



Arizona Scouting Museum Newsletter

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Founders of the Boy Scouts of America—JAMES E. WEST

President Franklin D. Roosevelt wrote this of him in mid-May 1941 just prior to the United States entry into World War II: "During these perilous times I am more conscious than ever of the patriotism of our Boy Scouts and the strength of their leadership. To you belongs much of the credit for the effectiveness of Scouting in this country. I desire therefore to take this means, on your birthday and on your thirtieth anniversary as Chief Scout Executive at the ceremonies in your honor at Hillcrest, the Children's Village, Washington, where you got your start in life, to tell you how much we appreciate your accomplishments in behalf of American boyhood."

Very little is written about the accomplishments of James Edward West, Chief Scout Executive of the Boy Scouts of America. But it is certain that his background prior to Scouting had a great influence on his guidance and direction during his 32 years of leadership to Scouting from 1911 to 1943.

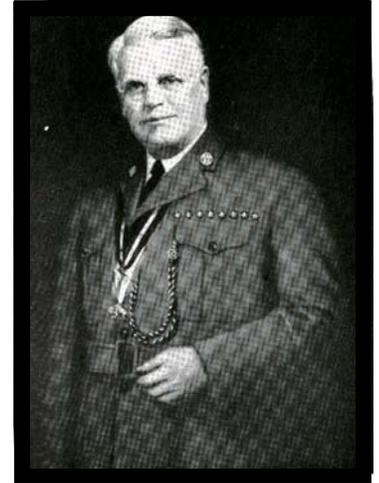
James E. West was born in Washington D.C. on May 16, 1876 to James Robert West & Mary Tyree. Although his father had died just prior to his birth, census records indicate that at age 4, James still lived with his mother. At age 6 his mother had to place her son in the City Orphan Asylum when she had to go into the hospital and there were no relatives to watch James. Mary died of tuberculosis and James remained in the orphanage. Within a year he complained of leg pain. After spending the next two years in the hospital with tuberculosis in the leg and hip, he walked with crutches for 12 years before throwing them away. He felt that the sight of his crutches prevented him from getting a good job.

At age 12 a friend of his mother, Mrs. Ellis Spear, wife of the U.S. Patent Commissioner, came to visit James and invited him into her home. After 6 years he was again welcomed into a family circle with Mrs. Spear and her five children. It was Mrs. Spear that aroused in James an interest in reading and education. James asked the orphanage if he could attend high school. They allowed him to attend school if he paid for the costs himself. So James worked double shifts in the orphanage laundry and sewing rooms to earn his expenses.

James graduated from high school at age 19 and then announced he wanted to go to college. To earn extra money he worked as a bookkeeper for a nearby bicycle shop. Working during the day, going to school in the evening, and studying late into the night, he decided he wanted to go to law school. This would require more money and James worked for the Washington DC YMCA and as a government stenographer. In 1901, at age 25, James graduated from Washington DC's National University Law School.

As a young lawyer, Mr. West worked for the Board of Pension Appeals and later as an assistant attorney for the Department of the Interior. By 1910, Mr. West was working in his own law firm and had been involved in a variety of organizations to improve conditions for children. He was instrumental in setting up the first juvenile court system in Washington DC, he helped organize and set up the city's playground system, he was co-founder of the Child Rescue League, he worked with the government to improve conditions in orphanages, and with President Theodore Roosevelt's support, he set up the first White House Conference on Care of Dependent Children in 1909.

In 1911 when the fledgling Boy Scouts of America was searching for a director for their new movement, several members of the National Council including Dr. Luther Gluck, Major Ernest Bicknell, William Cooper, and Lee Hanmer suggested James West for the position of Executive Secretary. Colin Livingstone extended an invitation to Mr. West and he declined. A second offer to meet with the Executive Committee of the BSA was accepted and after the meeting Mr. West agreed to a six-month service in which he would "set up an organization; make a thorough survey of what, if any, changes should be made to adapt the Movement to meet American boy needs; produce necessary literature; and put the Movement on a sound organizational basis. He stayed for 32 years.



Items We Are In Need Of

Camp Geronimo—3 Inch Patches
Tenderfoot Run = Years 2 & 3
I Did It All = Years 1, 4 & 5
Polar Bear Club = Years 2 & 3

If you would like to financially help the Arizona Scouting Museum

We have a partnership with Albertson's grocery and Osco Drugs with their Community Partnership Program. If you already shop at Albertsons, just let us know.

The Arizona Scouting Museum will provide you a card that you show the cashier at checkout. Then, each month a small percentage of your total purchases will go toward the Arizona Scouting Museum.

It cost you nothing and the Arizona Scouting Museum benefits from your purchases.

If you would like a card mailed to you, please email us your mailing address at info@arizonascoutingmuseum.org

UPDATE



Prior to this Newsletter, we had the financial support to purchase the mobile office pictured above. However, upon further investigation these "mobile offices" are regulated by the Modular Building laws and are not classified as a "trailer". Therefore, we are still seeking funds in order to have our mobile museum built so we may display the museum items.

www.arizonascoutingmuseum.org

If you would like to be added or know someone that would like to be added to our email distribution of the Newsletter, please email us at info@arizonascoutingmuesum.org.

Our mission is to promote Scouting through the preservation and display of Scouting Memorabilia and teaching of the history of Scouting in the United States.

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