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25 Years of Scouting in Rhode Island

1910-1935

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Col. Charles E. Mulhearn
The Father of Rhode Island Scouting

It Started On A Street Corner

An Address

by

Col. G. Edward Buxton



*Delivered to the Narragansett Council, Boy Scouts
of America, at Rhodes-on-the-Pawtuxet, Cranston,
Rhode Island, January eighth, nineteen hundred
and thirty-five, to mark the occasion of the 25th
Anniversary of the Founding of the Boy Scout
Movement in Rhode Island.*



The emblem of the Rhode Island Boy Scouts, adopted March 21, 1911.

This seal, in the form of its anchor and lettering, follows the lines of the seal of Governor Benedict Arnold, the first Territorial Governor of Rhode Island.

The Rhode Island Boy Scouts still maintains its corporate identity as a financial and business organization.

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS AGO, two young lawyers met on the northwest corner of Westminster and Dorrance Streets. They had been close friends through several years of association in the Rhode Island National Guard. One was thirty-four years old,—the other was twenty-nine.

The older man was tall, straight,—a soldier from the top of his red head to his heels. He spoke with great animation and serious purpose; but from time to time, his face lit up with an unusual smiling charm, and humorous crinkles around his eyes. He was a natural leader, because he used his imagination and optimism and courage to help other people, and very rarely thought of himself. His life has reminded me of one of the early figures of the Roman Republic, like Cincinnatus. He had the love for his City and State which motivated Horatius. He shared the ideals of citizenship expressed by Cato and Cicero and Horace and Virgil. He also had a genius for friendship. He spent his life working for his City and State, and he died in the service of the Federal Government. His name was Charles E. Mulhearn, and there is a square in Providence which memorializes his spirit and his service.

The younger man of the two who met on the street corner that day, a quarter of a century ago, was I.

"Have you been reading about General Baden-Powell and his Scout movement for boys?" said Mulhearn. His interest had been caught by press notices and the further announcement that an organization called the "American Boy Scouts" was developing in Boston, under the leadership of the *Boston American*. Colonel Mulhearn had visited their headquarters, and obtained a copy of Baden-Powell's first Manual.

He gave me a copy to read, and said that if I was interested in inaugurating such a movement in Rhode Island with him, he would be willing to "take off his hat and coat," as he put it, and "go to work." I went home, and read the manual from cover to cover, met the Colonel the next day, and we pledged ourselves to this task.

Neither of us liked the idea of accepting the leadership of the American Boy Scouts, but since no other organization in America was formally incorporated, we felt it would be necessary to affiliate for the time being, in order to get the benefit of existing experience, and contact with the English movement. We had neither money, backers, headquarters, nor followers.

The records of the organization show that on September 6, 1910, a meeting was held in the office of the General Treasurer, Walter A. Read, at the State House. Colonel Mulhearn was elected Chief Scout of the State. Other officers elected were: Secretary, Judge Howard B. Gorham; Treasurer, Mr. Read; County Commissioners, G. Edward Buxton, Jr., for Providence, Roland G. Hazard for Washington County.

The next step in organization was a meeting called by me as Scout Commissioner of Providence County, in the old Talma Theatre, on October 6, 1910. We had secured the following Committee for Providence County who joined in supporting the call for the meeting: Ex-Governor James H. Higgins, Colonel Frank W. Matteson, Colonel Harry Cutler, Walter Callender, and Antonio A. Capotosto.



Colonel G. Edward Buxton

*The first Scout Commissioner—
who has helped Scouting grow
for 25 years*

I called the meeting to order, and State Treasurer Walter A. Read was elected to preside over the meeting, with Captain Everitte S. Chaffee as Secretary. It is my recollection that there were about one hundred and fifty citizens present. Colonel Mulhearn made an enthusiastic report of progress which had been achieved in the past month, stating that five troops had been formed, and announced the names of the three County Scout Commissioners, Major Charles W. Abbot, Jr., having been appointed for Bristol County.

The newspaper account states that Superintendent of Schools Randall J. Condon announced that the use of any school room in the city would be extended for Scout purposes, and Harry Cutler, treasurer of the County organization, announced that pledges had been obtained for approximately \$1,000.00 to further the expenses of organization work. The only salary proposed was for a stenographer in headquarters.

I recall that Mr. Frederick Roy Martin, then Editor of the *Journal*, surprised us at this meeting by announcing that his corporation would furnish headquarters for the Scout movement, rent free, for so long a period as we wished to avail ourselves of such facilities.

You will be interested to know that the same newspaper account includes among those who attended and spoke in support of the movement the name of James A. Williams, who little dreamed at the time that his 12-year-old son would eventually become one of Rhode Island's most useful citizens,—the Scout Executive and central personality of Scouting, as well as a conspicuous figure in the development of a great national movement.

It is significant in a state founded by Roger Williams, upon the conception of complete religious liberty and freedom of conscience, that from the outset, this movement was given the hearty approval of all denominations and sects, and that no religious group desired to limit to itself the benefits of Scouting. Among the many clergymen who supported our efforts on the basis of undivided citizenship and Americanism, I recall with grateful appreciation the Most Reverend James DeWolf Perry, Monsignor Peter E. Blessing, Rabbi Samuel Gup, and Dr. William H. P. Faunce.

By October 24, 1910, headquarters had been opened in Room 14 of the Journal Building, and Providence County had five troops.

At the beginning, Colonel Mulhearn and I jointly attended the ceremonies connected with the formation of these troops, but as the movement grew, we found it necessary to divide our time and alternate our responsibilities. I have always remembered the day on which I formed the Third Providence Troop in the Slater Avenue School, and I take a pardonable satisfaction in the recollection that I administered the oath and gave preliminary instructions to an enthusiastic and bright-eyed youngster, named Harold Williams.

It is impossible to reminisce in anything but the most sketchy fashion concerning the incidents and the personalities of those early years. Many of those leaders have received an honorable discharge from the scouting of this world. It is easy to believe that their vivid personalities and boundless energies are engaged in the promotion of citizenship and the common welfare in other camping grounds, bordering on unknown rivers and boundless seas.

There was a lot of fun in those early days. Judge Capotosto will remember the thrills and merriment of the episode in which he and I aided Commissioner Rathom in a brilliant night attack upon the Judge's troop as it lay dreaming at its fireside in the gloomy wood, to be awakened by ferocious and savage cries, terrorized by the crashing of John Rathom's two hundred and sixty-nine pounds in the nearby brush.

