

The Stephen H. Porter BSA Awards Collection 1911-1914

According to the BSA the first person to ever earn all available merit badges did so in 1922. It appears it likely first took place in 1914. While researching the history of the Invention merit badge for over a year I came across an obscure Fayetteville, NY newspaper article printed in July 1914 about a local Boy Scout who had earned 56 of the original 57 merit badges listed in the 1911 Official BSA handbook and who was working on the 57th. His name was Stephen H. Porter. According to the newspaper article he was fifteen years old when he joined Scouting in 1911 and was eighteen in July 1914. His 1911 Scout handbook however has notes in it that indicate he was in a local Scout troop in 1909 at age 13. There were a few unofficial American Scout troops before 1910 based on the English program.

I continued to research the Invention merit badge for over a year as well as Stephen Porter. He was the son of a Presbyterian minister in Fayetteville, New York. Stephen attended Oberlin Academy in Ohio in preparation to be a teacher. He was leaving the U.S. in early September 1914 for Syria to teach at the Henry A. Nelson Memorial School in Tripoli according to the newspaper article. The first five merit badges he earned were the five required to be a Life Scout. Then he earned five more to receive the Star Scout honor. Back then Star and Life were not part of the progression to Eagle Scout but independent honors. You had to earn the Life honor first to progress to the Star honor. For Eagle Scout you could earn any 21 merit badges and you did not have to earn Life or Star first or at all. This lack of required progression created a situation that is not widely known of today. Early on there were more Eagle Scouts in the United States than Star Scouts. Quite a few more. Of the first twenty-five Eagle Scouts in BSA history only four of them were also Star Scouts. In April 1913 there were only seven Star Scouts total in the nation. The first Eagle Scout to also be a Star Scout was the second Eagle Scout nationally, Earl Marx of Florida. Earl was also the very first Star Scout in BSA history. His Star cloth badge still exists. At the end of 1914 there were more Eagle Scouts (242) than Life (116) and Star Scouts (100) combined in the nation.

Although I had been aware of its existence since the previous Fall, on June 16, 2015 I found still intact, Stephen H. Porter's entire collection of awards he had earned in Scouting between 1911 and 1914 including the Star and Life cloth badges, his Foley First Class Pin and Foley Eagle Scout medal and most of all his entire set of the 57 original merit badges that he had personally earned. Every one of his nearly seventy insignia items are one hundred years old or older. They include among them the most famous merit badge in BSA history, the Invention merit badge, and also the rarest ever officially issued, the oak leaf design Stalking merit badge. The oak leaf design stayed in use until June 1914 when it was announced in Boys Life that there had been a redesign with a mountain lion replacing the oak leaf. There was one Stalking merit badge awarded in 1912 and four more in 1913. The three issued in 1914 included Stephen Porter's oak leaf design badge. The other two issued that year are either the old or the new design depending on when they were awarded that year. To my knowledge Stephen's oak leaf design Stalking merit badge is also the only one known to still exist. No one had ever seen one in person until his was discovered.

The last merit badge Stephen needed in order to have them all was the Invention merit badge. The July 1914 newspaper article mentioned he was working on three different inventions in the hope one of them would allow him to earn the last merit badge to have earned them all. Stephen was Eagle Scout #105 nationally. Stephen succeeded in obtaining the Invention merit badge and it is the only one of the ten issued between 1913-1915 known to still exist. What he invented specifically has not been determined. He taught electricity as a vocational education teacher in life. There was an invention patent applied for by a Stephen Porter in 1914 but it was Stephen C. Porter of Brooklyn, NY who was born in 1864 and was a singer and entrepreneur, not Stephen H. Porter, an 18 year old Eagle Scout from Fayetteville, NY.

One of Stephen's badges was particularly important to me, that being his Seamanship badge that has a red anchor. There were 99 Seamanship badges awarded total by the BSA between 1911 and the end of 1914. There is a known variety that has a black anchor of which two have been found that I am aware of. The very first person in BSA history to receive the Seamanship merit badge was Earl Marx who was the 2nd Eagle Scout after Arthur Eldred in 1912. Earl Marx's awards all still exist including his Seamanship merit badge and his badge also has the red anchor. That means that the original loom run for Seamanship had red anchors and not black anchors. In the teens or perhaps even 1920's what I believe took place was the person making the Seamanship badges in the embroidery factory failed to disconnect the black thread from a

previous merit badge loom run and had black connected instead of red when he started a loom run of Seamanship. I believe the black anchor Seamanship is a partial loom run error that was used rather than tossed and not an officially approved design (my opinion only). If Earl Marx would have had a black anchor badge that would have changed everything. Of the original fifty-seven merit badges available in 1911, eight of the 57 varieties had a solid black icon and six had a solid red icon. I would think forgetting to change a single thread color on one badge between production runs would have been easy to do. This scenario is pure conjecture on my part though. But I do believe the black anchor badge is a loom run error and not a BSA approved change in design.

