

# **COMMISSIONER SERVICE**

## **Our First Hundred Years**



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Boy Scouts of America

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## INTRODUCTION

As we enter the second century of Scouting and the commissioner service, we need to look back and salute those Scouters that have worn the insignia of the commissioner.

Scouting has changed in those many years. Requirements and uniforms have changed. Council structures and boundaries have been altered. But the role of the commissioner as Scouting's conduit for unit service remains unchanged.

I have been honored to serve as a Unit Commissioner, Camp Commissioner, Assistant District Commissioner, Assistant Cub Scout District Commissioner, District Commissioner in three councils, Assistant Council Commissioner, and Council Commissioner. My experience is that it can be the most difficult position in Scouting. But it can also be one of the most rewarding jobs in Scouting.

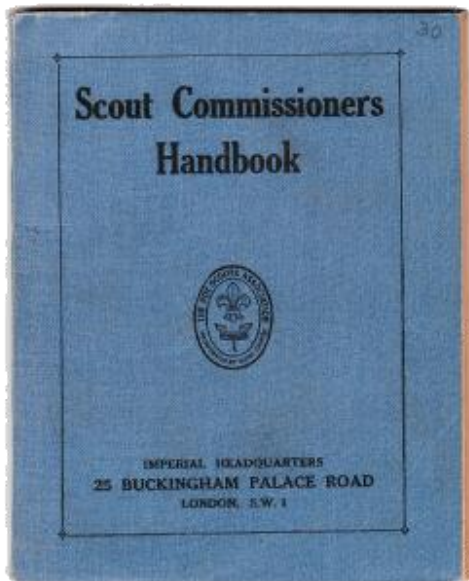
As we reach Scouting's centennial, the commissioner position is getting renewed emphasis and exposure. Funding for non-profits is getting harder to come by resulting in less growth of the professional staffs. The need for more volunteer commissioners is as great or greater than anytime in the past.

Our role in Scouting will continue to be fundamentally important for the next 100 years. As commissioners, we must make sure that every unit is offering their boys exactly what is promised to them.....fun, excitement, adventure, and ultimately a quality experience.

## The Roots of Commissioner Service

As commissioners in the Boy Scouts of America, we are delegated authority and responsibility from the National Council through our “Commission” per the By Laws of the National Council. Our responsibility is to help units succeed.

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



**1917 First  
Commissioner Handbook**

deserving few. These individuals 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.

In 1909, Baden Powell was still a working General in command of the Northumbrian Division of the Territorials when his new idea took hold in the imagination of boys everywhere and exploded into a full blown movement. He quickly realized that a system of organization and administration was needed. He put together an executive committee of prominent men. Among them, he named an old military friend, the recently retired Lieutenant-General Sir Edmond Roche Elles, as the first Chief Commissioner to fill in for him and direct the nomination of local County Commissioners and help to organize their associations. He held this post until 1922.

After nomination, the County Commissioners were approved by the Executive Committee. The County Commissioners nominated District Commissioners to help them within the civic divisions of the county. The local commissioners were expected to deal with Scoutmasters' questions and concerns.

By nominating prominent men for commissioner positions, BP helped gain support and recognition for the program. Some were working commissioners while some were commissioners in name only, but either way the movement benefited from their involvement.

W. F. deBois MacLaren was a District Commissioner in Scotland. He is best known for donating Gilwell Park. The MacLaren tartan on the Woodbadge neckerchief is worn in his honor.

Famous author, Rudyard Kipling had a son at the second Brownsea. Baden Powell named him the Commissioner of Wolf Cubs. Kipling also had a big influence on Scouting founder, Earnest Thompson Seton, being published.

## **The Rise of the Commissioner in the BSA**

Troops popped up around the country even before the National Council got organized. 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".

The Scout Commissioner represented the local community committee or council. A great deal of importance was placed upon the selection of this man. He was expected to have a great deal of outdoor experience and act as the local authority in all Scoutcraft matters.

The 1912 BSA Annual Report mentions that there were 290 Scout Commissioners.



No. 1184. SCOUT COMMISSIONER'S FLAG. Offered in response to the demand for such a flag to be used at rallies and other Scout assemblies. Made of all-wool blue 'American Navy' bunting, design and lettering, yellow. Size 4½x3½ feet. To order requiring 48 hours. \$6.50

**From Boy's Life December, 1914**

The commissioner was “commissioned” through the National Council. Commissioning a leader meant that they were authorized to render specific services provided for in the by-laws of the Boy Scouts of America.

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 known as First Class Councils while those with a volunteer head called the Scout Commissioner were known as Second Class Councils.

At the time, registration fees were 25 cents. If it was a first class council headed by a professional, the local council kept 15 cents locally. If it was a second class council, they kept only 5 cents.

The Great Depression hastened the demise of the second class council through mergers. By 1931, there was only one Second Class Council left; the Canal Zone of Panama.



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

## Scout Commissioner's Evolution

The Scout Commissioner is a position that has had its ups and downs. In some years it has played a vital role in organization and training, while in other years the function was weakened to an honorary title.

In Scouting's initial years, a great deal of the success of Scouting in a community as a result of the Scout Commissioner. He was expected to act as the authority in Scoutcraft matters and give leadership to the Scoutmasters. While he was a volunteer, the Scout Commissioner was supposed to be able to give considerable time to their Scout work. (1913)

Many, but not all Scout Commissioners became professional scouters. Some had jobs or family duties that would not allow for a career change.

Even with a paid Scout Executive, the Scout Commissioner was meant to be an active servant who with the Executive Committee provided direction to the Scout Executive. On occasion personal jealousies and antipathy developed between the two as their positions were not clearly defined. The first Professional guide, *Community Boy Leadership*, addressed this issue by suggesting clearly defined duties and doing what was best for the welfare of boyhood. This was of such importance that it was specifically addressed in the newly written 1917 Constitution and National By-Laws that when a council had both positions:

*“In such a case the local council, by a resolution, definitely fixes the responsibility of the scout commissioner and the scout executive in order to prevent conflict of authority and make clear the responsibility of the Scout Executive to the Executive Board of the local council in all matters excepting those specifically assigned to the Scout Commissioner.”* 2

It was also made clear that the responsibility of the Deputy Scout Commissioner was to the Scout Executive and not the Scout Commissioner.



Chief Scout Executive, James West, in the first National Conference of Scout Executives, 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. At the sixth National Conference in French Lick, Indiana, a group of Scout Executives were asked if they had gotten past the fear of the commissioner usurping their authority. Most indicated that they had.

But West also had issues with many Scout Commissioners that were reluctant to give up their turf. While some became professionals, others retained their title with a severe cutback in their duties so that the position became an honorary one. One in St. Louis was particularly irksome to James West as he did not respond to correspondence, got the BSA in trouble with a union, and smoked in public.

At the 1928 National Training Conference for Scout Executives, the group assigned to the task of commissioner service was split evenly with half wanting to totally eliminate the position and the other half wanting the position to be the volunteer head of Troop service for the council.

The Scout Commissioner became an elected position on the council board where his job was to represent the Scout leaders. Overall, his job was to promote Scouting in the area. (1939)

In the forties, the position was being used by councils around the country in many different ways. The recommended council by-laws suggested that the duties of the Scout Commissioner were determined by the local Council. Alternatives were:

1. Counselor and Adviser to the Scout Executive;
2. Chief Inspection Officer;
3. Chief Morale Officer;
4. Preside over gatherings and publically represent the Council
5. Serve as an honorary officer of the council.

