

Scouting

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NORMAN ROCKWELL:
A FRIEND FONDLY RECALLS HIS WORKING DAYS
WITH THE FAMOUS ILLUSTRATOR



FRONTIER FESTIVAL CAMPOREE

Firelays burst into flames from flint striking against steel. Tomahawks fly; muskets fire. History buffs in buckskin mingle with Scouts and guests. It's a camporee that stretches back in time to capture the excitement of Ohio in the 1700s.

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PHOTOGRAPHS BY
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(Above) One of the "pioneers" shows off a collection of leather pouches, arrowheads, animal skins, and more.
(Right) Jack Kovack plays the bagpipe just as an old Scot immigrant might when eastern Ohio was the frontier.



Dan Beard would have been pleased. Simon Kenton, the buddy of his old hero Daniel Boone, was there. So were the mountain men and fur traders who led the westward march of the pioneers in America.

Tomahawks flew to their marks on a log, and the boom of muzzle-loading long rifles echoed over the encampment. A couple of 18-foot-high Indian tepees towered over the modern tents of 29 Scout units.

The scene was the Frontier Festival fall camporee of the Western Reserve Council in northeastern Ohio. Six hundred Scouts and Scouters and 65 men and women whose hobby is perpetuating the skills, crafts, and garb of frontiersmen were reliving the past at Camp Chickagami in Parkman, Ohio, which, during the late 18th century, was the frontier.

Uncle Dan Beard, one of the founding fathers of the Boy Scouts of America and a legend among Scouts for 30 years, must have looked down with an approving eye at this celebration of the BSA's 75th birthday, for he was the first modern "buckskinner." He brought his own boys' organization, the Society of Sons of Daniel Boone, into the infant BSA, often wore buckskin himself, and was a fervent admirer of the "old-fashioned virtues of the American Knights in Buckskin."

Since Dan Beard died in 1941, his approval may be speculative, but that of the Scouts was not. All day Saturday they roamed the camporee site, watching demonstrations of pioneer skills and craftwork, and trying some of them themselves. They watched the "pioneers" shoot Kentucky long rifles and equally ancient pistol replicas at the rifle range. They threw the hawk and had rides on horseback, in a steel-wheeled hay wagon driven by an Amish farmer, and in an authentic South American Indian war

canoe. They saw displays of Indian crafts and artifacts and the crafting of bows and arrows, rawhide pouches and parfleches. They fingered bullet molds, traps, finished pelts, moccasins, spurs, and scores of other implements, weapons, and crafts from pioneer days.

Blacksmiths Jerry Field and Chuck Gilmour spent the day fielding Scouts' questions as they forged kitchen implements and strikers for flint-and-steel firemaking sets. (The most frequent question: "How much does your anvil weigh?" Answer: "127 pounds.")

The smiths and the lodges and Adirondack shelters of the buckskinners drew crowds all day, but the busiest site for hands-on activity was for a pioneer skill that still survives in Boy Scouting—making fire by friction. "They've been driving us crazy," said John Wolboldt, a camp Scoutcraft director in the Mahoning Valley Council, as he parceled out his 14 friction sets. "The kids love it. It's a real challenge to them."

He and his assistant, Jim Dubaj, an Eagle Scout and assistant Scoutmaster, made scores of fires while the Scouts strove manfully to emulate them. Only a handful of them did, but not for want of trying. "The problem is usually that the boys can't keep their spindle from wobbling," John Wolboldt opined.

Time and again Jim Dubaj, who is the fire-friction champion of the Mahoning Valley with a time of 11 seconds, patiently demonstrated his art to admiring eyes.

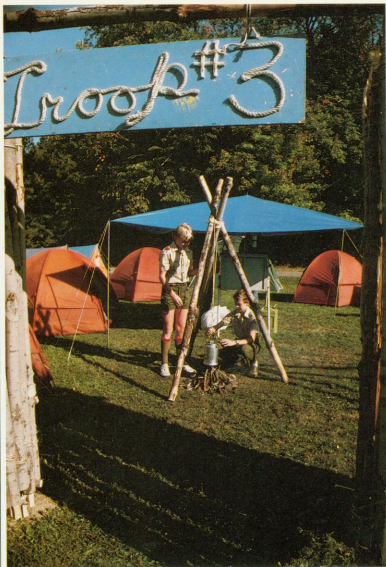
"I must have been here 12 times trying," said First Class Scout Jeff Boros of Bazetta Christian Church's Troop 50. "Once I had an ember but blew it out, but I'm going to do it until I get it," he vowed.

First Class Scout Jeff Wagner of Troop 15, Warren, chartered to the Knights of Columbus, was one of the few successful firemakers. "I'm



(Left) Scout William Simmons and Frank Savony of Troop 5 secure flags to their signal tower. (Above) Adults reenact "the old days" even portray Civil War-era soldiers ramming home musket balls against paper wads and gunpowder.





(Above) Troop 3 Scouts near their camp gateway forget about filling their mind with history and think about filling their stomach. (Right) View reveals variety of tentage; pop-ups, walls, flies, along with Indian-style teepees.

really happy," he said as flames danced in his tinder. "This was my third try; I guess I worked on it 15 minutes each time."

Nearby, "mountain man" Phil Crook, a Scouter, was displaying skins of arctic fox, timber wolf, and beaver—some road kills, some purchased, he said—as well as a huge bear trap and other implements of frontier fur traders. The Short Arrow Tribe, an Indian crafts and archery group, demonstrated the short bow and 22-inch arrows of the Plains Indians. "It takes five years to make one of these bows out of Osage orange wood," Nelson Hofman, who has been crafting Indian gear for 50 years, told visiting Scouts.

