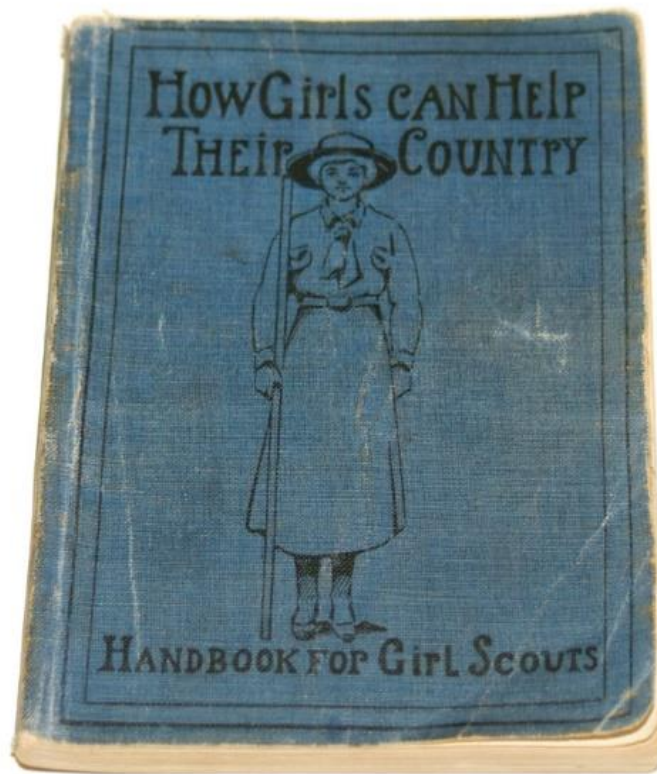


Juliette Gordon Low and the Girl Scouts Conversation Kit



Girl Scout Manual "How Girls Can Help Their Country" by Juliette Gordon Low, 1916. National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution.

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Juliette Gordon Low and the Girl Scouts



“Our country needs
women who are
prepared.”

– Juliette Gordon Low (1917)

“Juliette Gordon Low” by Edward Hughes, oil on canvas, 1887. National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution; Gift of the Girl Scouts of the United States of America.

Always conflicted about her status as a “woman of ease,” Juliette Gordon Low looked for a call to service and found it in scouting. From the beginning, membership included girls from different religious, ethnic, and social backgrounds, as well as girls with disabilities. (Low herself was severely hearing-impaired for much of her life.) Today there are more than 2.5 million Girl Scouts in the US and in nearly 90 other countries. More than 50 million women have participated in Juliette Gordon Low's organization.

Driving Question

How can education change expectations of what girls can and should be?

Supporting Questions

- When and why were the Girl Scouts founded?
- In the 1910s, what were young women (and young men) expected to learn?
- What were the reasons people resisted changing these expectations?
- How did the Girl Scouts change girls' education outside of school classrooms?
- Why does it matter that girls learn to "help their country"?

Civic Learning Themes

- Civic Action: Exercising one's rights as a citizen (non-legally defined) to affect change or share an opinion on public policy or actions taken by government officials. This can include lobbying, voting, canvassing, protesting, etc.
- Rights and Responsibilities: The freedoms, duties, and responsibilities that all Americans should exercise and respect as participants in our shared democracy.

Learning Objectives and Aligned Standards

This conversation kit follows the learning arc outlined in the [National Council for the Social Studies College, Career and Civic Life \(C3\) Framework](#).

D2.Civ.10.6-8. Explain the relevance of personal interests and perspectives, civic virtues, and democratic principles when people address issues and problems in government and civil society.

D2.Civ.10.9-12. Analyze the impact and the appropriate roles of personal interests and perspectives on the application of civic virtues, democratic principles, constitutional rights, and human rights.

D2.Civ.14.6-8. Compare historical and contemporary means of changing societies and promoting the common good.

D2.Civ.14.9-12. Analyze historical, contemporary, and emerging means of changing societies, promoting the common good, and protecting rights.