Council By-Laws in the forties had all the other commissioner positions reporting to the Scout Executive. District Commissioners answered to the Scout Executive. The position was totally ignored in the Scout Executive guide, *Personnel Administration in Scouting* even though there was an entire chapter devoted to commissioners. Commissioner training at the time did not even mention the position. This demonstrates that the Scout Commissioner was a figurehead in many councils.

In the mid fifties, councils were asked if they had an honorary or active Council Commissioner. Of those councils responding, 90% indicated that they had an active Council Commissioner. Sixty percent of the responding councils said that their Council Commissioner presided at monthly District Commissioner meetings and quarterly



meetings of the entire commissioner staff. A large number had the Council Commissioner visit at least one meeting per year of the District Commissioner staff. The evidence showed that those councils that had monthly district commissioner meetings did the best job with their commissioner staffs. The survey showed that the Council Commissioner was responsible for the annual membership roundup and served as the morale officer for the council.

The respondents made a special point of the wholesome working relationship between the Council Commissioner and the Scout executive.

The Council Commissioner as a figurehead was effectively gone. Throughout the sixties, it was felt that a man with the character to be the Council Commissioner would not be satisfied with simply a title. He was named to head up all the commissioner service in the council by leading monthly District Commissioner meetings, keeping his commissioners informed, planning the Commissioner Conference, realize measureable accomplishments, and be a strong influence in council, district, and unit activities.

By 1971, he was also accountable for the national standard unit goals in the council, and on time charter renewals. Additionally, emphasis was placed on commissioner staff – district committee relationships being understood and developed.

In 1975, the position became optional for councils. After over 20 years of nurturing the “active” Council Commissioner, the new recommended structure did not include the job. This was an effort to streamline accountability from the top to the unit level.

Many councils did not eliminate the Council Commissioner so that by 1980, it was back in full action. The Council Commissioner was viewed as heading all commissioner personnel.

His duties now included:

1. Supervise the activities of the commissioner staff and preside at council wide meetings of district commissioners and conduct commissioner conferences.
2. Give leadership to the recruiting and training of adequate commissioner staff so as to provide continuing and effective commissioner service to each unit.
3. Maintain the standards of the Boy Scouts of America, uphold national policies, promote good uniforming and the correct wearing of insignia, and give leadership to the holding of regular roundtable programs in the districts.
4. Be concerned about the proper recognition of unit leaders and the maintenance of their morale, and periodically report unit conditions to the executive board.
5. Help the district commissioners to maintain a good working relationship with related district Scout executives.
6. Maintain procedures that will assure maximum unit charter renewal by district commissioner staffs.
7. Work with the council president to secure help of committees in meeting unit needs.

It was recognized that he may now share parts of his job with assistants. But ultimately the Council Commissioner was held accountable for the unit service program.

In 2002, as greater importance was beginning to be placed on commissioner service, a handout was developed on *Selecting the Council Commissioner (14-160)*. The Council Commissioner was expected to be the morale officer and give leadership to the commissioner corps to help all units become successful. The leaflet stated that “Effective commissioner service is also one of the major causes of a growing council membership.”

## **National Field Commissioners**

During the first three years, the National Office drowned in a sea of applications and correspondence. Finally, a program of decentralization was begun with volunteer Field Commissioners to help with the organization of councils to handle local administration including the appointment of Scout Commissioners and Scoutmasters.

Volunteer Field Commissioners known as Field Secretaries were available as early as 1910 to help communities organize their local council and troops. At the first annual meeting of the BSA in February of 1911, James West expressed concern about the immediate demand for Field Secretaries to help organize states, counties and communities around the country. Today, we are glad that he changed the term secretary to commissioner. This happened around the time that West changed his title from Executive Secretary to Chief Scout Executive.

A National Field Commissioner named Samuel A. Moffatt was chosen in 1911. With an assistant, Arthur R. Forbush, they made up the National Field Staff. There were 68 volunteer Field Commissioners in 1913. W.A. Whiting became the National Field Commissioner in 1917. He was renamed National Field Scout Commissioner in 1918. This title rankled Daniel Carter Beard who felt that it would be confused with his title of National Scout Commissioner. <sup>1</sup>

Many of the volunteer Field Commissioners worked for other agencies such as the YMCA 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. These men were expected to make quarterly reports to the Field Department on the conditions of their geographic area and any recommendations.

From 1913 to 1917, six districts were established with a District Commissioner for each National District. This was later expanded to 12. The original six were:

