

even during the difficult days of the Great Depression. California became a national leader in playground – and recreational – work. The California Club established San Francisco’s first public playground in 1898. Three years later, the Board of Supervisors allocated \$12,000, thereby enabling the Board of Education to operate another at 7th and Harrison Streets. In spite of the serious financial situation created by the 1906 earthquake, the San Francisco Playground Commission was created in 1907. Across the Bay, the city of Oakland opened its first municipal playground in 1908. Within a short time both cities had developed robust and multifaceted programs. In addition to the work conducted by municipalities, neighborhood houses, organizations like the Boy Scouts, Camp Fire Girls, Y.M.C.A., church groups, and fraternal organizations offered scores of other opportunities. An important “Inquiry Committee” was appointed by the California State Legislature in 1913 to investigate all forms of recreation in the state. Its far-ranging recommendations were implemented, to varying degrees in cities and towns throughout California.

By 1929, San Francisco operated twenty-nine playgrounds. Nearly a score more were associated with the city’s public schools. Oakland had a similar compliment, many of which were larger. In 1934, when its population was reaching 300,000, Oakland operated seventy supervised playgrounds and a dozen other recreational facilities. (There are far fewer opportunities in either city today.) Both cities also provided summer camping experiences for children in the High Sierras. As of May 2002, Oakland is considering closing its Feather River Camp in order to help the city correct a budget deficit.

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**On My Honor: Contributions of Physical Educators
and Athletes to the Boy Scouts of America, 1910-
1920**

In his last year of his life, Robert S. S. Baden-Powell, founder of the Boy Scouts movement, was asked if physical education had a role in the Boy Scouts. He replied, in a personal letter, that the scouting movement had emphasized the importance of physical education since the association’s beginning. It was the Baden Powell model of scouting that would be adopted in the

United States in 1910. Thousands of American boys, from 1910-1920, would repeat the scout oath, beginning with the words, "On my honor I will do my best." And, pledging among other things, to keep themselves "physically strong" and to "be prepared in body, by making himself strong and active." The contributions made to the emerging Boy Scout movement in the United States, by physical educators and athletes, and their role in establishing the Boy Scouts of America as an "American institution," has yet to be investigated. Although David I. Macleod's book, Building Character in the American Boy includes two chapters on the origins of the Boy Scout movement, it does not devote attention to the relationship between physical educators and the organization of the Boy Scouts of America.

Physical educators took active roles in the boy scouts, perpetuating the belief that physical activity is essential to the proper moral development of the individual and therefore society. In addition to the important work of Luther Gulick, one such educator was Dr. George J. Fisher of the Young Men's Christian Association. He stated in the first edition of the Boy Scouts Handbook that a boy needed to "put the body in the best possible condition for doing its work and then keep it in good order." Other educators appealed to the boys by providing detailed instructions to build everything from baseball diamonds to hockey rinks to swimming pools in the deserts of California. Some universities even established departments in scouting and recreation, such as Columbia University, to train competent scout leaders. At the same time, the Boy Scout organization took advantage of well-known athletes and coaches. The Boy Scouts Yearbook for 1915 contains future Baseball Hall of Famer Christy Mathewson's story entitled, "Love the Game Beyond the Prize," and legendary Yale football coach Walter Camp's article entitled, "Are You Mean When You Win?" Many athletes and physical educators extended their influence past gymnasiums and playing fields, universities and academic publications, by sharing their expertise in the area of physical activity with the Boy Scout organization, thereby reaching the American home through the Boy Scout. This paper draws upon correspondence, official scouting publications, and reports that are in the Lawrence L. Lee Scouting Museum and Max J. Silber Scouting Library, and Springfield College Library.
