



History and Evolution of Commissioner Insignia

A research thesis submitted to the
College of Commissioner Science
Longhorn Council
Boy Scouts of America
in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the
Doctor of Commissioner Science Degree

by

Edward M. Brown
2009

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface and Thesis Approval	3
1. The beginning of Commissioner Service in America	4
2. Expansion of the Commissioner Titles and Roles in 1915..	5
3. Commissioner Insignia of the 1920s through 1969	8
4. ‘Named’ Commissioner Insignia starting in the 1970s	13
5. Program Specific Commissioner Insignia	17
6. International, National, Region, and Area Commissioners. .	24
7. Commissioner Recognitions and Awards	30
8. Epilogue	31
References, Acknowledgements, and Bibliography	33

PREFACE

I have served as a volunteer Scouter for over 35 years and much of that time within the role of commissioner service – Unit Commissioner, Roundtable Commissioner, District Commissioner, and Assistant Council Commissioner. Concurrent with my service to Scouting, I have been an avid collector of Scouting memorabilia with a particular interest in commissioner insignia. Over the years, I've acquired some information on the history of commissioner service and some documentation on various areas of commissioner insignia, but have not found a single document which covers both the historical aspects of such insignia while describing and identifying all the commissioner insignia in all program areas – Cub Scouting, Boy Scouting, Exploring, Venturing, and the various roundtables. This project does that and provides a pictorial identification guide to all the insignia as well as other uniform badges that recognize commissioners for tenure or service.

Like many memorabilia collectors, I have strived to have “one of everything” hoping someday this collection will end up in a museum. (Well, that’s what we tell our family members who would rather spend the money on other things.) The badges displayed here are from my personal collection except for the following, for which credit is acknowledged and thanks is given to the various owners:

Deputy Scout Commissioner (powder blue on page 4)
Troop/ Council Committee (page 5)
Scout Commissioner (brown gold eagle on page 6, page 8.)
Scout Executive (page 7) AND Assistant Scout Executive (page 8)
Commissioner Staff (page 16)
Field Commissioner AND Assistant Field Commissioner for Cub Scouts (page 17)
Cub Roundtable Commissioner (blue background on page 18)
Scout Roundtable Commissioner (blue background on page 20)
International Commissioner (odd-shaped, page 24)
National Commissioner (both odd-shaped and first-round issue, page 26)
Special National Field Scout Commissioner (silver eagle, page 27)

While this thesis is intended to show commissioner insignia, I have included selected other badges to compare similarities and differences in both design and color combinations to assist in seeing trends as new series of insignia were issued.

This manuscript has been reviewed and accepted as meeting the requirement for completion of the doctoral degree thesis or project in the Longhorn Council College of Commissioner Science by Jim Hodgson, thesis advisor and assistant dean for the doctoral program.

CHAPTER 1

The Beginning of Commissioner Service in America

To say that the commissioner was an integral part of American Scouting in the early days is an understatement. In fact, the organizers of the first troops were all volunteers and were called commissioners, a term borrowed from Baden-Powell's organizational structure. In those early days, individuals who started units sometimes had to acquire their resources from England and other places just to make it happen.

Baden-Powell was still serving as a general in the British military in 1907 when he started on Brownsea Island what would become Scouting. His first "volunteer" was retired Lieutenant General Sir Edmond Roche Elles, whom he called the "Chief Commissioner." Elles then directed the nomination of other individuals to serve as "County Commissioners" during the early years of growth.

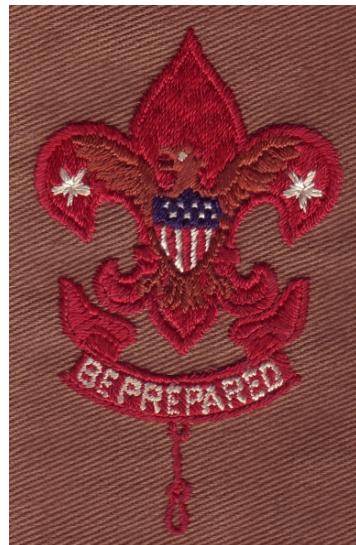
It would logically follow, then, that when William D. Boyce and others formed the Boy Scouts of America in 1910, the key figures in the local communities would be called Commissioners.

The first commissioner insignia is believed to have been issued in 1911. It consisted of a First Class emblem with a dark blue background behind a brown eagle and was titled "Scout Commissioner." A badge for the Deputy Scout Commissioner quickly followed and was similar in design but with a powder-blue (almost silver) background.

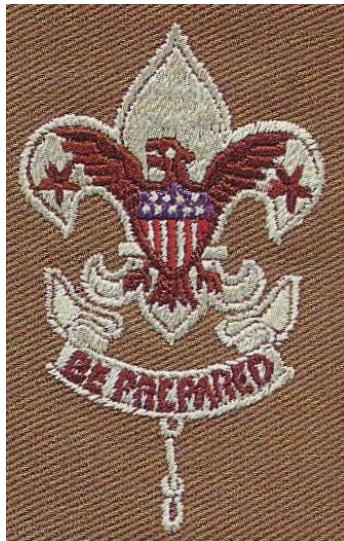


Deputy Scout Commissioner (left) and Scout Commissioner (right). These were the first Commissioner badges and were part of the original seven BSA insignia badges.

The first series of Scouting insignia was designed to differentiate positions by the color fill within the First Class emblem. In addition to the two commissioner badges, four additional badges were produced – Assistant Scoutmaster, Scoutmaster and Troop or Council Committee, and National Committee. It is very easy to confuse the Scout Commissioner (dark blue) with the National Committee badge (purple) as the colors were similar and fading or washing sometimes caused a lightening of the background color.



First issue Assistant Scoutmaster (left, red fill) and Scoutmaster (right, green fill).



Troop or Council Committee (left, white fill) and National Committee (right, purple fill). Note the similarity of color between the Scout Commissioner on the previous page and National Committee here. While several of these are not commissioner-related insignia, all of the first issue badges are shown to show the color differentiation used to identify the positions within this series.