Surprisingly, the Angling (Fishing) merit badge was extremely difficult to earn in the early teens era as was Archery. During 1911-1914, only 4 people in the nation earned the Angling merit badge and at least one of them (the first person to receive it) was an adult Scouter. His name was Joseph Evarts of St. Albans, Vermont. He was about 26 years old when he received it in May, 1913. He later served in WWI in 1917-18 and died in 1920 from lung complications of being mustard gassed during the war. Stephen Porter was one of the first two recipients of the Archery merit badge in BSA history. He may have been the first but there is no way to confirm it.

Among Stephen Porter's fifty-seven merit badges that he earned, his Agriculture merit badge was one of the first 18 ever awarded. His Blacksmithing badge was among the first 29. His Dairying badge was among the first 31. His Aviation badge was among the first 29. His Stalking badge was among the first 8 and is one of the original oak leaf design badges. His Angling (Fishing) badge was among the first 4. His Taxidermy badge was among the first 10. His Sculpture badge was among the first 47. His Leather Working badge was among the first 70. His Seamanship badge was among the first 99. His Printing badge was among the first 62. His Mining badge was among the first 58. His Photography badge was among the first 70. His Plumbing badge was among the first 88. His Architecture badge was among the first 93. His Ornithology (Bird Study) badge was among the first 42 and as stated above, his Archery badge was among the first 2 ever awarded. Then there is his Invention badge which was one of the ten total to be awarded.

Every Scouting website in the world that mentions the Invention merit badge says that it (the Invention merit badge) ended in either 1915, 1916, 1917 or 1918. It officially ended on October 1, 1914 by a vote of the national BSA board earlier that year. The national office gave an apparent extension to one person to continue working on it after October 1, 1914 and that person received the final Invention merit badge in 1915. It has been a mystery as to who was the final and lone 1915 recipient. My personal belief is that it was Stephen Porter who received the extension but there is no written documentation found so far that confirms it. It is very compelling that with him leaving the country to teach overseas before the cutoff date of October 1, 1914 and that he was so close to having earned all fifty-seven merit badges and the fact that he did earn and receive all fifty-seven makes me believe he was the tenth and final recipient of the award. He did not have it yet by July 1914. If he did receive it in 1915 then he did not earn all that were available at the time because Physical Development was available in 1915 (and in late 1914). If he received the Invention merit badge by October 1, 1914 then he truly did earn all that were available at the time. He had told his family for many years that "he had earned every merit badge that was available to earn". There is just no way to know for sure if he earned the fifty-seven badges by October 1, 1914 but he did earn the original 57 merit badges. So I continue to search for confirmation of that as well as the identities of the remaining seven unknown Invention merit badge recipients. The national office in the early teens stated it would be "impossible for any one person to earn the entire fifty-seven badges", but Stephen H. Porter proved them wrong.

The collection has been passed down in the family for over 100 years and the current guardian of it intends to keep it intact and in the family as a family treasure. The family requests that collectors and/or anyone else not contact them for any reason concerning it.

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STEPHEN PORTER A GOOD SCOUT

HAS ATTAINED GREATEST NUMBER OF SCOUT HONORS.

Wins Silver Eagle Badge, Which Distinguishes Him As Eagle Scout. But National Court Has No Other Insignia With Which to Reward Scout With So Many Honors.

The highest honor within the gift Of the National Court of Honor of the Boy Scouts of America, election as an eagle scout, has been conferred upon Stephen H Porter, son of the Rev. H. A. Porter, pastor of the Presbyterian church. Scout Porter is 18 years old and he has been interested in scout work for three years. In that time he has qualified for fifty-six of the fifty-seven merit badges offered by the National Court of Honor. The merit badge for Invention Is the only one that he has not earned, and he is now working on three inventions, with one of which he hopes to win the last badge. The wining of twenty-one merit badges entitles Scout Porter to the silver eagle badge, which distinguishes him as an eagle scout. There are a number of these created every month by the National Court of Honor. But the fact that Scout Porter has won thirty-five more badges than were necessary for his election places him In a class entirely alone. His record has not been equaled among boy scouts anywhere.

