

XVI TROOP 21 History

Troop 21 was initially chartered in 1918 by the First Christian Church, then located at 2213 Morris Avenue, Birmingham, Alabama. The first Scoutmaster was J.E. Taylor, and the Troop consisted of three assistant scoutmasters and twenty-seven scouts. It has been continuously chartered since 1918 to the present.

The Troop remained in downtown Birmingham for twenty-six years before it was re-chartered by the Bluff Park United Methodist Church in 1945. The first Bluff Park Scoutmaster was S.B. Nelson.

Less exceptional years, the Troop maintained an annual average of fifty scouts, the smallest number was seven (1945), and the greatest was 72 (1972). Over its ninety year history, the Troop has had twenty-five scoutmasters and more than 1,700 scouts and adults have worn, and are wearing, Troop 21 numbers. Two books listing all members since its inception, along with all its Eagle Scouts are located in the rear of the Hut along with two Eagle Project Books, assembled by Mrs. Cathy Kidd in 2006, which list Troop 21 Eagle projects and their descriptions.

Highlights and Points of Interest:

Summer camps were spent at Camp Andrews 1918-1935; Camp Winnataska (1916-1971); Camp Arrow Head on Lake Mitchell (1930-1937); Oak Mountain 1938; Camp Andrews 1939-1971; Indian Valley 1946-1986; and, from 1972 to the present when Camp Sequoyah was built. While at summer camp, all meals were prepared by the scouts in their patrol areas, until the camp dining hall was built in 1989. Camp Nawaka (1950-1971), then adjacent to Paradise lake southwest of the present day Galleria, Indian Valley, then south of the then well known "pig farm," north of Tarrant City, and present day Camp Winnataska were also camping favorites of the Troop while based in downtown Birmingham and throughout its Bluff Park legacy. 2000 was the first year the Troop summer camped at Camp Comer since 1972 when Camp Sequoyah first opened. The framed historical news clippings, dating from 1941 through 1981, in the Hut were provided by Mr. Robert Sleeman in 1996.

The Scout Hut was built in 1959 by the men and scouts in the Troop. Prior to the hut's construction, weekly meetings were held in private homes, the early Bluff Park Lions Club building and in the Bluff Park United Methodist Church. The Hut extension was built between 1969 and 1971 to accommodate the Troop's growing size. The extension (annex) was dedicated to Scout David L. White, whose name is inscribed on the plaque leading to the annex in the building. Building material for the annex was obtained from the Airport Hills portion of the City, and construction was likened to a "barn raising."

The only heat for the Scout Hut was initially produced by the fire place, until a gas furnace was put in the south east corner of the building. Several years later, the present overhead furnace was installed. The large ventilator van was installed by Mr. Larry Binder and Mr. Floyd Hauffe in 1998. Leaders and Scouts repainted the exterior and interior of the Hut during 1997 and 1998.

The hut's library was built in 1974 and totally revitalized by Charles Hawkins in 1999 during his tour as "Troop Librarian." The current water fountain was provided by Mr. Wes Smith (2007) and the present Troop archive book shelves and television stand was built and provided by Mr. Randy Watts (2007). Televisions have been provided by the Kunka family, Mr. and Mrs. Larry Young.

Also during the early 1970s, the Troop purchased its first major inventory of camping equipment to compliment its growing size. In 1968 there were only one and a half cook kits, and two, eight man tents. Other gear was personally owned, borrowed, and utilized by the Troop during its outings.

When Tannehill State Park was revitalized in 1972, the Troop played a major part in conducting service projects to help complete it. All of the stones in the stone house were transported by hand across the creek, in the water, by the Troop to where the house now stands. The historic furnace was cleaned by the Troop three different times.

One of the major Troop projects in the middle 1970's was the occasional maintenance of the West Oxmoor cemetery, located west of the Shannon road intersection just south of Bluff park which served the Oxmoor community during the nineteenth century, and for a good portion of the early 1900's. This service was formally ended in 1992.

The now traditional Christmas tree sales were begun in 1967. Eight years later funds would be available to purchase the Troop bus. Annual Christmas wreath sales began in 1997. Selling ice cream, ice water, and hot beverages at the annual Bluff park Art Show began in 2000.