Harry D. Cross – West Coast

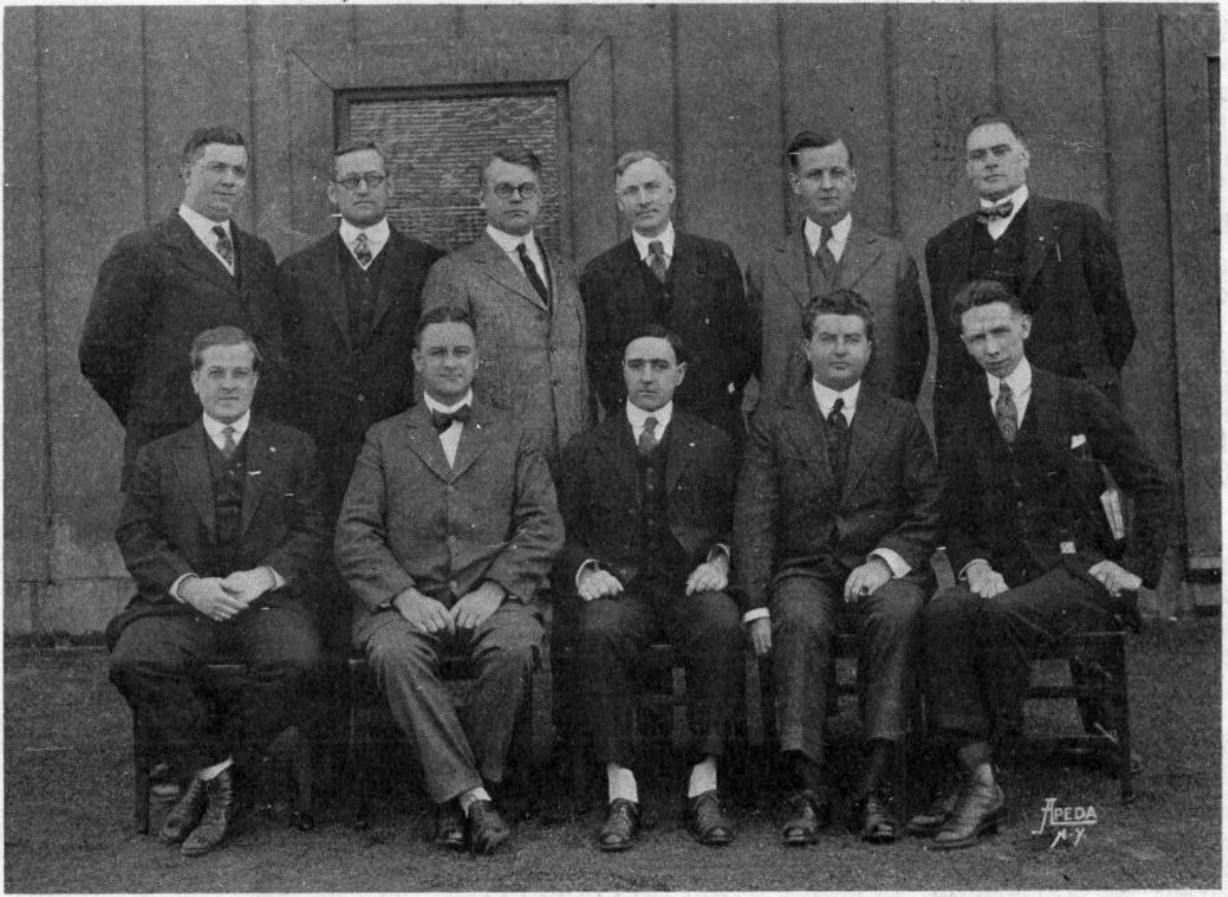
Judson P. Freeman – Midwest

Roy N. Berry – New England

John Boardman – New York/New Jersey

Haywood M. Butler – Pennsylvania

Stanley A. Harris – Southern District



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

From left to right, top row: Mr. Walter H. York; Mr. Clarence M. Abbott; Mr. James E. West, Chief Scout Executive; Mr. Lewis Buddy; Mr. Judson P. Freeman, in charge of Middle West Districts; Mr. Edward C. Bacon

From left to right, bottom row: Mr. A. C. Olson, Secretary to the Chief Scout Executive; Mr. W. H. Weisheit; Mr. S. A. Moffat, Director of Field Work; Mr. H. M. Butler; Mr. H. Laurance Eddy

## **First Class Councils**

While the British continued their organization of volunteers, the National Office felt that the use of career professionals was more successful. In 1920, the newly appointed Deputy Chief

Scout Executive Dr. George J. Fisher was given the task to create and promote the First Class Council concept throughout the country. He did this through his Field Department (replacing Moffatt as head of Field Service) and the National Organization and Field Committee headed by Mortimer Schiff. The position of National Field Scout Commissioner was eliminated.

	COUNCIL		-----TROOPS-----			-----SCOUTS-----		
	Local		Local		Not	Local		Not
	Councils		Councils		Under	Councils		Under
	1st	2nd	1st	2nd	Council	1st	2nd	Council
	Class	Class	Class	Class	Direct	Class	Class	Service
1915	47	263	2,891		4,484	59,866		83,916
1917	136	227	5,880		7,368	132,535		148,509
1919	270	151	7,850		8,326	184,944		175,125
1921	416	181	10,278	750	6,561	239,324	17,240	134,818
1923	531	100	13,951	557	5,805	315,603	12,716	116,317
1925	634	41	18,937	228	3,798	411,669	4,922	75,693
1927	638	21	23,156	117	2,375	506,270	2,562	47,825
1929	633	8	27,077	43	649	586,408	120	14,453
1931	583	1	28,989	7	478	636,581	308	9,966
1933	551	1	29,048	11	529	661,561	263	11,709
1935	544	1	32,252	11	442	728,621	330	9,477

Source: The History of the Boy Scouts of America Pg 259

Many of the volunteer Field Commissioners became Professionals following the establishment of the 12 regions in November of 1920.



## The Wreath of Service

Originally, the laurel wreath was a Greek symbol denoting victory and courage. Commissioners normally agree with the courage part the first time that they attend the troop meeting of a 25-year Scoutmaster.

The addition of the wreath to the first class badge is thought to be an outgrowth from its use for commissioned personnel in military insignia. Today, our movement 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.

We call it the wreath of service as a symbol for the service rendered to units by the commissioner.

As it also appears on professional insignia, it further symbolizes the continued partnership of the professional and the commissioner and their commitment to program and unit service.



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

## District Commissioners

The Deputy Scout Commissioner existed to help organize an assigned territory that could not support a full time executive. Once a Field Scout Executive (later District Executive) was in place, the need for a commissioner was questioned.

The National by-laws had given authority for commissioners to the Scout Executive and not the Scout Commissioner. The result was that many councils failed to organize a commissioner corps of any kind.

The 1928 National Training Conference of Scout Executives encouraged keeping the Deputy Commissioner as a representative of the council to see that the Scout Program functions in his District. At this meeting it was recommended that the title be changed to District Commissioner. It was also noted that there was a need for defined job descriptions and literature regarding the use of commissioners. The title change took place around 1931.

Titles and organization still varied widely from council to council. The Alameda Council in California had an active Scout Commissioner. He had five Division Commissioners with responsibility for three troops each. There were two Deputy Commissioners. One was for Cubbing and the other was for training. <sup>3</sup>

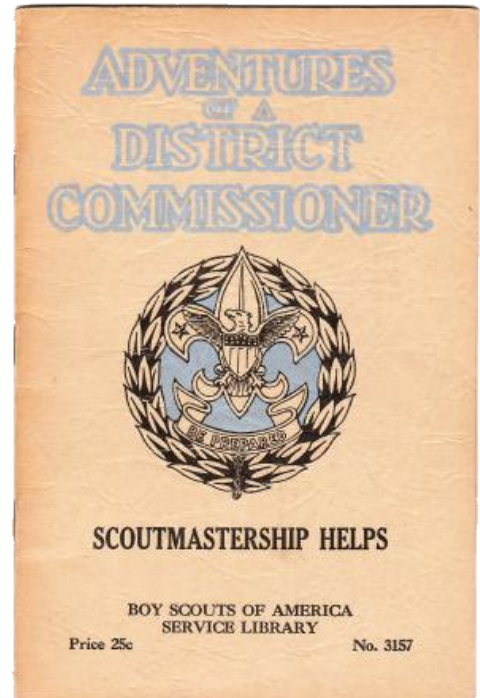
District Commissioners evolved to fill in and bring Scouting to the rural areas of councils that could not support a full time executive. By 1936, 81% of possible district areas had been organized as such.

The book, *Adventures of a District Commissioner*, was the first printed material from the BSA for guiding commissioners. In a narrative fashion it laid out the qualifications for and duties of the position.

This publication laid out essentially six duties for the District Commissioner.

1. Visit the Troops.
2. Stay in touch with the Field Scout Executive.
3. Keep in contact with the Troop Committee Chairman.
4. Recruit new Scouters.
5. Cultivate new Troops.
6. Hold a meeting for Scouters once a month.

A 1935 publication, *The Committee on Organization and District, Neighborhood, and Field Commissioners*, emphasized the commissioner duty of Troop service while leaving organization of new units to the Committee on Organization. Additionally, it gave more in depth information on the position of the Neighborhood Commissioner.



As the commissioner staff expanded to include Neighborhood Commissioners, another duty was added; the monthly commissioner meeting. Here he was expected to hold a session for training, reviewing reports of unit visitations, and planning the District work.

## **Field Commissioners**

While the Neighborhood Commissioner was viewed as a Doctor, the Field Commissioner was the Specialist that was “on call” to other commissioners.

Field Commissioners were specialized representatives of the council considered to be on an equal level with the District Commissioner. They served a functional responsibility such as Cubbing, Senior Scouting, Catholic Scouting, Camping, Emergency Service Corps, or Sea Scouts.

