

**A Century of Service**



# Commissioner Service The First Hundred Years

**Randy Worcester**  
**Past Assistant Council Commissioner**  
**Middle Tennessee Council**

**Past Council Commissioner**  
**Attakapas Council**



**100 YEARS OF SCOUTING**  
*Celebrating the Adventure • Continuing the Journey*

# (1344) Royal Beginnings



The word “commission” dates back to 1344 where it was derived from the Latin word *commissionem* meaning “delegation of business”. The nation’s monarch delegated authority to a deserving few.



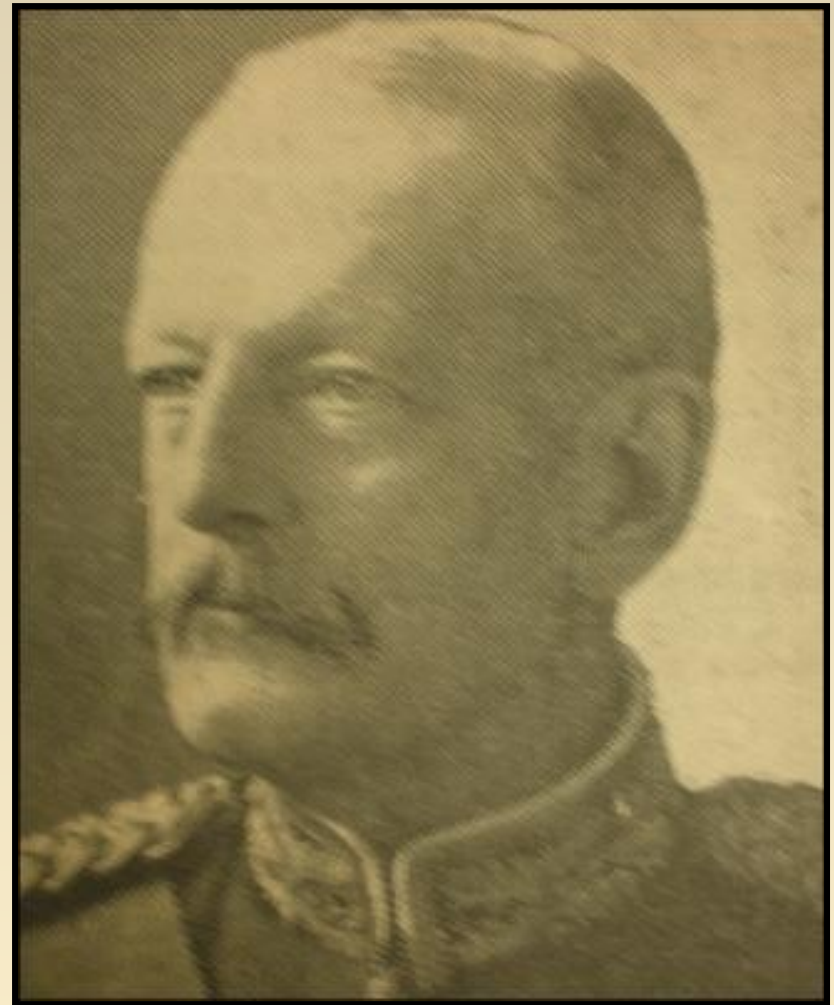
Edward III 1312-1377

# (1908) BP's Gentlemen



Individuals identified by the monarch to be Commissioners had to qualify as a “gentleman”. As legally defined, a gentleman earned his income from property and as such was independently wealthy with time to devote to other agendas. And it was exactly this kind of man that BP wanted as his volunteer Commissioners: men of both money and leisure.

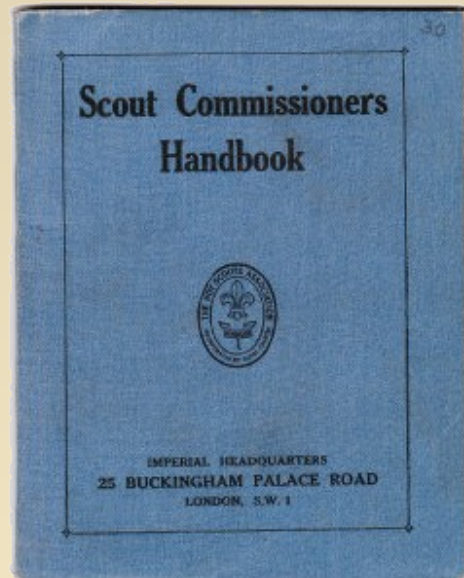
Baden-Powell's first Chief Scout Commissioner, Lieutenant-General Sir Edmond Roche Elles