This movement owes much, in its formative days, to the personalities of John Rathom, Harry Cutler, and T. F. I. McDonnell. They were busy men. They had many responsibilities in the world of public affairs and business. But nothing in their busy lives assumed the importance of, or took precedence over, all other interests as did the Rhode Island Boy Scouts. These men had a vision of the future Republic, strengthened by sound bodies and healthy brains, supported by standards of self-discipline, and a lively sense of citizenship, which epitomizes the spirit of Scouting.

The great problem of Scoutmasters arose, and we were fortunate indeed in finding young men like Dawson Brown, Milton MacIntosh, Herbert Dean, Captain John England, Prescott Lovell, Harold Babcock, Bob Thackeray, Grafton Kenyon, Ben Utter, George Fish and others on that honorable roster who were willing to learn patiently, by trial and error, the technique of boy leadership, on a scale never before attempted.

It will be remembered that for a period of years, the Rhode Island Boy Scouts continued an independent existence from the Boy Scouts of America, although the latter had troops in both Newport and the Blackstone Valley. It was not our intention to be stubbornly provincial in our hesitation to merge our identity with what had become a national movement, although our action may be said to have reflected some typical Rhode Island characteristics. You will remember that our State, although the first to strike a blow in the Revolutionary War, was the last to assent to the formation of the Federal Government. A small, compact geographical unit is perhaps more likely to assert its individualistic identity than a larger territory, which possesses a greater sense of security.

However, this movement meant so much to those of us who had created it that we waited a while, to be sure that the heads of the national organization were actuated by similar purposes—that the good of the boy was being placed first, and that leadership was not inspired by either a hope of personal aggrandizement or a love of power. It may be that we were strengthened in our determination to go alone through some formative years by the far-sighted philanthropy of Captain Bucklin, whose generosity enabled us to finance our State-wide organization, and to build up that great laboratory experiment in troop camping, Camp Yawgoog.

Suffice it to say that in early 1917 a meeting took place in our headquarters between half a dozen of our Rhode Island leaders and the Chief Scout Executive of the Boy Scouts of America. After a few preliminary clashes of personality, we found we were speaking the same language, and without further hesitation, threw in our lot with that great national body.

Since those first days, which we celebrate tonight, the years have thundered past. The first Rhode Island Scouts are men of forty. Upon their competent shoulders have, these many years, rested the burdens and privileges of manhood,

in peace and in war. Some of them fought through the Valley of the Aire and the Hindenberg Line, in our wartime regiments. Some died, with their young American comrades, that another generation might grow in usefulness and dignity through at least an interval of peace and security.

I do not know or care much what will be the economic order of tomorrow, if the Boy Scouts of America determine the quality of our future men. Our civilization will be assured. Out of this small experiment in citizenship and in the art of living has sprung a mighty force, which shall bind in ties of brotherhood the races which have inherited our continent.

Wave after wave of Scouts will advance, and the arena of modern American life will be a better place for the weak and the strong alike, because you leaders have imparted your vision of truth and courage and resourcefulness and unselfishness; because you have demonstrated that the forces of Nature are friendly to the trained man; because you preached the value of co-operative action for the common good, and have set an example of self-discipline based on loyalties and self-respect; because you have fostered by word and example a sense of pride in the obligations of citizenship, far more potent than the fear of the guard-house.

You have asked me tonight to talk a while about our beginnings, and some of the early leaders. I feel the inadequacy of my remarks. One would wish to say much of the experiments, aspiring failures, and human accomplishment of a twenty-five year saga in the lives of thousands of men and boys. I should have liked to pay tribute to the subsequent leaders of Rhode Island scouting. The roster of their names is written in the hearts of those they served. They belong to the only aristocracy that matters—those who demand much of themselves.

I charge you to accept your larger role, and your greater destiny, under the splendid leadership of your present Scout Executive. No man more justifies his entrance upon the stage of manhood than do you, in the parts you play. And none will win to larger rewards than you receive in what you do.

May I close with one word which I utter without reservation, on behalf of the Rhode Island founders, no longer here. You have built far beyond their dream. You have justified their deepest faith. I seem to hear the living spirit of Scouting speaking to each of us through those lines of Rudyard Kipling:

*"Also we will make promise. So long as the Blood endures,
I shall know that your good is mine. Ye shall feel that my strength is yours:
In the day of Armageddon, at the last great fight of all,
That our House stand together, and the pillars do not fall."*





This badge of the Boy Scouts of America is the sign of the north taken from the mariner's compass. In the centuries of adventure, when men of courage sailed strange seas and made trails across unsettled continents, this three point sign came to stand for the north and the guiding point for the explorers, pioneers, woodsmen and scouts.

The three points refer to the three points of the Scout Oath. The two stars symbolize the ideals of truth and knowledge which are foundations of strong Scout citizenship, and they guide the Scout into the out-of-doors. The Eagle is the National emblem of the United States of America, symbolizing freedom. The scroll at the bottom of the badge is turned up at its ends like a Scout's mouth to represent a Scout's smile.

The knot at the bottom is a reminder that a Scout does a "good turn" to some one daily.

High Tides in Rhode Island Scouting

A Brief History

by

Scout Executive J. Harold Williams



1910

THE BOY SCOUT WAVE, swelling out from Lord Robert Baden-Powell's first Scout camp on Brownsea Island in 1907, swept into Rhode Island in 1910. It brought together early in the year, four Newport boys at the home of Harold C. Warden, one of the number, to form a patrol. It caused square-jawed 17-year-old Milton R. MacIntosh to "organize a troop" in the spring among the Eddy Street gangs of South Providence. It started a dozen or more boys meeting a little later in Washington Park under the leadership of Deputy Superintendent of Police John A. Murray.

It threw together, on a Providence street corner early in the summer, two young men who liked boys, Colonel Charles E. Mulhearn, 34 years old, and Captain G. Edward Buxton, Jr., 29 years old,—and started a conversation which resulted in the formation of the Scout organization in the State.

It swept into the heart of that great personality, John R. Rathon, editor of the *Providence Journal*, and captured his growing interest and enthusiasm which gave Scouting its driving force and character during its early years.

In September, 1910, the first sponsoring organization was formed and the Washington Park unit was recognized as the First Providence Troop with a membership of 64 Scouts and with Herbert R. Dean, a young cavalryman, as the first Scoutmaster in the State.

