

Liberty Loan And The Boy Scouts

by Lynne Belluscio

Boy Scouts of America began in 1910, having taken ideas from the Scouts that were organized in England by Lord Baden Powell. Two years later, Troop 1 was formed in Genesee County at St. James Church in Batavia. The History of Genesee County mentions that there was also a Boy Scout Troop in Stafford, perhaps as early as 1912.

Troop 6 which meets at the Methodist Church in Batavia just recently celebrated its 100th Anniversary. It was chartered in December 1916 and is the longest active Scout Troop in the Council. It is not certain when Boy Scouting began in LeRoy, but it certainly was early.

In 1918, the local Scouts participated in the World War I Liberty Loan Bond drive. Liberty Bonds were issued by the Federal Government to fund World War I. Both the Boy Scouts and the Girl Scouts raised money for bonds. The most famous poster shows a Boy Scout holding a huge sword in front of the Statue of Liberty. In our files is a postcard from April 1918, which shows local Boy Scouts with the Liberty Ball in front of the Municipal Building. Scouts helped roll the ball from Buffalo to Albany.

The LeRoy Gazette article notes that: "The Liberty Ball reached LeRoy about 12:30, having been pulled in by the Boy Scouts from the Stafford town line. It was placed in the Municipal Building, where many viewed it during its sojourn here. Shortly after 2:00 o'clock the ball started on its journey for Caledonia, the motor power again being furnished by

the Boy Scouts." The Liberty Ball was seven feet in diameter and weighed 350 pounds. The frame was made of steel and rattan and it was covered with heavy canvas painted in red, white, and blue. It rolled on a brass rim about a foot wide. A rope was attached to an axle that went through the middle.

During the ceremony at the Municipal Building, Mayor Ward introduced Frank Lyon of Binghamton, former Deputy State Highway Commissioner, who presented the Boy Scouts with medals earned in the Second Liberty Bond Campaign. The newspaper listed eight boys: William Towner, William Cullings, Donald Lawrence, Maurice Giles, John Gleason, Charles Graney, Paul Taylor, and Duane Smyth. The boys are not identified in the postcard, but we did a little research on these boys and found some information.

In 1918, William Cullings was 17 and later worked at Lapp Insulator. Paul Taylor lived in Pavilion but graduated from LeRoy High School. In 1917, he enlisted in the Navy, so I wonder if he was in town in 1918. John Gleason eventually became assistant Postmaster in LeRoy and Maurice E. Giles was fourteen in 1918. He died in 1963 in Wisconsin. We could not find information on William Towner or Duane Smyth. Charles Graney is problematic. Dr. Charles Graney – well-known local physician, would have been already a practicing doctor and not "a Boy Scout" in 1918. Never the less, the 1918 event verifies that there were boys in LeRoy who were working on behalf of



the Boy Scouts.

Records for these early years in LeRoy are evasive and will require additional research. In 1924, the Genesee Boy Scout Council was formed, and that is when the recent history of the Boy Scouts begins. On April 4, 1924, seventy-five men from the surrounding communities met in the rooms of the Oatka Hose Company in LeRoy. Thomas Larkin, (owner of LeRoy Plow Company) was elected President of the Council and he introduced W.R. King from Buffalo who had been hired as the first Council Executive Director.

The LeRoy Gazette reported that "one of the great troubles with America today is the fact that fathers and mothers are thinking for their boys and girls rather than working and playing with them and that because of this, we are robbing our boys and girls of the power to think and act for themselves." For that reason, the Scouting programs were essential and it was suggested that troops be sponsored by the local churches. After the oath, the orchestra of Troop 1 of the LeRoy Scouts gave "good music." Then the Scouts from the School For the Blind in Batavia gave a first-aid demonstration. The LeRoy Boy Scouts were to be guided by Schuyler C. Wells, D.C. Prentice, Dr. George Davis, Calvin Keeney and Thomas Larkin.

Troop 21 was affiliated with the Presbyterian Church and was chartered in April 1924. The first Scoutmaster was Daniel Carroll. Troop 22 was chartered in May 1924 under the direction of Scoutmaster Wintrop Follansbee. It was affiliated with the LeRoy Recreation Department. In the following years, troops were affiliated with the Methodist Church, St. Peter's Church, and St. Anthony's Church in Limerock.

