



Arizona Scouting Museum Newsletter

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A Little History of BSA Councils

Early in the history of Scouting in the United States it became apparent it would be very impractical to serve all the local troops from the National Office in New York City. The informal formation of Councils started late in 1910 with the first Local Council charter issued in 1913. Councils were formed by groups of citizens interested in promoting the Scouting program for the youth of the community. All the early Councils were City Councils, that is they covered only the jurisdiction of a city. It was not until a few years later that it became necessary to form Area Councils that would serve troops in areas outside of the city. The highest number of Councils to exist at one time was in 1927 when a total of 659 Councils were chartered.

Two types of Councils existed in the beginning: First Class and the Second Class Councils. The First Class Council had a paid Executive Secretary or Scout Executive while the Second Class Council was only staffed with volunteer help. By the late 1910's, the advantage of First Class Councils was clearly demonstrated and the National Office began converting all Councils to First Class status. Second Class Councils were discouraged and rapidly decreased in numbers. In 1915, there were 47 First Class Councils and 263 Second Class Councils. By 1935, there were 544 First Class Councils and only one remaining Second Class Council which was in the Canal Zone of Panama.

In 1923 Councils were assigned permanent numbers just like a Troop. Councils that existed in 1923 should still have the same Council number. The numbers were assigned after all states were listed in alphabetic order and then the Councils within that state were listed in alphabetic order by city. The first number was 001 for Choccolocco Council in Anniston, Alabama. The last number assigned that year appears to be 644 which was assigned to Wausau Council in Wisconsin. Currently, the Grand Canyon Council is Council #10 and Catalina Council is Council # 11.

Since 1923, Councils have changed names, merged with other Councils and even new Councils have been formed. On the next page is a chart that list the Councils that existed at one time or another in Arizona. Today, only the Grand Canyon and Catalina Council service the Scouts of Arizona. Although parts of Arizona are served by Councils outside of Arizona. Kingman/Lake Havasu City and the northwest corner are served by the Las Vegas Area Council. Parts of Arizona on the eastern border are served by the Great Southwest Council located in Albuquerque, NM.

Council Shoulder Patches (CSPs)

As stated above, early Council were named for the city they served. So the city Council – Phoenix would be the shoulder patch worn. These were known as community strips.



The community strips were used at the same time as the R/W (Red and White) Council patches but they existed for separate purposes. The community strip was worn by local unit members and the R/W Council patches were worn by professional Scouters and Jamboree contingent members. Basically if the Council ceased to exist before the early 70's there are only R/W Council patches and if they came into existence after that time there are only CSP's.

