting.



A booklet that preceded the first Sea Scout manual published in 1915 gave some direction to Sea Scouting. It was entitled *Nautical Scouting* and was compiled by Charles Longstreth.

Since its beginning, the Boy Scouts of America had been aware of the need for an older-boy program. Mr. Carey made the first real effort to satisfy that need when he helped promote Sea Scouting with his pamphlet.



In a report to the National Executive Board, Mr. Carey recommended that Sea Scouting be recognized as a special department of the Boy Scouts of America. He suggested that the pamphlet *Cruising for Sea Scouts* be accepted as a supplement to the Handbook for Boys until a more complete Sea Scout manual could be written.



A Coast Pilot - Making a Harbor Map

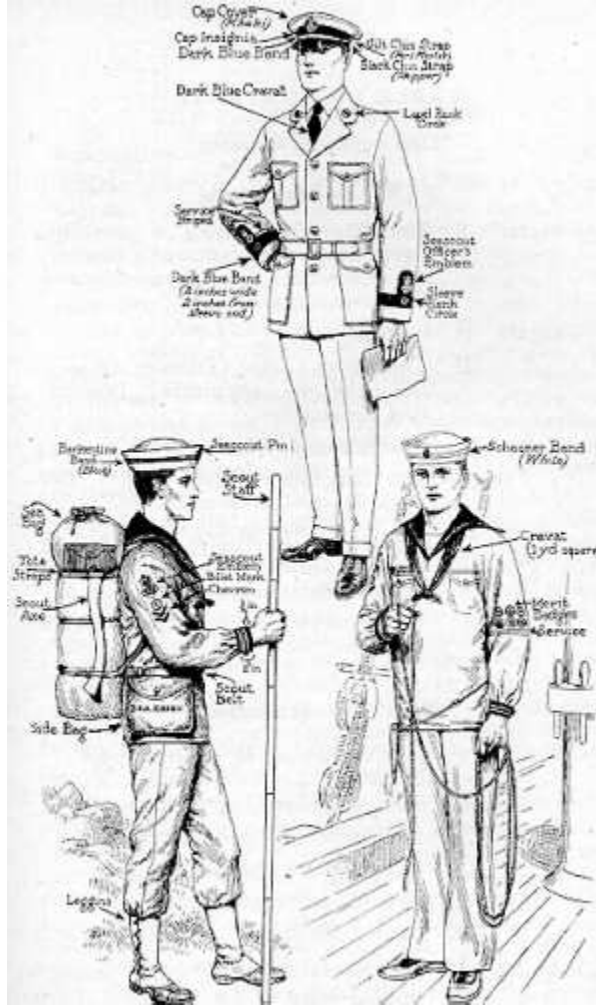
difficult period. And little or no national managed to grow. In addition, G. V. L. Secretary of the Navy, 1913, encouraged the development of Sea and extended the of the Navy Department. This was beginning of a fruitful cooperation for Sea with the nation's armed Sea Scouting received a in October 1917, when Austin Wilder (a sailor, global traveler, devoted Boy Scout

was secured as Director of the Department of Sea Scouting of the Boy Scouts of America. For several years, as a volunteer, Mr. Wilder worked full time for Sea Scouting with the title of Chief Sea Scout.

He organized the scattered Sea Scout units into a national organization that generated the first wide-spread interest in Sea Scouting. Gathering all of the experience and scattered bits of literature used in the program, Mr. Wilder supervised the preparation of the first Sea Scout Manual in 1919. In those days, Sea Scouting followed a pattern of action that was very similar to that of a Boy Scout troop; for example: boys wore khaki uniforms. In order to register, they had to subscribe to the Scout Oath and law and pass the Tenderfoot requirements. Membership required that a boy be 15 years of age and weigh at least 112 pounds.

For many years the Sea Scout older boys who had graduated from Scout units began to be called ships. of skippers, mates, boatswains, began to be used.