# BP's Commissioners Included:

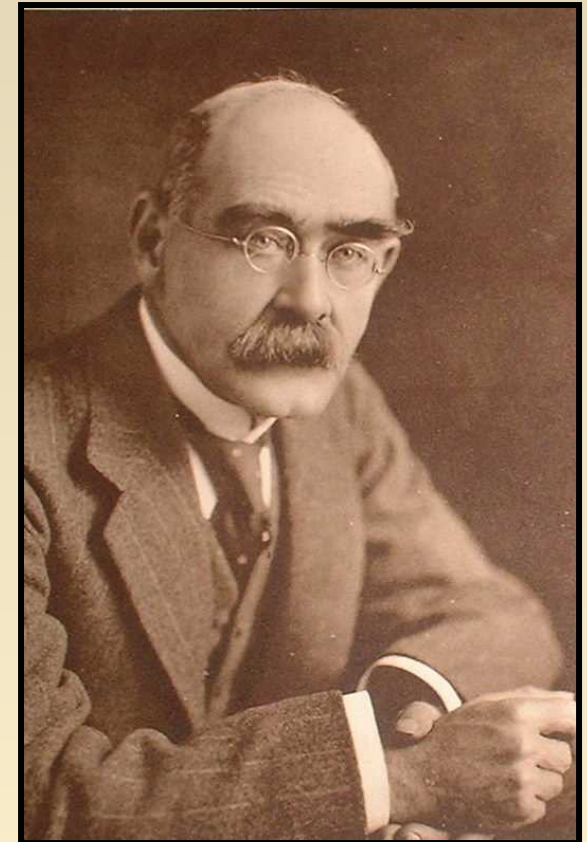


W. F. deBois  
MacLaren who  
donated Gilwell Park



1917 First  
Commissioner  
Handbook

Rudyard Kipling,  
author of  
*The Jungle Book*



# (1910) The BSA needs a few good men



As communities formed more troops, it became evident that some form of leadership was needed to maintain standards, provide camping opportunities, recruit leaders, give training, establish local Courts of Honor, and stimulate local Scouting. This person was the “Commissioner”.



# (1911) The Scout Commissioner



While originally a volunteer, in some areas the community was able to raise enough funds for the Scout Commissioner to become a salaried position.

The areas with paid leadership known as the Scout Executive or Executive Secretary became identified as First Class Councils while those with a volunteer head called the Scout Commissioner were known as Second Class Councils.



Deputy Scout Commissioner (left) and Scout Commissioner (right). The Scout Commissioner badge was one of the original badges.

# (1914) Wreath of Service



Today, our society is less connected to military tradition and the commissioned wreath insignia is thought of more as “the wreath of service” that surrounds all commissioner and professional position badges.

This wreath is a symbol for the service rendered to units. It also symbolizes the continued partnership between volunteers and professionals.

The Wreath of Service represents the Commissioner and Executive commitment to program and unit service.