The position became a catch all for any Scouting need. In Nashville, there was even a Scout Fire Commissioner and Scout Police Commissioner who helped guide the troops sponsored by the city. Another council had a commissioner for uniforming. The Field Commissioner was “on call” to the District or Neighborhood Commissioners as a technical expert in his program. They were not necessarily to wait for a call from the District Commissioner, but were encouraged to go out on their own initiative and visit with units in their respective area of expertise.

There was also talk around 1936 of having an Institutional Commissioner that took care of all the units (a term discouraged at the time) under a single chartering institution although this position never came about.

By 1947, the use of Field Commissioners had fallen by the wayside.

## **Neighborhood Commissioners**

The Great Depression curtailed non-profit funding so that more had to be done utilizing volunteer commissioners instead of professionals. The organization grew and District Commissioners could no longer get around to visiting all their units. This task was given to a Deputy Commissioner so that units would continue to get a monthly visit. The title quickly changed to Neighborhood Commissioner as it was thought that the title of Deputy Commissioner was not descriptive enough.

An increased emphasis on the development of strong commissioner staffs was begun in the late 30's following the Scout Executives National Training Conference at French Lick, Indiana in 1936. With the addition of the Assistant District Commissioner; the structure that we are familiar with today began to take shape.

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.



Scouting units were originally organized around the group of kids in the neighborhood. The times change and Scouting changes with it. Packs and Troops became more associated with their charter partner and the focus for the commissioner became the unit. The Neighborhood Commissioner evolved into the Unit Commissioner who was expected to bring the whole Scouting family of troops, packs, crews, and ships to the Charter Partner.

## Commissioners of the Round Table

Very early on, council leader meetings were just for Scoutmasters and was known as the Scoutmasters Association. 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.

The addition of the Roundtable Commissioner completed the District Commissioner’s evolution into an “administrative” commissioner.

The use of an Assistant District Commissioner for Roundtables gained momentum in the early fifties. Patches titled for the Cub Scout Roundtable Commissioner and the Boy Scout Roundtable Commissioner followed shortly after in 1973.

There was often confusion over whether the Roundtable Staff were commissioners. National ruled that the Roundtable Staff position was not considered “commissioned” and had the wreath removed from the patch for several years in the mid-nineties.

## **Flexibility & Change**

In the late sixties, about 20 councils experimented with alternative forms of council and district structures. These experiments resulted in a new recommended council structure. The new plan for organization was approved by the National Executive Board in 1973 and presented nationally in 1974. The existing form of organization was referred to as the “traditional” structure.

The main theme was that the council be organized around the program areas of Scouts (the term “boy” was dropped), Cub Scouts, Exploring, and support.

As one Scouting Professional explained it, “Single-line volunteer accountability was the goal – the president and the district chairman.”

A Cub Scout District Commissioner and a Scout District Commissioner were accountable to the District Chairman for Cub Scouts and the District Chairman for Scouts. This person in turn was accountable to a District Chairman. There were also Assistant District Commissioners and Roundtable Commissioners for Scouts and Cub Scouts. The Unit Commissioners became program focused and were re-titled Troop Commissioner and Pack Commissioner.

The Council Commissioner became an optional position for the council. If used, their position was more ceremonial in nature. Although, if approved; they could provide supplemental training to the commissioner staff.

Exploring had council level accountability. The program was served by a commissioner equivalent known as the Service Team which reported up through a council level Service Chairman.



A new commissioner emphasis in the late seventies highlighted the traditional method so that by 1980, the “recommended” plan disappeared from the manuals. See Exhibits A & B.



New programs are continuing to be experimented with around the country as Scouting continues to search for a better method of delivering the program. In the Narragansett Council of Rhode Island, the volunteer and staff structure is being organized along separate “sales and service” functions. The “service” element is composed of a “service team” led by a Service Area Commissioner. A “community commissioner” will be named for each of the approximately 20 communities with additional unit commissioners recruited based on the needs of the units in that community rather than an arbitrary 1 to 3 formula. (From Narragansett Council New Council Service Delivery Structure and Organization 8/19/2010)





## Female Commissioners

Except as a Women's Auxiliary, women were discouraged from taking part in early Scouting. The prevalent thinking at the time was that boys needed a strong male role model. Cubbing changed all that with the position of Den Mother who

was an aid to the Den Chief for the first two years of the Cubbing program,

Societal changes pushed for women to take on new roles in Boy Scouts; including the

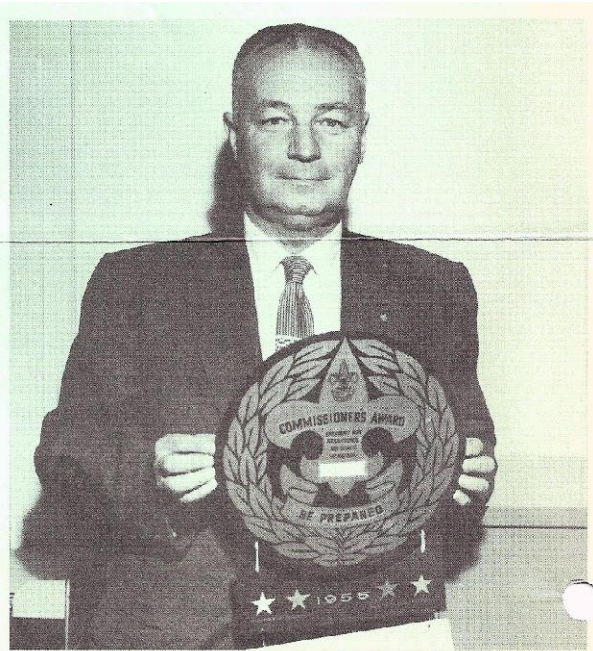
### First female khaki uniforms 1976

role of commissioner. In 1973, women were allowed to become Cub Scout Unit Commissioners or Cub Scout

Roundtable Commissioners.

The major change came in 1976 when women were allowed to hold any commissioner position. A month later women were given the option of a khaki uniform. Today, there are about 400,000 registered female volunteers.

## Commissioners and Quality in the BSA



COUNCIL COMMISSIONER Clarence Boyle holds new "Commissioner's Award" which goes to outstanding Units during the last quarter of 1955. A climax of the past four months activities, the award is based on membership, advancement, activities and committee meetings.

The Commissioner has always been considered the Quality Control Officer in Scouting with the duty of inspecting the troops. Prior to 1932, the troop rating system was a statistical point system that was easily administered by the council office. As more emphasis began to be placed upon the quality of the program, the Commissioner staff became more involved. This has increased over the years to the point that Commissioners have become a big part of the BSA Quality and are required to sign off on the

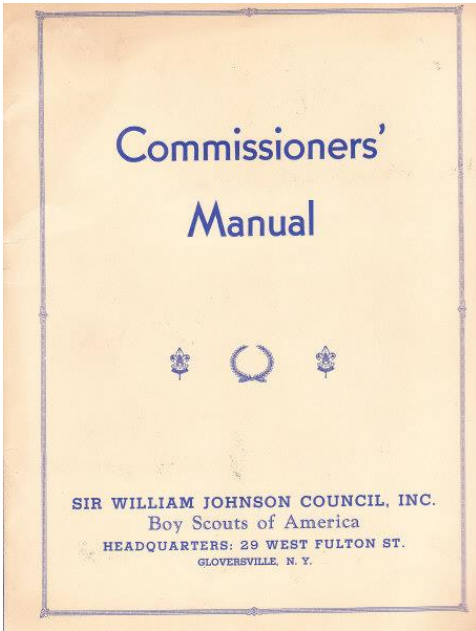
forms.