CHAPTER 2

Expansion of the Commissioner Titles and Roles in 1915

Within a couple of years, it became obvious that more help was needed and a new position was created – Assistant Deputy Scout Commissioner. Instead of creating a new badge for the lower position, a new badge was introduced in 1914 for the council's Scout commissioner at the top. It consisted of the original Scout Commissioner badge, now encircled by a gold wreath. There were available in two styles – one with a brown eagle and one with a gold eagle. Collectors are not in agreement as to which came first, though the prevailing thought is that gold was first followed a few years later by the brown. Starting in 1916, the Deputy Scout Commissioner wore the dark-blue badge previously worn by the Scout Commissioner and the new Assistant Deputy Scout Commissioner now wore the powder-blue badge previously worn by the Deputy Scout Commissioner.



Scout Commissioner insignia, circa 1915, now encircled with a golden wreath. There were two versions – brown eagle and gold eagle.

These early commissioners had their hands full. The newly formed troops didn't communicate well and many inconsistencies resulted. The new National Office struggled to manage the variations in the program. One area of obvious inconsistency was uniforming. Some units used military uniforms while others either created their own or adopted designs and images of English Scout Uniforms. Others simply put pieces of "scout-like" items together. Daniel Carter Beard was selected as the first National Commissioner. Besides creating standards for program and field operations, it was Beard's duty to create a uniform standard. With the advent of the Deputy Scout Commissioner's new insignia, new duties included issuing top level awards such as Star, Life and Eagle ranks and Lifesaving awards. Those forerunners of today's District Commissioners, began to develop and take on more responsibility. They were assisted by Assistant Deputy Scout Commissioners, a position similar to today's Assistant District Commissioner.

By 1916, council memberships were burgeoning and the work was time consuming. It was becoming obvious that a full-time or paid manager was needed. Many councils chose to hire a Scout Commissioner to oversee the day to day operations. These men were hired as “Scout Executives.” Councils with only a Scout Commissioner were called 2nd class councils whereas those who hired a Scout Executive were called 1st class councils. By 1931 all but one council had been converted to 1st class.

This shift (volunteer to professional) eventually led to the separation of the roles of the executive and the commissioner. This created a partnership between volunteers and professionals that exists today. It is typified by the close working relationship between the top volunteer (Council President, District Chairman, etc) and his/her executive and commissioner in what we call “the Key Three.”



Type I Scout Executive.

The first Scout Executive insignia was similar to the second Scout Commissioner insignia, except with white instead of blue background behind the First Class emblem.

The introduction of Scout Executive badge and the subsequent design of both commissioner and executive badges were unique in that they all had the wreath surrounding the First Class emblem. Most other insignia, including top-level positions at the national, regional, area, council and district, do not have the wreath. (There are some short-lived exceptions explained later.) This distinction is based on the assumption that the commissioners (and subsequent employees called council and district executives) were bestowed a “commission” not unlike the commission given to officers in military service. The word “commission” goes back to 1344, and is derived from the Latin word meaning “delegation of business.” The British monarch delegated authority to a deserving few. These individuals had to qualify as a “gentleman.” We know that was the caliber of individual Baden-Powell had in mind as he filled his commissioner staff.

Today, our society is less connected to military tradition and the commissioned wreath insignia is thought of more as “the wreath of service” that surrounds all commissioner and professional position badges. This wreath is a symbol for the service rendered to units. It also symbolizes the continued partnership between volunteers and professions. The Wreath of Service represents the Commissioner and Executive commitment to program and unit service.

CHAPTER 3

Commissioner Insignia of the 1920s through 1969

As scouting continued to grow in the 1920s, the lines of distinction between the commissioner and the professional became clearer as most councils now had both a Scout Commissioner and a Scout Executive. Most councils were now managed by geographically divided areas we now call districts, though that term came many years later.

Around 1920, there was a significant change in the look of commissioner and professional insignia. A pattern developed that continued for the next 50 years that identified badges both by fill color and combinations of silver or gold outline, eagle, and wreaths. All commissioner insignia included a blue fill inside the First Class emblem while professional badges were embroidered with red fill. While this thesis centers on commissioner insignia, one can find parallels in the professional insignia within the professional positions identified as Scout Executive, Assistant Scout Executive, Field (or District) Executive, and Assistant Field (or District) Executive (later called District Executive Staff).

From 1920 to 1937, the first class emblem on these badges had what is referred to as a “squatty crown.” From 1920 to 1931, the “second level” commissioner continued to be called the “Deputy Scout Commissioner.” This title was changed to District Commissioner in 1931 as increased emphasis was placed on the field organization.



Assistant Deputy Scout Commissioner (left), Deputy Scout Commissioner (center), and Scout Commissioner (right) circa 1920 to 1937. These were issued in both a standard size of approx. 68mm and oversized of approx. 81mm on various shades of khaki tan/green and on bullion, as well as serge wool for wear on the winter scout uniform.

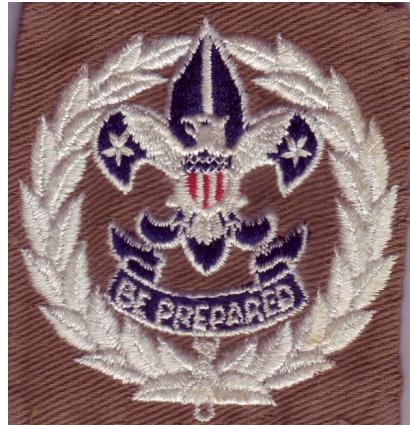


The 1920 series commissioner and professional insignia, with all surrounded with a wreath, were first produced in a larger, 81 mm size. Most considered this too large for the sleeve. These were replaced with the developing standard 68mm size. Shown left is a comparison of the sizes of District (Field) Executive position.

In the 1930s, the structure of commissioner service began to evolve. There was a growing need for unit serving commissioners as the workload on district commissioners and their assistants (or deputies) became too much for one or two to handle. The position of Neighborhood Commissioner was created in 1933 to fill the gap. These commissioners were assigned up to four units (a role nearly identical to today's Unit Commissioner). The logical position badge for this lower tier of commissioner was the same design with all gold (eagle, wreath, and outline). This issue was late within this "squatty crown" series and was quickly transitioned to the insignia design within a few years.



Starting in 1937, the insignia design was changed to include a high-crown atop the First Class emblem with vertical line from the top to the head of the eagle, on tan cloth.. This design continued until 1945 though there were minor variations within this period. Early badges were embroidered with silk thread. Cotton thread was introduced in the late 1930s.



Neighborhood Commissioner (top left), Assistant Deputy Scout Commissioner / Assistant District Commissioner (top right) Deputy Scout Commissioner / District Commissioner (bottom left) and Scout Commissioner (bottom right), circa 1937-1945. This was the first series with a high crown.