On July 15, 1920, the well- of the *Sea Scout Manual* was printed quantities. Then came a period of 2 Scouting struggled to be recognized and understood. Although membership fell off, the program proved healthy enough to withstand this period of



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Meyer, in February

Scouting cooperation

the period of Scouting services. real boost James veteran artist, and volunteer)



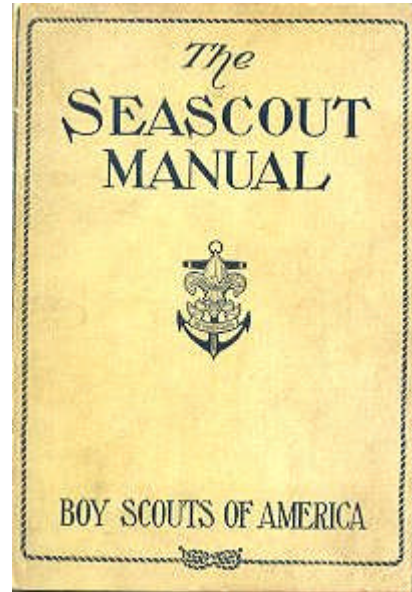
program was aimed at Boy Scout troops. Sea The age-old organization coxswains and crews

illustrated fourth edition and sold in large or 3 years in which Sea Scouting struggled to be recognized and understood. Although membership fell off, the program proved healthy enough to withstand this period of

adjustment. Finally it began to grow as more councils gave it enthusiastic support.

Over the years, one of the persons most responsible for the development of Sea Scouting was Commander Thomas J. Keane. Between 1922 and 1925, he completely revised the Sea Scout program. He wrote the new requirements for advancement and changed the Boy Scout nature of Sea Scout uniforms into the seagoing uniform that Sea Scouts still wear today. As a result of his fine leadership, the *Sea Scout Manual* was almost completely revised. Under his direction, it was published in 1924.

Commander Keane served as acting director of the Sea Scout department in the national office from 1923 until January 15, 1927. His annual report of 1925 indicates that there were 85 registered Sea Scout ships. A similar report in 1926 revealed an increase of 38 ships for a total of 123 ships



In 1927, Commander Keane was appointed the national director of Sea Scouting, its first full-time professional director. One of T.J. Keane's earliest projects was organizing the first Antarctic expedition to include a Scout. The Scout, Eagle Scout and Able Sea Scout Paul Siple of Erie Pennsylvania, ably participated in Admiral Robert Byrd's expedition of 1928-29. In the years that followed, Siple built a career on Antarctic exploration and extreme cold weather climatology. (See also [Eagle Scout Siple with Admiral Byrd in the Antarctic.](#))

In the years that followed, there was a marked increase in the number of units and boys registered in Sea Scouting. By 1930 the membership had reached 8,043 young men. In the 1930's, with the cooperation of other departments in the national office of the Boy Scouts of America, he developed training courses for leaders, new registration procedures, and more acceptable Sea Scout equipment and uniforms. He also developed a National Sea Scout flagship competition in 1928 which has been in use in varying forms up to today. [Click here](#) to view a historical listing of National and Regional flagships.

A major revision of the manual was made in 1939 by the national committee. The new version was written by Carl D. Lane, an outstanding skipper and author of many books and articles about small ships and the sea.

With a membership of more than 27,000, Sea Scouting served its country well in World War II. Commander Keane was recalled to active service in the Navy and resigned his position as national director of Sea Scouting.



Thousands upon thousands of former and active Sea Scouts joined the Navy and made a tremendous impression on Admiral Chester Nimitz who sincerely believed that Sea Scouts were better trained and better equipped to help the Navy win out over the enemy and the elements.



Throughout the rest of the 1940's, Sea Scouting continued to serve the boys of America who were interested in the lore of the sea. Sea Scouts all over the nation participated in flood relief and community service. They were in evidence at national jamborees. Sea Scout ships across the country held competitive and events known as rendezvous and regattas.

Based on the written report of ship activities-the ship log - a national committee selected the ship with the most outstanding record to be the national flagship. Quite surprisingly, two years this honor was achieved by a Sea

Scout ship located in the rather arid state of Kansas. Its Skipper was Dr. William C. Menninger, one of the early greats in Sea Scouting.

In May 1949, the National Executive Board made sweeping changes in the older-boy program, as a result of a study made by the Research Service of the Boy Scouts of America. This revision of Senior Scouting recognized as Explorers all young men who were 14 years of age or older and registered with the Boy Scouts of America.

