

Troop 21

Celebrating a
Century of Scouting
1914 – 2014

June 20, 2014
The Americus Kiwanis Club
1 p.m. - GSW Dining Room



Americus, Georgia
Chehaw District
South Georgia Council
Boy Scouts of America



Historical Highlights of Troop 21

Our history begins in June of 1914, when the Reverend J. A. Thomas, Pastor of the First Methodist Church in Americus, founded the Boy Scout troop that would be our direct predecessor. Troop 21 is fortunate to have a letter from Rev. Thomas detailing the founding of the Troop in 1914. The letter was written for the 1942 troop reunion and reads as follows:

“Troop No. 21, Boy Scouts of America, was organized in June, 1914, by Rev. J. A. Thomas, then pastor of First Methodist Church, who was Scoutmaster until his removal from the city. At that time the Scout movement had not become the broad movement it is today, and we think we are correct in saying that the Americus troop was one of the first seven in the state.

The charter members, as far as we can recall them, were George Wright (son of W.C. Wright), Henry Allen, Walter Stapleton, Joe Thomas, Jr., Frank Easterlin, Henry Clay, Benjamin Stapleton, Lorin Smith, James Davenport, George Walker, Joe Hightower, Henry Lumpkin, Norman McLeod, Rufus Godwin, Will Green Turpin, and Ott Johnson, Jr. The latter was camp bugler, and when the troop went on hikes to Myrtle Springs and for annual encampment there, Ott went from house to house of the members, blowing his bugle lustily until the Scout living there stopped him by calling that he was awake. We recall that other members of the family and neighbors did not think this call before light such a good idea.

The course of study and activity was somewhat limited at this time, but Troop No. 21 mastered what was available. We recall that they were particularly interested in the cooking test, since they could consume the bacon and eggs

which they cooked. Swimming, nature study, church attendance badges were among those the troop members secured. We recall also that health and other badges were available and the test passed by troop members.

The meetings were held in a Sunday school room of the First Methodist Church. There were not so many avenues of service for Scouts twenty-eight years ago, but Americus Troop No. 21 found many opportunities for public service, as well as profit and pleasure of the Boy Scout group. Civic movements found them valuable help in distributing publicity matters, putting up notices, and assisting in managing large gatherings. Splendid service was rendered in many other lines as the troop found opportunity.

The big social event of the year was the week's encampment at Myrtle Springs, when the Scout leader found his hands full looking after study courses, helping to direct recreation, and seeing that the mothers of the boys were pacified when some of them brought mosquito nets to hang over "her son's" bunk for fear he might get malaria. We realized that the Scouts feared far more the consequences from other Scouts when they slept under a mosquito net than they did an attack of malaria!

It is a pleasure to recall an especially fine service by Troop 21 to Mrs. C. J. Sherlock and her committee to take baskets to worthy families on Christmas Eve. When the State Sunday school convention met in Americus, bringing 1,700 instead of (the fewer) promised delegates, it was Troop No. 21 who solved a problem for the entertainment committee. The Boy Scouts were the ones who would face a housekeeper and bring in two more delegates to homes who all had six installed (already)...

The writer is proud of the privilege of having organized and for a while acted as Scoutmaster and friend-in-general to Americus Scout Troop No. 21. It was the beginning of a fine work, __ to take the place it has become one of the world's finest movements. Those Boy Scouts of 1914 are men today."

One of the troops first known duties was as the escort for the casket of charter member Benjamin Stapleton who died in 1914. The 1914 Troop lasted for several years until Reverend Thomas was transferred after which the troop and scouting in Americus became inactive.

Scouting became active in Americus again in 1918 with the application for a charter of an Americus Troop (Troop 1 now Troop 21) with the Boy Scouts of America. The charter was submitted to the National Council of the Boy Scouts on December 23, 1918. The Americus leaders had announced a meeting of the "prospective scouts" on December 19, 1918, but at that time meetings were banned in Americus and most of the country due to the worldwide flu epidemic. Therefore, the scout leaders asked the boys to bring their dues of \$1.50 to the Chamber of Commerce building by Monday, December 23, if they wanted to be "charter members" of the Americus Troop. As soon as the ban on meetings was lifted, a meeting of the scouts and their parents was held on the afternoon of Wednesday, February 20, 1919.

The next major event in Americus scouting was the appointment of Silas Johnson as the scoutmaster of the Americus Scouts in July 1919. Reverend Johnson proved to be a dynamic scout leader and he was probably the single most important factor in the success of scouting in Americus during its early years.

From his very first year, Reverend Johnson and the Americus Scouts continued the scouting tradition of an annual week-long summer camp. In August 1919, they camped at Wells' Mill on the property of John Sheffield in southern Sumter County.

In early 1920, John Ewing Kiker, Jr. of Troop 1 (now Troop 21) of the Americus Scouts received his Eagle rank and became the first person anywhere in Southwest Georgia to achieve that rank. David John Broadhurst of Troop 1 of the Americus Scouts received his Eagle rank on March 15, 1921, becoming the second scout in Southwest Georgia to achieve that rank. These Troop 1 (now Troop 21) Eagle Scouts are not counted and numbered in the troops list of Eagle Scouts. The troop's list of Eagle Scouts starts with the 1931 recharter.