The wooden airplane propeller was obtained by Troop 21 "Sea Explorers" in 1942, when the group went to the

Pensacola Naval Air Station and received permission to take the propeller off of a wrecked airplane. It was brought back to Birmingham and remained, for the most part, in storage until 1968, when it was refinished by Scoutmaster Pittman Wingo and hung in the Scout Hut in its present location.

The elk antlers in the hut were placed in their present location in 1976.

The Cherokee Fifty Order of the Arrow wooden emblem hung over the entrance to the Council Ring at Camp Sequoyah in 1985. It was hung in its present location in the Scout Hut that same year.

The Troop was awarded the "Award of Merit" in 1972 by President Richard M. Nixon. The same award was again presented in 1979 by President Jimmy Carter. It was awarded its Distinguished Camping Award (Gold) for over 1000 hours of camping since 1970 in 2006

During the mid-1970's there was an actual "waiting List" to get into the Troop. As a result, in 1974, Troop 21 assisted Troops 311 and 379 (Vestavia) in forming.

The "Cow Skull" was appropriated from the Ross Neely property on Highway 280 when the Troop had camp outs there in 1974.

The Troop's (7) aluminum canoes and trailer were obtained in 1976 from a Vestavia Troop that did not re-charter.

The Order of the Arrow "Chieftain" painting was donated to the Troop by John Godsey in 1971. The painting of the scouts looking out over the Order of the Arrow Point at Camp Arrow Head was also donated by Mr. Godsey during the same year. The painting of the Scout Bugler is also a John Godsey painting donated to the Troop by a former member and Life Scout in 1998. The Philmont picture was donated in 2000 by a former member of the Troop. Mr. All members of Troop 21 Order of the Arrow have traditionally signed the "Chieftain" painting, indicating the year of their induction and completion of their Ordeal and Brotherhood.

The Troop went to the National Jamboree at Moraine State Park, Pennsylvania, in 1977.

The rope hanging beneath the ceiling (now in storage) and now used for setting up the Troop "monkey Bridge" was the trophy taken by the "Critter" Patrol for the tug-of-war contest which was won by "Contingent" Troop 454 Troop at the National Jamboree held at Camp A.P. Hill, Virginia in July, 1981. Troop 454 was made up of 26 scouts and four adults from Troop 21 and ten other scouts from the Birmingham area.

The Troop step van or box truck, "The Frank Tank," was donated by Frank Nelson, D.D.S., J.D., in 1997. The first Troop trailer, built in 1959, was purchased by the Troop in 1993. The second and larger trailer was acquired in 2006. The Troop's first bus was purchased in 1975, and was replaced in 1992 with a newer model. The current Troop bus was purchased in 2001. The engine overhauled and re-built by Mr. Ken Brimer, and painted its current colors along with the Frank Tank and Troop trailers during the Summer and Fall of 2003. New seat backs and Emergency roof hatches were installed in the bus in 2009.

The Shiloh trip has been a tradition with the Troop since 1956. The greatest number going to camp there was 117 adults and Scouts in 1976. This is an annual trip for the Troop, permitting the Scouts/leaders to earn the Shiloh Veteran's Certificate and patch for completing all six trails.

During the late 1960's the Troop often hiked the Odom Trail, Kenesaw Mountain, Gatlinburg, and other areas within the Smokey Mountain National Park. Though the last recorded trip was made in 1970, a recent twenty-two miler starting from Woody Gap south to Springer Mountain was completed by the Troop in 1999.

The first Troop trip to the Philmont Scout Ranch was in 1990, the second in 1993, the third in 1996, a fourth in 2000, its fifth in 2003, and its sixth in 2008.

Though ten years in the process, and thanks in great part to Jason Godfrey (Eagle, 1992-1998), the completion of assigning specific equipment to each patrol was accomplished in 1999, further assuring the "Boy led Troop" concept correlated with "Patrol Owned Equipment."