D2.His.3.6-8. Use questions generated about individuals and groups to analyze why they, and the developments they shaped, are seen as historically significant.

D2.His.3.9-12. Use questions generated about individuals and groups to assess how the significance of their actions changes over time and is shaped by the historical context.

D2.His.4.6-8. Analyze multiple factors that influenced the perspectives of people during different historical eras.

D2.His.4.9-12. Analyze complex and interacting factors that influenced the perspectives of people during different historical eras.

D2.His.5.6-8. Explain how and why the perspectives of people have changed over time.

D2.His.5.9-12. Analyze how historical contexts shaped and continue to shape people's perspectives.

Primary & Secondary Sources

All conversation kit resources can be found in the [Learning Lab](#).

Individual links to resources are also included below for your convenience.

- Primary Resources:
 - [1916 Girl Scout Manual; "How Girls Can Help Their Country"](#)
 - [Girl Scouts Troop #1, from Library of Congress](#)
 - [Women's Sphere political cartoon](#)
 - [1918 Girl Scout Uniforms](#)
 - [1912-1918 Girl Scout Patches](#)
 - [How Girls Can Help Their Country by Juliette Gordon Low \(1917\)](#)
 - [Scouting for Girls, Official Handbook of the Girl Scouts \(1925\)](#)
 - [Girl Scout summer camp photo album](#)

- Secondary Resources:
 - [Juliette Gordon Low, featured by the Smithsonian's American Women's Initiative](#)
 - [A Scout By Any Other Name, from the National Museum of American History](#)
 - [Collecting a Century of Girl Scouts, from the National Museum of American History](#)
 - [Early Girl Scouting, from the Georgia Historical Society](#)
 - [Our History: The Vision of Juliette Gordon Low, from the Girl Scouts](#)
 - [Fashion History Timeline 1910 – 1919, from the Fashion Institute of Technology](#)

- [*Girls' Volunteer Groups during World War I, from the National Women's History Museum*](#)
- [*America at School, from Library of Congress*](#)
- [*Children's Lives at the Turn of the Twentieth Century, from the Library of Congress*](#)

Facilitation Strategies & Discussion Formats

Object Analysis

Display or distribute copies of the 1916 Girl Scouts Handbook, [*How Girls Can Help Their Country*](#), from the National Museum of American History's collection ([image included at the end of this conversation kit](#)). Using the guided looking and analysis questions below, have students work in pairs to examine the object carefully.

- What are your first impressions?
- Take a closer look, making sure to examine the whole object. What details do you see?
- Circle three things that you think are interesting or unusual about this object.
- What two or three adjectives would you use to describe this object?
- Who do you think would have used this object? Where might they have used it?
- Who do you think made this object? What could have been their reason for making it?
- What is the title? Why do you think the author chose this title?
- What else do you notice?

Juliette Gordon Low and the Girl Guides

Set the context for this object by explaining that this handbook was published in 1916 under the leadership of Juliette Gordon Low. Low founded the Girl Scouts in 1912. Share an [image of Low](#) in her role as founder of the Girl Scouts, from the Library of Congress.

Have students examine when and why the Girl Scouts, initially called the Girl Guides, were founded using [an excerpt from the Smithsonian American Women book \(included at the end of this conversation kit\)](#). Have students review the excerpt.

Then in small groups or as a full class, discuss the following questions:

- What inspired Juliette Gordon Low to establish the Girl Scouts in the United States?
- When did she form the organization?
- Who was able to be a Girl Scout?
- What did she want girls to learn through this program?

The Women's Sphere

Connect the founding of the Girl Scouts to larger movements in the early 20th century related to women's rights. Have students examine the [Women's Sphere cartoon](#) from the Library of Congress [\(included at the end of this conversation kit\)](#). Students should examine the cartoon to identify existing expectations of women, and why and how some Americans were trying to change them. Have students work in small groups or display the image for the whole class to analyze together; as they identify important information, circle, or note their observations on the image.