Between 1945 and 1955 all four commissioner badges continued with the same design but on a green khaki background to match the very common green khaki uniforms of that era. While I've drawn parallels between the design of the commissioner and professional position badges, it's worth noting that the Assistant Field Executive badge (red fill with gold eagle, wreath, and outline) was never produced in the high crown design on either the tan or green khaki but was re-issued starting with the follow-on cut-edge design. (This series is not displayed as it is identical the previous series except for the change in cloth color. Scans of the tan-khaki and green-khaki badges look very similar.)

Starting in 1953, the National Council began replacing the “rectangle” insignia with a new, cut-edge design. The change was the result of new technology that allowed manufacturing with a cut edge and perhaps also because of a growing trend to trim the badges to a round design before sewing them on the uniform. (This tendency to trim to round probably started as square merit badges were so trimmed prior to issuance of folded-under badges.) By the 1950s many of the position badges (and even youth rank badges such as star and life) were so trimmed and a transition to round design badge was logical. On the executive (professional) side, the middle-two tiers of insignia were eliminated in 1953 leaving only those with all silver or all gold on a red background.



Neighborhood Commissioner (top left), Assistant District Commissioner (top right), District (Field) Commissioner (bottom left) and Scout (Council) Commissioner (bottom right), and circa 1953-1960.

This was the first issue with a cut-edge design. While the stitching clearly defines the edge of the badge, the term cut-edge is used to differentiate them from the next (rolled-edge) design where the stitching actually wraps from the front to the back producing a merrowed border.

A few position badges remained rectangular and some transitioned to an oval design, but all of the commissioner badges and professional badges (as well as most other insignia) made the transition to a round badge during this period. Today, all insignia is round.

During the period 1967 to 1969, an improvement was made in the cut-edge design in which the badge was manufactured with a distinctive rounded border by wrapping the thread from the front edge to the back edge. This design gave each badge a raised border and was called the “rolled edge” or “merrowed border.”



Neighborhood Commissioner (left), Assistant District Commissioner (center) and District Commissioner, circa 1967-1969 with a rolled-edge border.

In 1969 (perhaps earlier) Assistant Council Commissioners got their own badge. It had a unique design with the wreath and outline in silver and the eagle in gold. This badge was available for only one or two years and is the only patch issued in this design (gold eagle with silver wreath and outline). An early reference guide lists a corresponding red-fill equivalent for Assistant Scout Executives but collectors are now in agreement that badge was never produced.



Assistant Council Commissioner (left) and Council Commissioner (right). There are references to the ACC as early as 1967 but it's believed to have been available for a much shorter period of time than the other badges in this series.

While issuance of executive or professional patches tended to parallel the designs of the commissioner series, BSA decided to drop two of the professional badges during this period leaving only two designs – all gold and all silver. Now, District Executives wore

the all-gold design, previously used to identify Assistant District Executives. I include this only for clarity and as an example of how confusion can arise when trying to identify a badge design when used at a different level in a subsequent release.



District (Field) Executive (left) and Scout Executive insignia, circa 1967-1969 in a rolled-edge border.

These were the only two council professional badges issued in this series. District Executives and assistants now wore all gold and Scout Executives and assistants now wore all silver. (The change to the use of only two occurred in 1953 though the earlier District Exec with silver outline and eagle was still released in cut-edge design.)



This is the first exception to the use of the wreath for other than Commissioners and Executives for council-level positions. These insignia were the first issue for Council President (left, 2 hands out) and Council Past President (right, 1 hand down). Prior to this, Council Presidents wore the Layman badge. While these cloth badges were produced with the 1967 series insignia, the same design (with wreath and hands first appeared as collar brass insignia as early as 1933).

Prior to the release of the Council President and Council Past President badges, one could generally assume the position was either a commissioned professional (executive) or commissioner if the badge had a wreath. While they are not commissioner insignia, I've included these samples to show the parallel design of the commissioner badges in this same era. For review of the remaining professional-series insignia, I'd suggest Mitch Reis' book -- *A Guide to Dating and Identifying Boy Scouts of America Badges, Uniforms and Insignia*. BSA actually considered all adult positions as "commissioned" if the role involved direct contact with youth. This also included Scoutmasters and assistants, Cubmasters and assistants, Den Leaders, etc. Yet, none of the "unit-level" positions ever contained the wreath design as part of the badges.

CHAPTER 4

‘Named’ Commissioner Insignia Starting in the 1970s

The 1970s proved to be a decade of significant change for both scout insignia and Scouting overall. Most attribute the change to Chief Scout Executive Alden G. Barber who succeeded Joseph Brunton, Jr. in 1967. Under Brunton’s leadership in the 1960s, Scouting membership increased and the program elements remained relatively stable. Hoping for even greater membership, Barber started a new initiative called, "Boypower/Manpower" which stressed the goal of reaching one third of all boys in the country by serving more minority youth and urban youth. He worked with volunteers and staff to reshape program elements for the core Boy Scouting program during a major 1972 revision. These major changes included a completely new Scout Handbook, complete revision of Boy Scout rank advancement requirements, addition of "skill awards", and multiple uniform options (including the introduction of the visor cap and beret). Some of the program changes were well received, but other changes were criticized, particularly those that emphasized urban activities over camping and out-of-town trips. He resigned his position before the normal retirement age, due in part to BSA experiencing membership declines and internal issues. Many argued the push for urban and rural youth had detracted from strong support of traditional community-based Scouting programs and bumper stickers were seen saying “Put the Outing back in Scouting.” Brunton’s changes had a profound impact on the release of new insignia.

From an insignia perspective, a complete revamping of position badges occurred in 1970. Varying colors and outlines to distinguish position were replaced by “named” badges where the titles were embroidered on the badge. Prior to 1970, the only insignia with titles were selected positions at the National Council level. This new series lasted for only two-three years. It consisted of round badges on blue twill material with the words and emblem (now, only Tenderfoot, not First Class) embroidered in either silver or gold thread with a brown eagle. A few of the badges were also produced on red twill, though it’s unclear whether the red version was issued concurrent with the blue or following it. Red backgrounds eventually became the default for commissioner and executive (and other employee) insignia. I have referred to these as “prototypes” as I have the impression that the issuance of badges in both background colors was a test of popularity and acceptance. Technically, there are not prototypes but were official issues, though the color red evolved as the color of choice for most of the commissioner and professional (including non-commissioned employees) positions in later issues.

