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# Ideal Patriots: The Boy Scouts of America as Propaganda during the First World War

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Ideal Patriots: The Boy Scouts of America as Propaganda during the First World  
War

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## Introduction

The eve of the one-hundredth anniversary of the United States entry into the First World War presents pause to reflect on the great challenge faced by the federal government in uniting the American home front. Total war created the need for home front and battlefield to maintain a proper war machine. Everyone on the home front, including children, became vital members of the war effort. The diversity of the American population created conflicts of interest amongst those of European descent. English and French-Americans pulled for the Allies, while many German Americans gravitated toward the Central Powers. Because of conflicts with England, some Irish-Americans supported the Central Powers. Though unity was vital for a successful home front, divided loyalties among 12.8 million Irish and German Americans<sup>1</sup> posed a major challenge. Labor unions also initially stood opposed to America's involvement due to their experiences of military crackdowns at labor protests. Many of the core labor members were also of either Irish or German descent.<sup>2</sup> How was the federal government going to motivate a divided populace?

Conflicting opinions over US involvement led the government to take drastic action and expand involvement into daily life. In order to achieve the federal government's war aims every level of society had to "do their bit" for the war effort. When the war began, intervening on social issues was a relatively new task for the federal

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<sup>1</sup>James L. Abrahamson, *The American Home Front: Revolutionary War, Civil War, World War I, World War II* (Washington D.C.: National Defense University Press, 1983), 114. The total population of the US was about 100 million in 1917.

<sup>2</sup>Robert H. Zieger, *America's Great War: World War I and the American Experience* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2000), 118.

government. Historians of this era note how the Progressive movement came to an end after WWI stating the defeat of Progressivism came from a government suppressing civil liberties of charged populace supporting the war effort.<sup>3</sup> Legislation like the Espionage Act of 1917, which forced uncooperative citizens into submission by imprisoning those seen as interfering with recruitment, highlight the State's drastic involvement in society.<sup>4</sup>

Yet there also existed a more subtle side of coercion on the American home front.

Historians sum up federal action in various ways: the US responded to non willful participation with exhortation, with rewards and threats and coercion, though it hoped to draw up national reservoirs of patriotism through incentives more so than punishment.<sup>5</sup>

This war initiated the first massive US government effort to sway public opinion.<sup>6</sup> Leading the charge was the Committee on Public Information (CPI) headed by George Creel, who is seen by historians as the father of modern American propaganda.<sup>7</sup> He was dealt a tricky assignment to forge a united American "war-will" out of a diverse, reluctant, and even skeptical population, while preserving democracy.<sup>8</sup>

During World War I the US government demonstrated that even a democratic country exercised great control and persuasion over its citizens. An analogy comes to

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<sup>3</sup> David Traxel, *Crusader Nation: The United States in Peace and the Great War, 1898-1920* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006), x.

<sup>4</sup> This was notably a period in time when the US government forged powerful instruments of coercion and repression. Robert H. Zieger, *America's Great War: World War I and the American Experience* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2000), 3-4.

<sup>5</sup> Ronald Schaffer, *America in the Great War: The Rise of the War Welfare State* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), xii.

<sup>6</sup> Celia M. Kingsbury, *For Home and Country: World War I Propaganda on the Home Front* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2010), 6. Most historians will agree that it was a largely successful propaganda campaign.

<sup>7</sup> Alan Axelrod, *Selling the Great War: The Making of American Propaganda* (New York: Palgrave & Macmillan, 2009), xii. Axelrod states that Creel's propaganda model continued to grind on well into the twentieth century by not only Americans but the likes of Nazi Germany and Stalinist Russia.

<sup>8</sup> Axelrod, *Selling the Great War*, 220.

mind when differentiating how democratic versus authoritarian states coerce their citizens: a child's parents convincing him/ her to visit their grandparents. An autocratic state would be similar to one's parents asserting that their child has no choice but to go visit their grandparents or face punishment. On the other hand a more liberal state would convince their people in a more elusive manner. These parents would quietly shame their children into the visit like so, "You don't have to visit grandma, *but* she is getting very old and she is always asking about you..." and this manner would continue until the child is guilt tripped into visiting their grandparents.<sup>9</sup> It was the job of the CPI to flood society with propaganda throughout the course of the war utilizing similar tactics.