As a class, reflect on the changing roles of women at this time and connections between this and the Low's vision for the Girl Scouts. Have students individually draft brief constructed responses to this prompt, to discuss with a partner or small group. From this, ask students to share key findings with the full class.

Changing Fashions and Expectations

Provide students with images and information about the clothing worn by girls in the early 1900s. Images from the Library of Congress and [excerpted descriptions from the Fashion Institute of Technology's Fashion Timeline](#) are [included at the end of this conversation kit](#). Have students examine the girls' fashion included in these resources and compare these to two depictions of Girl Scouts uniforms from the same period – the drawing of a Girl Scout on the front cover of the 1916 Handbook and the [image of a 1918 uniform \(included at the end of this conversation kit\)](#).

As students examine the two different fashion styles, encourage them to work with partners or small groups to discuss the following questions:

- What two or three adjectives would you use to describe girls' fashion in the early part of the 1910s?
- How did clothing for girls change in the latter part of the decade? Why did it change?
- What two or three adjectives would you use to describe girls' fashion in the latter part of the 1910s?
- Which style is most like the Girl Scouts uniforms from 1916 and 1918?
- What can the two different fashion styles tell us about the changing society and expectations for girls in the United States at this time?
- How do the Girl Scout uniforms reflect the changes in American culture during this time?

Merit Badges

Refer to the 1916 handbook, *How Girls Can Help Their Country*. Explain that this book contains, among other information, tests for how Girl Scouts could earn merit badges that signified their mastery or demonstration of various skills. Share the following excerpt from the 1917 edition of the handbook to frame the following discussion:

TESTS FOR MERIT BADGES

(excerpted from *How Girls Can Help Their Country*)

A girl must become a Second Class Scout before she is eligible for the proficiency tests. Merit badges are issued to those who show proficiency in the various subjects listed in this chapter. These badges are registered at Headquarters and are issued from no other source.

The purpose of the various tests is to secure continuity of work and interest on the part of the girls.

The girl who wins one of these merit badges has her interest stimulated and gains a certain knowledge of the subject. It is not to be understood that the knowledge required to obtain a badge is sufficient to qualify one to earn a living in that branch of industry.

Working as individuals or pairs, have students examine one or several of the merit badges using the six Merit Badge Investigation sheets [included at the end of this conversation kit](#). Each investigation sheet includes an image of a 1910s Girl Scouts patch from the National Museum of American History's collection and a description of that patch from the 1917 Girl Scouts handbook. Students will review their resource(s) with the following questions in mind:

- What skills did a Girl Scout have to learn to earn this patch?
- Why is this an important thing to learn?
- How might these skills have differed from what girls were expected to learn and how they were expected to behave at this time?
- In the 1917 handbook, *How Girls Can Help Our Country*, Juliette Gordon Low said, "Our country needs women who are prepared" How might this badge prepare girls to be courageous leaders ready to help their country?

After students have examined their resource(s), have them share their findings with the class. This sharing can be done through full-class discussion, jigsaw conversations, or other information sharing processes. Note that the 1917 Girl Scout handbook included

36 merit badges and that their list is a small sample of these. Then, review and analyze the full list of merit badges as a class using the questions below as prompts:

- How would you describe the expectations that Juliette Gordon Low had for the girls who became Girl Scouts?
- Why did it matter that girls learn to help their country?
- How might people in the 1910s have reacted to this list of skills that Girl Scouts were learning?

“Trivialized” and “Sissified”

Have students read excerpts from the National Museum of American History's blog, ["A Scout By Any Other Name."](#) Excerpted text is [included at the end of this conversation kit](#).

Discuss with students the following questions:

- How would you describe the reaction from some groups to the goals and name of Juliette Gordon Low's Girl Scouts?
- Why might they have reacted this way?
- Was their reaction justified? Why or why not?
- In what ways did Juliette Gordon Low's vision for what girls should learn and become go against established norms for girls at this time?

