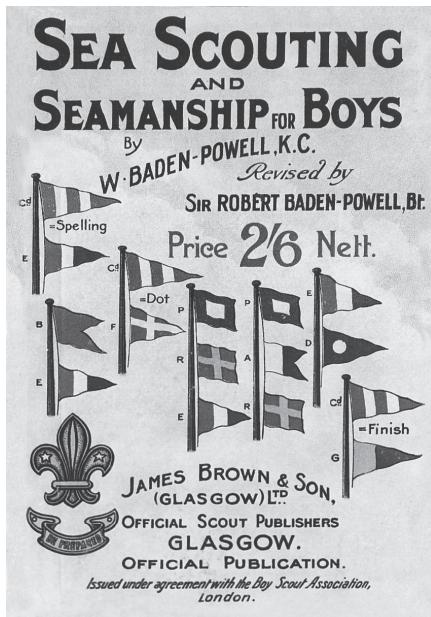


The History of Sea Scouts

Sea Scouts had its beginning at a campfire in England when Lord Baden-Powell voiced the hope that older Scouts would be interested in learning about boat management and seamanship. He stressed the need for young men to prepare themselves for service on their country's ships. He followed up on this discussion by publishing a pamphlet, *Sea Scouting for Boys*, in 1911.

Soon thereafter, Baden-Powell's older brother, Warrington, a famous explorer and canoeing expert, wrote a book called *Sea Scouting and Seamanship for Boys*. It was enthusiastically received by the young men of Britain, and soon found its way to the United States.



Sea Scouts came to the United States in 1912. That year, Arthur A. Carey of Waltham, Massachusetts, had Sea Scouts using the schooner *Pioneer*. That same summer, Charles T. Longstreth organized a Sea Scout patrol on his yacht in Philadelphia. Both of these men prepared pamphlets on Sea Scouts, and Carey's *Cruising for Sea Scouts* was the first literature in America related to Sea Scouts. The following year, Arthur Carey was appointed chairman of the National Committee on Sea Scouts.

The first Sea Scout manual, *Handbook on Nautical Scouting*, was written by the chairman of the National Committee on Nautical Scouting, Charles Longstreth, and was published in 1915. This 25-cent publication provided the first written support to the new program. Since its beginning, the Boy Scouts of America had been aware of the need for an older-boy program.

In addition, G. V. L. Meyer, secretary of the Navy, in February 1913 encouraged the development of Sea Scouts and extended the cooperation of the Navy. This was the beginning of a fruitful period of cooperation for Sea Scouts with the nation's armed services.

Sea Scouts received an important boost in October 1917 when James Austin ("Kimo") Wilder (a veteran sailor, global traveler, artist, and devoted Boy Scout volunteer) was secured as "Chief Sea Scout" (director) of the Department of Sea Scouting of the Boy Scouts of America. For several years, as a volunteer, Wilder worked full-time for the Sea Scouts. He organized the scattered Sea Scout units into a national organization that generated the initial widespread interest in Sea Scouts. Gathering all of the experience and scattered bits of literature used in the program, Wilder supervised the preparation of the first true *Sea Scout Manual* in 1919.

In the early years, Sea Scouts followed a pattern of action that was very similar to that of a Boy Scout troop. For example: boys wore khaki uniforms. In order to register, they had to subscribe to the Scout Oath and Law and pass the Tenderfoot requirements. Membership required that a boy be 15 years of age and weigh at least 112 pounds.

For many years, the Sea Scout program was aimed at older boys who had graduated from Boy Scout troops. Sea Scout units began to be called ships, though early terminology for leaders included "Seascoutmaster" and "Portmasters."

On July 15, 1920, the well-illustrated fourth edition of the *Sea Scout Manual* was printed and sold in large quantities. Then came a period of two or three years in which Sea Scouts struggled to be recognized and understood. Although membership declined, the program proved healthy enough to withstand this period of adjustment. Finally, it began to grow again as more councils gave it enthusiastic support.

Over the years, the individual most responsible for the development of Sea Scouts was Commodore Thomas J. Keane. Between 1922 and 1925, he completely revised Sea Scouts. He wrote the new requirements for advancement and changed the Boy Scout nature of Sea Scout uniforms into the seagoing uniform that Sea Scouts still wear today. As a result of his fine leadership, the *Sea Scout Manual* was completely revised and published in 1924.

