



THE BOY SCOUTS

When John D. McEwen came to town, in 1920, to take charge of the Boy Scouts of this area, he found the nucleus of a fine organization among the older youngsters who had received their elementary training under the capable leadership of Edgar Pearsall. Major Pearsall put the boys through their paces afternoons, in the vacant lot next to his home on Ferris Place; taught them the manual of arms, encouraged them to be self-reliant and mindful of their obligations as soldier-citizens. Occasionally, he marched them into the woods to test their stamina and skill where the going was tough.

Scout Executive McEwen was an organizer. While Superintendent of Parks of the Borough of Queens, under Mayor John Purroy Mitchell, he had had experience in directing boy's work, and had done so well that Daniel Carter Beard, Commissioner of Boy Scouts in America, suggested that he become an officer of the organization. Through Beard, McEwen made the acquaintance of James E. West, Chief Scout Executive, who prevailed upon him to come to Westfield and organize the Central Union Council. He accepted the post for a term of three years.

The Scout Executive divided the council into three commission districts: the Eastern—Roselle, Roselle Park and Kenilworth—under Mayor Elliott C. Dill of Roselle; the Central—Cranford and Garwood—under Fred Sykes; the Western—Westfield, Fanwood, Scotch Plains and Mountainside—under Robert W. Harden; Fred Holmes was treasurer. Nearly half of the total enrollment of 450 boys came from this area.

The Westfield boys pitched their tents in the wilds of the first mountain, now Surprise Lake, on weekends, during the spring and fall. Bob Harden directed their routine duties and John Brunner their nature studies. Thoroughness was the watchword. The spring camp gave the veterans a chance to prepare the novices for the summer campaign; the fall camp provided a general review of the year's work.

The real training season—"the school for character building"—was the camp life on

Kanawaskee Lakes, at Bear Mountain Reservation, New York. Here the camps of the Central Union Council joined with the camps from New York City and adjacent localities for continuous study and recreation from mid-June until after Labor Day—twenty-two groups on as many camp sites, each under its own leader.

Many were the subjects taught and many the practical lessons learned at these gatherings—public service, citizenship, first aid, firemanship, archery, nature study, athletics. There were contests of speed, skill and endurance, with badges of merit for the most proficient. The inspiring event was the Sunday open-air service in the amphitheatre. The joint bands of the New York troops—some 300 pieces—played and 2500 Scouts sang. Dr. S. Park Cadman, Rabbi Stephen S. Wise and other noted religious leaders spoke; Douglas Fairbanks, Mary Pickford and Will Rogers were among the distinguished entertainers.

Following Mr. McEwen, Eyare M. Hutson served as Acting Scout Executive for a time, followed by Myron G. Geddes of Plainfield and the present incumbent, James Boyer. Then came the rapid expansion of the organization. The Western division, known as the Watchung Council, now numbers 7500 Scouts and includes six central districts and 60 communities, covering half of Union, all of Somerset and parts of Middlesex, Morris and Hunterdon Counties. The districts are Plainfield, Summit, Bernardsville, Bound Brook, Somerville and Westfield. Former Mayor Shelby Fell is Western District Chairman and was recently made vice-president of the Watchung Council, succeeding Leo Montamat. David Tyler is field executive.

The Scouts own their own camps, which are open the year 'round. The largest of these is Camp Watchung, back of Glen Gardner. Camp White, in the Blue Hills north of Bound Brook, and Camp Lion, between the First and Second Mountain, are conveniently situated for Scouts in this locality. The work goes on with greater zest than ever. Old Scouts say they know of no better way to keep young always.