Processing and Reflection

In pairs or small groups, guide students to reflect on how the forming of Girl Scouts embraced and advanced changing expectations of what girls should know and be. Use the two prompts below to frame the reflection process:

- How might the establishment of the Girl Scouts have changed the expectations of girls in the early twentieth century and beyond?

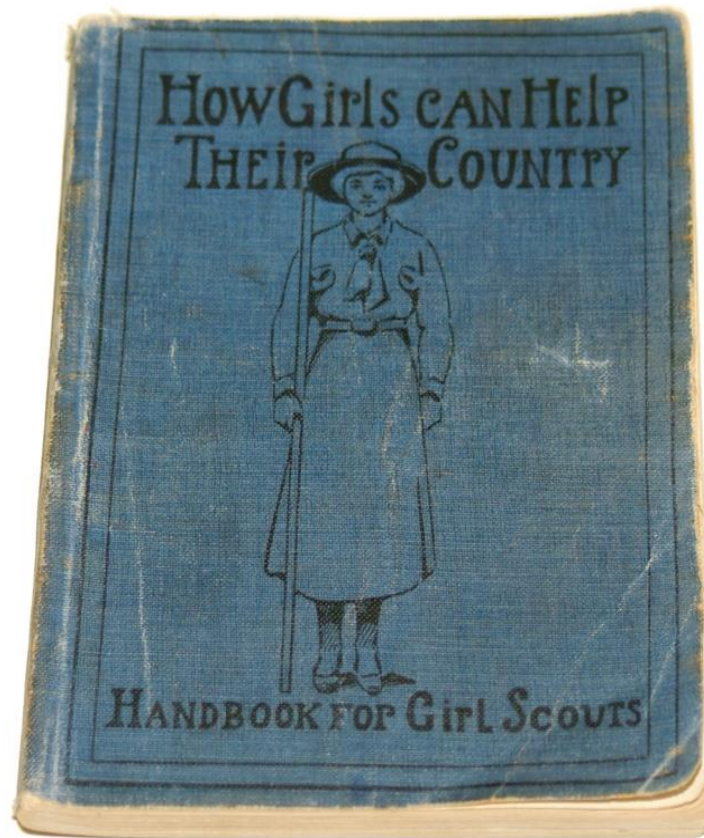
- What are the expectations of girls in the twenty-first century? Are there ways that you think these expectations should be changed? How?
- Consider this quote from *How Girls Can Help Their Country*: "The work of today is the history of tomorrow, and we are its makers." How can what young women and men learn help prepare them to take on this challenge?

Extension Ideas

- Explore how Girl Scouts exercised their leadership by volunteering on the home front during World War I. Examine this topic and learn more using the recommended resources listed below:
 - [National Women's History Museum, Girls' Volunteer Groups during World War](#)
 - [Georgia Historical Society, WWI, and the Girl Scouts](#)
- Dive deeper into what students were expected to learn in the early 20th century and compare this to educational and gender expectations in the 21st century. Learn more about this topic using the recommended resources listed below:
 - [Library of Congress, America at School](#)
 - [Library of Congress, Children's Lives at the Turn of the Twentieth Century](#)

This conversation kit was authored by Abby Pfisterer at the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History. Learn more at womenshistory.si.edu and americanhistory.si.edu.

Supplemental Materials: Object Analysis



Girl Scout Manual "How Girls Can Help Their Country" by Juliette Gordon Low, 1916. National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution.

- What are your first impressions?
- Take a closer look, making sure to examine the whole object. What details do you see?
- Circle three things that you think are interesting or unusual about this object.
- What two or three adjectives would you use to describe this object?
- Who do you think would have used this object? Where might they have used it?
- Who do you think made this object? What could have been their reason for making it?
- What is the title? Why do you think the author chose this title?
- What else do you notice?