The original group of these new “titled” badges included five national level positions: National President (President/Boy Scouts of America), National Past President (Past President/Boy Scouts of America), National Vice President (Vice President/Boy Scouts of America), National Treasurer (Treasurer/Boy Scouts of America), National Executive Board (National Executive Board/BSA), all of these included a wreath in conflict with the earlier rule reserving the wreath for commissioners/executives. (There was also a Special National Field Scout Commissioner further discussed in Chapter 8.)

At the council level, this new series included Council President and Council Past President (with wreaths for the last time for these positions) and seven commonly-

available “commissioner” badges: Council Commissioner, Assistant Council Commissioner, District Commissioner, Assistant District Commissioner, Roundtable Commissioner, Assistant Roundtable Commissioner, and Neighborhood Commissioner.



1970 series Council and District level commissioner badges. Of the generic (not-program-specific) commissioner badges, only Neighborhood Commissioner was issued in both blue and red. Council President is shown as a sample of this series with silver wreath, eagle, and lettering on a lighter blue background.

There were also eight less common blue-twill badges – four for Cub Scouting and four for Boy Scouting: District Cub Commissioner, Asst Dist Cub Commissioner, District Scout Commissioner, Asst District Scout Commissioner, Cub Roundtable Commissioner, Scout Roundtable Commissioner, Pack Commissioner, and Troop Commissioner, all further discussed in Chapter 6.

In 1972-73, BSA revamped almost all insignia, presumably after the 1970-72 issues. This set could be considered the “current issue” since subsequent issues have only been for selected positions. This new set of insignia continued to use titles (or position

names) and was somewhat stable in background color based on the category of insignia. Now, only executives and commissioner badges (including Roundtable Commissioners) were on red background and included the wreath. However, some BSA employees lower in position had red badges without the “professional or executive” wreath. These included Employee, Paraprofessional, Ranger, and Assistant Ranger. District and council level volunteers (except commissioners) had a light blue background. Boy Scout leaders were generally on a green background (except Physician, Chaplain, and Womens Reserve, which were white). Cub Scout leaders were on dark blue with either silver or gold thread. Boy Scout leader insignia was changed to a tan background in 1989. Within each background group, further differentiation was made by using silver thread for the key position and gold thread for the assistant position.



1972 series council and district level commissioner badges. The generic Roundtable Commissioner and Assistant Roundtable Commissioner badges were replaced with program-specific roundtable issues. They are discussed in Chapter 6. For the first few years there were variations in the shade of the red background from a bright red to a dull or maroon red as shown in the darker Chief Scout Executive badge displayed on the second row, right.

Cataloging commissioner issues after 1972 became difficult as BSA continued to release various new badges with slight changes in title or border. Also, the BSA’s use of different manufacturing sources often resulted in poor quality control giving some later releases the appearance of a new variety or issue. This occurred in both size, stitch color, background material (some twill, some solid or fully embroidered) and backing.

A few new titles were seen but used by only a few councils and were never widely accepted. These included Associate Council Commissioner, Division Commissioner, Deputy District Commissioner, and Commissioner Staff. It’s suspected these were never nationally-approved designs but were produced independently by some councils.



These various commissioner badges never gained wide acceptance and are usually now found only in collections and museums.

In the mid 1970s, with increased emphasis on key leader training, BSA issued a series of unit leader badges with silver or gold Mylar borders denoting a leader who had completed basic training. This was an incentive for leaders to quickly receive this training. These included Scoutmaster and Assistant Scoutmaster in Boy Scouting and Cubmaster, Assistant Cubmaster, Den Leader, Assistant Den Leader, Webelos Den Leader, Assistant Webelos Den Leader, Den Leader Coach, and Pack Committee in Cub Scouting. What naturally followed was the release of silver Mylar bordered badges for commissioners and executives.



Silver Mylar-bordered insignia for Council Commissioner and Assistant Council Commissioner.

The right badge shows similar design for executives and is shown for comparison to like commissioner badges. This particular badge is referred to as computer-generated. Several similar position badges were issued like this during the 1980's and 1990. On these, the letters are more precise and the overall appearance is flatter.

CHAPTER 5

Program Specific Commissioner Insignia

CUB SCOUTING

The "*Cubbing Program*" was introduced by the Boy Scouts of America in 1930. Because it was so much different from traditional Boy Scouting, it was considered completely separate, unlike today when Cub Scouting is a program type just like Boy Scouting, Venturing, and Varsity Scouts. Each council formed a committee for Cub Scouts and Commissioners were appointed to serve the cub packs. The Field Commissioner (for Cubbing) wore the same badge used by the council Cub Scout committee. A separate badge was worn by the Assistant Field Commissioner. As these were made of less-durable felt, very few survived and are today considered very rare.



First issue commissioner insignia for Cub Scouting, circa 1933- circa 1948
Field Commissioner (left) and Assistant Field Commissioner (right).

Cub-specific insignia was added in 1970 with the introduction of "named" or "titled" badges. These included District Cub Commissioner, Assistant District Cub Commissioner, Pack Commissioner, and Cub Roundtable Commissioner. All were issued with both red and blue backgrounds. However, the red roundtable badge also included blue fill (Cubbing's color) inside the wreath. A similar Cub Roundtable Staff badge was produced but only in red, perhaps after the decision to drop blue badges.





Cub-specific insignia from 1970-1972. Each were issued in both red and blue backgrounds. The red roundtable commissioner had blue fill (representing Cub Scout color) inside the wreath. This was the first example of the “dual-color” roundtable commissioner and staff badges used today. The Cub Roundtable Staff was not part of the 1970 series and was first seen in 1973.

Around 1991, the word “Scout” was inserted in the Cub series badges and two new badges were released – Cub Scout Roundtable Commissioner and Cub Scout Roundtable Staff. For unknown reasons, the blue fill was removed from inside the wreath of the Cub Scout Roundtable Commissioner badge but not on the staff badge. However, again debating who was considered commissioned, the Cub Scout Roundtable badge was changed replacing the wreath with a circle implying staff were not “commissioned.” Several years later, the wreath was added back to the staff position (and shown as the current insignia on page 19). In this same time period the Assistant District Cub Commissioner badge was replaced by District Assistant Cub Scout Commissioner (reversing District – Assistant, and adding “Scout”)



Changes to the 1973 series Cub commissioner badges adding “Scout” – circa 1991.