1914 Scout Commissioner (left) and Scout Executive (right) insignia feature the wreath for the first time.

# (1910 - 1920) National Field Commissioners

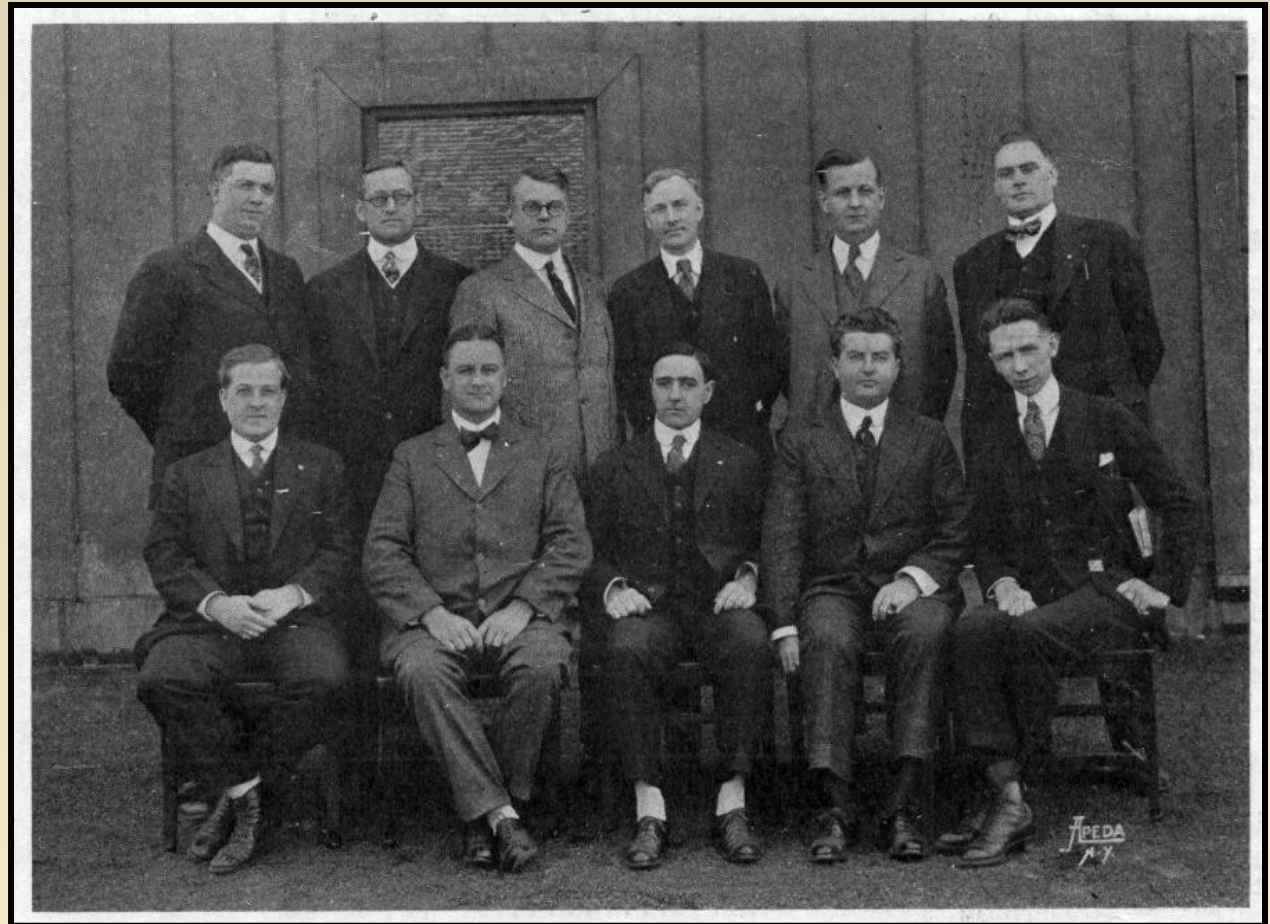


Volunteer National Field Commissioners were available as early as 1910 to help communities organize their local council and troops.

There were 68 volunteer Field Commissioners in 1913.

Many of the volunteer Field Commissioners worked for other agencies and traveled extensively, helping with Scouting wherever they went.

Besides organizing new councils, they had to spend time correcting false starts and restrain those that wanted to implement their own brand of Scouting.



**NATIONAL FIELD SCOUT COMMISSIONERS  
ATTENDING FIRST CONFERENCE SEPTEMBER, 1916**



# (1920) James West sez.....



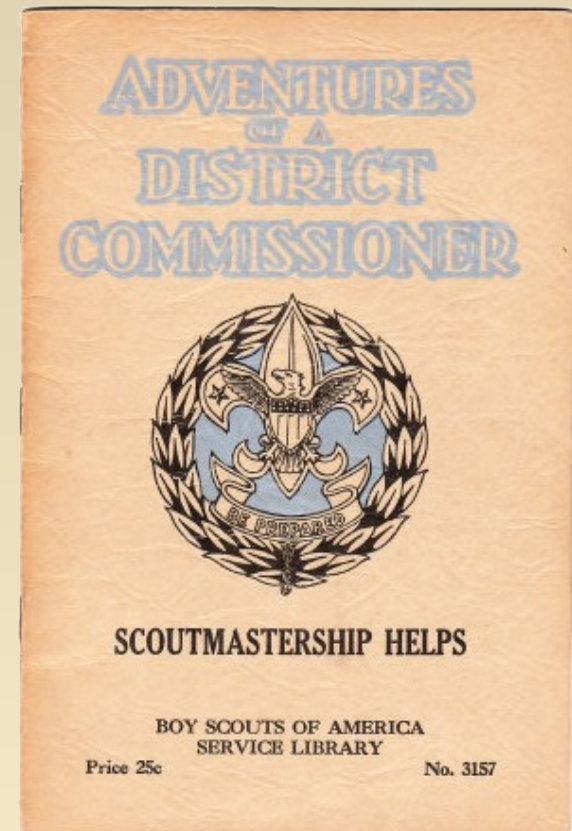
Chief Scout Executive, James West, at the first National Conference of Scout Executives in 1920 suggested that the Scout Executive should be the General in the background with the Scout Commissioner as the ranking uniformed officer giving leadership to the Scoutmasters and act as the ranking officer in public appearances.

West recognized that Scout Executives move around and that the Council would benefit from finding and developing a good Scout Commissioner.

# (1931) The District Commissioner



District Commissioners were introduced in 1931 as an outgrowth of the Deputy Scout Commissioner position. This book was the first printed material from the BSA for guiding Commissioners.



1933 - "I shouldn't have dropped in at Headquarters at all; at the end of half an hour, I came out a District Commissioner!"

# (1933) Howdy Neighbor



The growth of Scouting overloaded the District Commissioner and his deputy. This made it necessary to add Commissioners to serve specific troops, ships, packs, and Rover crews.

