

# Be Prepared, eh!

by Steve Bobrowicz

**A**n artist. A Mountie. The Chief Commissioner for the Hudson's Bay Company. What did these men have to do with the early years of Scouting in Canada?

With the publication of *Scouting for Boys* in January 1908, Scouting took the world by storm; first in England, then spreading to the rest of the

British Empire (including Canada) later that year. Canadians have played an important role in Scouting since its beginnings, even prior to the Brownsea camp. Here is a brief cross-section of some of the noteworthy "Canucks" who have helped shape the Movement, both here in Canada and throughout the world.

## THE CHIEF SCOUTS FOR CANADA

Most Scouts are familiar with the story...in early 1910, Baden-Powell petitioned the Governors-General of all of the oversea Dominions and asked them to accept the post of Chief Scout in their respective countries. Ever since then every Canadian Governor General has held the title of Chief Scout for Canada. In modern times, that title has become largely symbolic, but in the early years, those Chief Scouts were critical in the establishment and shaping of the Movement in this country.

### Before the Chief Scout - Lord Strathcona

Donald Alexander Smith, the man who would later become Lord Strathcona, was born in Scotland and immigrated to Canada as a young man to work for the Hudson's Bay Company. He eventually became the HBC's Chief Commissioner, in which role he was one of the most influential men in the new country of Canada.

In 1900, Lord Strathcona raised and privately funded a regiment to send to the Boer War. Known as *Lord Strathcona's Horse*, they arrived in South Africa shortly before the relief of Mafeking, and many members of

Lord Strathcona's Horse stayed in South Africa when Baden-Powell founded the South African Constabulary (S.A.C.). B.-P. incorporated elements of the Strathcona's uniform (most notably the Stetson hat) into that of the S.A.C. and later into the Boy Scout uniform.

After the war, Lord Strathcona and B.-P. became personal friends. Strathcona was one of B.-P.'s strongest supporters in the development of the Boy Scout Scheme, and donated £500 so that B.-P. could set up the first Headquarters in advance of the publication of *Scouting for Boys*. Lord Strathcona was not the Governor General, and was



▲  
*Donald Alexander Smith, the man who would later become Lord Strathcona*



◀ *Albert Henry George, 4th Earl Grey, was the Governor-General of Canada from 1904 - 1911*



▲  
*Ernest Thompson Seton*

▶ *H.R.H. the Duke of Connaught, pictured here with B.-P.*



never referred to as the Chief Scout for Canada. When Baden-Powell formally established his first Advisory Council in 1909, Strathcona represented Canada in a similar role, until Earl Grey became our first Chief Scout in 1910.

Lord Strathcona continued to be a supporter of the Scout Movement until his death in 1914. In his will, he left a large bequest to the Dominion Council, which was instrumental in supporting the Parliamentary Incorporation of the Movement later that year.

### Earl Grey

Albert Henry George, 4th Earl Grey, was the Governor-General of Canada from 1904 - 1911. Lord Grey was particularly concerned with physical fitness and social reform, and had a lifelong interest in sports and the outdoors. He also knew B.-P. from South Africa. It is not surprising that he was an early supporter of the Boy Scout Movement.

Although Lord Grey's tenure as Chief Scout was short, he was a vocal advocate of Scouting and under him, the Movement spread rapidly in Canada. His most important contribution was the establishment of the first Dominion and Provincial Councils, in late 1910.

As a further point of interest, our Lord Grey was the namesake of the Canadian Football League's Grey Cup, but not of Earl Grey tea...that was named after his grandfather.

### The Duke of Connaught

H.R.H. the Duke of Connaught has been previously profiled (*The Leader* February 2007), but is worthy of mentioning again here. The Duke succeeded Earl Grey as Governor General in 1911. As brother of the late King Edward VII, he was exceptionally popular in Canada and had a reputation as an eloquent speaker. He was also arguably the single most staunch supporter of Scouting in the Empire. Scouting had spread rapidly after the publication of *Scouting for Boys*, but it was in danger of becoming a 'seven-day wonder'. Connaught kept the public and media interested in Scouting, never missing an opportunity to mention the Movement in his speeches, or to inspect a local troop during his tours across the country. This was particularly important as the first generation of Scoutmasters and older Scouts left for the battlefields of France and the country faced the hard years of World War I. The first three Canadian Jamborees were held at the Connaught Ranges, just outside of Ottawa.