The process by which Scout Porter won his unique distinction was one of constant work and perseverance in the study of scout lore during the last three years. He began as a tenderfoot member of Troop No. 1, Fayetteville scouts, when he was 15 years of age. Soon alter joining the movement he went-to Oberlin, Ohio, where he entered Oberlin Academy, and there with other boys, interest in scouting. Through the second and first classes In the scout curriculum he made rapid progress and then began the series of tests by which the merit badges were won.

The first five were a matter of physical and mental fitness and elementary scout training. They were first aid, athletics, life saving, personal health and public health. Upon qualification for these badges Scout Porter was elected a life scout and was in line for the other badges When he had completed another series of five he was chosen a star scout and eleven more made him an eagle scout Not satisfied with the number necessary to wit the silver eagle badge, he continued his work until last week, when he received the last of the fifty-six badges. They were given for excellence in the following tests in addition to the five mentioned above: Agriculture, angling, archery, architecture, art. astronomy, automobilng, aviation, bee farming, blacksmithing. bugling, business, camping, carpentry, chemistry, civics, conservation, cooking, craftsmanship, cycling, dairying. electricity, firemanship, first aid to animals, forestry, gardening, handicraft, horsemanship. interpreting, leather working, machinery, marksmanship, masonry, mining, music, ornithology, painting. pathfinding, photography, pioneering, plumbing, poultry farming, printing, scholarship, sculpture, seamanship. signaling, stalking, surveying, swimming, taxidermy The examining board before which Scout Porter appeared for the majority of his tests consisted of the Rev Charles Themanson of Oberlin. Ohio; Thomas Blair Pratiman of Norwalk, Ohio; John B Long of Poughkeepsie, and Ralph Ellis Shriber of Mexico. Scout Porter is now in attendance at Syracuse University, summer school where he is taking a course in pedagogy. preparatory to teaching English at the Henry A Nelson Memorial School In Tripoli. Syria He will leave early in September for Syria to take up his work there.

<http://fultonhistory.com/Newspapers%20Disk3/Fayetteville%20NY%20Bulletin/Fayetteville%20NY%20Bulletin%201913%20-%201914.pdf/Fayetteville%20NY%20Bulletin%201913%20-%201914%20-%200770.pdf>

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FOUND AT LAST



History of the
**Invention
Merit Badge**

History Of the Invention Merit Badge

by Dave Eby

The very first official merit badges to be awarded by the Boy Scouts of America took place in 1911. There were a total of 83 earned and presented that first year to 30 different Boy Scouts from around the country. Of the fifty-seven types of merit badges available then, only twenty-one of the varieties were awarded in 1911. Going by information printed in the Second Annual BSA Report presented on February 8, 1912, the very first Boy Scout to have been awarded merit badges through the National Council was Richard Burckes of Waltham, Massachusetts. He earned six of them and the first one he received was Swimming.



Invention Merit Badge, Earned By Stephen Porter

The most famous merit badge in national BSA history, at least among collectors, is the Invention Merit Badge. It was one of the original "official" fifty-seven merit badges first authorized by the BSA in 1911. It was also one of the two shortest lived. It was announced in the July 1914 issue of *Boys Life* on page 28 that "The Merit Badge for Invention will be discontinued after October 1 (1914). This was decided recently by the National Committee on Badges, Awards and Scout Requirements, the action being approved by the Executive Board. Claims for merit badges for Invention should be taken up with the National Headquarters [at this time.](#)"

The reason it was terminated was mentioned in the October 1916 issue of *Boys Life Magazine* on page 46. "Question: Why did the merit badge for Invention go out of use? Answer: Because of the cost. Experience proved that it encouraged boys to invest more than they could afford in equipment which might be of little or no value to them." However in the May 1st, 1914 issue of *Scouting Magazine* on page two it mentioned a different reason. A new merit badge, "Physical Development" was added to the list of fifty seven available to earn. It states "It was voted to eliminate the Badge for Invention so that the number of merit badges remained at 57". The board apparently wanted to maintain the badges available at 57 so one had to go and that one was Invention. So if you ask a trivia question of "What merit badge replaced the Invention merit badge in 1914?", the correct answer is the Physical Development merit badge. Even though it was only available to earn part of that first year, there were five Physical Development merit badges awarded in late 1914. With that said there is a list of the 57 merit badges available to earn in the April 1914 issue of *Scouting Magazine*. On the list is the