Supplemental Materials: Excerpt from *Smithsonian American Women*

Juliette Gordon Low

Created the dedicated, dutiful, and diverse Girl Scouts

By Timothy K. Winkle, Curator of Community Organization History at the National Museum of American History

Always conflicted about her status as a "woman of ease," Juliette Gordon Low looked for a call to service and found it in scouting. From the beginning, membership included girls from different religious, ethnic, and social backgrounds, as well as girls with disabilities. (Low herself was severely hearing impaired for much of her life.) Today there are more than 2.5 million Girl Scouts in the US and in nearly 90 other countries. More than 50 million women have participated in Juliette Gordon Low's organization.



"Juliette Gordon Low" by Edward Hughes, oil on canvas, 1887. National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution; Gift of the Girl Scouts of the United States of America.

Elegantly depicted by British artist Edward Hughes, Juliette Gordon Low radiates the luxury of elite American birth and marriage to a wealthy Englishman. Low's satisfaction with her privileged lifestyle, however, soon faded. Following her unfaithful husband's death, she became interested in the Girl Guides, an organization established by her friend, British general Sir Robert Baden-Powell, who had also founded the Boy Scouts. Working with disadvantaged girls living near her Scottish estate, Low became a troop leader, imparting practical skills to her charges. After creating troops in London, Low brought the idea to the United States, establishing a troop in 1912 in her hometown of Savannah, Georgia. Three years later, Low incorporated the Girl Scouts of America. Today the organization continues to inspire girls to pursue "the highest ideals of character, conduct, patriotism, and service that they may become happy and resourceful citizens."

Supplemental Materials: Women's Sphere Political Cartoon from the Library of Congress



"Women's Sphere: Suffrage Cartoons" by Merle De Vore Johnson, around 1909. Library of Congress, Rare Book and Special Collections Division.

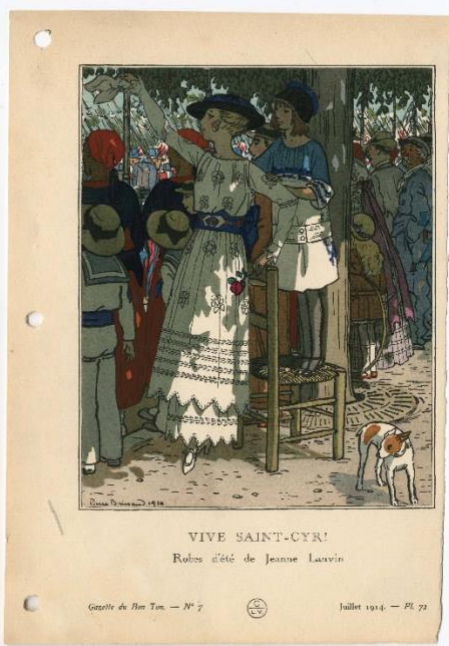
Supplemental Materials: Excerpt from “Fashion History Timeline, 1910 – 1919” (Fashion Institute of Technology)

By Karina Reddy

May 31, 2018

Fashion in the 1910s, like the decade itself, may be divided into two periods: before the war and during the war. World War I had a profound effect on society and culture as a whole, and fashion was no exception. While changes in women's fashion that manifested in the 1920s are often attributed to changes due to World War I, many of the popular styles of the twenties evolved from styles popular before the war and as early as the beginning of the decade...

Children's dress from 1910-1919 saw a move toward greater simplicity. The smock dress, often worn with a pinafore, which had been popular since the 1890s, continued to be worn by young girls in the first part of the decade and can be seen in the fashion plate from 1914 (below, top left). With material rationing during the war, girl's dresses became shorter with less embellishment, like the sisters in 1919 who don't have any embellishment on their dresses at all (below, bottom left). Dress historian Jayne Shrimpton wrote for the blog Find My Past: "By around the WWI era, many girls were wearing plainer dresses that ended above the knee (often showing long knickers underneath!), were fitted at the waist, and had three-quarter length sleeves." Young girls had begun to wear styles that were simpler and less like mini versions of womenswear.



