



Girl Scouts of Kentuckiana Council History

Girl Scouts has not always been as popular and successful as it is today. In fact, the organization had a somewhat humble beginning. The Movement began on March 12, 1912 with just 18 girls in Savannah, Georgia. Initially founded by Juliette Gordon Low as American Girl Guides, the name of the organization was changed to Girl Scouts in 1913. Her idea was revolutionary, for although times had begun to change, the lives of girls and women were still very limited. They had few opportunities for outdoor recreation, their career options were almost non-existent, and, as Juliette Low observed, they were expected to be "prim and subservient." But convention did not impede Juliette Low. Her vision of Girl Scouting became a reality that actively challenged the norms that defined the lives of girls. She constantly encouraged girls to learn new skills and emphasized citizenship, patriotism, and serving one's country.

Girl Scouts of Kentuckiana History & Archive Committee invites anyone interested in preserving Girl Scout history, developing Girl Scout history related programs and events, creating historic exhibits, and/or interviewing and collecting oral Girl Scout histories to contact the history and archive committee at gskyanahistory@gmail.com for more information.

1910s

In Louisville, the first unofficial Girl Scout troop was organized in July of 1911 by Charlotte Went Butler, an outdoors-loving 11-year-old, even before the Girl Scouts was officially founded in Georgia. A patrol of eight girls was formed as members of Boy Scout troop #17. The girls met in the basement of the Highland Library. Miss Eugenia, a neighbor, was the Captain of the girls, who wore bloomers and middy blouses--radical attire for the day--although they wore skirts in town.

In 1917, Girl Scouting officially reached Kentucky with the first documented troop in Scottsville. Within a year, troops had formed in Owensboro, and in 1919, they began in Paducah, Louisville, and New Albany (Indiana). The first troop in Louisville was led by a teacher in the Louisville City School system and had 10 girls. At that time, the troop leader was called Captain and the assistant leader was Lieutenant. Patrols of girls elected their own patrol leaders. Over the next few decades, the Girl Scout association, which was open to girls of every race, religion, socio-economic level, and ability level, reached over 70,000 members nationwide.

1920s



By 1920, World War I was over and women had just won the right to vote. In order to assure the stability of the Girl Scout Movement, the national organization established Girl Scout councils in larger communities in the early 1920s. The Louisville Council of Girl Scouts was chartered in April 1923 and was followed by councils in New Albany, Indiana and Paducah, Kentucky in 1924. Since the 1920s, there have been at least 20 councils within our current

jurisdiction. The original council office for the Louisville Council was located on the third floor of the Red Cross building at 642 S. 4th Street (Dolfinger Building) where space was rented. The Louisville Council was formed by a group of 23 women who were members of the Louisville City Women's Club. So energetic were these women that the fund drive goal of \$2,500 was exceeded 100% to \$5,000. From March 1925 to April 1928, the council office moved three more times, with each location on Chestnut Street in Louisville. 1932 saw the office move once again, this time to 424 West Jefferson Street (the Community Chest Building).

Girl Scouts in parts of Kentucky were camping in the summers along Barren River. The girls wore the casual uniform at camp. Boating activity on the Barren was considerable, and the sternwheelers coming up the river would signal to the girls, who then dove into the water and rode the waves. During the summer of 1923, the local Girl Scout organization gratefully accepted the use of the Boy Scout Camp at Covered Bridge. Thirty-two girls used the campsite for a 2-week summer camp. The following summer, the Girl Scout council leased ground on Harrod's Creek near Crestwood, Kentucky for the camping season. Knee-deep in mud, the bloomer-clad girls pitched tents and slept on straw mattresses in their khaki uniforms. They named it "Happy Hollow" and camped there through the 1928 camping season. In that year, the camping site committee found a site on Cedar Creek in Bullitt County, Kentucky after surveying 25 different proposed sites by automobile via ferry across the Ohio River, airplane, and hiking through mining camps. The newly-leased 34 acres later became known as Camp Shantituck. The first organized camping season at the camp was held in the summer of 1929. Two units, the Pixies and the Indians, slept on straw mattresses and carried buckets of water for drinking and washing. The girls built the first dam at Cedar Creek with clay and brush. Sixteen girls were accommodated in the two units.