That was 25 years ago.

1935

On January 8, 1935, at the 25th annual meeting of the Narragansett Council, Boy Scouts of America, we recognized 231 troops with 5,479 Scouts and an adult membership of 1,615. In addition, there were 13 Cub Packs with a membership of 244 Cubs and 60 Cub leaders.

In 1910, Scouting in Rhode Island was an idea.

In 1935, it is a reality—with a great and steadily growing membership; a magnificent camping reservation at Yawgoog; scores of district and troop hiking sites; a successful leadership training program; complete district organization; the Jamboree recognized as the greatest show in the State; a loyal and enthusiastic corps of leaders of increasingly higher type; and a National reputation.

In these 25 years, our troops have graduated approximately 25,000 boys from the ranks of Scouting into the ranks of citizenship. Hundreds of these boys have personally testified to the value of Scouting in their lives. Who knows what it has done for others—what leisure-time happiness it has created; what characters it has moulded; what lives it has saved?

During these 25 years, death has taken many of Scouting's staunch supporters—Colonel Mulhearn, John Rathom, General Abbot, Harry Cutler, Walter Read, Frank B. McSoley, Arthur L. Lake, George L. Gross, George Bucklin, Walter Hidden and Dr. Charles Hitchcock. T. F. I. McDonnell has been ill and confined to his home for a long time.

Others who have been active through the years are now out of active service but give Scouting continued interest and support, including Colonel Buxton, N. Stuart Campbell, George B. Utter, William B. MacColl, Judge Howard B. Gorham, Judge A. A. Capotosto, Grafton I. Kenyon, Richard S. Aldrich, E. S. Chaffee, Donald S. Babcock, Carl B. Marshall, Professor Harold S. Bucklin, Colonel H. Anthony Dyer, Charles C. Marshall, Dr. Dennett L. Richardson, G. Maurice Congdon, E. S. Hartwell, Robert Johnston and Andrew Meiklejohn.

Others carry on—Donald North, T. Dawson Brown, Edward S. Moulton, Professor Fred W. Marvel, Wilbur A. Scott, and a host of younger men with the same faith and enthusiasm in boyhood.

A Personal Touch

The writer was one of the first Scouts to join in September, 1910, and it has been the great privilege of his life to have grown up with Scouting in Rhode Island and with the personalities which have made it.

Will not this brief historical sketch be more readable and more pleasing if written in reminiscent and personal style?

* * * *

My father brought home one night a red-covered book, *Scouting for Boys* by Lieut. Gen. Sir Robert S. S. Baden-Powell, and laid it on the table. "Son," he said, "you might read this and see what you think of it."

By the next morning, I had gone through it as only a 12-year-old can devour a book. "Dad," I said, "I want to be one."

"You form a patrol," father explained, "and then report to Colonel Charles E. Mulhearn, the probation officer."

At school, the Owl patrol was organized, and Joe Cummings, as patrol leader, and I, as assistant, found ourselves knocking at Colonel Mulhearn's office door next Saturday morning "to report."

We were scared. A colonel is a colonel and a probation officer is a probation officer. Charles E. Mulhearn, however, was a man. He rose, shook hands with us, told us he was our friend, and treated us like men. From that day on, he was one of my heroes.

Col. Mulhearn assigned the Owls to the Third Providence Troop, forming at Slater Avenue school with Prescott W. Lovell as Scoutmaster, and on the next Saturday we marched into the school yard and reported. That morning, I met my second great Scout hero, whose lustre has never faded, G. Edward Buxton, Jr. He invested the troop and initiated us into the first mysteries of Scoutcraft.

The First State Organization

By September 6, 1910, the meeting of Col. Mulhearn and Capt. Buxton had borne fruit and the first State Boy Scout Committee was formed at a meeting in the State House. Col. Mulhearn was elected Chief Scout; Judge Howard B. Gorham, Secretary; and State Treasurer Walter A. Read, Treasurer of the Committee. Capt. Buxton was named Scout Commissioner for Providence County and the other charter members were Walter R. Wightman, Agent of the State Board of Charities and Corrections; Dr. William McDonald, Jr., former Congressman Oscar Lapham, Capt. Edgar R. Barker, Deputy Superintendent John A. Murray, John H. Mason, Capt. S. Frank Nolan and Deputy Sheriff Lewis P. Allen. This group applied for a charter from the American Boy Scouts in Boston which was granted.

Scout Commissioner Buxton formed his Providence County Committee, consisting of Judge Antonio A. Capotosto, James H. Higgins, Frank W. Matteson, Harry Cutler and Walter Callender, and called a citizens' meeting on October 6 in the old Talma Theatre (now the South Main Street Boys' Club) to secure moral and financial support. He got both. Superintendent of Schools Randall J. Condon offered the use of any school room in the city for Scout purposes and Treasurer Harry Cutler collected \$1,000 in pledges.

By October 24, Scout Headquarters had been opened up in the Journal Building, and Providence had five Scout troops—the First Providence Troop, Washington Park; Milton R. MacIntosh's South Providence aggregation had been recognized as the Second Providence Troop; Prescott Lovell's was the Third; Charles R. Stark, Jr., formed the Fourth Providence on the West Side, and John Kelly of the Police Department had become Scoutmaster of the Fifth Providence at the Boys' Club.

There were also two troops in Cranston and one in East Providence. Organization had also begun in South Kingstown under Rowland G. Hazard, Scout Commissioner for Washington County, and in Bristol under Major Charles W. Abbot, Jr., Commissioner for that County.

The Great Old Days of 1911

By March 12, 1911, there were 600 Scouts in Providence County and 200 additional in the rest of the State. On that day, a meeting was held at Scout Headquarters in the Journal Building which severed connection with the American Boy Scouts, a movement fostered by the Hearst papers, and set up an independent State organization—The Rhode Island Boy Scouts. Major Abbot, then Adjutant General of the State, was elected Chief Scout for the State and John R. Rathom, Scout Commissioner for Providence County.

As a result of this meeting, a State Charter was granted the Rhode Island Boy Scouts on April 13, 1911, the incorporators including Charles W. Abbot, Jr., Edgar R. Barker, E. Merle Bixby, Harris H. Bucklin, G. Edward Buxton, Jr., Walter R. Callender, N. Stuart Campbell, Antonio A. Capotosto, Patrick P. Curran, Harry Cutler, Frank T. Easton, George W. Gardiner, Howard B. Gorham, Frederick H. Jackson, Ambrose Kennedy, Thomas F. I. McDonnell, Harold L. Madison, Frank W. Matteson, George L. Miner, Charles E. Mulhearn, John R. Rathom, Walter A. Read, Edward A. Stockwell and R. Livingston Beekman.