### Lord Byng of Vimy

Field Marshal Julian Hedworth George Byng was a British aristocrat who knew Baden-Powell from service in India and the Boer War. There is some evidence that he was involved in Scouting in England in the earliest years, before World War I.

In 1916, Colonel Byng took command of the Canadian Army Corps on the Western Front in France. It was under his command that Canadian forces had their historic victory at the Battle of Vimy Ridge, in April 1917. He was promoted to General and made Lord Byng of Vimy for his conspicuous military achievements.

Lord Byng became Governor General in 1921. While other Governors General had been vocal *supporters* of Scouting, Lord Byng truly *was* a Scout. His predecessors, Grey and Connaught, promoted Scouting by persuading politicians and other powerful men to support the Movement. Lord Byng, on the other hand, worked directly with the boys and grass-roots leadership. He often held training sessions for patrol leaders and Scout leaders right inside Rideau Hall. A frequent speaker at provincial council meetings and Scouters' Conferences, he participated in local troop meetings whenever he was on tour. The Scouts of the Ottawa District were often referred to as "Byng's Boys" and were the envy of troops across the country.

For his exemplary service to Scouting, B.-P. presented Lord Byng with the Silver Wolf, the highest adult honour in Scouting. Camp Byng, in British Columbia, is named for him.

## THE FIRST DOMINION COUNCIL

Although we know that Scouting first came to Canada in 1907, there is little documentation of those early years. In most cases, those earliest patrols and troops were started by the boys themselves, and lacking any governing body, record keeping was often poor or non-existent. Baden-Powell established the first Headquarters Council in Great Britain in 1909, and Lord Grey followed suit in Canada in 1910.

The original Council consisted of 31 community-minded volunteers from all parts of the country, including 22 military officers, four clergymen and four Members of Parliament. The 1910 Council was considered a temporary appointment, pending an election of members the next year. Nonetheless, the first Dominion Council suc-



## Brownsea – The Canadian Connection

In 1907, Baden-Powell invited twenty boys to join him at his experimental camp on Brownsea Island. Amongst the twenty were four brothers: Simon, James, George and William Rodney. The boys were from an aristocratic family (their great-great-great-great grandfather, the 1st Baron Rodney, was Governor of Newfoundland in 1749). George was the eldest, in line to inherit the title Lord Rodney. But in 1907 his title was patrol leader of the Wolf Patrol on Brownsea Island.

In 1919, George, now the 8th Baron Rodney, immigrated to Fort Saskatchewan, Alberta, to take up farming and make a new life after the war. Lord George Rodney was one of the few original Brownsea Scouts who remained with the Movement into adulthood. He worked with the local association in Fort Saskatchewan, and his wife, Lady Rodney, was the first provincial commissioner for Guides in Alberta.

In 1928, the surviving members of the Brownsea Experiment held a reunion with B.-P. Lord Rodney could not attend, but sent this note to Baden-Powell: "It should go down to future generations as historic as representing the beginning of the greatest movement for good that the world has ever seen. I would give anything to have been able to be present to have talked over old days and to have renewed acquaintance with yourself. I often think of those days as the good old time before the war, and that first Boy Scout camp has always stood out as one of the landmarks of my life, representing one of the happiest fortnights of my childhood."

ceeded in developing the original Policy, Organization & Rules for Canada, and oversaw the foundation of provincial councils and numerous local associations across the country. The Dominion Council was also responsible for the appointment of commissioners, the issuing of Scoutmasters' Warrants, and established the national Supply and Finance Departments.