In order to achieve a successful home front all types of participants needed to join in and help out. Children came under bombardment about war service from various propaganda sources like the federal government, private advertisers, and organizations. Federal involvement in the lives of children was a new concept adopted in the early 1900s. Progressives called for federal intervention overseeing state charity boards in the 1910's, which ultimately resulted in the formation of the Children's Bureau in 1912.<sup>10</sup> This agency's function was to oversee how states handled adoption and child abuse. The war presented another opportunity for further federal intervention into children's lives. Although no legislation strictly involving children passed during the war, the government still made its way into the everyday lives of children. This expansion in domain opened the opportunity for the government to use children as a means to accomplish the war aims on the home front.

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<sup>9</sup>Credit for this analogy goes to Dr. Minsoo Kang of the University of Missouri-St. Louis.

<sup>10</sup> David I. Macleod, *The Age of the Child: Children in America, 1890-1920* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1998), 27.

Federal propaganda depicted children as both victims and the future warriors of freedom.<sup>11</sup> Children were the primary targets in numerous propaganda campaigns, so scholars note the importance of child participation. James Marten for example, emphasized how children were not simply portrayed as victims in propaganda but enthusiastically accepted wartime activities.<sup>12</sup> From this template children became aware of their wartime expectations. Scholars of WWI propaganda specifically study children as targets of propaganda campaigns, not seeing them as propaganda themselves. State officials indeed encouraged children to accept the war with great enthusiasm. This study will look at a specific group of children targeted by propaganda during the war. Members of the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) entered into this wartime culture to promote their public image and became recognized as ideal home front participants, making them walking talking mediums of propaganda.

Scholars note that propaganda can take various forms since it uses suggestion and persuasion of a given ideal or belief. In order to accomplish this goal it uses words and word substitutes (pictures, drawings, graphs, exhibits, parades, songs, and similar devices).<sup>13</sup> Seeing individuals as propaganda is not that farfetched. Alan Axelord presented in his work that Edward Bernays, a member of the CPI, saw his Four Minute Men as propaganda.<sup>14</sup> The job of the Four Minute Men was to give a rousing speech to groups of people to support the war. Seeing and hearing their speeches caused emotional

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<sup>11</sup>James A. Marten, *Children and War: A Historical Anthology* (New York: New York University Press, 2002), 116.

<sup>12</sup>Marten, *Children and War*, 4.

<sup>13</sup>Ralph D. Casey, "What is Propaganda," *American Historical Association Archives* (July 1944): <https://www.historians.org/about-aha-and-membership/aha-history-and-archives/gi-roundtable-series/pamphlets/what-is-propaganda/defining-propaganda-ii>. Date Accessed: 8/31/2016.

<sup>14</sup> Axelord, *Selling the Great War*, 120.

response. The Boy Scouts performed similar types of propaganda. Seeing Boy Scouts aiding the war effort could evoke a similar kind of response. The image of a young man enacting messages in propaganda would hold extra weight in the eye of the beholder. This situation challenges how historians see propaganda, actions like these open the door for wider interpretations of what is propaganda. Having numerous tools allow for a wide interpretation of propaganda, which allow for messages reaching wider audiences. The ultimate goal of propaganda materials is to propagate in a contested matter. Scouting's actions during the war were helpful in supporting the efforts on the home front, therefore Scouts' work follows this concept of propaganda.