1930s

The Capital Fund to buy Camp Shantituck began in October 1929. Even with the Stock Market Crash, the women raised just over half of their goal, which was enough to purchase 89 acres. They also built tent floors for 2 units (Wilderness and Ledges). A contest was held to name the camp. Shantituck, an Iroquois word meaning "wooded land," was chosen. The first lodge was donated and built with volunteer labor. In 1931, the Swinging Bridge was built by a group of parents with Louisville Gas and Electric who were concerned with flood levels. The first bridge was 100 feet long and 15 feet above the water level. It would not be replaced until 1960. Also in 1931, the first dam was built with volunteer labor and free equipment and supervision by the Henry Bickel Company.



In 1933, the lodge at Shantituck accidentally burned to the ground when several WPA Workers ignited a whole pile of tents while waxing some of the tents near the lodge. The insurance of \$1,400 covered part of the cost of rebuilding, and much of the remaining cost was offset by volunteer labor and donated materials. The new lodge was built as a temporary structure, but it was used into the 1970s. Also in 1933, camp staff salaries were cut by 18%. The year seemed to get better, however. In August, day camps were held at Cherokee (20 girls), Iroquois (21 girls), and Shawnee (26 girls) City Parks, and the first training course for Brownie leaders was held in November, even before Brownies became an official level of Girl Scouting. At this time, the

greatest challenge to the national organization was to provide adequate training and resources for its adult volunteers.

Over the years, Girl Scouts continued to progress. In 1936, during the Depression when money was tight for many organizations, the first official sale of commercially-baked Girl Scout cookies took place, although Girl Scouts had been baking cookies for sale for many years before then. Also in 1936, Girl Scouts sought to modernize the Girl Scout Program with new uniforms and a series of program changes that grouped program activities into three distinctive levels: Brownie Girl Scouts, Intermediate Girl Scouts, and Senior Girl Scouts.

The Louisville Girl Scout council continued to make friends outside of Girl Scouting, and many of these affiliations resulted in assistance for the council. In 1935, Fort Knox dedicated a troop house for Scout use, which would be used for over 60 years. Two years later, Red Cross donated boats to Shantituck after the 1937 flood relief operations.



Girl Scouting in Kentucky continued to blossom as a council was chartered in Bowling Green - Warren County and rechartered in Paducah. And local council activities became more diverse as the years went on. The "Kenova Trek" was held at Shantituck for campers ages 16 and older in 1937 and was sponsored by the regional headquarters. The following year, Louisville Girl Scouts met with Eleanor Roosevelt, the First Lady at that time. By 1939, the Louisville Council membership was at 873 girls in 45 troops.

1940s



The 1940s were a period of nationalism, continued growth, and budding social change. World War II raged in Europe, and Girl Scouts were quick to step forward to help the national war effort. In Paducah, girls collected books to send to soldiers, and in Bowling Green, Girl Scouts served fruit and sandwiches to troop trains that stopped there. In 1941, Girl Scouts took part in the "Bundles for Britain," an

American Red Cross project. In January of 1942, the Girl Scout council resolved to be subordinate to the Louisville Defense Council. A resolution was passed that Girl Scout uniforms were to be worn only by those qualified to provide emergency assistance.

In the Louisville council, social change began as the council formed an interracial committee for Negro Girl Scouting in 1940. The first Black troop was formed for girls in Beecher Terrace. Mrs. Murray Walls, a member of the committee, helped organize camping for Black girls and recruited community support for its continuation and growth. In 1945, she became the first Black member of the council Board of Directors. The Paducah Council and the Bowling Green - Warren County Councils also formed troops for girls in their Black communities. Although troops were still strictly segregated in Kentucky, the national organization recorded that its membership among Black girls had more than doubled.

In 1943, a Polio epidemic broke out, and many campsites were closed because doctors suspected that people could contract polio from swimming in creeks and other waterways. From 1943 to 1944, Camp Dan Beard, a Boy Scout camp, was used for the first established camp for Negro Girl Scouts. In 1945, a permanent campsite called Camp Lincoln Ridge was established at Lincoln Institute near Simpsonville, KY.



As World War II ended in 1945, Girl Scouts began building new traditions. In Muhlenburg County, Kentucky, the first of the annual Silver Teas was begun, a tradition which has continued for more than 50 years. Around the same time, the Paducah council leased 184 acres on Kentucky Lake and held its first summer session at Camp Bear Creek. The fee for attending was \$10 a week and meals were served in a tent erected over a concrete floor until the lodge was finished in 1949.

In a national push for Girl Scout membership, councils were chartered or reformed in Owensboro, Henderson, Madisonville, and Murray in Kentucky and in Clark County, Indiana. By the end of 1944, Girl Scouting had reached its national goal of over a million members. In 1948, Girl Scouts changed its name to Girl Scouts of the United States of America (GSUSA). The end of this decade saw the Louisville Council serving 2,100 girls.