Many of the members of the First Dominion Council were noteworthy in their own right: for example, Lt.-Col. A. E. Gooderham was the single biggest financial contributor to Scouting in Canada during the first ten years of the Movement. He was the President of the Ontario Provincial Council from 1913-1920, and was awarded the Silver Wolf in 1917. In his spare time, he also founded the Canadian Academy of Music, and later served as President of the Toronto Symphony Orchestra.

Lt.-Col. E. W. B. Morrison, of Ottawa, was another important supporter of Scouting, but his greatest claim to fame was that he served with Major John McRae during WWI. As a journalist, Morrison recognised the quality of McRae's poem *In Flanders Fields*, and convinced his friend to submit it for publication to the British magazine *Punch*. After McRae's untimely death, it was Morrison who salvaged the original printing-press plates from McRae's effects, bringing *In Flanders Fields* home to Canada, where it has stood as a monument of remembrance for Canadians for over eighty years.

### Colonel S. B. Steele

Many of the other twenty-nine members of the Dominion Council also made important contributions to Scouting and to Canadian society, but none was more famous than Sam Steele.

Samuel Benfield Steele was born in Muskoka, and educated in Orillia, Ontario. After a short military ca-

As B.-P.'s friend and right-hand man, Steele certainly would have acted as a sounding board for Baden-Powell's earliest ideas for the Scout Movement.



In 1900, Lord Strathcona invited Steele to become the first commanding officer of his new regiment, the aforementioned *Lord Strathcona's Horse*, which he led in action during the Boer War in South Africa. After the war, Steele returned to South Africa at Baden-Powell's invitation, taking command of one of the four Divisions in the South African Constabulary. Under Steele's guidance, the S.A.C. was managed along similar lines to the N.W.M.P. and quickly became an efficient frontier police force.

Baden-Powell left the S.A.C. in 1903, and was promoted to Inspector-General of Cavalry for Britain and Ireland. When the S.A.C. was disbanded in 1906, Steele moved briefly to England, where he spent eight months as B.-P.'s adjutant, before returning to Canada. It was during this time that General Baden-Powell was developing the preliminary outline for his Boy Scout Scheme, and was gathering support for the idea from the leading men of the Empire. As B.-P.'s friend and right-hand man, Steele certainly would have acted as a sounding board for Baden-Powell's earliest ideas for the Scout Movement.

reer, Steele joined the newly-formed North-West Mounted Police (he was actually the third officer sworn into the force), and was initially posted in Manitoba, where he trained new recruits. After fighting against the Metis and Cree in the Northwest Rebellion, Steele was promoted to superintendent, and posted to the Klondike, where he gained fame during the Gold Rush of the 1890s.

In 1910, Colonel Steele served as the Commanding Officer of the Canadian Military based in Winnipeg, and represented Manitoba on the Dominion Council. He became the first Provincial Commissioner for Manitoba, a position which he held until the outbreak of war in 1914. He served in France during the First World War, where he was promoted to Major-



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General, and was knighted in January, 1918. He died a few months later during the Spanish flu epidemic.

## CANADIANS AND THE BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA

### Ernest Thompson Seton

Born in England, Ernest moved to Canada as a small child, growing up in Lindsay, Ontario, and Toronto. He was a talented artist, with a particular interest in wildlife and the outdoors, and started his career as a government naturalist in Winnipeg. After moving to the United States, he became a famous public speaker, touring the country talking about the need to protect the wilderness.

In 1902, Seton established an outdoors-oriented youth organization called the *Woodcraft Indians*. The Woodcraft Movement was relatively successful in the United States, and there is some evidence that Baden-Powell visited a Woodcraft camp in Connecticut in 1905.

When the Boy Scouts of America was established in 1910, the Woodcraft Indians, along with another rival organization, Dan Beard's *Sons of Daniel Boone*, merged and joined the Scouts. Seton went on to become the first Chief Scout of the United States. He also wrote the first American Scout handbook, and contributed many illustrations and text to early editions of the *Handbook for Canada*.

