



# Arizona Scouting Museum Newsletter

Vol: 3 No: 1

Second Quarter 2007

## A Few Questions About The Eagle Rank

The British Boy Scouts used the wolf as part of their program. The wolf is a strong, resourceful, and cunning animal. A brave leader in the forest. The Silver Wolf was the highest award in British Scouting...an unrestricted gift of the Chief Scout for service of the most exceptional nature. Ernest Thompson Seton, BSA's Chief Scout, had taken the name Black Wolf as his Indian name in his Woodcraft Indians in the early 1900's. Today, the highest recognition awarded by the World Scouting Committee is the Bronze Wolf award. To date, only 320 have been awarded worldwide.

The Boys Scouts of America (BSA) was incorporated in 1910 after William D. Boyce got lost in London and the Unknown Scout helped him find his way. Boy Scout troops were already forming in the United States, based on the British Boy Scout program of Sir Robert Baden-Powell and his book *Scouting for Boys*. The Organizing Committee for the BSA needed a handbook and Ernest Thompson Seton was assigned the task of preparing one. His Birch Bark Roll handbook for the Woodcraft Indians was integrated with Baden-Powell's Handbook for Boys and the result was the Boy Scouts of America Official Handbook. (insert photo of 1910 handbook at this point).



Arthur Eldred's Eagle Scout Award  
Courtesy National Scouting Museum

After the initial release of the Official Handbook in 1910, work began on the development of a wholly American version for the handbook. The "proofs" for this 1911 version of the BSA's *Handbook for Boys* contained the requirements for advancement and listed the Wolf Scout as the highest rank in Boy Scouting. Reviews from the 500 proofs that were sent out overwhelmingly wanted an "Americanization" of the highest rank and in the first printing for release, the *Handbook for Boys* listed the Eagle as BSA's highest achievement.

Thus the Eagle Scout was the top merit badge award in Scouting as the Eagle was initially given solely as recognition of earning merit badges. The ranks of Scouting were Tenderfoot, Second Class, and First Class. A Scout earning five merit badges was awarded the Life Scout award. Upon earning another five they earned the Star Scout award. Upon earning 21 merit badges, including First Aid, Athletics, Lifesaving, Personal Health, and Public Health, would earn the Eagle Scout award. Notice that the award order was Life, Star, and then Eagle. It was not until 1924 that the Life and Star awards were reversed.

The first Eagle badge was awarded to Arthur R. Eldred, a member of Troop 1 of Oceanside, New Jersey. Arthur Rose Eldred was born August 16, 1895. His father died when Arthur was young and he was raised by his mother. Scouting came to Oceanside in 1910 through the efforts of Arthur's older brother Hurbert who went to New York City to see about forming a Boy Scout troop. He visited the American Boy Scouts whose benefactor was William Randolph Hurst. He also visited the Boy Scouts of America. He was more impressed with the ideals of the BSA and returned to Oceanside to form Troop 1 in November 1910 and became the Scoutmaster.

Eldred's Troop was one of the first Troops in American to be a complete full-uniformed Scout Troop. Each Scout had to earn the funds for his own uniform. So important to each boy that one young Scout, Melvin Daly, once came to a Scout meeting in heavy snow with the soles of his shoes worn completely through, just so he could save the money needed to buy his Scout pants.

Arthur earned his First Class badge in March 1911 and completed the requirements for his 21 merit badges in April 1912. (put his 21 merit badges in a side-bar) Just as today, Arthur had to complete a Board of Review to ensure he was qualified to receive his Eagle Scout. Unlike today however, Arthur's Board was composed of the Chief Scout Executive James E. West, the National Scout Commissioner Daniel Carter Beard, and the Chief Scout Ernest Thompson Seton - BSA's top three leaders.

In a letter dated August 21, 1912, James E. West formally notified Arthur that he had the honor of being the first recipient of the Eagle Scout award. West also informed Arthur that the Eagle Badge would be presented to him at a later date. The reason was that the dies for casting the eagle bird for the ribbon had not yet been made. The work was completed and Arthur received his Eagle Scout award on Labor Day 1912.

