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Boy Scout Movement

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Interview with Mrs. W. B. Frederick,
119 North Wheeling Avenue, Tulsa,
Oklahoma. Effie S. Jackson,
Field Worker, June 23, 1937.

Mrs. W. B. Frederick, 119 North Wheeling Avenue, asked me to stop when I was in the neighborhood to see one of her treasured possessions. It is a letter which Cannon J. F. Mitchel-D.D., Executive Secretary of the Bishop Seabury Memorial, New York City, had written to her brother, the late W. E. McGuire of Pawhuska. It was written relative to the organization of the first Boy Scout troops in America.

As Mrs. Frederick tells the story from her own experience, the Rev. John Mitchell of the Episcopal Church was sent by his church from England to America. He reported to his Bishop in New York, who sent him to his first church in America, Pawhuska, Oklahoma, in 1909. Pawhuska was then a little town of 1500, an Indian reservation.

Rev. Mitchell had become acquainted with the scout movement in England through association with Sir Baden-Powell, founder of the Boy Scouts. The movement was less than a year old when Mitchell was sent to America. So Mitchell, in 1909, began organizing a Boy Scout troop. There were just enough boys in the town to fill three patrols; they called themselves the Quail, Wolf, and Beayer.

Mitchell had brought scout literature and manuals from England and the troop followed the English form at first. Later these forms were changed to fit the United States. In the beginning, Mrs. Frederick remembers, they used to sing "God Save the King" - until they could have it changed to our own anthem. Even the uniforms were English with their English hats turned up on one side. Mrs. Frederick says that Mrs. W. E. McGuire of Pawhuska has a large framed picture of the troop taken in 1909.

W. E. McGuire, Mrs. Frederick's brother, who was then post master, was the assistant scout-master and helped organize the troop. About six months after his arrival in Pawhuska, Mitchell was transferred to another church and McGuire assumed charge of the scouts. McGuire was active in his work with the troop as scout-master for fourteen years. A paid scout executive was then placed in charge of the troop but McGuire continued as a scout executive, and held his scout commission until his death, June 18, 1936.

About a year after the Pawhuska troop started, the Boy Scouts of America were organized and the troop affiliated with the national organization. Many of

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the boys of the first troop are still in Pawhuska and among the leading citizens, holding public office and taking active part in civic work. The following were in the first scout troop organized in Oklahoma and said to be the first in the United States: Douglas Foote, Jack Hutchings, John L. Johnston, Robert McGuire, Lee Copeland, Clifford Ferguson, Thomas Leahy, Walter Johnson, Tim Leahy, Joe McGuire, Clyde Wilson, Dick Millard, Spider Hinkle, Climmer Curtis, Roland Blaha, Alex Tinker, Jack Coffy, Roger Leahy, and Roland McGuire.

(The following letter from Cannon J. F. Mitchell,

D.D. - Executive Secretary of the Bishop Seabury Memorial, New York City, is self-explanatory. The original of this letter is framed and in the possession of Mrs. W. B. Frederick, 119 North Wheeling, Tulsa.

THE BISHOP SEABURY MEMORIAL

Headquarters
217 Broadway
New York City

Executive Secretary
Cannon J. F. Mitchell - D. D.

July 31, 1931

Mr. W. E. McGuire & Son
Pawhuska, Oklahoma

My dear Friend:

Thanks so very much for your kind and gracious letter; which I appreciate very much indeed. Pawhuska is very dear to me and very near my heart.

I may say that the happiest days of my sacred ministry were spent in Pawhuska.

In regard to the Boy Scouts, we were the first Scout organization in this country. I think it was in May, 1909, we organized and met in the Episcopal Church near the depot, which was their headquarters. When Bishop Brook of blessed memory visited Pawhuska in 1909, he inspected the troop and congratulated them on their training and behavior, which was then new in the state of Oklahoma. I would be pleased to hear from the old scouts at any time. Please remember me most kindly to Mrs. W. E. McGuire and your family.

With kindest thoughts and good wishes, I remain,

Most sincerely yours,

(signed) John F. Mitchell.

P. S. I would be pleased to see the photo and some of the press cuttings and I think the present Bishop of Oklahoma would be pleased to see the photo and press cuttings.

(signed) J. F. M.

Mrs. W. B. Frederick says that Dean Baden-Powell of England wrote a letter to her brother, the late W. E. McGuire, praising him for his assistance in helping to organize the first Boy Scout troop in the United States. Mrs. Frederick believes this letter is now in the possession of a Mr. McCoy, a friend of the late Mr. McGuire. Mr. McCoy is abroad at the present time and when he returns Mrs. Frederick hopes to get a copy of this letter. If she is successful she will gladly send a copy to the Oklahoma Historical Society.