So, on September 1, 1949, the Sea Scouts officially became *Sea Explorers*. This was primarily a change in terminology since the old Sea Scout program continued much the same as it had in the past.



In 1954, the National Executive Board of the Boy Scouts of America authorized the Research Institute for Social Service of the University of Michigan to make a national study of adolescent boys. This survey revealed the needs, desires, and concerns of 14- to 16- year old boys across the nation. As a result, a completely new Explorer program was developed and put into effect on January 1, 1959. However, this did not bring about a change in Sea Exploring. It was decided that changes should be postponed until there had been sufficient time to observe Sea Exploring in operation alongside the new Explorer program. After 5 years, in which there was ample time to make such observations, the decision was made to revise the program.



The national committee on Exploring worked closely with the Exploring Division in making recommendations for this revision. Groups of experienced volunteers also assisted- especially in the revision of advancement requirements. The object was to make available to Sea Exploring some of the elements of the new Explorer program that had been found effective, while preserving

the integrity of Sea Scouting with its traditions.

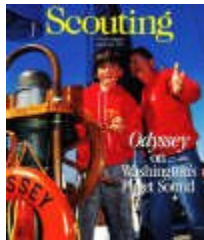
After extensive field testing, the Exploring Division put the revised Sea Exploring program into effect. This was done in May 1966 with a new edition titled *Sea Exploring Manual*, written by Arthur N. Lindgren.

In 1968, a new Exploring Division, BSA was organized and established under the direction of John M. Claerhout, who placed a new emphasis on Sea Exploring by naming William J. Lidderdale as the first time director of Sea Scouting since 1935.

After a new National Sea Exploring Committee was formed with Morgan F. Fitch, Jr., as Chair, to give new national volunteer emphasis to the promotion and support of Sea Exploring. In response to field reaction, the new *Handbook for Skippers* was written by Arthur Lindgren and published in 1971 for Skippers, mates, ship committee members, and other related adult leaders. The following year,

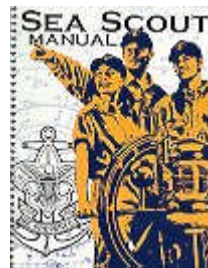


Sea Exploring (along with all other phases of Exploring) officially became coed. In 1974, the U.S. Navy assigned a liaison officer to work in the BSA national office. A series of officers served in this capacity through 1983. Their work further enriched and expanded Sea Exploring.



Sea Scouts across America were saddened by the death of Commander Thomas J. Keane in 1984. His pioneering efforts on behalf of Sea Scouting extended over sixty years. The rich tradition and long tenure of many Sea Scout Ships are a tribute to his career.

Technological improvements in seamanship, extensive changes in aids to navigation, and program improvements created the need for a new *Sea Exploring Manual* in the early 1980's. Long-time Sea Exploring leader, Bill Minto of Houston, Texas, did most of the text revision with the help of Don Callenius and Bob Maxfield, former national directors of Exploring, and Mike Strain of San Francisco. A number of BSA Skippers, U.S.



Coast Guard personnel, and maritime experts contributed to this revision.



In 1998, the Boy Scouts of America reorganized the Exploring program into the Learning for Life Exploring program and the new Venturing Division. Sea Exploring was placed in the Venturing Division and was renamed *Sea Scouts*.

A new edition of the *Sea Scout Manual*, edited by Bruce Johnson and Jimmie Homburg, was published in 2000, which extensively revised the content and organization of the handbook, as well as updating advancement and uniforming standards.

In 2002, the National Sea Scouting Committee re-initiated the

national Sea Scout sailing championships. The new competition, called the [*William I. Koch International Sea Scout Cup*](#), is named for William Koch, famous yachtsman and National Committee member, whose generous support has made the competition possible. The Koch Cup competition includes Sea Scout competitors from all over the United States, as well as international Sea Scout participants. The initial running of the Koch Cup is scheduled to run in August of 2002 at the Columbia Yacht Club in Chicago, Illinois.

[A Chronology of Sea Scouting in the United States](#)

[Historic Sea Scout photos](#)

[A history of Sea Scout flags](#)

[Covers of Sea Scout publications](#)

[Historic Sea Scout insignia](#)

[Aquatic merit badges](#)

[Sea Scout Recipients of the Silver Buffalo Award](#)