1950s



As the 1950s began, the Girl Scout councils in Paducah and Murray merged to form Bear Creek Girl Scout Council. In Louisville, the council extended services into the 10 counties in Kentucky surrounding the city. The organization also made advancements toward racial integration. A pool was built at Camp Shantituck to be used by girls from both Black and White communities with donations raised from both the Black and White communities of the city, even

though a pool to be used by girls of both races was a very controversial thing at the time. The year after Rosa Parks refused to relinquish her seat on the bus, officially marking the start of the Civil Rights Movement in 1955, all camp sessions at Shantituck were fully integrated, and Mrs. Murray Walls received a national award for the council and for her work with integration. Throughout the 1960s, Girl Scout programs and projects focused on overcoming prejudice and building relationships with those of all ages, religions, classes and races.

Shantituck's Pine Lair Cabin, a winterized troop camp building, was donated by the Lions Club in May of 1951, and the swimming pool was completed a few years after. In 1952, an additional 30 acres of land was purchased for the camp from its former caretaker, Charlie Taylor, and the infirmary, Sinawik, was dedicated to the camp by the Kiwanis Club. A new dam was built at Shantituck in 1954. Two years later in 1956, the shower house in the pool area was added. At this time, the council was serving 6,000 girls.

In 1956, the Owensboro council, which had been holding camp sessions at borrowed facilities, purchased 85 acres and set up Camp Pennyroyal for business. By the next year, through the efforts of Elmer Beckley, a dam was build and land was cleared for an eight acre lake. As the 50s

ended, the Owensboro, Henderson, and Madisonville councils merged to become Pennyroyal Girl Scout Council. In 1958, the name of the Louisville Council was changed to Kentucky Cardinal Girl Scout Council, and the next year, the council office moved to 1110 South Third Street. This was the first time Girl Scouts leased an entire building.

1960s

In an early version of a Wider Opportunity, Girl Scouts from across the country boarded the *Avalon* in Memphis and cruised to New Orleans in 1961. The following year, the *Avalon* was bought and moved to Kentucky, eventually becoming the *Belle of Louisville*, where she's still enjoyed by Girl Scouts.

The Caveland Girl Scout Council was formed in 1962, the same year the Murray council merged into Bear Creek. By 1962, there were as many as 1200 Girl Scout councils in the nation. Major organizational changes with GSUSA resulted in reducing this to a little over 330 councils, which caused huge upheaval across the country. The Louisville Council's jurisdiction began expanding



to include several other counties in Kentucky and six southern Indiana counties. As a result of the jurisdiction change, the council chose a new name – the Kentuckiana Girl Scout Council. The new council expanded its land ownership and developed new camp facilities. Camp Sacajewa was added from the Floyd County merger in 1965 but was sold in 1970 when a 50-year lease for the 1,400-acre Stem Program Center was acquired along the Ohio River in Harrison County, Indiana. And 40 acres were leased in 1965 for another

campsite at Otter Creek Park near Radcliff, Kentucky. This site was used for troop and day camping and was named Twin Ridges. In September 1969, an additional 107 acres was purchased outside of Madison, Indiana, for Camp Whippoorwill using money earned by Girl Scouts in that area who baked and sold homemade cookies for many years to add to the camp fund.

In the same decade, the council purchased its first office at 1268 Cherokee Road in Louisville (Spring 1963), and it was formally named the "Girl Scout House." The national organization had created four new age levels (Brownie, Junior, Cadette, and Senior), resulting in new Girl Scout handbooks and a new Leader's notebook being published, and program change was beginning to show in the council. Career exploration, a part of every badge since the 1950s, became increasingly more important as opportunities for women expanded tremendously. New uniforms reflected the changes.

In 1964, the Cardinal council sponsored the first Girl Scout department of the Kentucky State Fair, open to Scouts throughout Kentucky. In the same year, the council sponsored a group trip to *Our Cabana* in Mexico, and in 1965, it sponsored a patrol of girls to the first national Senior Round-Up, a precursor to National Wider Ops. In Bowling Green, an "all city troop" was organized, consisting of a diversity of girls--Black, White, Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish--and they were selected to represent Kentucky in an All-States Rendezvous, the first large-scale gathering held at the new Girl Scout National Center West in Wyoming in 1969.

