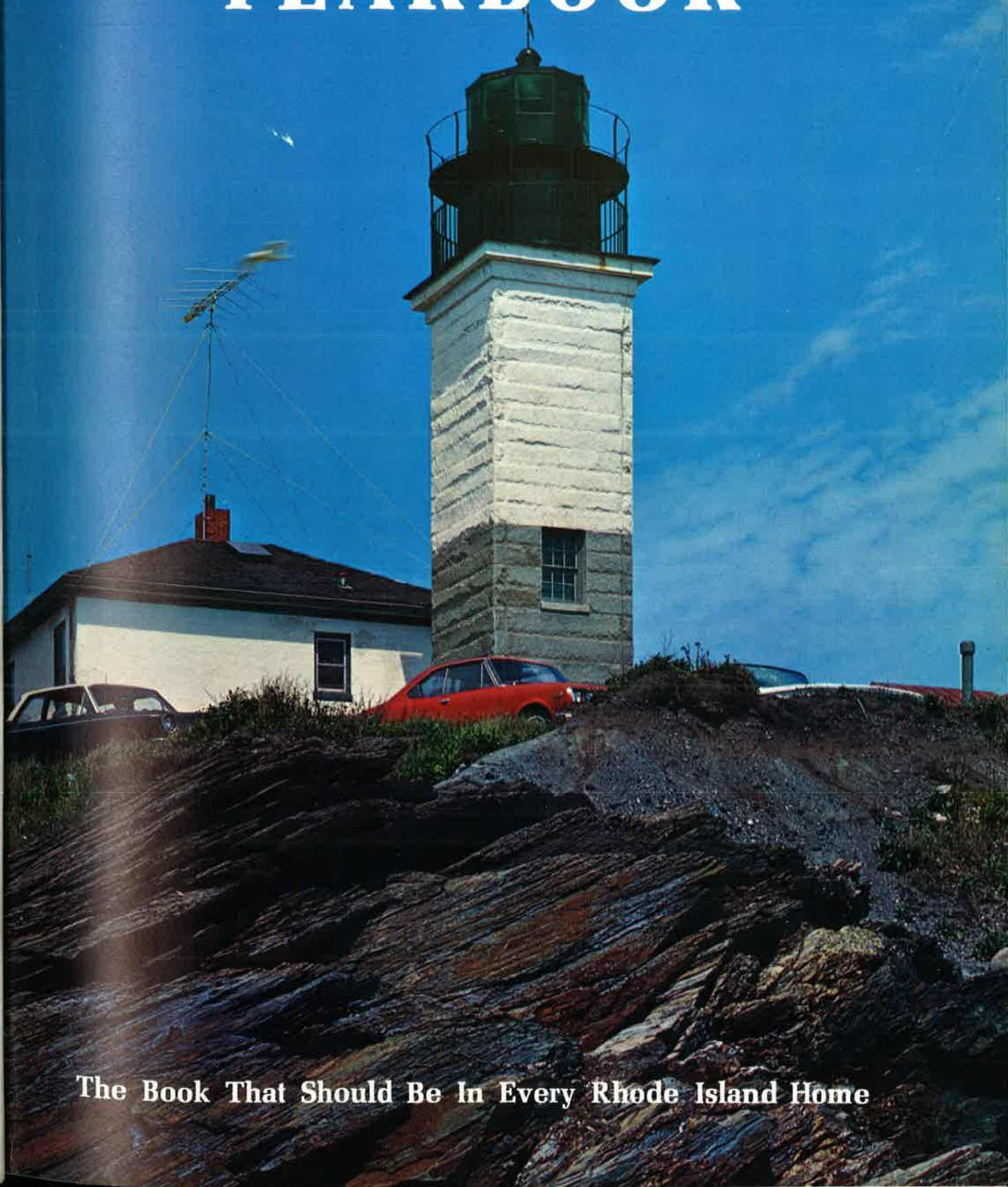


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RHODE ISLAND YEARBOOK



The Book That Should Be In Every Rhode Island Home

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Drill team completes its program with flag display at Golden Jubilee, 1970