Well do I remember the thrill of buying my first Scout uniform at the Outlet and parading the neighborhood streets to show off. What a funny uniform it seems today. The trousers and leggings were all one piece and the coat had a stand-up collar. The little knapsack (capable of holding about two sandwiches and a pickle) was labeled R.I.B.S., so that the "wise guys" on the corner called us "Rhode Island Butt Shooters." A tin eagle, with extended wings as big as a searchlight, was pinned to the front of the campaign hat and completed this khaki ensemble. The uniform was wonderful then, but it is a sorry picture when contrasted with the shirt and neckerchief, shorts or laced breeches and stockings of today.

We had our first chance to see ourselves all together on May 23, 1911, when Mrs. Aram J. Pothier, wife of the Governor, presented the Providence County troops with Rhode Island Boy Scout flags on the State House steps.

As each troop reached the vicinity of the State House it was disbanded and the Scouts were told to hide themselves in the building and about the grounds. I found myself in the rotunda, crouched by the staircase with an English lad from the Greystone troop. The official party gathered out on the steps. Commissioner John Rathom, his uniform consisting of a Scout hat, gave the signal and nine-year-old mascot-bugler Harold Kenyon of my troop sounded the "Assembly." The State House, the terraces, the walls and every nearby street and freight car rained kids. We swarmed over the lawn and fell in by troops in front of the steps.

We boys in the Third were greatly fascinated by Scoutmaster Dean of the First. His cavalry tunic fitted him so snugly and smartly that we were sure he had corsets on underneath.

The band played and each troop marched forward while its Scoutmaster received a R.I.B.S. flag from Mrs. Pothier's hands. Then the Governor spoke; we passed in review and marched home.

A Journal Reporter Writes a Sentence

I remember it as a grand occasion, but listen to what the *Journal's* reporter said: "All the manoeuvres, the approach of each troop to receive its new flag from the hands of the Governor's wife, the massing in battalion formation afterward, and all the other varied movements were greeted with continuous cheering, which culminated in a storm of applause when the entire brigade swept past the steps in review, a solid massed body of boys in perfect alignment with colors flying, bands playing, and breathing forth a spirit of patriotism and pride impossible to describe in words."

In those days, when they wrote a sentence, they wrote a sentence—and sentiment, too.

On Memorial Day, we assembled to form the first Scout Guard of Honor for the Civil War veterans. On June 20, we paraded in Providence, 1,000 strong, and Mayor Fletcher closed off Exchange Place and turned over the keys to the city. Just three days later, we turned out again to mass on Exchange Place and wait for hours to welcome President Taft to Providence. Finally he arrived; a Scout presented him with a picture, and he went. As we plodded home, the "literary cove" in my patrol remarked, "Much Ado About Nothing."

Since then, I have always had a horror of keeping boys in line—waiting. But Scouting in the early days had a military tinge. Troops were big—50 to 75 boys—and were drilled, and drilled and drilled. That was one of the reasons why they and the boys didn't last too long, after the first rush of excitement was over. Drilling has never satisfied the adolescent urges, and thank Heaven, we are learning better ways.

The First Scout Camps

The summer of 1911 saw the first Scout camps. Our hikes had been pretty much sandwich affairs, but had gotten us all keyed up about going to camp. My troop and the First Providence conducted the first Scout camp in the State on Prudence Island. (The *Journal* said, "The first encampment in America to be devoted exclusively to Boy Scouts.") It ran from June 25 to July 2. I didn't know how "to fold my blankets to keep my feet in nights; Col. Mulhearn and John Rathom got lost in the fog coming to visit us; we visited the fleet at Newport; and all in all had a grand time.

In August, the Rhode Island Boy Scouts conducted a big camp in Greystone, in command of Scoutmaster Stark, attended by many of the troops. The great event of the season took place on the night of August 10, when Commissioner Rathom, following several days of warning to the campers that they were to be "attacked," hired a special train, loaded it with Scouts, and "moved" on Greystone. As the train approached the town, Mr. Rathom had all the lights put out and had all the Scouts lie on the floor between the seats. The train slid quietly by the camp and the sentries, and stopped outside Georgiaville. Attacking columns were formed; rockets were set off; and a grand "battle" was enjoyed by all hands, but by no one more than by Mr. Rathom.



John R. Rathom

*A real friend of "the greatest
and most wonderful experimental laboratory on earth,"
the American Boy*

Stories of John R. Rathom

Mr. Rathom was a gigantic man, physically as well as in other ways. When his associates finally persuaded him to get a uniform, he couldn't get into the trousers until his tailor inserted a large "V" in the seat. This "V" was always an organization joke.

Mr. Rathom used to tell a story on himself about forming a troop in Wanskuck. During the organization meeting, Mr. Rathom gave the youngsters a talk on the evils of smoking. He told them that no growing boy ought to smoke and drove his point home by telling them that the big African game hunters of his acquaintance did not smoke on safari in order to have steady aim when charged by wild beasts.

"As I came out of the hall after the meeting," Mr. Rathom said, "there was a youngster smoking a cigarette. I asked him, 'Didn't you hear my speech?' 'Sure,' he replied. 'Well, why are you smoking?' I asked. The boy looked at me in disgust; 'Hell, mister, there ain't no lions in Wanskuck.'"

He was a real personality to all us Scouts. I was fortunate enough to get to know him personally when I was picked to take a leading part in the Scout Minstrel Show at the old Opera House on February 5-6, 1912. Mr. Rathom had written a very funny parody on Mark Antony's oration over Caesar's body and I used to go down to his office after school to rehearse it.

The show was a great success. At the time "Alexander's Rag Time Band" was all the rage. On the way to the theatre for the second show, Mr. Rathom heard a hurdy gurdy playing the tune. I remember his calling Scoutmaster Arthur Lake to him back stage: "Lake, I want that hurdy gurdy on stage. Go and get it. I don't know where it is, but go and get it. Don't argue. Get out." Mr. Lake got the hurdy gurdy.