The Troop made its first trip to the High Adventure Sea Base in Florida, in July, 1998, its second in 2001, its third in 2004, a fourth in 2005, a fifth in 2007, and its sixth in 2009.

2002 marked the Troop's first visit to the Northern Tier Canoe base (Ely). 2010 will mark the second time (Bisset).

Beginning in 1929 and continuing through the present, approximately one-hundred-seventy Scouts were awarded the rank of Eagle. Their names and dates are recorded in a loose leaf binder kept in the Hut on a Black Walnut stand designed and built by Dr. Frank Nelson. An additional stand supports two Eagle Project Books (created by Mrs. Cathy Kidd) displaying the work formats and planning for more than thirty Eagle projects over the years to serve as a "how to" example for potential Eagles. The "Be Prepared" painting by Mr. Lee Masters, completed in 1997 hangs on the interior front wall. The Troop 21 current, royal blue, embroidered neckerchief was created in 2003 and the Troop's current red "t" shirt was created in 1988. The attendance board was donated by Mrs. Kidd and kept current on a monthly basis as needed.

The average time to acquire the rank of Eagle is between five and seven years. Less than seven scouts received Eagle rank in less than four years. To date, though more than 170 Scouts have earned their Eagle with the Troop. Douglas Graham Jr., Eagle 2001, has been awarded his brass, gold, silver, and second brass palms for a total of 41 merit badges. He has also earned the Shiloh Veterans Hiker Award and the coveted Charles L. Sommers Alumni Association Award for attending all three High Adventure Bases (Philmont, Sea Base, and Northern Tier).

The following adult leaders were awarded the Greater Alabama Area Council's District Award of Merit: Frank Wingate, Gordan Eggart, Jack Howard, Murray L. Kennedy, E.C. Bush, Bob Sleeman, Pitman Wingo, Frank C. King, Ken Hager, Dr. Steven Smith, William L. Johnson, Larry Binder, Floyd J. Hauffe, Glenn McCracken, Daniel M. Strunk, and Douglas W. Graham, Sr. Michael (Mickey) Harbin, Richard Griffith.

One of the most prestigious National award presented by the Greater Alabama Council, the "Silver Beaver," has been awarded to Troop 21 adult leaders Pitman Wingo, Glenn McCracken, Floyd J. Hauffe, Larry Binder, and Dan Strunk.

Leaders who have completed the regional, Nationally recognized Wood Badge Course in complimenting high leader training standards for the Troop over its history are Pitman Wingo, Frank King, Floyd Hauffe, Larry Binder, Glenn McCracken, Dan Strunk, Doug Graham, Sr., Michael (Mickey) Harbin, Richard Griffith, David Davis, Bert Oliver, Charles Kidd, and Kathy Kidd.

Leaders earning the highest rank of Vigil Honor in the Order of the Arrow are Pittman Wingo (1974), Paul McCracken (1976), Derek Hauffe (1989) Glenn McCracken (1997) and Dan Strunk (2000).. In the Fall of 2008 five members of the Troop, Karl and Joe Berry, Joshua Ng, John Kunka, and Patrick Kidd formed a five person "Pre-Ordeal" Team in the Nunne-Hi Chapter of the Coosa Lodge. As many as five is precedental for the Troop, including their medaling at regional Conclave competition in 2008 and 2009. They attended the National Order of the Arrow Conference in Indianapolis, Indiana during August, 2009, representing the Lodge

Mr. William J. Johnston, an active Assistant Scoutmaster and Troop Committee Member Passed away during the Fall of 1997. His personal time and effort was given freely to the Troop in the development of the Troop 21 Guide Book for parents and the foundation of the Troop 21 archery program which is continued by Steven Gilbert.

Mr. Glenn McCracken, a venerated Scouter since his youth in 1936, and long time member of Troop 21, passed away in June, 1998. The memorial frame located on the rear wall of the Hut and personal Scouting articles located throughout the Hut were provided by the Troop Committee and his family the same year.