Caption (clockwise from top left): "Children 1880-1920, Plate 076" by Jeanne Lanvin, around 1880-1920. Metropolitan Museum of Art Costume Institute; Gift of Woodman Thompson.

"Homer," 1919, from Bains News Service. Courtesy of Library of Congress, George Grantham Bain Collection.

Girl Scout uniform, from around 1918. National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution; Gift of Dorothy Emmert Brewster.

"C. Mackay & children," around 1910-1915. Courtesy of Library of Congress, George Grantham Bain Collection.

Complete Article: ["Fashion History Timeline, 1910-1919"](#)

Supplemental Materials: Merit Badge Investigation A, Ambulance Patch

- What skills did a Girl Scout have to learn to earn this patch?
- Why is this an important thing to learn?
- Was this different than what girls were generally expected to learn at this time? Explain your reasoning.

Ambulance Patch



Ambulance Patch, 1912 – 1919. National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution; Gift of Girl Scouts of the United States of America.

1. To obtain a badge for First Aid or Ambulance, a Girl Scout must know the Sylvester or Schaefer methods of resuscitation in cases of drowning.
2. Must pass an examination on the first three chapters of Woman's Edition of Red Cross Abridged Textbook on First Aid.
 - Treatment and bandaging the injured.
 - How to stop bleeding.
 - How to apply a tourniquet.
 - Treatment of ivy poison.
 - Treatment of snakebite.
 - Treatment of frostbite.
 - How to remove cinder from the eye.

Supplemental Materials: Merit Badge Investigation B, Civics Patch

- What skills did a Girl Scout have to learn to earn this patch?
- Why is this an important thing to learn?
- Was this different than what girls were generally expected to learn at this time? Explain your reasoning.

Civics Patch



Civics Patch, 1912 – 1919. National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution; Gift of Girl Scouts of the United States of America.

1. Be able to recite the preamble to the Constitution.
2. Be able to state the chief requirements of citizenship of a voter in her state, territory, or district.
3. Be able to outline the principal points in the naturalization laws in the United States.
4. Know how a president is elected and installed in office, also the method of electing vice-president, senators, representatives, giving the term of office and salary of each.
5. Be able to name the officers of the President's Cabinet and their portfolios.
6. The number of Justices of the Supreme Court of the United States, the method of their appointment and the term of office.

7. Know how the Governor of her state, the lieutenant-governor, senators, and representatives are elected and their term of office. Also, explain the government of the District of Columbia and give the method of filling the offices.
8. Know the principal officers in her town or city and how elected and the term of office.
9. Know the various city departments and their duties, such as fire, police, the board of health, charities, and education.
10. Be able to name and give the location of public buildings and points of interest in her city or town.
11. Tell the history and object of the Declaration of Independence.

Supplemental Materials: Merit Badge Investigation C, Cook Patch

- What skills did a Girl Scout have to learn to earn this patch?
- Why is this an important thing to learn?
- Was this different than what girls were generally expected to learn at this time?
Explain your reasoning.

Cook Patch



Cook Patch, 1912 – 1919. National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution; Gift of Girl Scouts of the United States of America.

1. Must know how to wash up, wait on the table, light a fire, lay a table for four, and hand dishes correctly at table.
2. Clean and dress fowl.
3. Clean a fish.
4. How to make a cooking place in the open.
5. Make tea, coffee, or cocoa, mix dough, and make bread in the oven, and state approximately cost of each dish.
6. Know how to make up a dish out of what was left over from the meals of the day before.
7. Know the order in which a full course dinner is served.
8. Know how to cook two kinds of meat.
9. Boil or bake two kinds of vegetables successfully.
10. How to make two salads.
11. How to make a preserve of berries or fruit, or how to can them.
12. Estimate the cost of food per day for one week.

Supplemental Materials: Merit Badge Investigation D, Naturalist Patch

- What skills did a Girl Scout have to learn to earn this patch?
- Why is this an important thing to learn?
- Was this different than what girls were generally expected to learn at this time? Explain your reasoning.