Fifty Golden Years of Girl Scouting in Rhode Island

BY CATHERINE T. HAMMETT

1917 . . . the nation was at war; young men from almost every home were in the armed services; young women were there, too, as yeowomen, forerunners of the Waves; everyone was finding a way to help win the war that was to end all wars! High school girls envied their brothers and boy friends who could enlist, their older sisters who entertained the navy recruits, their mothers who were busy with Red Cross work. And then, suddenly, there was news of a new organization for girls . . . the GIRL SCOUTS! Their handbook was titled "How Girls Can Help Their Country," and seemed just the answer to the teen-age girl of 1917. All over the country groups were being organized; in Rhode Island a small church group, The Busy Bees — without any real purpose except getting together — became Red Clover Troop #1 of Newport. This was the first officially registered troop in Rhode Island; however, other groups had been meeting in other communities, one in Pawtucket since 1914. Newport's troop #1 was enrolled in December 1917, and this date is the one which the Rhode Island Girl Scout Council records as the beginning of Girl Scouting in this state. The troop boasted nine members on that historic date, but rapidly increased in membership, and helped other troops to organize. Little blue handbook in hand, the captain, Miss Susan Sherman (now Mrs. Gilbert C. Doane) and the girls fig-

ured out how to meet the "Tenderfoot" requirements and proudly wore the trefoil pins that marked them as members of the national organization.

In company with their sister Scouts throughout the nation, they turned their efforts to serving their country; they rolled bandages and knitted helmets, socks and mufflers; they practiced marching so they could be in parades to send off the would-be heroes, and to welcome them home again; they sold Liberty Bonds . . . and also found much enjoyment in an unheard-of new freedom for the female! They reveled in hiking, cycling, camping — doing things until then allowed only to boys. It was a stimulating time of new adventures, but more, of purposeful activities; girls gained new stature as they learned to plan and manage their own program, to make decisions, to accept responsibilities; they improved their homemaking skills and acquired new skills in a fascinating variety of other activities. Then, as now, the purpose of the organization was to provide girls with a special kind of activity program whose content and method helped them develop into self-reliant, interesting young adults ready to take their places as concerned citizens. Both the Boy Scout and the Girl Scout movements grew in amazing fashion . . . practically by word of mouth — here in Rhode Island, and throughout the country. Adults joined together in local, state and na-



tional councils to stabilize and extend the organization. In Rhode Island during the 1920s local Girl Scout councils were formed in every city and most of the smaller communities. In 1935, records show 35 councils or community committees. Throughout the years these tended to merge into larger administrative units, pooling their knowledge and resources to provide more effective help to troops. In 1919 a statewide organization, Girl Scouts of Rhode Island Incorporated, was chartered by the National Organization and the State of Rhode Island to provide coordination for all of the local units and give statewide service in camping and adult training. In 1962, the then remaining nine local councils, many of them mergers of earlier groups, consolidated under the charter of Girl Scouts of Rhode Island, Inc. to form the present Rhode Island Girl Scout Council, a total administrative organization for Girl Scout operations in all of Rhode Island and several nearby Massachusetts and Connecticut communities.

In 1970 the Girl Scouts of Rhode Island conclude a three-year observance of the anniversaries of the first troops, the first councils, the first camps; the enrollment that started with 9 girls has now reached more than 15,000 in 711 troops.

From 9 to 15,000 in just over 50 years! How has the organization maintained the interest of girls from 7-17 years of age? How has it grown with the times? For, of course, it *has* changed — as it will continue to change to meet the interests and the needs of each new generation of youngsters who join the ranks.

Sir Robert Baden Powell who started the movement known as the Boy Scouts in England in 1910, was astonished, and *NOT* pleased when he found a group of girls in full Scout regalia (except that they wore skirts rather than trousers) at the first rally held for Boy Scouts in London in 1910. His first reaction (and that of the boys!) was *NO* — no girls in Scouting. But the girls put on the pressure — they wanted to be Scouts, too. His wisdom and his interest in all young people convinced him that girls indeed needed similar activities and training, and with the help of his sister, the Girl Guide program was developed, with an emphasis on womanly pursuits, but also with training in other scouting activities. Juliette Gordon Low, an American married to an Englishman, became interested in Baden Powell's venture; she was an active Guide leader in Scotland and later in London. In 1912, she returned to her native Savannah, Georgia, full of determination to give this program to the girls of the United States.

She called a friend and said "Come right over. I've got something for the girls of Savannah, and all America, and all the world, and we are going to start tonight." The world *MUST* have needed such a movement as Scouting, for all over the world, the "game" caught on.