Mylar border “trained” badges were also produced for Pack Commissioner, and District Cub Scout Commissioners who had completed basic training.



Trained insignia for Pack Commissioner and District Cub Scout Commissioner.

Between 1997-2002, the Cub Scout Roundtable Commissioner and Cub Scout Roundtable Commissioner badges were revised to now include both the blue fill and wreaths on both. This is the current design and has a “ScoutStuff” back as do all current issues of “official” Boy Scouts of America insignia.



Current Cub Scout Roundtable Commissioner and Cub Scout Roundtable Staff and sample of a “ScoutStuff” backing, first introduced in 2002, now common to all BSA insignia. It was intended to help identify “official” patches authorized by the National Office, BSA.

BOY SCOUTING

The 1970 issues brought nearly a parallel set of Boy Scout badges as we saw in Cub Scouting. These included District Scout Commissioner, Assistant District Scout Commissioner, Troop Commissioner, and Scout Roundtable Commissioner. All were believed to have been issued with both red and blue backgrounds, though I’ve been unable to locate a District Scout Commissioner in red. Like Cubbing, what shortly followed were Scout Roundtable Commissioner and Scout Roundtable Staff insignia. Silver Mylar bordered Troop Commissioner and District Scout Commissioner were also produced for those who had completed basic training.



1970 issue Boy Scout Commissioner, Scout Roundtable and Staff insignia. District Scout Commissioner in red with gold (not Mylar) border is believed to exist but I have not yet found anyone who has one.



Troop Commissioner and District Scout Commissioner were also produced with silver Mylar borders, denoting trained commissioner.

The Scout Roundtable Staff badge was changed, replacing the wreath with a ring or circle in the 1990's concurrent with adding "Boy" before Scout and later changed back to include the wreath. It is believed there was no intermediate Boy Scout Roundtable Commissioner badge without fill as there was in Cub Scouting.



Intermediate Boy Scout Roundtable Staff (1991 on left)
and current Boy Scout Roundtable Commissioner and Boy Scout Roundtable Staff insignia.

EXPLORING, VARSITY, AND VENTURE SCOUTING

Exploring was an active program for older youth starting in 1949. Its origins started as early as 1912 with Sea Scouts (later called Sea Exploring). Explorer Scouts, Senior Scouts, and Air Scouts were all brought together in 1949. Career awareness was at the heart of the program starting in 1982. Exploring was transferred in 1998 as career awareness went under the BSA Learning for Life program. Posts mostly associated with outdoor high adventure or sponsored by religious organizations converted to Venturing Crews. For nearly 20 years of Exploring, unit service was provided to posts by commissioners assigned to a Service Team. An individual commissioner serving a post was called a Service Team Member.



Exploring Service Team Insignia (first issue on the left).

Varsity Scouting is an optional sports-oriented program for older Scouts. It began in 1984 as a program totally separate from the troop. Primary impetus for the creation of Varsity Scouting came from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (LDS), which was experiencing a high dropout rate in its Explorer posts and was anxious to find more effective ways to keep its high school young men in a male-only Scouting program.

Although the BSA did the official development of the program and has promoted it as a standard BSA offering, most Varsity teams today are still LDS sponsored. In 1989, the BSA made Varsity Scouting an option for older Scouts within a troop as well as within separate Varsity teams.

Commissioner service to Varsity teams was like Scout troops and roundtables were established for the Varsity program, except they were named “Huddles.” Like Cub Scouting and Boy Scouting, Varsity Huddle Staff members briefly had insignia with a circle or ring instead of the traditional commissioner wreath. There were also Varsity Roundtable Huddle Commissioner and Varsity Huddle Staff badges made similar to unit leader badges after the conversion to the tan background design. This was the only program group, in the last 30 years that had commissioner badges in other than red background.



Varsity Huddle Commissioner and Varsity Huddle Staff insignia. The original background was red but switched to tan-background between 1989-1995, then back to red.

Venture patrols began as an optional high-adventure program for older Scouts within a troop in 1990. It replaced the Leadership Corps (1972-1989). It still exists as an option in the troop. Older Scouts in a troop can still do “Venture” activities without having to join a crew. In 1998, Venturing became a stand-alone program that absorbed most of the former Exploring posts. (Some parts of Exploring were transferred to Learning for Life.) Venturing is a coed program for high school and college aged young men and young women.

As Venturing is relatively new, there are only two badges yet produced for Venturing commissioners.



Insignia for Venturing Roundtable Commissioner and Staff.

COMMISSIONER SERVICE IN LDS UNITS

The LDS (or Mormon) Church has had a significant effect in shaping the structure of Scouting over the years. As previously mentioned, nearly all Varsity programs are LDS. In fact, the Mormons are the largest chartering organization and nearly every ward sponsors the full complement of Scouting units – a pack, troop, team, and crew. Within the LDS community, units are sometimes grouped in zones and several commissioner badges were created to accommodate this structure. Zone Commissioners are believed to be exclusively used by Mormon units.



Zone Commissioners – Exclusive to Mormon (LDS) commissioner service. These may have been privately issued by the Mormon Church and not official insignia by the Boy Scouts of America.

CHAPTER 6

International, National, Region, and Area Commissioners

Unlike all previously discussed commissioner positions and insignia, the positions of International Commissioner and National Commissioner are held by only one individual at a time. Collectors call these “one-person” insignia.

INTERNATIONAL COMMISSIONER

The first known cloth insignia for the position of International Commissioner (IC) was introduced in 1930. Arguably, the most famous International Commissioner was Mortimer Schiff. Schiff's association with the Boy Scouts began almost immediately after its founding and he was elected BSA National President in 1931. Unfortunately he died one month later. His biography indicates he had served as the International Commissioner for several years preceding his election, so he was possibly the first International Commissioner, or at least the first to have worn the insignia of that office. The property for the Mortimer L. Schiff Scout Reservation was purchased by his mother, named in his honor, and donated to the BSA for their national training center. Between 1934 and 1949 there was no insignia for the International Commissioner position. A variation of the first design was again released in 1950. In 1957, the first round design was produced and continued until 1969. The current insignia began in 1970. Besides Mortimer Schiff, other known International Commissioners included Bill Campbell, Thomas A. Watts, John Schiff, Edward Joullian III, Dick Burdick, and Wayne Perry.