Physical Development merit badge and already taken off the list is the Invention merit badge. It strongly appears that the decision to end the Invention badge was done early in 1914 even though it officially ended on October 1st. It would seem logical that if the BSA wanted to maintain the number at 57 and that if the Invention merit badge was available to earn until October 1, 1914 that the Physical Development Badge would not have been available to earn until after October 1 1914. The number of Physical Development badges issued in 1914 (five) seems to back this up.

In the national BSA Reports to Congress it is stated that the Invention Merit Badge was awarded to ten Scouts total. None were awarded in 1911 or 1912 but one

was awarded in 1913, eight more in 1914 and a final one awarded in 1915. Some collectors question whether any Invention merit badges were actually physically produced. The answer to that is yes they were.

Time seems to have erased the names of the ten recipients but records from that era still exist that in fact do name at least two of them and a third one has been identified through his awards and a news article which still exist. One was a Scout in Washington DC in the teens. He was a member of Troop 32 and the Invention Merit Badge was the 38th merit badge that he had earned. He went on to earn fifty-one of the fifty-seven available at that time. He became an Eagle Scout in 1914. He was seventeen years old when he received the Invention merit badge during the week of June 7th, 1914. He was one of ten BSA members to receive merit badges that evening and the only one of the ten to receive the Invention badge. He had received his Eagle Scout badge at a White House ceremony in early 1914. President Wilson was suppose to pin it on him and several others but was too ill that day so Mrs. Wilson did the honors.

The second known named recipient of the Invention merit badge was an adult Scoutmaster from Brooklyn, New York. Keep in mind that scout advancement was available to youth AND adult members for many years up until 1965. Adults could and did earn and receive merit badges and ranks up to and including Eagle Scout and were encouraged to do so by the National Council in the early years in order to serve as an example for Scouts to follow. The Brooklyn Scouter was 43 years old when he received the Invention Merit Badge. He was a registered Scoutmaster and

a noted chemist by occupation. He held numerous patents and once testified before the U.S Supreme Court as a expert witness. The one invention of his that seems to be the closest by issue date to when he received the Invention Merit Badge was for a oil separator.

The third known recipient of the Invention merit badge was a eighteen year old Eagle Scout from Fayetteville, New York.

The core requirement of earning the Invention Merit Badge was that you had to literally invent something and get a patent on it. What the seventeen year old Scout invented was a unusual uniform coat and one that advanced Scout collectors would recognize. In the teens there existed a BSA uniform coat that had a removable false sleeve that merit badges and rank badges could be sewed to or pinned to. You could wear the sleeve over the regular sleeve or remove it as desired to keep your badges from being soiled while out in the field. That was his invention. His patent number was US 1162523 and the patent was applied for in 1914 and approved in 1915 yet he received his Invention merit badge in June 1914. The application included a sketch of his coat invention. His invention was actually put into production and sold by the BSA. It is presumed that his badges and awards were worn on his personal prototype "false uniform sleeve". With the advent of the merit badge sash in 1924 the false sleeve uniform coat went out of use although some still exist among advanced collectors.

The name of the young seventeen year old inventor of the BSA false sleeve and Eagle Scout was Graeme (pronounced Graham) Thomas Smallwood of Washington, DC. He later married a girl from Toledo, Ohio and they had twins in 1919 while living in Toledo. Washington DC newspapers in 1914 stated that he was the only Scout to ever receive the merit badge and likely ever would be as it was about to be deleted from the list of badges. That information however was incorrect as far as him being the only recipient. Graeme Smallwood was Eagle Scout #81 in national BSA history.