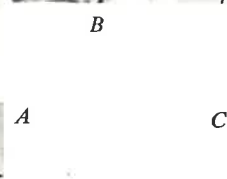
In this country, the name Girl Scouts was chosen as more appropriate, since the term "Guide" has a British connotation not familiar here. The basis of the program, however, was the same, including the ideals of the Promise and Laws, the internal program groups with their own peer leaders, the emphasis on service, the ecumenical groups from all economic levels, all races and religions.

Robert Baden Powell was a visionary, a leader, a great understander of young people. Some of these same characteristics emerged in the pioneers who built the new organization in hamlets, cities and countries of the world. Juliette Low was such a visionary, such a leader. Almost singlehanded she evolved the first steps of organization; she wrote the first little handbook, based upon the British one, but geared to girls in the USA. In 1917, the Model T Ford was a familiar sight and, nothing daunted, the Girl Scouts had a merit badge for Automobiling. It would be ten years before Lindberg would rock the world with his flight across the Atlantic, but the 1917 handbook included a badge for Aviation. Older sisters and mothers might still look something like Gibson Girls, but their young sisters and daughters were carefree in middy blouses and those daring garments known as bloomers; soon camps would find them wearing the *more* daring one-piece swimsuits introduced by Annette Kellerman. At first, though, bare knees on land or in the water were taboo even for Girl Scouts. Uniforms, however, were another thing. Women in the war years took to uniforms with enthusiasm, and the Scouts followed them, delighting in the broad-brimmed soldier hat and the khaki-colored suit. Early songs of the young organization were parodies written to war songs such as "K-K-K-Katy," and "There Are Smiles That Make You Happy." In Newport, especially, daughters of Navy personnel found new companionship with "town girls" in Girl Scout troops, and then, as ever since, membership has been an open sesame to new friends wherever service fathers have been stationed. Navy wives, too, found the organization a way to serve their temporary community, and as troop leaders or committee members have aided Girl Scouting in the state and in overseas stations ever since the earliest days. In Rhode Island today, hundreds of Navy girls and adults each year are active members of Girl Scout troops and neighborhood associations in the areas of Quonset, Davisville, and Newport.

In 1920, the state council organized the first resident camp on Prudence Island, and in 1921 purchased land for a permanent camp in West Kingston. Named Camp Hoffman for Mrs. William H. Hoffman, one of the untiring leaders of the early years, it is still a major year-round center for camping, adult training, and troop activities. Boy Scout officials came from the just-a-bit-older Camp Yawgoog to help set up the new camp — partly to be of service, but also to advance a romance



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A — Senior Scouts provide music for Ecumenical Folk Service at Golden Jubilee
 B — 1970, Sing-Outs are always fun
 C — 1954, Campers in Flag Ceremony
 D — Girl Scouts attending Golden Jubilee
 E — Hoffman campers sailing on Salt Pond.
 F — 1959, Outdoor housekeeping in camp.
 G — Grandmother and Granddaughter Mrs. William Houston of Warwick

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between the scout executive and one of the camp leaders. (Good incentives — both worked!) The camp resembled an army camp, with tents in company streets, for the army way of camping was then the accepted method for “mass” camping. Bugles, parades for flag ceremonies, spit-and-polish uniforms, rigid inspection of gear and tents were the order of the day — and the girls loved it all! For some years, beginning in 1925, Camp Hoffman was the site of an annual national training camp for troop leaders and is used in this same way today for a concentrated period of summertime “Early Bird” training for new and “fly-up” leaders in the Rhode Island Council.

In the 1920s, a new profession of “paid workers” developed throughout the country, and Rhode Island’s first executives and field captains were part of this pioneering group. They organized troops and councils, trained adults, operated camps, developed standards and wrote How-To-Do materials to help the many volunteer adults provide a good program for all girls who wanted to be Scouts. State rallies were organized to stimulate activities and to give girls the feeling of belonging to a larger organization. A highlight of Newport Scouting was a ride on the Army Engineers’ boat up Narragansett Bay to such a rally.

Nationally as well as locally, prominent women were lending their aid to develop a strong organization. Rhode Island’s Mrs. Hoffman became a part of the national board, and served as national president in 1928-1930. Such people as Mrs. Herbert Hoover, an active leader and board member before the days of her husband’s presidency, and Dean James Russell of Columbia University served the growing movement well in the beginning years. One member of Newport Troop 1, Mrs. Malcolm Edgar, served in later years in many capacities, including national vice president.