A great deal of latitude was given to the local council up until the National Standard Unit in 1969. One Council in California, the Crescent Bay Council in Alameda, created the Commissioner's Award in 1955. Other councils adopted this program.



## Commissioner Tools & Publications

The commissioner work kit was a local assembly of National and local forms and reference materials for commissioners to carry as determined by the local Scout Executive. The work kit



**1939 Council Manual**

was an early development and was also referred to as the Commissioner Manual before the introduction of the “Official” Commissioner Manual”.

After a four year study, a manual was finally produced by the National Office in 1943 that was meant to be used alongside the Council’s version.

The *Commissioner Fieldbook* was created in 1954.

In the early seventies, the *Commissioner Field Book* was introduced in a handy loose leaf design to place in a binder and replace pages as needed. This is an idea that has come back around today.

## Commissioner Training

A specialized course for the District Commissioner was developed by the Educational Service in the early thirties.

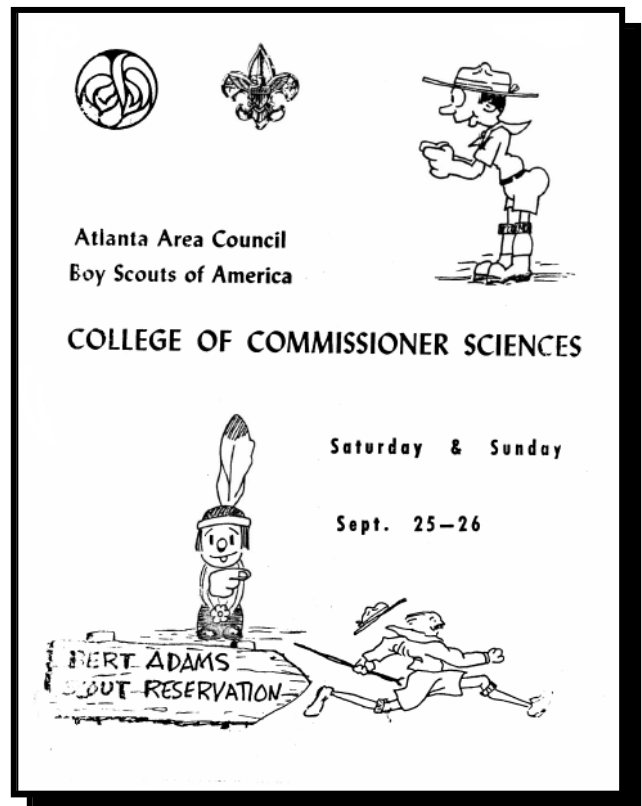


Commissioner courses were initially held at the Mortimer L. Schiff Scout Reservation and known as *Troop and Pack Service* in 1942. This training was offered to those individuals with responsibility for training in their local councils. Philmont instituted national commissioner training in 1951.

As the commissioner membership grew so did the need for training. A *Commissioner's Training Course* was introduced "For Experimental Use" in 1943. The course was timed for release with the new *Commissioner Service Manual*. The training met the requirements for the 5 year training program toward the Scouters Training Award. The country was at war and faced increased turnover in Scouting professionals and volunteers. Commissioners were vital in helping Scouting to respond to all the wartime demands placed upon it and maintain the esprit de corps.

As soon as a Council had enough commissioners to fill a room, there was a need to get together and trade ideas. These later evolved into more elaborate conferences for training and fellowship.

Although many councils still successfully make use of the Commissioner Conference, others have adopted the College



format that was introduced in Atlanta in 1976.

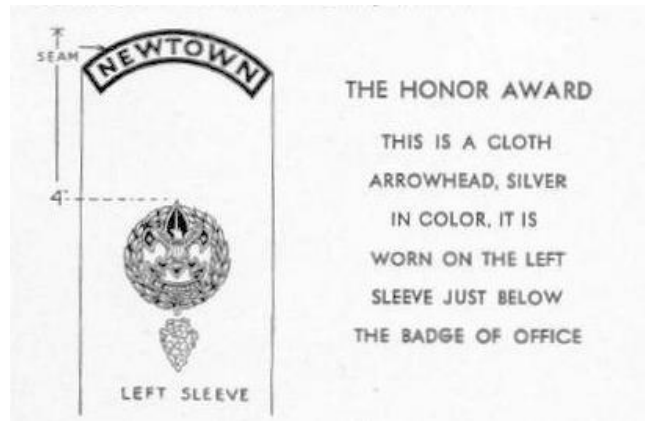
Courses at the first *College of Commissioner Sciences* included:

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

## Commissioner Recognition

### Arrowhead Honor

The silver Arrowhead Honor Award was introduced in 1952. The Arrowhead was an award that fit between the Scouter's Training Award and the Scouter's Key for Scoutmasters and Commissioners. It was brought out as a part of the three year



leadership training plan. At one time, there was a gold arrowhead for Assistant Scoutmasters. Originally pointing down, it was turned around in 1954. The Arrowhead Honor was changed to white in 1970. It is now a symbol of pride and identification of a well-trained commissioner. This award is unique to the commissioner service and is unusual in that it requires the application

of the knowledge learned in basic commissioner training. It means that you have proved yourself on the job.

## Commissioner Key – Scouters Key

Prior to 1948, the Scoutmaster's Key required 5 years of satisfactory service. It allowed for 3 years as a scoutmaster and 2 years as a commissioner. In 1948, the Scoutmaster's Key was renamed the Scouter's Key and the tenure requirement dropped from five to three years. It could now be earned by commissioners. For commissioners, the Scouter's Key incorporated sections on Training, Performance, Good Turn, and Tenure. A few years later, the Arrowhead requirements were added in addition to preliminary and basic training. When earned by a commissioner, it is commonly referred to as the Commissioner's Key.

## Distinguished Commissioner Service Award

The Distinguished Commissioner Service Award was introduced in 1987. Because it requires 5 year of tenure and active registration as a commissioner, it is considered a difficult award to earn. The award itself is a plaque and bolo with a medallion in Silver, Gold, or Bronze. Following the military and Scout tradition, the silver is awarded to Council or Assistant Council Commissioners, Gold to District or Assistant District Commissioners, and Bronze to the Unit Commissioner. The brochure on the award shows the Gold at a higher level. There is also a square knot to represent the award.

## Doctorate of Commissioner Science Knot

The Doctorate of Commissioner Science Knot was introduced in 2008. Joseph E Wherry, Assistant Council Commissioner in the Mid-America Council, was instrumental in proposing this new award to recognize completion of a standardized program leading to the completion of a thesis or project and the award of the Doctorate of Commissioner Science from a College of Commissioner Science.

## Commissioner Award of Excellence

The Commissioner Award of Excellence in Unit Service is awarded to a commissioner who provides exemplary unit service, focusing on unit performance as measured in Journey to Excellence and through the use of the current Boy Scouts of America Unit Service Plan and Commissioner Tools. It was developed as a nationwide effort to engage Scouting volunteers and professional Scouters to work together in focusing on unit retention.