Scouting at the time was very community focused so the Neighborhood Commissioner position was conceived to serve up to 4 units in his immediate local area.



# (1930s) Local Field Commissioners



Field Commissioners were specialized representatives of the council and served a functional responsibility such as Cubbing, Senior Scouting, Catholic Scouting, Camping, Emergency Service Corps, or Sea Scouts. He was “on call” to the District or Neighborhood Commissioners as a technical expert in his program..

Later, Exploring Posts had Commissioners known as the *Service Team*.



Field Commissioner  
for Cubbing



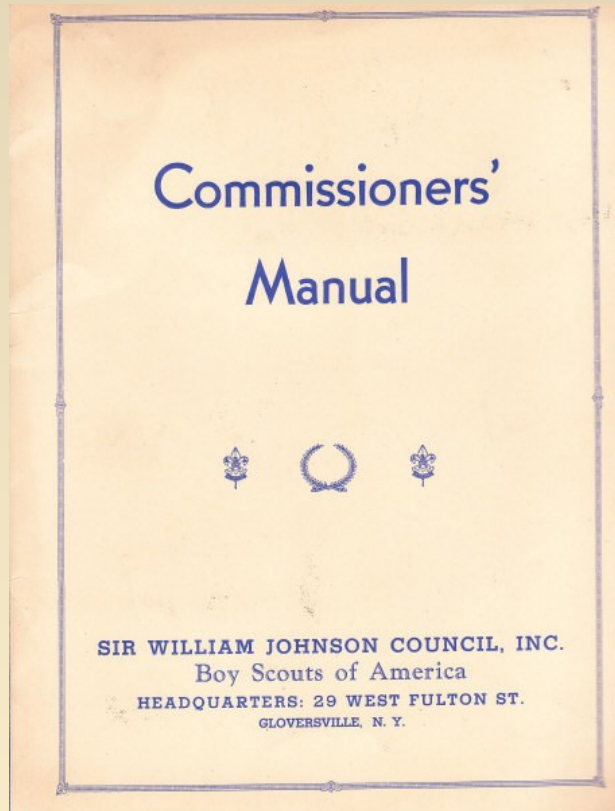
Assistant Field Commissioner  
for Cubbing



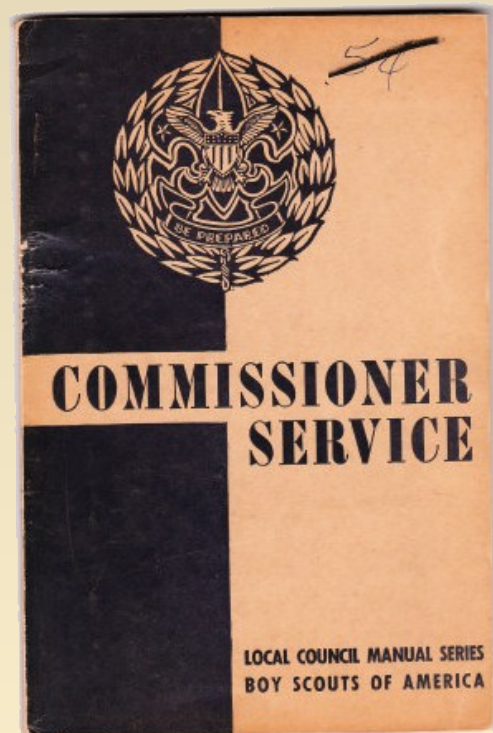
# (1943) The Commissioner Manual



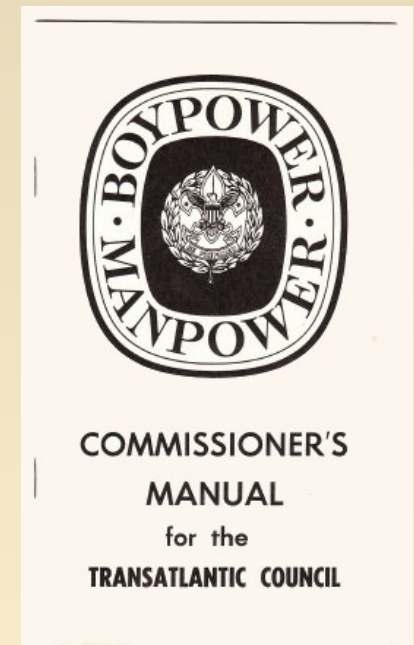
Councils developed their own Commissioner manuals. After a four year study, one was finally produced by the National Office in 1943 that was meant to be used alongside the Council's version.