At first, Girl Scouts were ages 10-17, but smaller sisters clamored to belong, and the Brownie program for 7, 8 and 9 year olds was adapted from the British. The first “pack” registered in Newport in 1923. Two Newport leaders, Mrs. Adolphus Staten and Miss Edith Ballinger Price, later became national leaders of the Brownie program. By 1930, the oldest girls were asking for more sophisticated activities. A group of girls in Providence formed such a troop, known as a “ship;” they were one of the first six Mariner groups in the country, and had a hand in developing this specialized program. Today’s Mariner Ship 28 of Cranston, descendant of the first ship, in 1968 received a Reader’s Digest Foundation grant for a special service project in wildlife conservation, one of 13 troops in the United States to receive a grant in that year, symbolizing the versatility of interests and service found in today’s Senior Scout program. Later, a Wing program was added for those girls with an interest in aviation.

In these years of growing, emphasis has always been on the feminine role of girls in homemaking and in the community. In the 1920s, the military influence which had been evident since the war years in the uniform and in marching activities was considered inappropriate for a girls’ organization, so the uniform was changed to a forest green, and the very first model of this new uniform was shown at a pageant marking the tenth anniversary of Scouting in Rhode Island, in 1927. Since that time, the color has remained green, for all except Brownies, but the style has changed many times. Hats have evolved from the broad-brimmed stiff hats to “sailor” hats to cloches to berets. Once dear to ladies’ hearts, hats now have less importance as part of the uniform. Anyway, hundreds of women had hundreds of ways of wearing the same hat, so they never were very “uniform.”

Camping was extended in the 1920s and 1930s to day camps, which gave inexperienced campers opportunities to enjoy outdoor fun and camping skills by the day, returning to their own homes at night. This type of camping reached not only younger girls, but also those whose families were not willing to allow them to go away overnight. It also proved a great adventure for low-income youngsters in city areas. Troop camping, planned and carried out by one troop and its leaders, has always been a popular form of camping, and the Rhode Island Council aided leaders by providing facilities and training. Today the 8 council camp facilities are used by weekend and vacation groups averaging more than 5,000 campers for the past 5 years. In a number of communities, Scout houses were established; seven of these are still serving as troop meeting places, adult training centers, locales for troops’ suppers, and daytime cookouts.

In the 1930s, Rhode Island troops enjoyed new national handbooks, and the girls’ magazine *The American Girl*. There were now three age levels — the Brownies, Intermediates and Seniors. International friendship had become important parts of the troop and camp programs. National and international camping opportunities were open to Seniors. Guide visitors from other countries came on international exchange projects. Girls from Rhode Island attended Camp Andree, the national camp for Senior girls. Some years later, selected Senior girls were to have opportunities at the World Association centers in Switzerland, Mexico or India, or in special projects in many countries. Many Rhode Island adults assisted with the World Conference which opened the Edith Macy Training Center in New York in 1926; through the years, hundreds of troop leaders, committee members, professional workers or camp leaders from the state have attended training courses and conferences at this center.

The 1940s brought another wartime atmosphere;

again Girl Scouts sought ways to serve their country. Farm aides and victory gardeners became the fashion; cooking with rationed food brought a new challenge to outdoor cooking; campers brought their food coupons to camp; fats and foil were collected; this time War Bonds rather than Victory Bonds were sold.

In World War II attention was given to emergency preparedness, as girls learned to use their outdoor skills, their first aid, their training in working with small children to help at home, or in the community in case of bombings. In Europe and the Far East, sister Guides were called upon to help in many actual war activities, some underground, some in bomb shelters, some in hospitals, some in refuges for children. In this country, such drastic action was not necessary, but the training has been put to good use by many girls and trained leaders in emergencies such as hurricanes, floods, ice storms, earthquakes and other disasters.

The postwar years brought great growth and great changes to Girl Scouting in Rhode Island and across the nation. A national program study in 1956 resulted in updated age level program, contemporary for today's girls and new age level groupings . . . Brownies, Juniors, Seniors and a separate Junior High level called Cadettes. Membership mushroomed, growing nationally by thousands to the 1970 figure of 3,750,000 girls and adults. Small local councils became so numerous the national organization spearheaded a ten-year reorganization project for larger administrative units of which the Rhode Island statewide consolidation in 1962 was a part.