In 1920, Troop 1 (now Troop 21) took a trip to North Carolina for an unofficial BSA Jamboree. Dan Beard is the gentleman in the campaign hat on the back row.

In late 1920 Aumuckalee Council was formed from Third Congressional District and registered with the National Council.

The Reverend Johnson was hired as its first and only Council Executive although only in a part-time position.

Reverend Johnson left Americus for a position at a church in Savannah in January 1922. At his leaving, Americus had three troops of scouts. The leaving of Reverend Johnson seemed to begin a downward turn in the level of activity of the Americus Scouts. By the end of 1923, all scout troops in Americus had closed as had Aumuckalee Council. Although serious efforts to restart scouting in Americus were made in 1925 and 1929, scouting did not begin again in Americus until 1931.

From 1931 until the formation of Chehaw Council in 1939, there was no active scout council for the troops in this area. All troops were chartered directly from the National Boy Scout Council in New York which was referred to as Direct Service status because southwest Georgia had no Scout council. In March of 1931, Troop 1 of Americus (now Troop 21) was again chartered by the National Council. We have been continuously chartered since that date. The American Legion sponsored the troop for the first two years, after which the Kiwanis Club of Americus took over as sponsor and has been the sponsor for eight-one consecutive years.

In December of 1934, the Kiwanis and Rotary Clubs joined forces and hired Reverend Evans as "Director of Boys' Work" in Americus. His job appeared to be almost entirely devoted to the Boy Scouts, even though this distinction was not made in his title. The Merritt Building on Jackson Street was donated for use by the scouts, and Reverend Evans had an office in the building. With a full-time paid director, scouting flourished in the area.

Charlie Hogg took over as Scoutmaster of Troop 1 (now Troop 21) in 1938 becoming the first of the troop's long-term Scoutmasters. He served until 1967 and saw 69 young men become Eagle Scouts.

In 1939, Chehaw Council was formed and pulled together a number of counties (or districts) each with its own Troop 1. In August of 1939, the troops in the Sumter County all changed their numbers to numbers in the 20s. Thus, Troop 1 became Troop 21.

Also, in 1939, Frank Easterlin, Jr. and Bob Arthur received their Eagle Scout ranks as the first Eagle Scouts of Troop 21. Thus began Troop 21's climb to its current 197 Eagle Scouts, which currently ranks 10th in the history of scouting.



It was about this time that seven of the first eight Eagle Scouts from Troop 21 along with Scoutmaster Charlie Hogg and members of the Troop Committee posed the above photograph. The

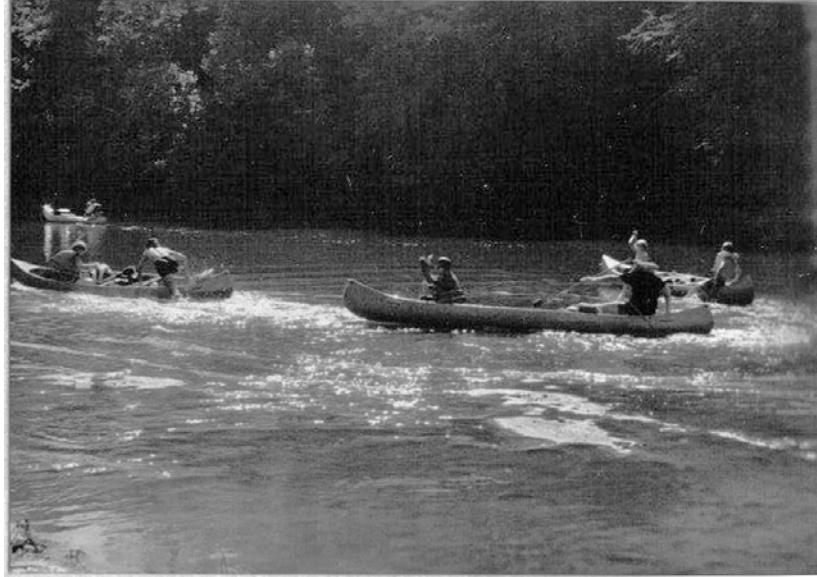
seven Eagle Scouts were Frank Easterlin, Jr. (Eagle Scout #1), Billy Elam (Eagle Scout #2), Terrell Horne (Eagle Scout #3), Bob Gatewood, (Eagle Scout #4), Robert Ellis (Eagle Scout #5), Jim Dudley (Eagle Scout #6), and Johnny Sheffield, Jr. (Eagle Scout #7). Bob Arthur (Eagle Scout #1a) had also earned his Eagle Scout in Troop 21, but had moved away by the time the photo was taken.