Three major designs of the International Commissioner insignia. The badge on the left is probably the third issue as the insignia for this position was produced one at a time with slight differences on subsequent manufacturing. The middle design was part of a series to include National Commissioner and Chief Scout, discussed later. The current badge (right) was one given me by Ed Joullian at the 1989 National Jamboree.

NATIONAL COMMISSIONER

The position of National Commissioner began almost immediately after the founding of the organization and was actively filled until 1960. Thirty years later, in 1990, the position was again filled and continues today. Only 8 individuals have ever held this position -- 1910–1912 William Verbeck, 1910–1912 Peter S. Bomus, 1910–1941 Daniel Carter Beard, 1943–1960 George J. Fisher, 1990–1995 Earl G. Graves, 1999–2004 William F. "Rick" Cronk, 2004–2008 Donald D. Belcher, and 2008–present Tico Perez.

One of the more famous National Commissioners was Daniel Carter Beard. For the first two years, he shared the position with William Verbeck and Peter Bomus, but continued as the sole National Commissioner until his death in 1941. Born in 1850, Beard was an American illustrator, author, youth leader, and social reformer. He was a member of the Student Art League, where in 1883 he met and befriended Ernest Thompson Seton (discussed later). Influenced by Seton, Beard founded the Sons of Daniel Boone in 1905. That organization merged into the BSA and Beard continued to serve Scouting for the remaining 30 years. Literature is full of pictures of “Uncle Dan” Beard at Scouting events wearing his traditional “buckskin” shirt.



An early National Commissioner (left), 50's-60s NC (center) and current issue (right). There were some variations in the early design since, like the IC badge, very few were made as the position was held by only one person at a time. It is believed the one shown on the left was worn by Daniel Carter Beard in the 1930s and the middle one worn by George Fisher during his term.

NATIONAL DISTRICT COMMISSIONERS, NATIONAL FIELD COMMISSIONERS, AND SPECIAL NATIONAL FIELD SCOUT COMMISSIONERS

During the early years of Scouting, the National Office was swamped trying to manage and coordinate with the growing number of councils. Volunteer field commissioners were appointed to help communities organize their local councils and troops. Eventually, a commissioner organization evolved to help manage the field operations. Samuel A. Moffit was chosen as National Field Commissioner. By 1913, there were 68 volunteer Field Commissioners. From 1913 to 1917, six national districts were established with a District Commissioner for each National District. These were not the same as the Districts we think of today, but more like regions and included: West Coast, Midwest, New England, New York/New Jersey, and Pennsylvania.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, volunteers ran the first councils with the top individual being the Scout Commissioner. As “Executives” were hired to run the council, a differentiation was made calling those run by a paid executive a “First Class” council, while those run by volunteers were called “Second Class” councils. In 1920, the newly appointed Deputy Chief Scout Executive Dr. George J. Fisher was given the task to create and promote the First Class Council concept throughout the country. As more and more councils were converted, the need for field commissioners at the national office staff was reduced and the position of National Field Scout Commissioner was eliminated

in 1921 leaving only the National Commissioner Beard at the National Council. Within 10 years, nearly all councils had become “First Class” and were operated by a paid council executive and a commissioner staff.

It could be argued the elimination of the large number of volunteer commissioners at the national level contributed to the need to create a new position, perhaps more honorary than functional, called the Special National Field Scout Commissioner (SNFSC). A collar pin insignia for this position is known to exist from 1920 to as late as the 1950s with the first cloth badge showing up in 1950s. A second design badge “with title” was issued in 1970.



Special National Field Scout Commissioner (left 1953-1970) in both brown eagle and silver eagle design. Show right is the 1970-1972 issue. (Note: scanned colors display differently but the left two badges are actually the same except the color of the eagle and shield).

There is very little historical information available about the position but speculation is that it may have been for those who represented the national chartering organizations that were starting units. It's known that many senior military officers were given the position, as were civilians very prominent in a particular industry. Each military branch (Army, Navy, and Air Force) assigned a liaison to each of BSA's then 12 regions. Based on the time line of collar brass showing up at the time of the elimination of the national field commissioner organization, it could be argued that some of the earlier appointees to the volunteer field commissioner staff were given this as a continuing, albeit honorary, assignment following the elimination of the national field commissioner program. That would account for the title being called “Special” as representing organizations or industries from which a large number of Scouts could be recruited.

This possible role as a link to national charting organizations might explain the elimination of the SNFSC and the adoption of a new position, the “National Partner Representative” during the 1970s. Unlike commissioners who worked directly with units, it's believed that the role of Special National Field Scout Commissioners and later National Partner Representatives was that of liaison to the national parent organization not unlike a Charter Organization Representative (previously Scouting Coordinator and Institutional Representative) links Scouting to its chartering organization at the local level. The National Partner Representative position was eliminated in the 2000's. Representatives of the national partners now serve on the Relationships Task Force at the National Council and wear the National Committee badge.



National Partner Representative badges (1970 left and 1972 right). These badges were issued to representatives to national organizations with responsibilities similar to those of the earlier Special National Field Scout Commissioner. This position was discontinued in the 2000s.

REGIONAL AND AREA COMMISSIONERS

The positions of Regional Commissioner and Area Commissioner were created in 2007 and announced at the October 2007 national executive board meeting. These positions were created "to support councils in the areas of membership, unit charter renewal, and training in support of commissioner service." This move was long overdue as the regions and areas were the only organizational element in Scouting that did not have assigned commissioners. The addition of these positions now makes the familiar "Key 3" possible at these levels as well as support for council commissioner training and programs.



Area Commissioner and Regional Commissioner insignia first issued in 2008.

CHIEF SCOUT AND AMBASSADORS

While not commissioners, the positions of Chief Scout and Ambassador deserve mentioning. The functions they perform are in some ways similar to commissioners, particularly in their role in ensuring quality Scouting and serving as an advocate for the Boy Scouts of America.

CHIEF SCOUT

The position of Chief Scout in the United Kingdom started with the appointment of Robert Baden-Powell, 1st Baron Baden-Powell, the founder of the Scout Movement, as Chief Scout. He was designated Chief Scout of the World in 1920 at the first World Scout Jamboree in Olympia, London. Following his death, Chief Scouts were appointed for the British Empire, then the British Commonwealth and Empire, then the Commonwealth, and finally for the United Kingdom and Overseas Territories. In the UK today, the Chief Scout is analogous to the BSA's Chief Scout Executive. However, in our program, the Chief Scout was a volunteer (mostly honorary) position.