One could go on for hours telling John R. Rathom stories—about his visits to troops, his battles, his trips to the camps with Capt. Jack Crawford and many another character, his appearances at rallies in an old hat with a line of fish hooks caught into the band.

J. R.'s Last Message

May I tell just one more. It was on September 25, 1923. Mr. Rathom was in his last illness, abed in his cabin at Kennebago Lake, Maine. I had become Scout Executive of the organization, and was at Kennebago with other New England executives for a conference. Three of us, Roy Berry of Boston, Don North and I, went in to see Mr. Rathom just as the sun was setting over Spotted Mountain.

His great form had almost wasted away. We asked him if he read much.

"No, I can't read," he said, "but I can remember most every novel I ever read—characters, action, even some dialogue. Today, I have been going through the *Tale of Two Cities*. It's easy reading. It saves your eyes."

Then he gave us his last message to Scouting: *"The American boy—that complicated bundle of contradictions—is the greatest and most wonderful experimental laboratory on earth, and he can be made either the hope or the despair of the world. It is to the former goal that the efforts of the Boy Scouts of America are pledged; and as long as our people still hold to the basic virtues the work cannot fail. God speed every activity in that direction."*



The Boy Scouts of America

Outside Rhode Island, the American Boy Scout organization was going out of existence, and the Boy Scouts of America, chartered in the District of Columbia on February 8, 1910, was becoming the great National Scout organization.

Newport and Pawtucket had never become affiliated with the Rhode Island Boy Scouts, although the Rhode Island Boy Scouts had organized one Boy Scout troop in Pawtucket, with Stewart Little as Scoutmaster in May, 1911, which lasted a short while.

In Newport, Ernest Thompson Seton, Chief Scout of the Boy Scouts of America, lectured at the Y.M.C.A. in the summer of 1910, and from this meeting an organization developed which resulted in a committee meeting on January 8, 1911, at the home of Mrs. John Nicholas Brown, with some 25 persons interested in Scouting present. In February, 1911, the Newport Council was organized at the office of Superintendent of Schools Lull. Among those present were: Major Lorillard Spencer of New York, Austin T. Sands, Capt. W. McCarthy Little, Commander P. W. Hourigan, H. W. N. Powell, Stephen P. Cabot, Wilfred H. Chapin, D. Leroy Dresser, Walter A. Wright, A. R. C. Gatztenmeier, Henry S. Hendy and Mr. Lull.

Harold Warden's original patrol had grown into Troop 1, Newport, with Austin L. Sands as Scoutmaster. Mr. Gatztenmeier became a Scoutmaster in February, 1911, and also became the first Scout Commissioner for Newport. Mr. Gatztenmeier's service has been continuous since that time.

Until 1920, Newport was a second class council with Mr. Gatztenmeier as Commissioner. In that year a first class council was organized with Robert E. Gurley as Scout Executive. He was followed, after two years service, by Lawrence K. Ebbs, who held office one year.

Newport then became a second class council again without an Executive until 1929 when it merged with the State organization and became the Newport Area of Narragansett Council.

Scouting in Blackstone Valley

The first Boy Scouts of America troops were started in Blackstone Valley in 1911. A unit in the First Baptist Church in Pawtucket was recognized as Troop 1, Pawtucket, with Albert L. Copeland as Scoutmaster. Troop 2, Pawtucket, was organized by the Bethany Free Baptist Church with Thomas A. Holt as Scoutmaster. Mr. Holt's service has been continuous since his first commission as a Scoutmaster.

Andrew Meiklejohn and Robert Johnston were instrumental in the organization of the Pawtucket-Central Falls Council, Boy Scouts of America, in 1916, and Mr. Meiklejohn became first President. The Scout Executives of Pawtucket included: John D. McEwen, 1917-1918; Charles A. Holmes, 1919-1920; George W. Fairchild, 1920; William Lee Abbot, 1922-1930.

The Council operated a camp at Quonset Point in 1918; Camp Sterling near Hope in 1919 and 1920; at Norton in 1922; and Camp Hill on Flat River Reservoir in Coventry from 1923 to 1930.

At the time of the merger of the Pawtucket-Central Falls Council with the Narragansett Council in the fall of 1930, the former's territory included Pawtucket, Central Falls, Lincoln and Cumberland, with a membership of approximately 20 troops.

The Woonsocket Council was organized in 1924 with John C. Cosseboom as President, and Arthur S. Gemme as Scout Executive, who was followed by James B. Dodds. Mr. Dodds was Executive at the time of the merger of Woonsocket Council with the Narragansett Council in the fall of 1930.

One of the big accomplishments of the Woonsocket group was the acquisition of a 125 acre camp-site on Wakefield Pond. This camp, which was named Winnesuket, was purchased by the Kiwanis Club of Woonsocket and deeded to three trustees who lease it to the Woonsocket Scouts.

Boys' Life Starts Here

Boys' Life, now the official Boy Scout magazine, got its start in Rhode Island in 1911. The first issue was published in Boston on March 1, 1911, by Joseph J. Lane, a young man of that city, who was one of the first Scouts and Scout leaders. Later the magazine moved to Providence when financial support was furnished by Edward M. Fay. On July 19, 1912, it was purchased by the Boy Scouts of America to become one of the leading publications of the country.

The Boy Scouts of America urged the Rhode Island Boy Scouts to merge, and much correspondence was exchanged and many conferences held. Mr. Rathon and his associates felt that the national organization was too cumbersome, too sectarian, and that it was not making an appeal to all classes of boys.

But both organizations tempered their views and methods. Congress chartered the Boy Scouts of America on June 15, 1916. The approach of the World War was bringing the national organization governmental recognition and, in May, 1917, the Rhode Island Boy Scouts voted to merge with the Boy Scouts of

America. The Rhode Island Boy Scouts retained its corporate identity, but the operating body became known as the Greater Providence Council, Boy Scouts of America. The National Organization was given the right to organize other councils in Newport, Pawtucket and Woonsocket.

Leaders of '12, '13, '14 and '15

But to go back again, Gen. Abbot was succeeded by Col. Harry Cutler as Chief Scout for 1912 and 1913. His speeches condemning racial prejudices and extolling patriotism are not to be forgotten.

The next Chief Scout, in 1914, was Frank B. McSoley, an efficient young engineer and early wireless expert who had made a mark as a Scoutmaster. He was our Beau Brummel and made a grand figure in uniform—field glasses and all.