## The National Commissioner

### National Commissioners of the BSA

**2016–Present Charles W. Dahlquist II**

**2008–2016 Hector “Tico” Perez**

**2004–2008 Donald D. Belcher**

**1999–2004 William F. "Rick" Cronk**

**1994–1999 Frances Olmstead**

**1985–1994 Earl G. Graves**

**1944–1984 Vacant**

**1943–1960 George J. Fisher**

**1942 Vacant**

**1910–1941 Daniel Carter Beard**

**1910–1911 Peter S. Bomus**

**1910–1911 William Verbeck**

Along with Dan Beard, Col. Peter S. Bomus and William Verbeck were named National Commissioners. The three had been heads of competing Scout-like organizations that were folded into the BSA. Colonel Peter Bomus headed the Boy Scouts of the United States and Colonel William Verbeck led the National Scouts of America. Dan Beard had established the Boy Pioneers (formerly the Sons of Daniel Boone).

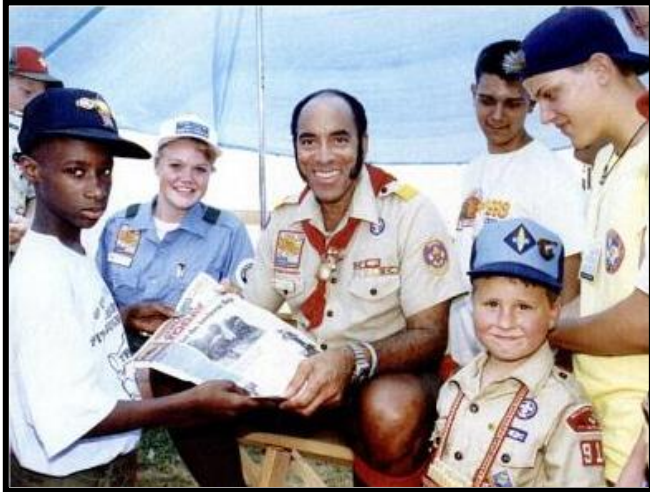
Both Bomus and Verbeck served for only 2 years from 1910 to 1912. Uncle Dan spent 31 years as the most recognizable volunteer in the nation. With his white hair and beard, and his white buckskin ensemble, he stood out in a crowd. Although he was never paid a salary by the BSA, he did derive some income from his speaking engagements.

The minutes of the annual meeting of the National Council in 1913 set out the duties of the National Scout Commissioner:

“The National Scout Commissioner is the head of staff of official representatives of the various national organizations engaged in work with boys and also interested in the Scout Program. The Commissioner and his staff shall adapt the activities to the needs of the groups represented, and work for the development of a high grade of leadership in boy’s work. He is also an honorary member of all standing committees.”

As described above, Dan Beard had no direct authority. He was an honorary member of all standing committees and was very good at making his opinion known; especially when it came to his opinions of Earnest Thompson Seton and James West. Dan Beard was the Chairman of the National Court of Honor. He became a well known symbol of and cheerleader for Scouting.

Beginning with the restructured position of the National Commissioner in 1985, there has been increasing emphasis on the role of the Commissioner. The first to be named National Commissioner in the modern era was Earl Graves, Publisher of Black Enterprise magazine. He



**Past National Commissioner Earl Graves**

had previously served as Commissioner for New York City. During his term, *the Commissioner*, National Commissioner newsletter was begun.

Francis Olmstead, Jr served as National Commissioner from 1994 to 1999. He started the tracking of the unit-to-commissioner ratio by council and began

the gatherings of Council Commissioners at the Annual National Meetings.

In June, 1999, Rick Kronk, president of Dryer’s Grand Ice Cream, agreed to fill the role. During his tenure, commissioner identity items were introduced through the Scout catalog and through his efforts the visibility of the commissioner role was raised nationwide.

Following Kronk, Don Belcher filled the position whose role was identified as developing national unit service programs and commissioner training programs.

National Commissioner, Hector A. “Tico” Perez, took over in May, 2008 and



**Past National Commissioner, Tico Perez**

served in the position for eight years. Compared to many previous National Commissioners, he has had a much more participatory role in improving commissioner service and leading the commissioner corps. He had a large influence over the quality of the program.

Tico crisscrossed the country attending Commissioner Colleges and other Scouting events, where he became a cheerleader for Commissioners and the Scouting program. He was known for his impromptu style of speaking. Scouters recognized that he could speak from his heart because of his love of and belief in the program. He was often heard preaching that the commissioner corps owns retention.

A fervent patch collector, he convinced the National Council to implement the Centennial Commissioner position patch to celebrate 100 years of Commissioner Service.

Tico's greatest impact on Commissioner Service was establishing a volunteer group, The National Commissioner Service Task Force.

Nine great Scouting volunteers came before our newest National Commissioner, Charles W. Dahlquist II so he has a lot to live up to. Charles developed his love for Scouting within The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Scouting's first charter partner. Among many other jobs in the church, he served as the Young Men General President. Together with his Scouting background, Charles understands that everything we do must ultimately result in a



**National Commissioner,  
Charles Dahlquist**

positive impact upon the lives of our youth. We look forward to seeing how the Commissioner Program will continue to evolve under his direction.

## **National Commissioner Service Task Force**

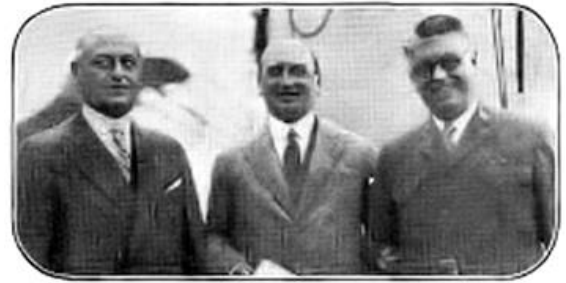
The goal of the National Commissioner Service Task Force is to positively impact the quality of commissioner service provided to Area, Council, District, Unit and Roundtable Commissioners. Everything that they do is designed to make the commissioner function easier for the volunteer and assist the commissioner corps in delivering a quality program to the unit.

The National Commissioner Service Support team has had a huge impact on the success of Commissioner Service and ultimately the quality of the program and retention of youth and units. Today the team consists of a National Commissioner Service Training Chair, National Commissioner Service Recruitment and Retention Chair, National Commissioner Service Underserved Markets Chair, National Commissioner Service Communications Chair, National Commissioner Service Roundtable Chair, Commissioner Service Chair and National Commissioner Service Resources Chair. In a short amount of time, we have seen increased Commissioner enthusiasm due to increased communication, new tools, new and revised Commissioner literature, improved training programs including the renewal of the Commissioner College.

## The International Commissioner

The Boy Scouts of America is represented in world contacts and developments by the volunteer International Commissioner. He plays a key role in representing the BSA at world conferences and events.

The first International Commissioner was Mortimer Schiff. There is no complete list of International Commissioners, but the following men have been identified as holding the position.



Hubert Martin, Director of the International Scout Bureau, Mortimer L Schiff, International Commissioner, Chief Scout Executive James West 1928



Mortimer Schiff

Thomas J Watson

Irving Feist

Edward C. Joullian III

Richard L. Burdick

Steve Fossett

Wayne M Perry

James Turley

Roger Schrimp



## The Next Hundred Years

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.

Just as Scouting has evolved over the last 100 years, so has the commissioner position. Wherever Scouting needed us, commissioners were there to take on the task.

It has always been the mission of every commissioner to see to it that the spirit of Scouting as embodied in the oath and law is a living reality in every unit.