In order to maintain the war effort the US needed a loyal and committed home front. Children became vital part of the home front. They were indoctrinated that the war was being fought for their freedoms. The State reached out to children's groups to enlist more home front supporters. The State cooperated with local voluntary associations to reach out to groups of children. Historian Christopher Capozzola explained that before the war voluntary associations shaped American public culture,<sup>15</sup> meaning these organizations were well embedded in the workings of their communities. Therefore tapping into the community organizations allowed the State's message to disseminate to many followers. A reciprocal relationship between state agencies and many groups used the war to advance each other's interests.<sup>16</sup> Children's groups bought into these messages of duty on the home front, leading children to participate in numerous war services in

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<sup>15</sup> Christopher Capozzola, *Uncle Sam Wants You: World War I and the Making of the Modern American Citizen* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 7. What he meant by this was voluntary groups organized local communities through their involvement. Thus they became familiar entities in the community.

<sup>16</sup> Abrahamson, *The American Home Front*, 87.



their communities. Although many groups and organizations played a role on the home front, the example of the BSA shows how their members became a means of propaganda. Approximately 300,000 boys were enrolled in the BSA in 1917. By infusing war work into the BSA program, the war became acceptable to many young men on the verge of joining the war itself.<sup>17</sup> Boy Scouts' war contributions were widely recognized as a model of patriotism. Scouts were a staple of their communities; by performing war work amongst their neighbors, they helped sell the war to fellow community members.

Although originally the BSA's base membership consisted of Protestant, middle to upper class youth, BSA officials embraced immigrant boys, forming Catholics, Jewish, and nation-of-origin troops.<sup>18</sup> The BSA offered a great opportunity for the government to spread its ideals into a multitude of communities. Some boys' magazines saw Boy Scouts as models of patriotism, duty, and civic virtue.<sup>19</sup> These were the ideal mannerisms needed for a successful home front. Influential men, like Colin Livingstone, the BSA's national president during the war,<sup>20</sup> also wanted to reinforce the message of manly character because he feared that middle and upper class white males were becoming increasingly weak. The war offered the opportunity for a young movement to create a national focus by spreading the ideals of citizenship, especially to young men.

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<sup>17</sup> Ross Collins, "This is Your Propaganda, Kids: Building a War Myth for World War I Children," *Journalism History* 38, 1 (Spring 2012): 21. His work here asserts how war became like a game to children and thus became an acceptable part of everyday life for them. The many Scouting war service programs became an avenue for them accepting the war.

<sup>18</sup> Benjamin R. Jordan, *Modern Manhood and the Boy Scouts of America: Citizenship, Race, and the Environment* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016), 168.

<sup>19</sup> Robert H. MacDonald, "Reproducing the Middle-Class Boy: From Purity to Patriotism in the Boys' Magazines, 1892-1914," *Journal of Contemporary History* 24, 3 (July 1989), 531.

<sup>20</sup> David Scott & Brendan Murphy, *The Scouting Party: Pioneering and Preservation, Progressivism and Preparedness in the Making of the Boy Scouts of America* (Dallas, Red Honor Press, 2010), 97. Colin Livingstone was a lawyer, then became a vice president of American National Bank prior to his work in Scouting.

The vast archives of the BSA's two publications, *Boys' Life* and *Scouting*, include propaganda messages young men were exposed to, along with examples of Scouting's commitment to the war effort. A mix of short stories, informational articles, and images, they provide insight to Scouting's wartime involvement, and even the home front expectations placed on boys. This media influenced the boys aged 12-18 to become walking, talking forms of propaganda. Scholars have observed that the theme "do your bit" recurred throughout children's literature during the war. Children's stories reminded them of their love for democracy and their country, pushing them into home front duty.<sup>21</sup> In order to achieve a child's cooperation editors romanticized war with stories of adventure and heroism to hook their interest.<sup>22</sup>

The actions and the bodies of Boy Scouts throughout the country acted as propaganda. Eventually Scouts become symbols of service, leaving a lasting impression in their community both locally and nationally. National efforts, like Liberty Bond sales, got numerous amounts of people out to support the war. The Boy Scouts enthusiastically volunteered for any federal service that allowed them to be active in their own communities. Scout's aid to federal war services made them visible, lively war supporters, prompting the notion that these boys were the ideal patriots within their communities. By being active in federal services allowed Scouts' neighbors to witness model home front behavior needed by the federal government.