### Dr. Edgar M. Robinson and the Silver Bay Experimental Camp

Edgar Robinson was from St. Stephen, New Brunswick, but in the early years of the 20th century he was working in New York as the International Director of Boys' Work for the YMCA. During 1908 and 1909, Robinson had watched the development of Scouting in England and Canada with some interest. When William D. Boyce founded the Boy Scouts of America in 1910, Robinson approached him with a proposal that the 'Y' would administer the American Scouting program. Boyce agreed, and Robinson was granted a one year leave of absence from his regular duties in order to establish the national Scouting program in the United States.

Dr. Robinson had already scheduled a two-week summer camp program for older boys at the YMCA facility at Silver Bay, New York, which was to feature Ernest Thompson Seton and his Woodcraft Indian pro-

gram. However, when Robinson learned that Seton had associated himself with the fledgling Boy Scouts of America, they shifted gears, and the Silver Bay camp in August 1910 became the first experimental Boy Scout camp in America. One hundred and twenty boys, including at least two from Toronto, participated in the two week camp. The camp combined elements of Baden-Powell's Scouting Scheme with material from Seton's Woodcraft, Dan Beard's Sons of Daniel Boone, and established YM-CA summer programming.

Robinson went on to become the first Chief Executive of the Boy Scouts of America, a position which he held for the remainder of his one year leave from the 'Y'. Few people in either Canada or the United States realize that both the first Chief Executive and the first Chief Scout (Seton) of the BSA were Canadians. However, the important contribution of Canadians toward the establishment of Scouting in the United States was formally acknowledged by the BSA in a special ceremony at their National Jamboree in 2005.

## LAST, BUT CERTAINLY NOT LEAST

### Dr. James Wilson Robertson

James Robertson was a true Renaissance man. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, he was involved with many aspects of social improvement in Canada, including instituting national standards on agricultural and dairy industries, educational reform in public schools and colleges, and the Canadian Red Cross in both peacetime and war.

In 1914, the Duke of Connaught invited Dr. Robertson to join the Dominion Council, feeling that his "very name on the council lists will be the best guarantee of the public-spirited and educative aims of the Association." Dr. Robertson went on to become the Dominion Commissioner in 1919, a position which he held until 1930. Under his leadership, the Scout Movement in Canada blossomed, growing to some 50,000 youth members at the time of his retirement. He expanded the Dominion Headquarters, brought the first Woodbadge courses to Canada, and revitalized the spiritual emphasis of Scouting. But perhaps his longest-standing contribution to the Movement was the establishment of *The Scout Leader* magazine in 1923.

Scouting may have started in England, but we can be proud of our Canadian forefathers' hard work and contributions to making Scouting the success it is today in Canada. X

– Steve Bobrowicz has already written several articles in past Leader Magazines regarding the history of Scouting. This article wraps up the series.



## Notice of Annual Meeting Scouts Canada

**Saturday,**

December 1, 2007

4:30 p.m.

**Richmond Gateway Theatre  
6500 Gilbert Road  
Richmond, British Columbia**

### Purpose:

- 1) Receipt and consideration of reports including the Corporation's annual report.
- 2) Receipt and consideration of the financial statement for the National operation and the auditor's report thereon for the preceding year.
- 3) Election of Honorary Officers and Honorary Members.
- 4) Recommendation to the Chief Scout of an individual to fill the position of Chief Commissioner.
- 5) Appointment of Officers and election of Members of the Board (except for the Executive Commissioner & Chief Executive Officer, who is appointed by the Board, and the Chief Commissioner, who is appointed by the Chief Scout).
- 6) Appointment of an auditor.
- 7) Consideration of any matter placed before it by the Chief Commissioner on behalf of the Board.
- 8) Selection of three (3) Voting Members to serve on the Nominating Committee for the ensuing year.
- 9) Consideration of any resolution(s) introduced by the Voting Members in accordance with Article III i., and the recommendation(s) of the Board relating thereto.
- 10) Such other business as may come before the meeting and which the Members under applicable law are authorized to transact.