Troop 21 whitewater rafting in the Georgia Mountains

Troop 21 has held three major reunions. In 1942, Troop 21 held a reunion and Reverend Thomas, the original scoutmaster, wrote the letter detailing the troops founding in 1914. In 1982, the troop celebrated its 50th anniversary since its 1931 chartering at the Marshall Center of Georgia Southwestern State University. President Jimmy Carter was the guest speaker. The 75th anniversary was held in 2006 at South Georgia Technical College. Senator George Hooks (Troop 21 Eagle Scout) was the speaker.

Over the years, Troop 21 has sent scouts to every National Jamboree, many World Jamborees, and all three of the high adventure bases: Canoe Base, Philmont, and Sea Base.

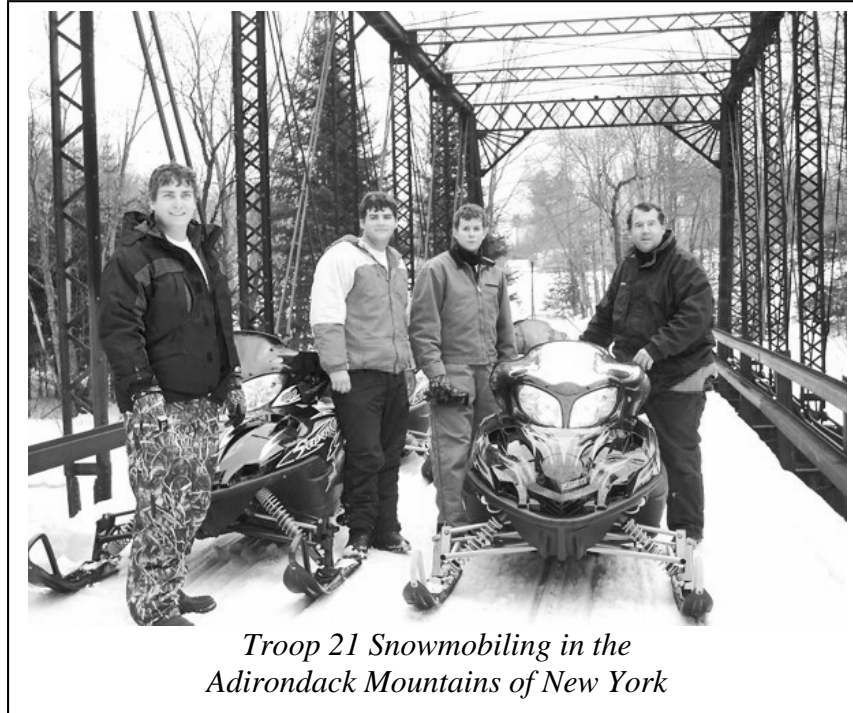


Troop 21 Canoe Trip

In 1990, Tommy McCurley took over as Scoutmaster of the Troop becoming the second of the troop's long-term Scoutmasters. He continues to serve as Scoutmaster and has seen 64 young men become Eagle Scouts.

Today, our troop remains one of the most active in the South Georgia Council and in Scouting. During our 100 years over 5,000 young men have been members of Troop 21 with 197 of them reaching the rank of Eagle Scout. Beginning with Frank Easterlin (Eagle Scout #1) in 1939; through Greg Slappey (Eagle Scout #100) in 1980; and Tyler Brown (Eagle Scout # 197) in 2013, Troop 21

continues to place an emphasis on earning the rank of Eagle Scout.



*Troop 21 Snowmobiling in the
Adirondack Mountains of New York*

More about the history of Troop 21, including hundreds of photos, old troop documents, a list of our 197 Eagle Scouts, and a list of past Scoutmasters, can be found on the troop website at www.bsagat21.com. More about scouting in Americus and Sumter County can be found in the book *The History of the Boy Scouts of America in South Georgia*, which is available free for viewing or downloading at www.sgacbook.com.

In 2012, Chehaw Council and Alapaha Area Council merged to form South Georgia Council, which now serves 29 South Georgia counties through three districts: Atkinson, Baker, Ben Hill, Berrien, Brooks, Calhoun, Clay, Clinch, Cook, Coffee, Crisp, Dougherty,



Dooly, Early, Echols, Irwin, Jeff Davis, Lanier, Lee, Lowndes, Miller, Mitchell Schley, Sumter, Terrell, Tift, Turner, Wilcox and Worth. Americus is part of the Chehaw District of the South Georgia Council. In addition to the merger of the councils, the Order of the Arrow Lodges Immokalee (#353) and Alapaha (#545) merged to form Withlacoochee Lodge (#98).

A WELL DESERVED THANK YOU!



The scouts, leaders, parents, and all those associated with Troop 21 and with scouting in Americus and South Georgia wish to thank **The Americus Kiwanis Club** for its 81 years of consecutive sponsorship. Without their support such things as this would not be possible.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Matt Hart".

Matt Hart
Council Executive
South Georgia Council

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Preston Parker".

Preston Parker
Chehaw District Executive
South Georgia Council

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Mike Greene".

Mike Greene
Chehaw District Chairman
South Georgia Council

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Tommy McCurley".

Tommy McCurley
Scoutmaster, Troop 21
South Georgia Council