1939



1943



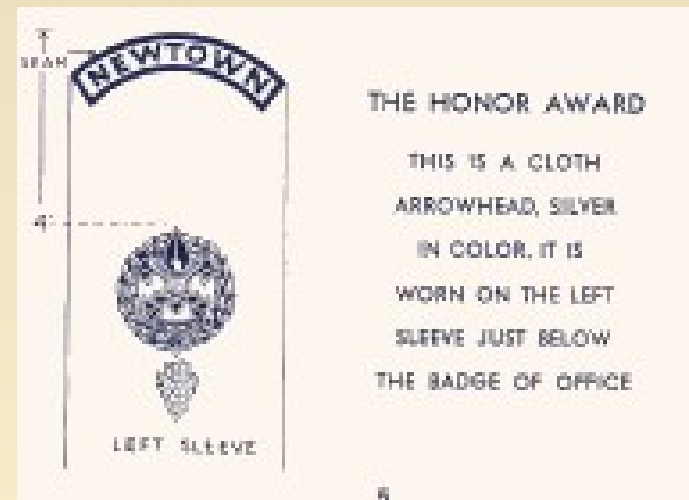
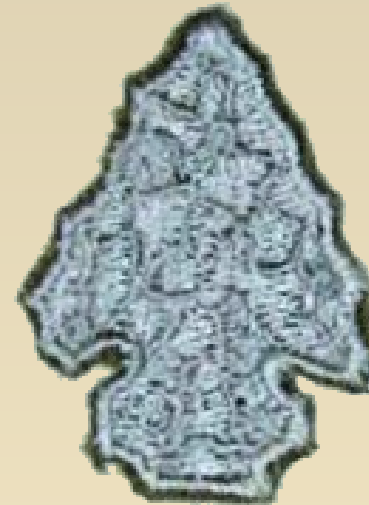
1976

# (1952) Commissioner Arrowhead



The silver Arrowhead Honor was introduced in 1952. It is now unique to the Commissioner service and is unusual in that it requires the application of the knowledge learned in basic Commissioner training.

The Arrowhead Honor was changed to white in 1970.



# (1950s-1960s) The Council Commissioner



The Scout Commissioner now became the Council Commissioner.

The position was still honorary in many councils however it was beginning to transition into a job with active leadership of the Commissioner staff.



Council Commissioner

# (1970-1972) Unit Focus



The Neighborhood Commissioner evolved into the Unit Commissioner.

And the mission of the Commissioner became clear: **Help Units Succeed.**

In an original idea, the *Commissioner Field Book* was introduced in a handy loose leaf design to place in a binder and replace pages as needed.





# (1970s) Commissioners of the Roundtable



From early on, District Commissioners were expected to hold a monthly meeting of the “District Scouters Round Table”.

Eventually, this became too much for the District Commissioner to handle and was delegated to a “Round Table leader”. Later, an ADC was designated for the task. In the seventies, the Roundtable Commissioner became an official title.

This also completed the District Commissioner’s evolution into an “administrative” Commissioner.



# (1975) Experimentation Continues



In 1975, an alternative was offered whereby Councils could have their Commissioners specialize in a program area.



Both organizational structures remained focused on the unit.



By 1980, the “optional” plan disappeared from the manuals.

# (1973-1976) Female Commissioners



1973 - Women are allowed to become Cub Scout Unit Commissioners or Cub Scout Roundtable Commissioners.

1976 - Women are allowed to hold any Commissioner position. A month later women were given the khaki uniform.