The first Chief Scout in the BSA was Ernest Thompson Seton. Seton, a naturalized US citizen, was a noted author and wildlife artist. He had caught the attention of Baden Powell who was impressed with his writings. His Woodcraft Indians combined with the early attempts at Scouting from the YMCA and other organizations as well as with Daniel Carter Beard's Sons of Daniel Boone. The work of Seton and Beard is in large part the basis of the traditional Scouting movement today.

Seton was Chief Scout of the BSA from 1910-1915 and his work is in large part responsible for the American Indian influences within the BSA. However, he had significant personality and philosophical clashes with Beard and James E. West. He resigned from the BSA in 1915 though remains one of the greatest influences in the early years of American Scouting. It's unknown who, if any, followed Seton in this position until the appointment of James E. West as Chief Scout in 1943.

James West was both the first and longest tenured Chief Scout Executive serving from 1910 to 1943. In his early years, West had battles not only with Seaton and Beard, but founder William D. Boyce who eventually left the BSA in January 1915 to found the Lone Scouts of America (LSA). LSA initially flourished but had to merge back into the BSA in June 1924. West even had Boyce's name erased from BSA records for years. Competition from LSA caused West to seek a federal charter for BSA. This federal charter for BSA was granted on June 15, 1916. In the years before World War I, pacifism and patriotism often came into conflict, and the BSA was sometimes in the middle. Some thought that the BSA was too militaristic, especially as characterized by their military style uniforms and discipline, while others felt that the BSA was unpatriotic in their stance against military training. Upon his retirement, West was given the title of "Chief Scout" of the BSA, the same title that Seton had held. That year, a badge was designed specifically for West. Elbert K. Fretwell, West's CSE successor, was the last person to be appointed as a "Chief Scout."



Insignia of Chief Scout (1943-1958) worn only by retired CSEs James E West and Elbert K Fretwell. This and the similarly designed International Commissioner and National Commissioner badges of the 1950s are but a select few that had position titles embroidered onto the badge prior to 1970.

AMBASSADORS

The International Division of the BSA created the position of Ambassador in the 1990s. The position was created to honor those who had served in key positions representing Scouting both internationally and to other youth organizations in the USA. Like Chief Scout, the position is mainly ceremonial but differs in that multiple Ambassadors have been named. Collectively, Ambassadors spread the good name and goodwill of Scouting throughout the world.



Current issue Ambassador insignia (computer design).

CHAPTER 7

Commissioner Recognitions and Awards

There are several awards that can only be earned or awarded to commissioners. These include the Arrowhead Award, Commissioner Key, Distinguished Commissioner's Award, and Doctorate in Commissioner Science award.

The Arrowhead Honor is bestowed on Roundtable Commissioners, Unit Commissioners, Assistant District Commissioners, and District Commissioners as an intermediate recognition on their progress toward the Commissioner's Key. The Arrowhead badge is worn on the commissioner's left sleeve under the position badge as an indication of advanced training. It is usually the first honor given to commissioners. The Commissioner Key (in reality, a Scouter's Key with a commissioner device added) reflects a higher level of training and requires three years of service along with other training and performance objectives.

In the late 1980s commissioners could earn higher recognition as a Distinguished Commissioner after 5 years of service and additional performance criteria. The Distinguished Commissioner Service Award is represented by a common square knot but different presentation plaques and bolo ties for Unit (bronze), District (gold), and Council (silver) Commissioners. These awards recognize commissioners who provide upgraded and quality commissioner service and help units succeed.

The most recent recognition for commissioners was added in 2008 is called the Doctorate of Commissioner Science Award. It is awarded to individuals who have served at least 5 years and have earned degrees through the doctorate level at a council College of Commissioner Science. Completion of this highest degree requires the commissioner to complete a thesis or project such as demonstrated in this manuscript.



Commissioner Arrowhead.



Commissioner Key (left), Distinguished Commissioner (center) Doctor of Commissioner Science (right).

CHAPTER 8

EPILOGUE

With the exception of minor variations in the early insignia, I believe this thesis includes a description and/or a picture of every known commissioner insignia design to date. I chose not to display the 1945-1955 green-khaki series as the scans look similar to the earlier tan-khaki background and there were no design changes during this period. While collectors generally use 1945 as the beginning of the green-khaki issues, many shades of tan-khaki were issued in the 1937-1945 series. Thus, it becomes difficult to clearly differentiate a late issue tan with an early issue green. The type of thread helps, though, as cotton thread (now universally used) did not appear before the late 1930s.

Further, I have chosen to include only one of each design, though as pointed out earlier, all the squat-crown insignia was produced in two sizes and many of the early badges were available in three materials -- twill cloth, bullion, and serge wool. The criteria for selection to include here were a change in design/shape, background color, fill color, and/or wording. If you discover a commissioner issue I have not identified, please let me know. I can be contacted by email at edbrown@hot.rr.com

As one who started in Scouting in the 1950s, I've always considered the use of color in the pre-1970 series as beautiful (colorful) way to identify a badge and have been particularly interested both the professional (red fill) and commissioner (blue fill) insignia from 1920 to 1970. This, perhaps, explains my interest in the use of the wreath as this is where it mostly appeared. I find it interesting that the wreath was never used for a unit-level leadership position yet that is where 80 percent or more of the commissioned members serve in those positions that have direct contact with youth. These would include most all unit positions except the (pack, troop, or team) committee and Charter Organization Rep. The wreath was also used for several national level positions (with no direct contact with youth) and only twice at the council-level outside commissioners and professionals – Council President and Council Past President until 1972.

Current insignia identification is much easier now with the use of titles and of background colors. Red identifies Commissioners, professionals, employees and paid staff; light-blue identifies district and council scouters; dark-blue identifies Cub Scout leaders; tan identifies Boy Scout and Varsity leaders. Area, region, and national scouters are dark-green, dark-maroon, and purple respectively. Interestingly, Venturing leaders are red, while Venturing youth are white with a green border. Thus, Venturing remains the only program element with more than one background color for insignia. Border color can also assist in identifying a position as primary leadership, such as Cubmaster, Council President, and Lodge Advisor. These have a silver border whereas assistant or staff positions have a gold border.