Randy Mathis, an active Assistant Scoutmaster and Troop Committee member passed away during the Fall of 2005. During his seven years in the Troop, he routinely attended Troop trips, meetings, and served as an active member at Committee meetings. His installation of the truck horns on the Troop bus, the rear step-up into the bus passenger compartment, and the personal construction of the "Old Geezer" and "Venture" benches in the Hut, serve as part of his living legacy in the Troop. The family's contribution of memorial funds to the Troop are represented by the large, Troop trailer (purchased in 2006 and painted in 2007) is now dedicated to Mr. Mathis.

Mr. Steve Gillbert, also an active Assistant Scout Master and Committee Member passed away during the winter of 2009. He and his son joined the Troop from Pack 321 in 1996. Though Stephen earned his Eagle in 2001, Mr. Gilbert continued actively as an assistant Scoutmaster and Committee Member with the Troop assisting in the Christmas Tree Lot Set Up and all other electrical matters dealing with the Troop...his serving as the Archery Merit Badge Counselor, making his boat and home on the lake a Troop destination for water skiing, constant smile under challenging circumstances and advisor to numerous Eagle projects earned him a reputation for personal strength and leadership among the Scouts.

Mr. Mark Branin, with more than fifteen years as an active leader in the Troop (1990), serves as an Assistant Scoutmaster and Troop Committee member has contributed not only routine time at meetings and trips, as well as committee meetings, but has maintained the Troop vehicles, served as Troop Advancement Chairman, built

numerous storage cabinets in the Hut, and all planned and constructed all the existing Troop "chuck boxes". He routinely serves as a "Trip Facilitator" for many trips and assured the past three trips to Philmont .

Dan Strunk , a member since 1989, served as Troop quartermaster and committee member until he accepted the Scoutmaster position in December of 1994.

Without question, the Troop bases all of its great amount of success upon the continuity and drive of selfless, dedicated leaders, many of whom have experienced more than one son obtaining his Eagle, but more importantly, the pride felt upon the experience of another Scout earning his Eagle during periods as few as four and as great as seven years time. Leaders currently serving with more than eight years experience, or who are serving since their son(s) received his Eagle are , Frank Nelson, and Wes Smith. The plaque and sculpture on the rear wall of the Hut was sculpted by Mr. Art Umlauf. It represents leaders who have been active with more than ten years of service to the Troop in assuring the continuity so important for maintaining the Troop's more than 90 years of service and activity.

1/28/10 ds

\

Chronological History

Year	Chartering Organization	Scoutmaster
1918	First Christian Church	J.E.Taylor
1919	" "	" "
1920	" "	" "
1921	" "	R.N. Simpson
1922	" "	C.P. Watson
1923	Trinity Methodist Church	H.L. Freeman
1924	" "	" "
1925	27th Street Baptist Church	H.L. Freeman
1926	" "	" "
1927	" "	M.F. Tice
1928	" "	" "
1930	St. John's Methodist Church	" "
1931-1938	" "	" "
1939	Southside Neighborhood House	" "
1940-1942	" "	" "
1943-1944	Third Presbyterian Church	" "
1945	Bluff Park Methodist Church	S.B. Nelson
1946	" "	W.H. Proctor
1947	" "	" "
1948-1952	" "	O.P. Smith
1953	" "	R.E. Randall
1954-1956	" "	J.D. McCarley
1957	" "	E.N. Hopkins
1958-1959	" "	H.T.Wingate, Jr.
1960-1961	" "	D.C. Harvey
1962-1964	" "	H.G. Eggart
3/1965 - 8/1965	" "	P. Green
9/1965 - 12/1966	" "	J.O. Patton, Jr.
1/1967 - 9/1968	" "	R. Sleeman
10/1968 - 12/1968	" "	J. Innman
1969-1970	" "	R. Ray
1971-1973	" "	P.L. Wingo
1974	" "	W. Pinkham
1975-1978	" "	P.L. Wingo
1979-1985	" "	F.C. King
1986-1987	" "	K.H. Hager
1988-1994	" "	F.J. Hauffe
1994-Present	" "	D.M.Strunk

The Boy Scouts of America

TROOP 21

Bluff Park, Alabama

*Troop Guide
and
History*

**"The Spirit of Scouting"
Since 1918**

“Delivering the Promise”

Revised 2009