Naturalist Patch



Naturalist Patch, 1912 – 1919. National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution; Gift of Girl Scouts of the United States of America.

Make a collection of fifty species of wildflowers, ferns, and grasses and correctly name them. Or,

1. Fifty colored drawings of wildflowers, ferns, or grasses drawn by herself.
2. Twelve sketches or photographs of animal life.

Supplemental Materials: Merit Badge Investigation E, Needlewoman Patch

- What skills did a Girl Scout have to learn to earn this patch?
- Why is this an important thing to learn?
- Was this different than what girls were generally expected to learn at this time? Explain your reasoning.

Needlewoman Patch



Needlewoman Patch, 1912 – 1919. National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution; Gift of Girl Scouts of the United States of America.

1. Know how to cut and fit. How to sew by hand and by machine.
2. Know how to knit, embroider, or crochet.
3. Bring two garments cut out by herself; sew on hooks and eyes and buttons. Make a buttonhole.
4. Produce satisfactory examples of darning and patching.

Supplemental Materials: Merit Badge Investigation F, Pioneer Patch

- What skills did a Girl Scout have to learn to earn this patch?
- Why is this an important thing to learn?
- Was this different than what girls were generally expected to learn at this time? Explain your reasoning.

Pioneer Patch



Pioneer Patch, 1912 – 1919. National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution; Gift of Girl Scouts of the United States of America.

1. Tie six knots. Make a camp kitchen.
2. Build a shack suitable for three occupants.

Supplemental Materials: Excerpt from “A Scout By Any Other Name” (National Museum of American History Blog)

By Tim Winkle Amanda B. Moniz, and Amelia Grabowski

March 12, 2019

James E. West was not pleased. In 1913, just one year after its foundation, the Girl Guides of America had changed its name to the Girl Scouts of the United States of America. West, the Chief Boy Scout Executive, worried that the use of the term "scouts" by the all-girls' group "trivialized" and "sissified" his Boy Scouts. West wrote letter after letter to that effect and brought legal challenges against Girl Scouts to control the moniker.

West's objections to the group did not stop there. Boy Scouts wore khaki uniforms, similar to the military uniforms of the day. When Girl Scouts started wearing khaki uniforms too, West called them "mannish." Couldn't they be more like the Camp Fire Girls? For that matter, why couldn't they just merge?



Girl Scout uniform from around 1918. National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution; Gift of Dorothy Emmert Brewster.

This early khaki Girl Scout uniform dates to around 1918.

In the early decades of the Boy Scouts of America, West and his supporters saw any crossover with Girl Scouts as a blow to the burgeoning masculinity of Boy Scouts. They feared boys wouldn't want to do anything that girls were also doing. Critics also worried about girls becoming "tomboys" who would reject the more socially acceptable roles for women in the domestic sphere—homemaker, wife, mother.

In contrast, the more popular scouting group for young women at the time, the Camp Fire Girls of America, promoted "womanly qualities." Instead of badges, Camp Fire Girls had a system of bead rewards, called "honors," that recognized repeated tasks and skills such as cooking, sewing, or caring for the sick and injured. Even skills that fell under "camp craft" and "nature lore" had underlying domestic applications. And unlike the Girl Scouts, the Camp Fire Girls steered clear of overlap with the Boy Scout program. Camp Fire Girls' founders, having worked with James E. West to develop the organization, actively partnered with the BSA to create activities that were, as West put it, "fundamentally different from those of the boys."...

... The Girl Scouts, on the other hand, sought to prepare citizens—not just homemakers. Badges were still awarded for domestic tasks like housekeeping and sewing, but also for things like automobiling and civics. As one national Girl Scouts board member wrote, "Now that [the right to vote] has been extended to women of this state . . . I believe there is no better way for [children] to learn to become good citizens than to learn to become the best kind of Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts."

Complete article: "[A Scout By Any Other Name.](#)"