The change to a common background for Boy Scout rank, youth insignia and adult leader insignia was prompted by a proposal made by fellow Scouting memorabilia collector and graphic artist Michael Feigenbaum to Chief Scout Executive Ben Love in

1989. He described the uniforms of that era as resembling a Christmas tree and proposed to Love a less-colorful scheme. The resulting change to tan background for both rank and insignia made all Boy Scout leader insignia consistent with a common background color.

Occasionally we see exceptions to these “general rules” though they usually are a result of an error in manufacturing with releases to council scouts shops before the error was discovered. Recent examples are a Cub Scout Roundtable Staff with green fill (should be blue), an Executive Board Member with a gold border (should be silver) and a Tiger Cub Den Leader with a blue border (should be gold/yellow).

As we study the insignia of previous eras, it’s also difficult to rule out the existence of designs we think should exist but have never been confirmed to exist. For example, in the 1970 series program-specific badges, eight were released in blue but only seven in red excluding an expected District Scout Commissioner (with gold border). This position was issued with a silver Mylar border leading to an alternate hypothesis that this might have been done concurrently with the other seven, making it the first badge with a Mylar border. Additionally, after the 1991 decision to change “Cub” to “Cub Scout” and “Scout” to “Boy Scout”, a Cub Scout Roundtable Commissioner badge was issued with no fill color. Logically, there should exist a corresponding “Boy Scout Roundtable Commissioner badge with no fill, but none is known to exist.

Though the issuance of new insignia has slowed in the 2000s, several new commissioner badges are being proposed including “National Commissioner Staff” and a series of commissioner insignia commemorating the 100th anniversary of Scouting.

This year, a Commissioner Staff Service element was added to the new BSA Community Alliances Team on the National Committee. With the strong leadership of National Commissioner Tico Perez and his recently appointed Region and Area Commissioners, one can expect a growing respect for the value to Commissioner Service in the BSA.

Commissioners have and will continue to proudly wear their arrowhead honor and wreathed insignia as they serve to help units succeed, coach and consult with unit leaders, and help maintain the standards of the Boy Scouts of America.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS, REFERENCES, AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

The main source of information and resulting scans came from numerous conversations, emails, and phone calls, purchases and trades to/with fellow insignia collectors. Special thanks to those who have shared their knowledge and helped me build my insignia collection over the past 30 years -- Jim Stevenson, James Clough, Mitch Reis, John Hoffman, Michael Feigenbaum, Paul Myers, Kelly Williams, Dave Scocca, Don DeYoung, Herb McCoggins, Roy More and many others.

I especially want to thank Michael Feigenbaum, George Crowl, Mitch Reis, and Paul Myers for their detailed critique and review of the draft of this thesis. Their collective knowledge was immensely helpful and finding and correcting errors in the narrative. Their suggestions and “historical facts” also showed me that there is not necessarily consensus among even the most knowledgeable collectors.

Most collectors have had to synthesize information from Scouting equipment catalogs, insignia control guides, and limited information in other BSA publications as no one single source describes the history of Scouting insignia. However, I’d certainly recommend Mich Reis’ guide as the best currently available on the market. (Expanded 4th Edition expected to be released in 2009).

Other sources and references used in this thesis include:

The Commissioner Story, a college of commissioner science thesis by Randy Worcester, Middle Tennessee Council (from whom I received much of the early commissioner history)

Collecting Deputy Scout & District Commissioner Badges and Pins, by Paul Myers, published in Scout Memorabilia, Vol. 30, No 4

A Guide to Dating and Identifying Boy Scouts of America Badges, Uniforms and Insignia by Mitch Reis, 3d Edition, 2000

The Official Uniform Badges and Insignia – 1933, Boy Scouts of America

Rules and Regulations of the Boy Scouts of America, July 2007

Charter and Bylaws of the Boy Scouts of America, July 2007

Unpublished manuscripts of Cub-Scout- related Commissioner Insignia by Don DeYoung

Numerous online resources including *Scout Leader Pins Part 1 and Part 2* by George Crowl <http://www.crowl.org/George/>

Scouting History Through Memorabilia: The Bernie Miller Collection Vol 1, by Roy More, 1995

Arapaho 1, 2nd Edition, 1984 by Albertus Hoogerveen

History of the Boy Scouts of America -

<http://www.seqbsa.org/Commissioner%20page.htm#history>

<http://www.totscouting.org/commish-2/history.htm>

Biography of Alden Barber –

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alden_G._Barber

History of Cub Scouting -

<http://www.geocities.com/~PACK215/hist-cshistory.html>

History of BSA and Varsity -

<http://www.troop97.net/bsahist1.htm#bsdiv>

BSA National Presidents -

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_president_of_the_Boy_Scouts_of_America

Biography of Daniel Beard –

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Daniel_Carter_Beard

History of the Chief Scout –

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chief_Scout

Biography of Ernest Seaton –

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ernest_Thompson_Seton

Biography of James E. West –

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_E._West_\(Scouting\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_E._West_(Scouting))

Region and Area Commissioners –

<http://old.scouting.org/commissioners/newsletter/5-07.pdf>

A Brief History of the Boy Scouts of America – 1910 to Present

<http://www.troop97.net:80/bsahist1.htm>

Founders of Scouting and The Boy Scouts of America

<http://www.usscouts.org/aboutbsa/bsafound.asp>

Boy Scouts of America Historical Highlights

<http://www.scouting.org/Media/95thAnniversary/history.aspx>

A Virtual Boy Scout Museum – Awards, Badges, and Insignia

<http://www.scouting.org/Media/95thAnniversary/history.aspx>

Scout Leader Pins by George Crowl

<http://www.sageventure.com/history/pins/LeaderPins1.pdf>

World Organization of the Scout Movement
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_Organization_of_the_Scout_Movement

Organization of the Boy Scouts of America
<http://www.usscouts.org/aboutbsa/bsaorg.asp>

Scout Leader Training and Award Knot Requirements
<http://www.tomecek.com/t282/Boy%20Scout%20Leader%20Awards.htm>

Devices on Training Awards
<http://www.mninter.net/~blkeagle/trdevice.htm>

Biography of Elbert K. Fretwell
http://www.absoluteastronomy.com/topics/Elbert_K._Fretwell
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elbert_K._Fretwell

Commissioners
<http://www.scouting.org/commissioners.aspx>