Arthur L. Lake, the popular Court House Superintendent and North Providence Scoutmaster, was Chief Scout in 1915. He was a very stout man, and I will never forget the fall on the ice he took outside the door of my troop meeting place. It broke up the troop meeting. But Arthur Lake never stood on dignity. He was a real friend to us all.

In South Kingstown, Grafton I. Kenyon was Scoutmaster of a very large and flourishing unit, formed in 1911.

Scouting was going now in Warwick, where it had been organized in 1911 by Edward L. Waterman; in Bristol, started in 1912 with George R. Fish as Scoutmaster; and in Westerly where it had been inaugurated in 1913 by George B. Utter, Robert G. Thackeray and Silas T. Nye.

The Greystone camp was followed by Camp Rodman in 1912 and 1913 at Kettle Hole Pond, Allenton. I shall never forget the long hike from the cars at Wickford; the tents on the hill top; the evening parade and the dish washing in the cold water of the brook.

Our next organization camp was on Mount Hope during 1914 and 1915, through the courtesy of R. F. Haffenreffer, Jr. The camping technique was improving some. We had warm water to wash dishes in. Mount Hope was a very charming camp and among my papers is a faded newspaper page of the *Sunday Journal* feature section in which I contributed an article on "A Rhode Island Boy Scout's Experiences on Mount Hope."

We Lose Ground

The organization had been losing ground during 1914 and 1915. The first wave of enthusiasm both on the part of the boys and men was wearing off. Leadership training efforts were inadequate. The lack of a printed manual was felt, although a second and first class badge had been designed and made available in 1914. Funds were scarce.

The volunteers directing the State and county organizations found it hard to give the time needed to keep troops going; to recruit new leaders; to replace those resigning; to form new troops. John I. Rancourt had been employed as

Assistant Commissioner to take charge of the headquarters in 1911, followed by John E. England who served from 1912 to 1916. Their work, however, was more secretarial than executive.

Only one troop formed in 1910 has continued for 25 years without a breakdown and a period of inactivity. That troop is the First Providence Troop, and one of its traditions is that the troop has never missed a meeting.

In January, 1914, T. Dawson Brown organized the Second East Providence Troop and began his outstanding Scouting career. In March, 1915, I became a Scoutmaster, reorganizing my old troop, the Third Providence.

By the first of 1916, the membership, which in 1912 had probably reached about 1,400, had fallen to approximately 500. There was bickering among the Scoutmasters and but few activities. Affairs had reached a crisis. The Advisory Committee acted and Col. Buxton was chairman of the committee which brought to Rhode Island from Springfield, Donald C. North as the first real paid executive of the organization.

The First Executive Officer

Mr. North, who had been in Boys' Club work and probation work in the Massachusetts city, took up his duties early in 1916 with the title of Chief Scout. Of course, all the "independent" Rhode Island Scoutmasters resented an outsider's coming in "to boss us."

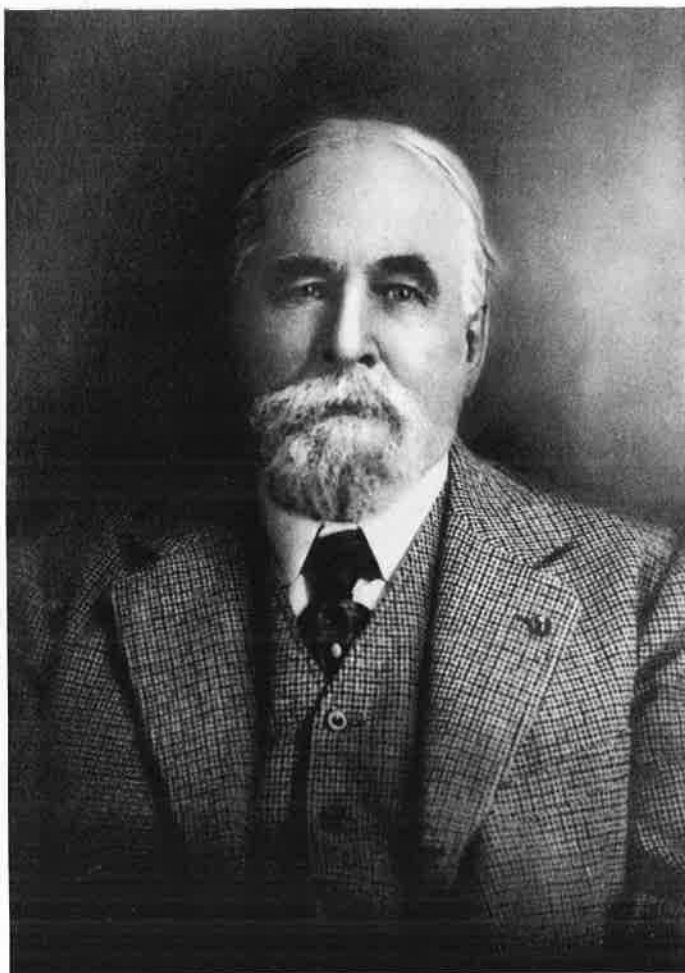
But Don North shortly won us all over. He had two methods. One was the inviting you out to a beefsteak supper and the other was selling himself. His winning personality, his "line of jolly" and his sense of appreciation made us all "North Boosters" in a month or two.

Things began to boom again. Don North was a promoter. The organization raised some money. A little manual was printed. Scoutmasters' lectures were arranged. Don made speeches and galavanted around the State from Narragansett to Woonsocket. He started the Boy Scout column in the *Sunday Journal*.

His greatest contribution was the fixing of our camping reservation at Yawgoog. He sold the organization the need for a permanent campsite, and then proceeded to find it. He visited about every lake or pond in the State and two sites were especially favored, Larkin's Pond and Yawgoog Pond. Larkin's Pond was lined with reeds and surrounded by fields and groves without a rock. Yawgoog was lined with ledges and surrounded by forest and rocks. Larkin's was nice. Yawgoog was rugged. The Boy Scouts took Yawgoog. Later the Girl Scouts located at Larkin's.

Camp Yawgoog opened on June 24, 1916, on the old Palmer farm, leased from the heirs. That fall, purchase negotiations were begun and by December, the Rhode Island Boy Scouts owned 130 acres on the shore of Yawgoog Pond.

The Chief Scout was busy. He had all the old-timers working and was bringing in new blood. New troops were forming in the fall. A rally and convention were held. The numbers were increasing again.