1970s



During the 1970s, local councils found reorganization and merger a way to increase financial stability and expand the program to girls. Between 1970 and 1978, four councils in Western Kentucky – Caveland, Pennyroyal, Bear Creek and Kentuckiana – became one council, which, by adding an office in Elizabethtown, was divided into five service centers in 1980. This merger included several campsites: the leased 12-acre campsite on Barren River called Detrex, later changed to Houchens Program Center; the 10-acre Hickory Grove in Henderson, KY; the 170-acre Pennyroyal campsite outside of Owensboro; and the 183-acre Camp Bear Creek in Marshall County. Soon after, the council acquired its ninth campsite through a lease with the Corp of Engineers on Barren River Reservoir near Glasgow, Kentucky, the 220-acre Barren River Program Center. At the conclusion of 1977, the council office had moved once again, this time to a rented space at 730 West Main Street (the Hart Block Building) in Louisville.

Girl Scout activities in the '70s included a council-sponsored trip to National Center West in 1970 in Wyoming, a national Wider Opportunity bicycling event called "Pedal Pushers" in 1972, the beginning of the annual Festival of the Arts (also in 1972), and a council-sponsored Wider Op at Land Between the Lakes in 1974. In addition, the first council-sponsored trip to *Our Chalet* in Europe took place in the mid-1970s, followed by several other council-sponsored international trips over the next three decades.



A new national Girl Scout Trefoil design was introduced to present a more contemporary image, and a new Brownie/Junior handbook was introduced in 1977 which introduced a major new program concept called "Worlds to Explore" (this handbook was the first and only combined handbook for both Brownies and Juniors). The world of science and technology received new attention, and environmental concerns were addressed in a national service project called Eco-Action. "You Make the Difference" was published in 1980, completing the set of new basic publications for Cadette and Senior Girl Scouts. The Girl Scout Gold Award, the highest recognition that a girl could earn in Girl Scouting, was also introduced for the first time.

1980s



Throughout the 80s, the Girl Scout organization worked diligently to broaden the scope of its resources for girls and their leaders, and to point out the many career options that were available and were emerging for women. Membership extension efforts continued, and in 1984 Girl Scouts of the USA began offering membership to girls in kindergarten. A new program level, Daisy Girl Scouts, was introduced with its own uniform, membership pin, and resources.



The year 1981 saw our council reaching over 25,000 girls and adults throughout the 56 counties and nine camp properties in its jurisdiction. Logan County became the last Kentucky County to join the 57-county Kentuckiana council. This decade brought many changes in the Girl Scout realm, including handicapped awareness workshops. In 1983, a scholarship program was established for Senior Girl Scouts, with the money coming from the cookie sale. The University of Louisville, with other universities around the country, also began giving scholarships for Gold Award recipients.

Girl Scout activities in the '80s included a council-sponsored trip to Europe where 10 Senior Girl Scouts and 2 adults represented Kentuckiana in 1983; a girl/adult team sent to the Avon Leadership Conference in Washington, D.C. in 1983; a council Olympiad in 1984; participation in the Derby Pegasus Parade in 1985, where Girl Scouts received the award for Best Animation; and the beginning of the Museum Midnight Magic program at Louisville's History and Science Museum in 1985. Program opportunities were extended to five year olds in October of 1984 with the creation of the Daisy Girl Scout level. And Kentuckiana Girl Scouts welcomed 58 girls from the United States and 2 girls from Ireland during the council's Kentuckiana's Pride national Wider Opportunity in 1986.

But the '80s weren't always full of positive events. In June of 1985, a tremendous storm downed 300 trees at Camp Shantituck. The following year, the roof of Kornhauser Lodge at Camp Stem caught fire and had to be replaced. The cabin at Twin Ridges burned to the ground, also.



Although the mid-80s had sometimes been challenging, many great things were happening for Girl Scouts later in the decade. In October of 1986, a new 15,000-square-foot council office building at 1325 South Fourth Street was purchased, and renovation to begin in November. The staff moved into the new building on Mother's Day Weekend 1987 and were ready for business on the following Monday. In the same year, a new council volunteer trainer program was established. In 1988, targeted areas for special membership projects were established in Owensboro and Louisville, and a new two-day agenda began for Annual Meetings, with workshops on the first day and a business meeting on the second day. The grand opening of the Girl Scout Shop in the lower level of the main office building was celebrated in September of

1989, the same year of the First Annual Council Cookie Event titled *Building for the 90s* held at Oxmoor Center with architects using cookies to build and corporations/business teams participating in a cookie stacking contest. And by 1989, the feasibility study and five-year plan for the council computer system was completed and would be implemented starting in 1990.