As boys watched the camporee activity areas, they could earn wooden "buffalo nickels" by trying the hands-on projects. By mid-afternoon, it was a rare Scout who wasn't clutching four or five nickels. At the same time, they swapped Frontier Festival trading cards, trying to get a full set and earn a small prize.

Drifting over the grounds all day was the savory fragrance of roasting ox. More than 300 pounds turned slowly on two motor-driven spits

It's sobering for today's youngsters to see how tough the pioneers had it: capturing each day's supper, making clothes from skins, protecting themselves with muzzle-loading rifles.

under the watchful eye of Robert Scholten, a Scoutmaster and first-time ox roaster. "I was a little nervous about it when they asked me to do it," he said, "but I went to some people who do ox roasts and they told me what I needed." Their advice evidently was excellent because Scholten and his 15-member committee served up hefty portions of just-right beef to 524 diners in a half-hour.

Just before supper, some buckskinners and a contingent of the 29th Ohio Infantry, a Civil War reenactment group, staged a mock skirmish along the camp's lakeshore. Aided by one Confederate ringer in the gray uniform of the 5th Texas regiment, the soldiers bested the buckskinners in a 10-minute battle.

The frontier theme for the camporee had been set at the opening campfire Friday night. "Simon Kenton," "Tecumseh" (the Shawnee chief who tried vainly to form a confederation of midwestern tribes to fight the white man), and a



"mountain man" told their life stories to an attentive audience.

Although the flavor of a bygone America permeated the program, there were some traditional camporee activities, too. For units, there was judging of campsites and gateways; for patrols there was competition in patrol flag making and Dutch oven cooking; and for individual Scouts there was a neckerchief slide contest. The big winner was Troop 101, chartered to the Warren Elks Lodge 295, which took three firsts, two seconds, and one third prize. In second place, surprisingly, were the Webelos Scouts of the Churchill United Methodist Church's Pack 42, who earned two seconds and three third prizes. "The kids are having a great time," said Cubmaster Larry Beers with considerable understatement as the whole den went whooping up to claim their prizes during the awards ceremony.

The closing campfire Sat- (continued on page 76)

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Frontier Camporee (from page 46)

urday night followed a performance of authentic Indian dances by the Oglewagagi dancers, an Ohio-based troupe. For the closing, the emphasis shifted from America's past to the 75th anniversary of the Boy Scouts of America. William D. Boyce's encounter with the Unknown Scout in London in 1909, which led to the founding of the BSA, was reenacted, and narration and a slide show carried the story to the present. For the finale, all the campers lit candles and joined in singing "America, the Beautiful." Then, backlit against a huge American flag, a silhouetted bugler played "Taps."

Counting the visitors who streamed in during the day, the camporee attracted about a thousand people. "No question that this is the biggest event we've ever had, at least in the 13 years I've been in this council," said Ned C. Gold Jr., the council's vice-president for finance.

The camporee program was actually a reprise, with additions and elaborations, of a "rendezvous pow wow" held by the council's Order of the Arrow lodge for its 1984 fall fellowship. For that event, some 700 people, including a few troops, came to see buckskin hobbyists exhibit their skills and crafts.

The idea of a frontier theme for both the OA rendezvous and the camporee came from Ken Hall, the camporee's program chairman, and Jim Potjunas, overall camporee co-chairman. Hall, a buckskinner himself, was largely responsible for the show. "I know most of the buckskinners and clubs in the area, so it was a natural thing for me to make the contacts and recruit them," said Ken Hall, who is a Wyandot District member-at-large.

The 75-member camporee staff was headed by executive board member Mike Weaver and Jim Potjunas, Scoutmaster of Troop 101. "It took a lot of planning and recruiting," Potjunas declared. A dozen subcommittees were formed to cover the tasks foreseen by the planners, and the OA lodge and campmasters were recruited to provide many of the support services.

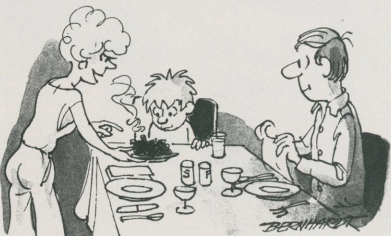
The plans were unusually ambitious, since the design called for a camporee, a buckskin show, an ox roast, an observance of the BSA's diamond jubilee, and as a sideline, a show area for local craftspeople to exhibit and sell their wares. (The craft show was included in hopes of attracting more of the general public. It didn't, and the consensus of both craftspeople and planners was that the craft show idea misfired.)

Except for the craft show, the elements fell into place. The key to success undoubtedly was the presence of the buckskinners and the chance for Scouts to see their equipment and try some of their skills.

Buckskinning is the fastest-growing offshoot of the black powder sports, Ken Hall said. It's big in eastern Ohio because, for one thing, one of the largest buckskin equipment suppliers is located in the area.

"Buckskinning—and the black-powder, muzzle-loading movement as a whole—are a kind of return to an older America," Ken Hall said. Many buckskinners are hunters, too, and "using a muzzle-loader is a much more competitive way to hunt than going out with a rifle with a 'scope that will knock out a groundhog's eye at 400 yards."

Like most other buckskin hobbyists, Hall can recreate the lives and times of pioneers from several eras of American



"Eat through your spinach and you'll find dessert underneath."