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

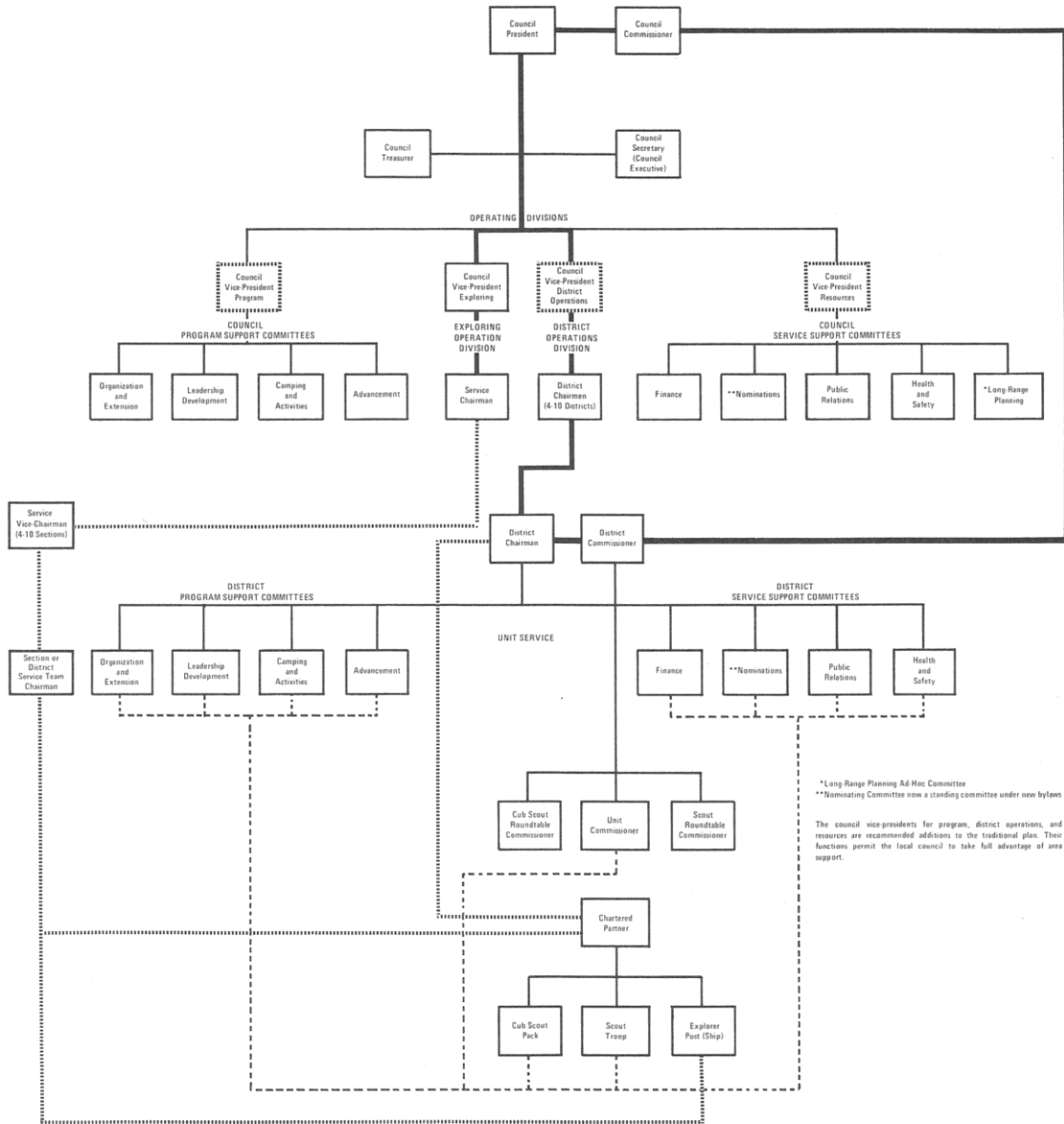
## Notes

1. Scott & Murphy, *The Scouting Party*, pg 211
2. *Scouting*, Annual Report of the Boy Scouts of America, 1917, pgs 13-14
3. Deputy Commissioners Portfolio, Alameda Council, BSA, January 1931