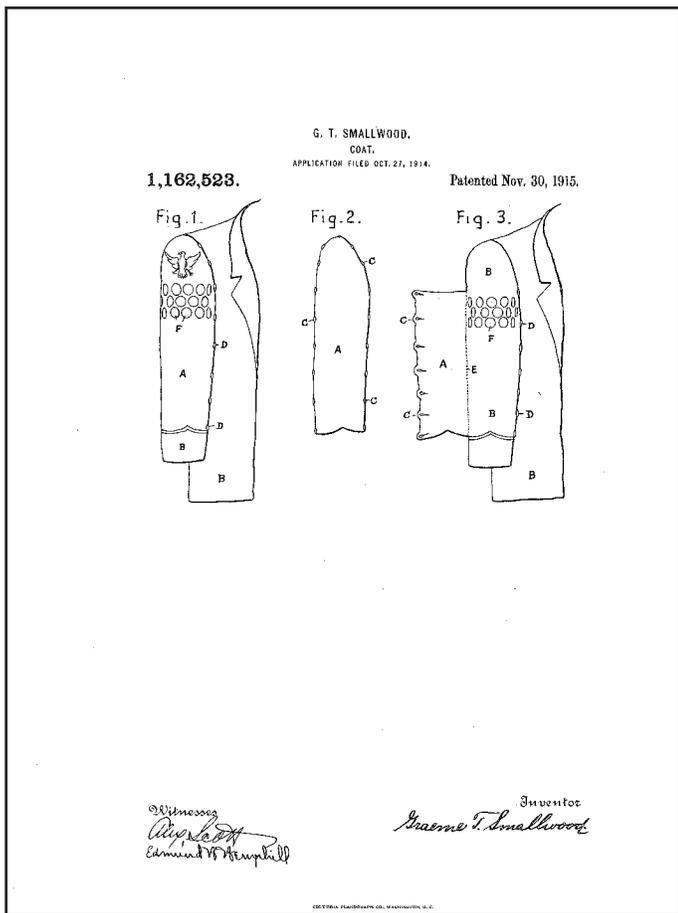
The name of the Brooklyn Scoutmaster who received the Invention merit badge on October 13, 1914 was Frederick L. Maywald Sr. News accounts state that he was the first person in Brooklyn to receive the Invention merit badge. The night he received it at a gigantic Court of Honor in Brooklyn, over five hundred merit badges were given out to both Scouts and adult Scouters and fifteen adults and youth members were presented with the Eagle Scout Badge. James E. West and Dan Beard were in attendance. Beard gave a talk about personally feeding wounded Civil War soldiers some pears while they were recuperating when he was a boy. James E. West was taken back by the sheer volume of merit badges that were awarded that night and questioned if the requirements were fully met. He gave a speech and said in the



Graeme T. Smallwood

future it was going to get harder to earn a merit badge. At that time it already required a review board of three adults and/or one expert in that particular field to pass a given merit badge.

The name of the Fayetteville Eagle Scout was Stephen Porter. He joined the BSA at age 15 in 1911 and by July 17, 1914 (just after his eighteenth birthday) he had earned 56 of the entire 57 original merit badges. That is an average of nineteen merit badges a year for three years. The last one he needed in order to have them all was the Invention merit badge. He was working on three different inventions at that time in the hope of receiving the Invention merit badge. He was among the very earliest recipients of the Agriculture, Blacksmithing, Dairying, Aviation, Stalking, Angling, Taxidermy, Archery and Ornithology (Bird Study) merit badges. And as it turned out he did earn the Invention merit badge and was one of the ten recipients. Although a member of the BSA in 1911 he did not receive any of his merit badges in 1911 as his name is not listed as one of the thirty Scouts who earned them that year. Or at least he was not credited with earning any in 1911. Stephen Porter was Eagle Scout #105 in national BSA history.