First female khaki uniforms 1976

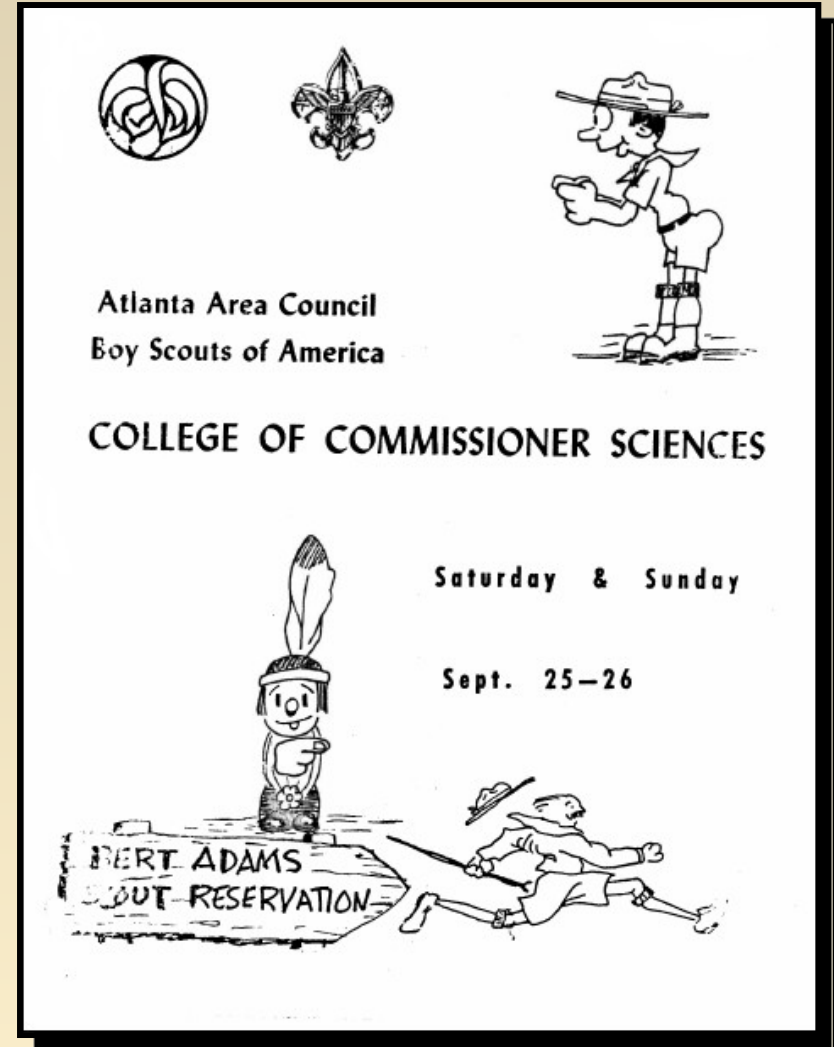
# (1976) Commissioner College



The first *College of Commissioner Sciences* was held in Atlanta in 1976.

Courses included:

- Physical Education
- Staging Roll Call and Inspections
- Exciting Charter Presentation Ceremonies



# (2008) Commissioner Service is Reborn



Today, Council Commissioners are accountable for the unit service program in their councils.

The appointment of Area and Regional Commissioners expands the direct support to the Council and demonstrates that at all levels of the organization; the importance of Commissioner Service is being recognized.



# (2008/11) New Commissioner Recognition



Two new awards were added to the Commissioner Key (1947) and the Distinguished Commissioner Service Award (1987).



2008 – Doctorate of Commissioner Science Knot Award



2011- Commissioner Award of Excellence in Unit Service



# (2008) Entering the Digital Age



2006 – Official Commissioner website available.

2007 - New Online Commissioner Tracking System for Monitoring Monthly Unit Visits.

2010 - Unit Visit tracking system 2.0 implemented.

2013 – The Official Commissioner Facebook page begins.

2014 – Commissioner Tools introduced.

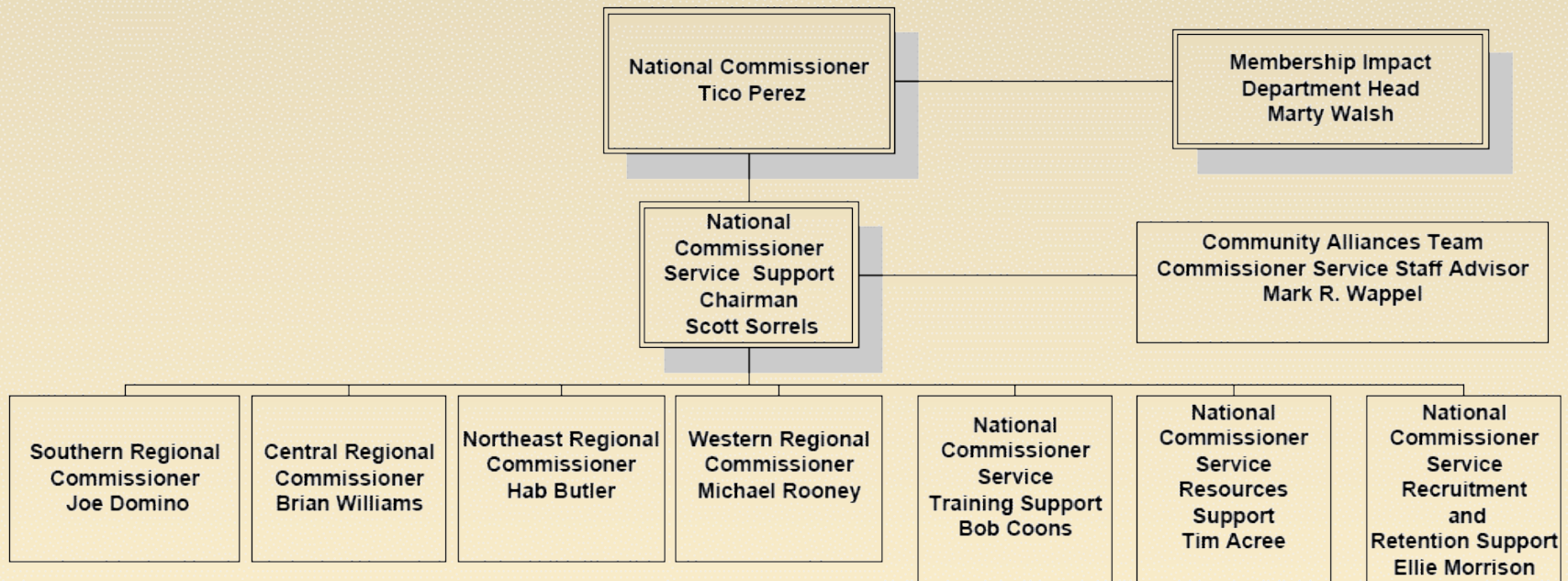


# (2009) Commissioner Support



A volunteer organizational structure was developed to expand direct support and communication to the field.