# Exhibit A Flexibility & Change

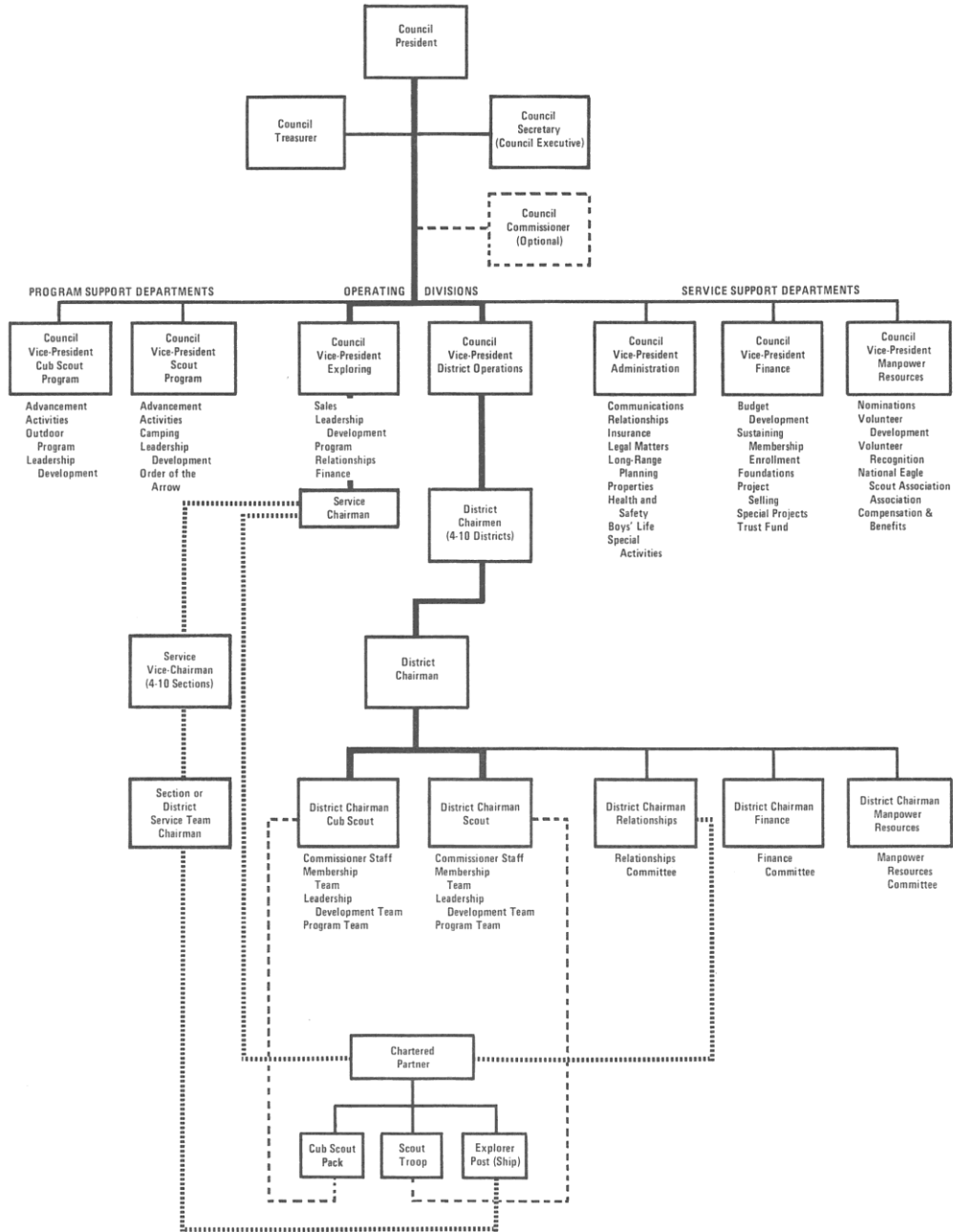
## TRADITIONAL PLAN OF COUNCIL AND DISTRICT ORGANIZATION



Commissioner Concept

# Exhibit B Flexibility & Change

## RECOMMENDED PLAN FOR COUNCIL AND DISTRICT ORGANIZATION (OPTIONAL)



Commissioner Concept



## Exhibit C

### ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF COMMISSIONER TITLES/POSITIONS IN THE BSA

Area Commissioner	Division Commissioner
Assistant Commissioner	Exploring Zone Commissioner
Assistant Council Commissioner	Field Commissioner
Assistant Deputy Commissioner	International Commissioner
Assistant Deputy Scout Commissioner	International Scout Commissioner
Assistant District Scout Commissioner	National Field Commissioner
Assistant District Commissioner	National Field Scout Commissioner
Assistant Field Commissioner	National Scout Commissioner
Assistant Roundtable Commissioner	National Commissioner
Boy Scout Roundtable Commissioner	Neighborhood Commissioner
Camp Commissioner	Neighborhood Scout Commissioner
Community Commissioner	Pack Commissioner
Council Commissioner	Regional Commissioner
Cub Roundtable Commissioner	Roundtable Commissioner
Cub Roundtable Staff	Service Area Commissioner
Cub Scout Roundtable Commissioner	Scout Commissioner
Community Commissioner	Scout Roundtable Commissioner
Deputy Commissioner	Special National Field Scout Commissioner
Deputy Scout Commissioner	Troop Commissioner
District Assistant Cub Scout Commissioner	Unit Commissioner
District Assistant Scout Commissioner	Varsity Huddle Roundtable Commissioner
Deputy Special National Field Scout Commissioner	Venturing Roundtable Commissioner
District Commissioner	Zone Commissioner
District Cub Scout Commissioner	Zone Commissioner Varsity Scout
District Scout Commissioner	

## Exhibit D

### Timeline of Commissioner 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.
- 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 National Commissioner position restructured. Earl Graves named National Commissioner.
- 1989 The Distinguished Commissioner Award is introduced.
- 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.
- 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.

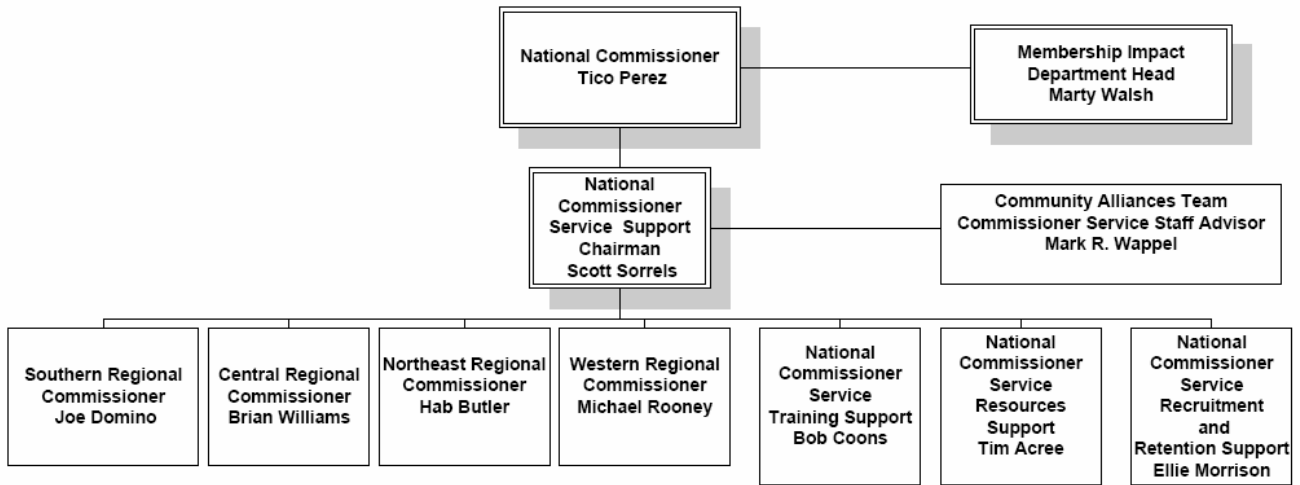
## **Timeline of Commissioner Service continued**

- 2009 Introduction of Volunteer National Commissioner Service Support Staff.
- 2010 Commissioners celebrate 100 years of service to units!  
New Commissioner Position Patches for the Centennial year.
- 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.
- 2014 Commissioner Tools released.
- 2016 Commissioner Certificate of Commendation available.
- 2016 Charles W. Dahlquist II named National Commissioner.

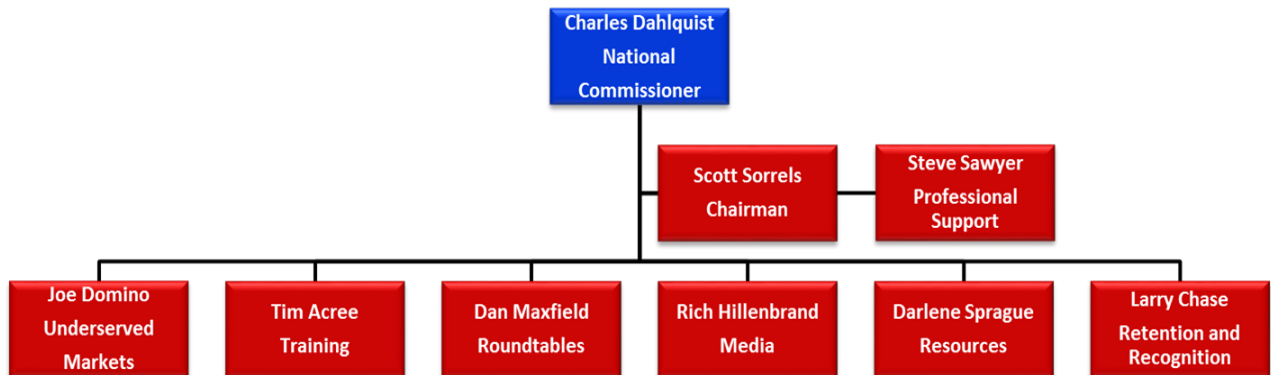
# Exhibit E

## Volunteer National Commissioner Service Support Staff

**Original National Commissioner Service Organization**



**Expanded National Commissioner Support Staff**



## **Exhibit F**

### **Commissioner Service - The First Hundred Years PowerPoint**

A copy of the accompanying PowerPoint presentation can be found at

<http://clarksvillehomepros.com/files/1026854/CommissionerHistory.ppt>



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## IN APPRECIATION

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This manuscript and accompanying PowerPoint and 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 in this manuscript, please email me.

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