Drawing from Patent Application For False Sleeve



Sample of BSA Produced "False Sleeve" - Front



BSA Logo From Inside of False Sleeve Pictured Above

Based on the BSA annual reports, there were seven others besides the Washington DC Eagle Scout, the Brooklyn Scoutmaster and the Fayetteville NY Eagle Scout who received the Invention Merit Badge. The Invention merit badge officially ended October 1, 1914 so it is presumed the lone 1915 recipient received special permission from national headquarters to continue working on it after October 1st. There are many sources in print that state the Invention merit badge ended in 1915 and others state it ended in 1917 and the BSA itself quotes 1915 as well as 1918. The official end date was the first day of October in 1914 with the last badge being awarded in 1915. In the national annual BSA reports printed in the late teens they included a summary of merit badges awarded with the years listed for years 1911 through about 1918. People have misinterpreted (myself included) those summary lists over the years to mean that the Invention merit badge was available though 1917 or 1918 and it was not. If the summary had only been for years 1916 and later, the Invention badge would not have been included in the summary and even though one was awarded in 1915 it officially ended on October 1st, 1914. If you look at the Physical Development merit badge those same later summaries show a zero after it for years 1911, 1912 and 1913 and only five awarded in 1914. They show a zero because it did not exist in 1911, 1912 or 1913, not because none were earned, but you can read the summary and assume it was available to earn and it was listed that way. The BSA did not differentiate in the summaries between when a badge was not earned and

when it did not exist. It has caused a lot of confusion over the years.

The identities and stories of the remaining seven recipients remains to be rediscovered. I believe that the identities of the



Sample of BSA Produced "False Sleeve" - Reverse

remaining seven are listed in newspaper microfilm around the country that has not yet been digitalized. How many of the remaining seven recipients were adults is unknown but my guess would be the majority of them. Yet at least one of the ten was a Boy Scout under the age of eighteen. Graeme Smallwood was quite a distinguished Boy Scout in his day. He was present at and served as one of four Eagle Scout sentries at the groundbreaking ceremony of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington DC in 1914. During the 1914 National BSA meeting he was also present as a young Eagle Scout. There is a photo of him in uniform with Ernest Thompson Seton, Dan Beard and other high ranking officials attending the meeting. Graeme left college at the end of his sophomore year and served as a Army officer in 1918 then came to Toledo, Ohio where he was the President of the Toledo Automatic Ice Corporation in 1919. From there he became a realtor and moved back to Washington DC where he started his own realty company. He died rather young at age 49 in 1947.

Frederick Maywald had three children but none of them had children. Frederick's Boy Scout items have long ago dispersed to the winds of time. Graeme Smallwood also had three children and they in turn also had children. I was in contact with surviving family members who did an extensive search and found none of Graeme's Scouting memorabilia still among them. Stephen

Porter's badges are with a distant relative and he is fully aware of the potential significant value of the collection and has no plan to sell any part of it.

During the time that the Invention Merit Badge was available to earn which was again, 1911 through October 1, 1914, it was not the least earned merit badge of the original fifty seven available. One would presume that the reason the Invention badge was selected for extinction was because it was the least awarded during that time period but that was not the case. There were three other merit badges awarded less times than the Invention merit badge through October 1, 1914. They included Archery (two awarded by the end of 1914) and also Angling (Fishing) with just four awarded by the end of 1914. Stalking during that same time period only had eight awarded. The Invention merit badge was awarded a total of nine times by the end of 1914 and a tenth time in 1915. The National Committee on Badges, Awards and Scout Requirements likely determined that the Invention merit badge was the most difficult and perhaps most costly to earn. In 1914 the filing fee for a new patent was \$15 and the fee to issue a patent was another \$20. \$35 is not a lot today but it was back then. Then there was whatever costs you incurred in creating your invention. There were a total of 70,404 patents applied for during 1914 through the U. S. Patent Office. Presumably eight of them were for recipients of the Invention Merit Badge.

So do any of the other seven Invention merit badges still exist? Personally I am quite certain one or more does exist. My belief is that some local museum somewhere has one of them in their attic or archive but has no clue as to what they have. Or that some national entity such as the Smithsonian, the Library of Congress or the Rockefeller Archive has one (or more) in their vast storage facilities. So the search goes on. There are still seven to be found or determined not to have survived the last one hundred years.

Stephen Porter's story has been researched and written and will be published in an upcoming issue of the ISCA Journal. It will include photos of all fifty-seven of the original 1911 era BSA merit badges he earned by mid 1914. His unprecedented personally earned Boy Scout memorabilia collection numbers nearly seventy items, all of which are over one hundred years old, is scheduled to be on display at the Miakonda Scouting Museum in Toledo during Camp Miakonda's centennial year celebration in 2017. Miakonda is the oldest BSA camp in Ohio and the sixth oldest in the nation.

Special Thanks to Ben Wasner for allowing us to photograph the "False Sleeve" used in this article.

Requirements and Drawing from 1911 Handbook

Invention

To obtain a merit badge for Invention a scout must

1. Invent and patent some useful article.
2. Show a working drawing or model of the same.