## National Commissioner Service Organization

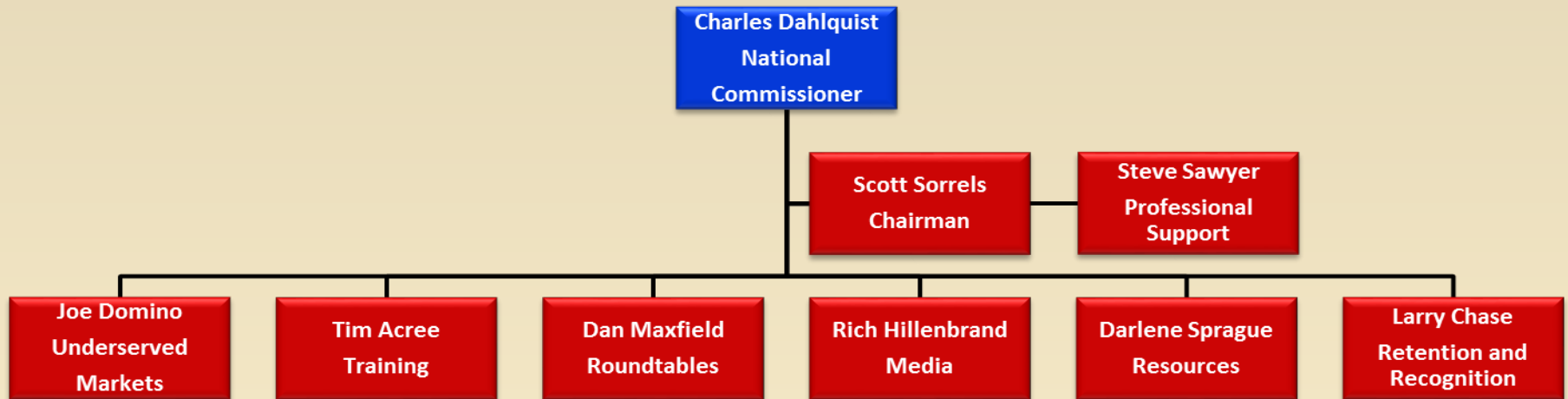




# (2017) Commissioner Support



In addition to the Regional Commissioners, several new support positions were added.



# National Commissioners



2016–Now	Charles W. Dahlquist
2008–2016	Victor “Tico” Perez
2004–2008	Donald D. Belcher
1999–2004	William F. “Rick” Cronk
1995–1999	Frances Olmstead
1985–1995	Earl G. Graves
1960–1984	Vacant
1943–1960	George J. Fisher
1910–1941	Daniel Carter Beard
1910–1911	Peter S. Bomus
1910–1911	William Verbeck



# Role of the National Commissioner



Dan Beard was the Chairman of the National Court of Honor. He became a well known symbol of and cheerleader for Scouting.

Today's National Commissioner, while still a cheerleader for Scouting, has a much more participatory role in improving Commissioner Service and leading the Commissioner Corps.



1930's - Dan Beard



Today – Charles W. Dahlquist II

# The International Commissioner



The Boy Scouts of America is represented in world contacts and developments by the volunteer International Commissioner.

The first International Commissioner was Mortimer Schiff.



# Famous Commissioners



## Theodore Roosevelt

Scout Commissioner of the Nassau County Council  
President of the United States  
First (and only) Chief Scout Citizen



## George J. Fisher

National Commissioner  
Inventor of Volleyball



## “Uncle” Dan Beard

National Commissioner  
Illustrator of Mark Twain books



# COMMISSIONER TITLES/POSITIONS THROUGH THE YEARS



Area Commissioner  
Assistant Commissioner  
Assistant Council Commissioner  
Assistant Deputy Commissioner  
Assistant Deputy Scout Commissioner  
Assistant District Scout Commissioner  
Assistant District Commissioner  
Assistant Field Commissioner  
Assistant Roundtable Commissioner  
Boy Scout Roundtable Commissioner  
Camp Commissioner  
Community Commissioner  
Council Commissioner  
Cub Roundtable Commissioner  
Cub Roundtable Staff  
Cub Scout Roundtable Commissioner  
Deputy Commissioner  
Deputy Scout Commissioner  
District Assistant Cub Scout Commissioner  
District Assistant Scout Commissioner  
Deputy Special National Field Scout Commissioner  
District Commissioner  
District Cub Scout Commissioner