Keane served as acting director of the Sea Scout department in the national office from 1923 until January 15, 1927. His annual report of 1925 indicates that there were 85 registered Sea Scout ships. A similar report in 1926 revealed an increase of 38 ships, for a total of 123 ships.

In 1927, Keane was appointed the national director of Sea Scouts, its first full-time professional director. In the years that followed, there was a marked increase in the number of units and boys registered in Sea Scouts. By 1930, the membership had reached 8,043 young men. In the 1930s, with the cooperation of other departments in the national office of the Boy Scouts of America, he developed training courses for leaders, new registration procedures, and more acceptable Sea Scout equipment and uniforms.

Sea Scouts were much in evidence at the first national Scout jamboree, held in Washington, D.C., in 1937. A separate subcamp for Sea Scouts was built with contingent ships from all 12 BSA regions. Highlight events included a visit to the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland, and sailing on the Potomac River and Chesapeake Bay.

A major revision of the manual was made in 1939 by the national committee. The new version was written by Carl D. Lane, an outstanding Skipper and author of many books and articles about small ships and the sea.

With a membership of more than 27,000, Sea Scouts served the country well in World War II. Keane was recalled to active service in the Navy and resigned his position as national director of Senior Scouting. At the outset of the war, the secretary of the Navy, Frank Knox, issued an appeal for all Sea Scout leaders to join the service as commissioned officers. Thousands did, so many that entire ships ceased to exist for the duration of the war. Sea Scouts made a tremendous impression on Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, who sincerely believed that Sea Scouts were better-trained and better-equipped to help the Navy win out over the enemy and the elements.

Throughout the rest of the 1940s, Sea Scouts continued to serve the boys of America who were interested in the lore of the sea. Sea Scouts all over the nation participated in flood relief and community service. Sea Scout ships across the country held competitive and social events known as rendezvous and regattas.

Based on the written report of ship activities—the ship log—from 1929 to 1947, the national committee selected the ship with the most outstanding record to be the national flagship. Quite surprisingly, one year this honor was achieved by a Sea Scout ship located in the Plains state of Kansas. Its Skipper was Dr. William C. Menninger, one of the early greats in

Sea Scouts. Menninger co-wrote *The Kansan's Skipper's Aide* in 1932, which was used in 1934 as the basis for the first *Handbook for Skippers*.

In May 1949, the National Executive Board made sweeping changes in the older-boy program as a result of a study made by the BSA Research Service. This revision of Senior Scouting recognized as Explorers all young men who were 14 years of age or older and registered with the Boy Scouts of America. So, on September 1, 1949, the Sea Scouts officially became Sea Explorers. This was primarily a change in terminology, as the old Sea Scout program continued much the same as it had in the past.

In 1954, the National Executive Board of the Boy Scouts of America authorized the University of Michigan Research Institute for Social Service to conduct a study of adolescent boys. This survey revealed the needs, desires, and concerns of 14- to 16-year-old boys across the nation. This resulted in a new Explorer program focused principally on vocational exploration, and was put into effect in 1959. This did not, however, immediately change Sea Exploring, where changes were postponed until there had been sufficient time to observe it alongside the new vocational Explorer program.

After five years, the decision was made to revise Sea Exploring, especially in the advancement requirements. The object was to incorporate some of the new vocational Exploring elements into Sea Exploring, while preserving the integrity of traditional Sea Exploring. After extensive field testing, the Exploring Division put the revised Sea Exploring program into effect in May 1966 with a new edition of the *Sea Exploring Manual*, written by Arthur N. Lindgren.

In 1968 the national Exploring Division placed new emphasis on Sea Exploring by naming William J. Lidderdale as the first full-time director of the program since 1935. A new National Sea Exploring Committee, chaired by Morgan F. Fitch Jr., was formed to give new national volunteer emphasis to the promotion and support of Sea Exploring. A new *Handbook for Skippers* was written by Lindgren and published in 1971 for Skippers, mates, ship committee members, and other adult leaders.

Sea Exploring leaders across America were saddened by the death of Thomas Keane in 1984. His pioneering efforts on behalf of Sea Scouting extended for more than 60 years. The rich tradition and long tenure of many Sea Scout ships are a tribute to his career.

In 1998, the Exploring program was reorganized to bring back its traditional, Scouting-oriented programs, and Sea Exploring returned to its traditional name of Sea Scouts.