New trends are now apparent in the handbooks used by today's Girl Scouts. Badges cover such activities as Family Camping, Radio-Television, Science, Traveler, World Neighbors, World Heritage, and Language. A troop may develop its own Space badge if it wishes to do so, though cooking, homemaking, sewing, crafts, outdoor cooking and camping are still the favorites they have always been. College campuses now have "Campus Gold" groups that have been formed by college students who want to retain their Scouting affiliation, and who perform many kinds of service to troops and in camp during their college years.

In the past decade, much attention has been focused nationally and in local communities on service to the handicapped and underprivileged. This concern is not new to Scouting. As early as 1919 troops were established in settlement houses in Barrington and Providence and in several mission churches in Providence. Since then, though with some year-to-year fluctuation in numbers due to the availability of volunteer leadership, "inner-city" Scouting has been steadily maintained in these areas. More recently, both independently and in cooperation with Community Action agencies, Girl Scouts of Rhode Island, Inc. has expanded its inner-

city services to include girls who are non-Scouts, and boys, too. An extensive campership program brings hundreds of girls each summer to day and resident camps, many of them by referral from other public and private agencies. Each year since 1964 the Council has conducted special day camps or summer activities programs for girls from disadvantaged areas in Warwick, Woonsocket, or Providence. Non-Scout teenagers have been trained by Girl Scouts to serve as paid Recreation Aides in summer programs of local community action agencies. A curriculum-supplement program of outdoor activity on both a twice weekly and whole week-whole summer basis has been provided for boys and girls from the Fox Point Community School at 2 different Girl Scout camps in 1968 and 1970.

HOW THEY'VE GROWN — in keeping up with trends in education, recreation, homemaking, worldwide interest and in becoming "involved", too, and in Senior girls' SPEAK-OUTS on prejudice and other current concerns.

HOW THEY'VE GROWN in numbers, too. Nothing demonstrates that growth better than the Golden Jubilee which was held in May 1970 at the Narragansett Track. This event, culminating the three-year 50th Anniversary observance, brought together nearly 12,000 Rhode Island Council Girl Scouts to show and to actively demonstrate present day interests and activities both indoors and outdoors, to show their youthful patriotism in the final review of hundreds of USA flags proudly carried by selected troop representatives; and, with more than 15,000 guests, baby to grandparent, watching, to launch ACTION '70 in Rhode Island, part of the nationwide Girl Scout anti-prejudice campaign for the 1970 decade. An ecumenical worship service was attended by girls and families of all faiths; a hundred girl chorus was assisted by guitar players from the Girl Scout ranks. •

Hundreds of thousands of girls have participated in this Scouting program that was launched in 1917 in Rhode Island; some have maintained membership and interest for most of these fifty years; three generations — daughter, mother and grandmother — proudly claim membership today. Many of today's leaders were once girls in troops, eager now to help today's generation find the same fun and learning and growing experiences.

Today's Council supports itself by the well-known Girl Scout Cookie Sale which pays for all the expense of developing and improving the 8 owned camping sites as well as contributing substantially toward the non-camping budget. Public support to general operations is given through the United Fund; to camping through gifts from civic and service organizations and interested individuals. Girls pay their own fees for summer camp, and individual girls and adults continue to pay \$1.00 annual dues for membership in the Scouting movement, the only



Girls demonstrating Pioneering skills, 1923.



A cooking class, Girl Scout headquarters, 1921.

financial contribution made locally to the national organization. Weekly dues of 5¢ to 25¢ set by each troop, and a small share of the earnings on each box of cookies sold, provide a treasury for the troop's own activities.

To ensure financial security for the generations ahead, the Council in 1965 as an outgrowth of the statewide consolidation, established the Girl Scouts of Rhode Island Trust Fund, a general endowment fund, whose interest is used each year to help support the Council's overall services. Through gifts and bequests from interested families and community friends it is hoped this Trust Fund will grow to cover an increasingly substantial part of the annual operating budget.

What of the future? Who knows? But surely Girl Scouts will be among the first to camp on the moon or on Mars, perhaps. And there are those who are *sure* that the first woman president of the United States is a girl in a Girl Scout troop *somewhere* today! It could be — say in the year 2000! If so, some of her training in citizenship, in group government, in looking wide at new horizons, in being concerned about other people will have been part of her growing up, as it has for so many, many girls in these past 50 Golden Years of Girl Scouting in Rhode Island.



"Old Timer" Mrs. Howard Earle shows early troop flag to 1970 Brownies.

Everyone likes to flip pancakes, 1927.



Troop 2, Riverside on Town Hall grounds, 1919.

