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Anacostia Community Museum Archives

Birney School Life Newsletter, November 1950

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[[image - drawing of boy scouts raising the flag]]

THE BOY SCOUT MOVEMENT

In order to find out what the Negro Youth of Anacostia has contributed to the Scout Movement, let us first find out how Scouting came to America and the Nation's Capitol.

In 1907, William Boyd, on a visit to London, learned of the Boy Scout program. Standing on a street corner somewhere in London, in need of information, Mr. Boyd was approached by a young man wearing a khaki uniform, who offered him his services. After helping Mr. Boyd, the lad was offered money for his services; but he refused the money, explaining to the puzzled Mr. Boyd that he was a Boy Scout and that this was one of his many good deeds for the day. Mr. Boyd, who became very much interested in this movement for young men, learned as much as he could about it, and brought the idea back with him to America in 1909.

The Boy Scout Movement, with all its ideals and elaborate customs, became popular with the youth of America, and spread like wild fire across the continent. Shouting[[sic]] was to be a program for all boys. So, around the year 1911, the first charter to Negro Scouts was granted in the District of Columbia. After this, other troops sprang up in the District and neighboring counties. Troop 504 was organized in Anacostia.

Troop 504 was started in 1939 by Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church, at that time under the Pastorship of the Most Reverend Father Sneewise. Until 1942, troop 504 was known as the "backwoods troop." Roger Hodges became Scoutmaster in 1942, and together with Mr. Frank Tyler, of troop 512, made the Scouts of Anacostia the number one organization for young Anacostia men.

Boy Scouts of troop 504 have contributed much to Anacostia. Community projects, like directing

traffic on Saturdays in front of the Safeway on Nichols Avenue, a means of insuring protection and safety for busy shoppers; neighborhood cleanup campaigns; waste-paper collections, Christmas baskets for the needy, and serving as Altar boys are among the Scouts many duties. During the Second World War, the Scouts acted as messengers during air raid drills, and distributors of war posters.

In 1943, the charter was changed from 504 to 534. The ceremonies were held in Brooks Stadium and the troop received the highest award ever bestowed upon a Negro troop in Washington....The District Six National Capitol Area Flag. Each member received a bronze medal for helping to make the troop the best in Washington. With this award the troop was no longer called "the back-woods troop"; the Boy Scouts of Anacostia had finally come to life. Scouting was now centered around two troops, 512, runners-up of the Southeast House, and 534 of Anacostia.

In 1944, the troop charter was transferred from the Catholic Church to the Barry Farms Recreation Center. This change did not alter troop plans in any way. This troop continues to be tops. In 1944 the first



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