Capt. George Bucklin

*A Civil War Veteran
who saw the possibilities of Scouting for
the training of Youth*

Then Came the War and Merger with the B. S. A.

Then came the War in 1917, followed by the merger with the Boy Scouts of America on May 22, 1917. We all became Boy Scouts of America in the Greater Providence Council. T. F. I. McDonnell was elected President. Don North became Scout Executive. We changed our badges and plunged into war service.

We had mobilizations and patrolled beaches. We planted corn (some of which was harvested). We sold Liberty Bonds and War Savings Stamps; collected funds for the Red Cross, gathered fruit pits and tin foil; located black walnut, raised flags, secured food conservation pledges, suspected spies, and performed a hundred and one other "back home" war services.

In the Second Liberty Loan, we sold \$399,700 in bonds; in the Third, \$452,550; and in the Fourth, \$404,950. Scouts also sold \$12,963 worth of War Savings Stamps.

The organization lost many Scoutmasters who went into service, and the Scout Executive had his hands full filling the vacancies. But he bolstered up the morale with a big conference the last of 1917 by bringing to Rhode Island all the "big bugs" from National Headquarters—Chief Scout Executive James E. West, National Scout Commissioner Daniel Carter Beard, Director of Education Lorne W. Barclay, "Pine Tree" James A. Wilder, Chief Sea Scout, and Chief Scout Librarian Franklin K. Mathiews—an array of national Scout talent never since equaled here.

The membership in 1917 reached over 2,000.

Under the leadership of Mr. McDonnell, Mr. North and others, plans were laid the first of 1918 for a big financial campaign for \$40,000 to cover a three-year budget, and George L. Gross was secured as campaign chairman. In March, the drive was held and more than \$52,000 was raised.

In February, Mr. North resigned to become Superintendent of Sockanosset School, and was succeeded as Scout Executive by Raymond W. Seamans of this city, who held office until the fall of 1918.

Our Benefactor, Capt. George Bucklin

Capt. George Bucklin, a Civil War veteran, is the great benefactor of Rhode Island Scouting. A native Rhode Islander, Capt. Bucklin had spent much of his life in the West. In the early days of Scouting in Providence, some unknown Scout performed Capt. Bucklin a service. The boy refused a tip as a good Scout should, and this captured the veteran's interest. He talked with John Rathom about Scouting and learned about its aims and purposes.

Capt. Bucklin died on August 25, 1918, and bequeathed a large sum of money in trust for the Rhode Island Boy Scouts, part of which was to be used in the erection of a memorial building. This fund has made possible the purchase of the great Yawgoog reservation of 550 acres, the erection of the magnificent Bucklin

Memorial buildings at Yawgoog as a year-round camping and training center, and the carrying on of our work in progressive and militant style.

There is a tablet at Yawgoog which says: "Scouts, When Passing This Spot, Salute the Memory of Capt. George Bucklin." We *do* salute him.

A New Scout Executive

In December, 1918, the vacancy in the Scout Executive's office was filled by a partnership. J. Harold Williams was elected Acting Scout Executive to share the work of the position with Deputy Scout Commissioner T. Pitman Greene, a Spanish War veteran who was a very active and successful Scout leader. This arrangement lasted until the fall of 1919 when Mr. Williams was made the Scout Executive, which position he has held ever since.

A survey of our active Scout membership the first of 1919 revealed that the Scout enrollment had dropped to approximately 1,000. An intensive program of activities was developed and the work of the Court of Honor promoted with many Scouts winning merit badges, until in March, 1919, James J. Deery of Troop 15, Providence, became the Council's first Eagle Scout. Deery is now an officer in the regular army. We turned out en masse to welcome the soldiers home in May, 1919, and in June, 1,200 Scouts paraded the streets of Providence and held a rally at Brown University as a public demonstration. New troops began to form and the enrollment was again on the upgrade.

The last 16 years, in which our membership has grown from 1,000 to 5,500 Scouts, have been very personal years to the writer—years marked with the happiest kind of associations with loyal and inspired workers.

Leaders of the Last 16 Years

T. F. I. McDonnell was President when I took office. He had been one of the incorporators of the Rhode Island Boy Scouts and had been Treasurer and an active worker before he became President in 1917. He continued as head of the organization through 1921, and as an active member of the Board until his illness several years ago restricted his activities. His interest in the development of Scouting is still very keen.

Mr. McDonnell's charming personality and his friendship meant much to me as a 21-year-old executive and I shall always have the greatest affection for him. His enthusiasm as a public speaker and his vigor as a worker in the community life of Providence were of the greatest value to Scouting.

George L. Gross, as Chairman of the Board of Directors in 1918 and 1919, gave us a sound business administration. N. Stuart Campbell, another incorporator, served as Chairman of the Board in 1920 and 1921 and, when that office was abolished by a complete revision of the by-laws, became President in 1922. To him we owe our sound financial footing.

William B. MacColl, as President during 1923, 1924, 1925 and 1926, threw his vigorous personality into the work and was instrumental in the development of the intermediate district organizations which had been so badly needed in a great organization covering most of the State.

T. Dawson Brown, who started as a Scoutmaster in 1914 and who had served as Council Secretary and Chairman of the most important Council Committees, became President in 1927, holding office during 1928, 1929, 1930, 1931 and 1932. His was a most vigorous administration, perhaps the most vigorous and most noteworthy. During his term, the Jamboree, that great Scout circus at the Auditorium, was inaugurated, and the purchase of all the land surrounding Yawgoog Pond was accomplished.

The finest achievement was the bringing together, in one fine State organization, of the Newport, Blackstone Valley, Woonsocket and Greater Providence Councils, under the name of Narragansett Council. It was Mr. Brown who guided these mergers in 1929 and 1930 and who worked out the present plan of Council operation.

It must be noted also that when Mr. Brown's term as President was finished, he went back to the most important job he could find in Scouting, that of being a Scoutmaster.

F. C. Pearce Drummond, another Scoutmaster grown up into Council leadership, is our present popular President.

I cannot forget the men who have served as Scout Commissioners during these 16 years—Col. Buxton, Col. Everitte S. Chaffee, Donald S. Babcock, Prof. William G. Vinal of the College of Education, who became an Eagle Scout to show the boys the way; Mr. Drummond, Albert E. Lownes and now Donald North, still at work for Scouting.