1990s



By the 1990s, Girl Scouts of the USA again reached the 3 million mark in its membership numbers, further establishing itself as the largest organization for girls in the world, with nearly 320 councils nationwide. The Kentuckiana council was pleased to have paid off the mortgage on its new office building after only three years in 1990. In the same year, the Order of the Silver Trefoil (OST) Chapter was established for individuals who had been in Girl Scouting for 25 years or more, and the First Annual Council Golf Tournament for adults succeeded in generating additional income for Annual Giving.

In 1991, a federally-funded project titled "Vista Program Project" for girls in two low economic areas was established, the council sponsored six Eco-Fair programs, and international counselors were added to resident camps. In the following year, the Kentuckiana council sponsored a national Wider Opportunity called "Adventure Plus," Kentuckiana Girl Scouts were featured for the first time in the GSUSA Wall Calendar, and the council's Women of Distinction program and Planned Giving Program - Juliette Gordon Low Society/Endowment were established. In addition, the council sponsored a trip to *Our Cabana* in Mexico. Also in 1992, Kentuckiana celebrated the 20th Anniversary of its Festival of the Arts program. To celebrate this special occasion, the council board of directors approved funding for a special performance to highlight the history, flexibility, growth and value of Girl Scouting. The play was entitled "Dream the Future."



In 1993, the council sponsored yet another national Wider Opportunity, ADVENTURE PLUS, this time at Camp Bear Creek. During the same year, the council executive director became one of three mentors for GSUSA ED Fellows Program, the council provided key leadership in the first diversity walk with the local chapter of The National Council of Christian & Jews, and Paducah won a national award for its Kentuckiana Girl Scout Council Special Housing Membership Program at Bear Creek Service Center.



The Kentuckiana council reached out to various communities in 1994 with the creation of several programs. Leadership Challenge was designed to increase awareness and support of Girl Scouting in the corporate and business world of women. The Green Circle Program was established council-wide for all ages to develop a greater awareness and appreciation of human differences. And a special membership program was created at the homeless shelter known as the Tingley House. This project was later named Girl Scouts on the Move in 1997 and was expanded in 2000 to serve girls in all the temporary shelters in metropolitan Louisville. In 1995, the council further expanded its special membership projects with the creation of Girl Scouts Beyond Bars, a program for girls whose mothers are incarcerated.



The year 1995 had many exciting moments for the council. The Pennyroyal Service Center was approved by GSUSA for a joint Science and History Partnership Program with the Owensboro Area Museum, and the council sponsored a trip to *Our Chalet* in Adelboden, Switzerland, at which ten girls and two adults spent their time with girls from all over the United States, Saudia Arabia, Norway and Great Britain. Also in 1995,

the annual "Be Your Best Day" was established to encourage everyone to "be their best" and provided a time for troops to participate in activities which benefited their communities. In Kentuckiana, hundreds of girls recruited members of their families and the community to give blood in the name of Girl Scouting on this special day.



By 1996, the council's strategic Long Range Plan for 1996-2001 was completed, and the Science Sensations Program was created with the partnership of the council, Business and Professional Women/River City (BPW), and the American Association of University Women. In the same year, the council benefited from a very generous donation from Women 4 Women, Inc. for programs focusing on girls in their formative years.

At the close of the decade, the first Girl Scout research center was established, which led to numerous scientific studies regarding the needs of girls and the impact Girl Scouting has on its members.

2000s

In 2000, the council name changed slightly and became Girl Scouts of Kentuckiana. Many councils began putting the words "Girl Scouts" first in their names so they would be more easily located in telephone directories. *Wider Opportunities* and *destinations* have been very popular in this decade. Kentuckiana's girls participated in the national *Wider Opportunity/destinations* "Careers Rx" (hosted by the Kentuckiana council in 2002 and 2004), an international *Wider Opportunity* in France in 2002, an international *Wider Op* to Chile in 2003, and an international *destination* to England in 2005.

Also in 2005, the council headquarters moved to a new location at 2115 Lexington Road in Louisville. With this new 42,000-square-foot facility, the council could offer troop camping on site, as well as much needed program space.

Girl Scouts of Kentuckiana, with a membership of 30,000 girls and adults, strives to bring the benefits of Girl Scouting to "Every Girl, Everywhere." Besides serving girls in rural and suburban areas, we now serve girls in Appalachia, the inner city, homeless shelters, transitional housing, special needs homes, multicultural communities, and a women's prison. Although Girl Scouting has changed significantly through the decades, the guiding principles and core values have remained the same for over 90 years.

Want to learn more about the history of the national organization? Check out the [history section](#) of the national Girl Scout website.