In August of 1912 Arthur's Scouting skills earned him another special award from the BSA. While on a Troop outing to Orange Lake, New York, a non-swimmer in the Troop, Melvin Daly, waded out into the lake too far and found himself in water over his head. He started to drown. Arthur, seeing the Scout's predicament, swam to the site and pulled Melvin from the bottom. Another Scout, Merritt Cutler, swam out to help but Daly grabbed him and pulled Merritt under. Eldred was able to pull Melvin away and in to shallow water and returned to assist Merritt to shore. Two other Scouts in the Troop witnessed the rescue and signed statements in an application for the life saving award from BSA.

Arthur went on to college at Cornell University. He was on the track team, cross country team, and President of Cornell's Agricultural Association. He graduated in 1916 and served in World War I as an enlisted man aboard the US Navy's submarine, the USS Chase, in Greece. He continued his interest in Scouting serving as Troop Committee Chair for his son's Troop and as a member of the Camden County Council.

Twenty-two more Scouts earned the Eagle Scout award by the end of 1912 and in 1982 Alexander Holsinger of Normal, Illinois, became the one millionth Eagle Scout. Today more than 1.7 million Boy Scouts have earned this prestigious honor.



Arthur Eldred's 21 Merit Badges		
Civics	Cycling	Electricity
Firemanship	First Aid	First Aid to Animals
Gardening	Handicraft	Horsemanship
Interpreting of French	Life Saving	Painting
Pathfinding	Personal Health	Poultry Farming
Public Health	Swimming	Chemistry
Dairying	Business	Plumbing

Arthur Eldred's Merit badges  
Courtesy National Scouting Museum



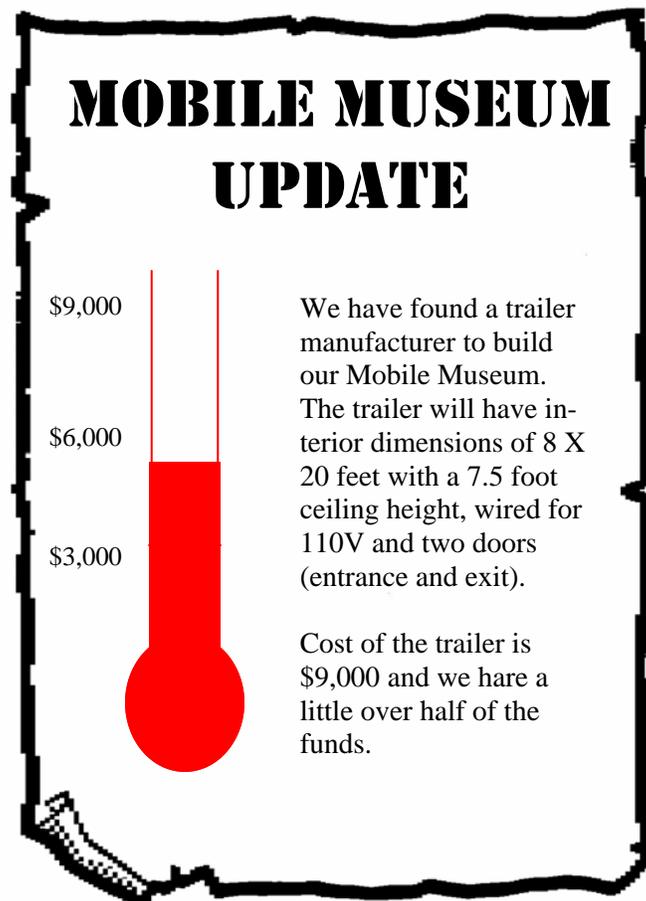
Arthur Eldred  
Photo Courtesy Gary Twite



Arthur Eldred  
Photo Courtesy Gary Twite

## Items We Are In Need Of

First Edition Scoutmaster Handbook  
First Edition Boy Scout Handbook (1910)  
First Edition Boy Scout Handbook (1911)



---

**[www.arizonascoutingmuseum.org](http://www.arizonascoutingmuseum.org)**

If you would like to be added or know someone that would like to be added to our email distribution list for the Newsletter, please email us at [info@arizonascoutingmuesum.org](mailto: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.

Newsletter printing compliments of **GordonGraphics, Design & Offser Printing / 623-582– Fax 623-582-0333**

Arizona Scouting Museum  
PO Box 86476  
Phoenix, AZ 85080-6476