Edward S. Moulton came into Scouting in 1918 to audit our books and we have never let him go. Since 1920, he has been our devoted and efficient Treasurer, always more interested in the boys than in just keeping books. To him, we owe that delightful Rhode Island Scouting event—the annual Squantum dinner to the Scoutmasters which was begun in 1923.

Yawgoog

Prof. Fred W. Marvel came to camp during the summer of 1919 as a visitor and was so impressed with the activities and discipline of the camp that he became a "Scouting bug." In 1920, he became Chairman of the Camp Committee for 10 years. Ever since, he has preached the gospel of Yawgoog far and wide until he achieved the nickname of "the guy that owns Camp Yawgoog."

He saw Yawgoog grow in enrollment from 400 to 3,000 a season. He saw the building of Three Point Lodge and Rathom Lodge and the development of the camp from a mass unit to a series of divisions of troop camps, with all the attendant equipment and personnel.

It was a proud moment for him and for T. Dawson Brown when on July 8, 1928, in the presence of 1,000 people, the 550 acres of Yawgoog pond and surrounding forestland were dedicated as a "Scout Adventureland Forever."

We should remember always the words of Col. Buxton that day as he made the dedication address :

"We dedicate these acres to the memory of the men who have made it possible. We dedicate this camp in recognition of the shy, yet deep, sense of duty which lies in the heart of the boy; we dedicate it to the spirit of greater understanding in future generations; and we dedicate it, finally, looking into the far distant future, to the time of a better, wiser and happier race."

But the story of Yawgoog is not complete. How can Cushman Anthony and I ever forget that Sunday afternoon of May 4, 1930, when the greatest forest fire in the history of our State swept down upon our beloved Yawgoog and devastated our glorious woods. We were there, powerless to stop it, and it laid its mark upon us as upon the forests.

How the loyal lovers of Yawgoog rallied there the next morning as the fire raged on; how a month later they set out 25,000 white pine seedlings among the charred stumps; how they have come camping there just the same these last years as nature strives to heal the wounds. These are warm memories.

In 1930, the Bucklin Fund trustees gave us permission to erect the Bucklin Memorial at Yawgoog where it could be used by all the Scouts. G. Maurice Congdon was chairman of the building committee and F. Ellis Jackson the architect. Hours of meetings and conferences resulted in the development of that beautiful building with its gateway, garage, flanking cabins and pavilion which was dedicated on July 4, 1931, by Judge A. A. Capotosto, one of our charter members. The use of these buildings for year-round camping and leadership training has gone far beyond our dreams. Last season, 2,400 scouts and leaders used them on week-ends and vacation periods. They form the heart of our Council.

The year 1930 also marked the acquisition of the 43-foot schooner Dolphin as a training ship for our Sea Scouts. This older boy division of Scouting was started in 1920 and has been of great value to hundreds of older Scouts. At present, we are in the midst of a change of organization from that of independent Sea Scout ships to that of Sea Scout Patrols and Divisions connected with troops and look to an increased enrollment in the years ahead, with the loyal support of Commodore Francis H. Stone, Jr.

We are beginning the development of Cubbing, a junior Scout program for boys of 9, 10 and 11 years of age, and have at present an enrollment of 244 of these future Scouts.

Members of the Field Staff

The story would not be complete without mention of the men who have been associated with our development during the last 16 years as Assistant and Field Executives. They were George R. Fish, 1919-1920; Eric P. Jackson, 1920-1921; Bradford H. Field, 1921-1925, and 1929 to present; Earle C. Beebe, 1921-1923; Nelson A. Sly, 1922-1926; Louis W. Gavitt, 1923-1928; Wilford S. Budlong, 1924; Christopher Gunderson, 1925-1933; Dana U. Lamb, 1926-1927; H. Cushman Anthony, 1927 to the present; Arthur W. Leidman, 1928 to the present; Harold Silverman, 1930 to the present; James B. Dodds, 1930-1934; C. Raymond Westcott, 1933 to the present; Daniel W. Earle, 1934 to the present.

Mr. Sly is at present Scout Executive at Hartford, Conn.; Mr. Gunderson, at Cambridge, Mass.

Our Council is now divided into areas and districts, each area being supervised by a paid officer, a Field Executive, and each district being in charge of a District Committee and a District Commissioner, volunteer workers. All of the members of the present executive staff have come up through the ranks of our Council.

Mr. Anthony is the Executive for the Blackstone Valley Area, with headquarters at 33 Summer Street, Pawtucket. This area includes the Daggett, Slater, Central Falls, and William Blackstone Districts.

Mr. Silverman and Mr. Westcott supervise the Providence Area with headquarters at 100 North Main Street, including the North, East, South, West, Hope and Elmwood Districts.

Mr. Field looks after the Suburban Area, including Cranston, Woonasquatucket Valley, East Providence, Bristol County and Woonsocket Districts.

Mr. Leidman, in the Kent-South County Area, covers the West Shore, Pawtuxet Valley, Quequatuck and Narragansett Districts.

Mr. Earle is the executive for the Newport Area, with headquarters at 179 Thames Street, Newport.

Clinton L. Armstrong is Camp Warden for the Yawgoog reservation.

Some Accomplishments

These 16 years are full of memories of rallies, meetings, civic service and associations with thousands of boys and men, but for myself I am proudest of our steady growth, both in quantity and quality.

We have developed active troop committees to help Scoutmasters where before there were only Scoutmasters working alone.

We have developed active district committees and commissioners where before there was no intermediate organization between the troop and the headquarters.

We have developed a leadership training program, using the Five Year Training Plan of the National Council, which is turning out trained leaders.

We have helped in the development of the patrol system and boy leadership in our troops where before all was mass activity.

We have seen a great advancement in outdoor craft and Scoutcraft technique, with 358 boys having reached the highest rank of Eagle Scout.

We have seen our leadership being developed from the ranks.

We are looking ahead to even greater numbers of Scouts in the years to come and to even better troops.

There is nothing else worth working for. Our work is only as effective as our troops. Our job is to form new troops and to help devoted Scoutmasters to conduct effective troops so that more and more boys—at least one out of every four—will be influenced by the spirit of Scouting.

I wish this brief sketch might contain the names of the wonderful Scoutmasters I have known, but space forbids and anyway their names are engraved on the hearts of the boys they have guided.

Twenty-five years. It has been a long time and a short time. It has been work which has been fun.

We now turn our faces, our enthusiasms and our love for boys who will soon be men, toward the next 25 years which lie ahead.

January 8, 1935



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