

ELMHURST HISTORY HIGHLIGHT: ELMHURST GIRL SCOUTS

***“On My Honor, I will try: To serve God and my country,
To help people at all times, And to live by the Girl Scout Law.”***

Every Girl Scout will recognize the Girl Scout Promise printed above. The Girls Scouts of the USA celebrate their Founder's Day on March 12. Juliette Gordon Low founded the organization on March 12, 1912 in Savannah, GA, basing the program on the Boy Scouts and Girl Guide youth movements in England. Originally called Girl Guides, it was renamed Girl Scouts in 1913. Early scouts learned about nature, self-reliance, and resourcefulness.

World War I influenced the new scout movement. The troop leaders were called captains and the assistants were lieutenants. The girls spent much of their time drill marching, camping, and practicing Morse code. In fact, the uniform color was changed from navy blue to khaki in 1914. It was not until 1928 that the khaki uniforms were changed to green.

Eleven girls and three adults formed the first troop in Elmhurst in June 1918. Within a year there were three troops in Elmhurst whose members had bake sales at Graue's Grocery Store, played in basketball tournaments with other troops in the county, hiked to Graue Woods, camped at Lake Glen Ellyn, and hosted a summer party for thirty-five neighborhood children, entertaining them with games and a bonfire. In May 1920, forty-five girls from Elmhurst's combined troops participated in a program to show the community what it meant to be a Girl Scout. The evening's activities included a roll call, inspection, a salute to the flag, first aid demonstrations, and a sale of handiwork.



*Members of the first Girl Scout troop in Elmhurst, circa 1919.
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A 1932 pamphlet, *How to Start a Girl Scout Troop*, suggests that the first troop meeting should mostly be games, with a brief talk about Girl Scouting, stories about pioneers who showed "pluck," and a chance to break up into smaller groups, known as patrols. The patrol

system arises from "a belief that the character training and education of a girl should be evolved from within. The girls, in fact, must make themselves into Girl Scouts -nobody else can do it for them." The Girl Scout program, nationally and locally, has evolved over time: expanding programs, adding new age levels of scouts, revising the handbooks, and updating the uniforms.

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