District Scout Commissioner  
Division Commissioner  
Exploring Zone Commissioner  
Field Commissioner  
International Commissioner  
International Scout Commissioner  
National Field Scout Commissioner  
National Scout Commissioner  
National Commissioner  
Neighborhood Commissioner  
Neighborhood Scout Commissioner  
Pack Commissioner  
Regional Commissioner  
Roundtable Commissioner  
Scout Commissioner  
Scout Roundtable Commissioner  
Special National Field Scout  
Commissioner  
Troop Commissioner  
Unit Commissioner  
Varsity Huddle Roundtable Commissioner  
Zone Commissioner  
Zone Commissioner Varsity Scout

# Pressing Forward.....



During all these many years, Commissioner Service was the one unifying factor that made Scouting permanent. The commissioner has remained the line of service from council to unit and chartered organization.

With your help, Commissioner Service will continue to be the catalyst for growth and quality in the BSA for the next hundred years.



100 YEARS OF SCOUTING  
*Celebrating the Adventure • Continuing the Journey*

# Copyright 2009



Many thanks to Edward M. Brown for permission to use scans of Commissioner patches from his 2009 thesis *History and Evolution of Commissioner Insignia*. And thanks to Mitch Reis, Mike Walton, George Cowl, and Ed Brown for reviewing this document for content and accuracy.

This PowerPoint and the visuals within may not be duplicated or presented without specific written permission except by the Boy Scouts of America. If you have suggestions for additions or changes, please email me.

Randy Worcester [randywoo@aol.com](mailto:randywoo@aol.com)

Past Assistant Council Commissioner – Middle Tennessee Council

Past Council Commissioner – Attakapas Council

Version 4 – February, 2017



# BSA Commissioner Timeline

## A Century of Service



- 1344 The word *Commissionem* is introduced to the English language during the rein of Edward III.
- 1908 Baden Powell appoints the first volunteer Commissioners.
- 1910 Daniel Carter Beard named National Commissioner.  
Local council Scout Commissioners named.
- 1911 National Field Commissioner is named.
- 1914 Wreath of Service is added to the Commissioner insignia.
- 1917 First British Conference of Scout Commissioners at Matlock.  
First British Commissioner manual introduced.  
Teddy Roosevelt named Scout Commissioner of the Nassau County Council.
- 1931 District Commissioner position introduced.
- 1933 *Adventures of a District Commissioner* published.  
Neighborhood Commissioner position introduced.
- 1936 All Councils become First Class Councils headed by professional staff.
- 1941 Daniel Carter Beard passes away at 90 years of age.
- 1943 Commissioner's training course introduced.  
Commissioner Service manual introduced.  
George Fisher named National Commissioner.
- 1948 First International Commissioners Meeting at Kandersteg International Scout Centre in Switzerland.
- 1951 First Commissioner Training at Philmont Training Center.
- 1952 Commissioner Arrowhead award introduced.

# BSA Commissioner Timeline



- 1973 Women are allowed to become Cub Scout Unit Commissioners or Cub Scout Roundtable Commissioners.
- 1975 Alternative council's Commissioner structure offered based on program areas.
- 1976 Women are allowed to hold any Commissioner position.  
First Commissioner College held in Atlanta.
- 1985 Earl Graves named National Commissioner.
- 1989 The Distinguished Commissioner Award is introduced.
- 1990 National Commissioner position restructured.
- 1991 *"The COMMISSIONER"* quarterly National Commissioner newsletter started.
- 1995 Frances Olmstead, Jr named National Commissioner.
- 1999 Rick Cronk named National Commissioner.
- 2003 National Commissioner web site activated.  
Line of Commissioner products offered.
- 2004 Don Belcher named National Commissioner.
- 2006 Official Commissioner section of the BSA website.
- 2007 Unit Visitation Tracking System officially launched.
- 2008 Tico Perez named National Commissioner.
- Area and Regional Commissioner positions are established.  
College of Commissioner Science Doctorate square knot introduced.

# BSA Commissioner Timeline



- 2009 Introduction of Volunteer National Commissioner Service Support Staff.
- 2010 Commissioners celebrate 100 years of service to units!
- 2010 Council Commissioner manual published.
- 2010 Commissioner Training goes online.
- 2010 Unit Visit Tracking System 2.0 made available.
- 2011 Commissioner Award of Excellence in Unit Service announced.
- 2011 Second Century Commissioner position patch introduced.
- 2013 Commissioners embrace Social Media with an official Facebook page.
- 2014 Commissioner Tools released.
- 2016 Commissioner Certificate of Commendation available.
- 2016 Charles W. Dahlquist II named National Commissioner.