In order for Scouts to embrace the war their own exposure to propaganda must be studied. Chapter one examines the ideals of militant masculinity, first explored in

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<sup>21</sup> Abrahamson, *The American Home Front*, 120.

<sup>22</sup> Ross F. Collins, *Children, War, and Propaganda*, 246.

Scouting literature and other media. “Militant masculinity” described cultural expectations of strength and virtue, including a man’s willingness to fight for his homeland. I borrow the term “militant masculinity” from historian Meg Albrink. She specifically described how the British government’s propaganda created the expectations for British men’s participation during the First World War.<sup>23</sup> This chapter will argue that attitudes of militant masculinity pushed by American Scouting to adopt wartime service as a way to appease national figureheads and thus promote the BSA movement. Historians’ analysis of children during the war shows how the glorification of military values mythologized the war and made it an acceptable tool for foreign policy, thus encouraging that generation to become militarized.<sup>24</sup> It was essential for governments to get children to accept the war, since children would one day have to be the future warriors which all warring governments must rely upon.<sup>25</sup> Tugging at the hearts of many young men at the time were the messages of militant masculinity. Behind the push for a militarist BSA were men such as Teddy Roosevelt, who raised fears of declining masculinity. Home front media altered such messages during the war, as they bombarded young men with messages that being a true man meant serving the nation in any way possible. Militarists further believed that the war could make better citizens out of children. Furthermore, participating in war services could promote children’s citizenship, as performing vital duties instilled patriotism. The American wartime culture of

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<sup>23</sup> Meg Albrink, “Humanitarians and He-Men: Recruitment Posters and the Masculine Ideal,” *Picture This: World War I, Posters and Visual Culture* ed. Pearl James (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), 314.

<sup>24</sup> Ross F. Collins, *Children, War, and Propaganda* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2011), 278.

<sup>25</sup> Celia M. Kingsbury, *For Home and Country: World War I Propaganda on the Home Front* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2010), 8.

obligation lent itself to political coercion, as propaganda encouraged numerous young Scouts to be actively involved with the war.<sup>26</sup>

Chapter two will discuss how awards, medals, and other forms of recognition served as incentives to participate in war programs while also helping develop the BSA's identity to an ideal war contributor. This chapter shows how Scouting's growing participation in the war effort enhanced its reputation among national and local authorities making Boy Scouts identifiable examples of ideal war service. The creation of numerous home front programs allowed anyone to participate in war services, making for a more involved United States. Daily civilian life became militarized as everyone's contributions were vital to the war's success.<sup>27</sup> The BSA eagerly fed on the growing need for war services on the home front and vigorously accepted the demand placed on them by government agencies. Their growing presence in successful wartime activities allowed for the spotlight to shine on the Scouting movement. Being associated with various government services created the notion of Scouts as models of wartime contribution.

The final chapter argues that Scouts' visibility in their communities made them into propaganda itself, as their bodies performed war-related tasks. By looking at the various tasks Scouts performed at the request of federal entities we see that Scouts were used to promote war aims. Having an image as ideal home front participants enhanced Scouts role in the government's efforts. Both the BSA and federal government each worked to promote their own interests. Though previous scholars have shown that Scouting used the war for self promotion, this study shows how Scouts became

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<sup>26</sup> Christopher Capozzola, *Uncle Sam Wants You*, 18.

<sup>27</sup> Tammy Proctor, *Civilians in a World at War, 1914-1918* (New York New York University Press, 2010), 7.

propaganda, as their neighbors connected this organized and uniformed body of boys as ideal patriots successfully aiding in the war. In this sense Scouts implicitly encouraged their neighbors to support the war. One important implication of the success of groups like the BSA in selling the war, is that future wartime propaganda would use children as a means of propaganda.

Out of a need to create a unified home front, the US government built a massive propaganda machine. The federal government used Scouts' bodies and actions as propaganda by enlisting their help with various wartime service projects. Scouts doing war service at home and in the community brought the war war home to their communities. Exploring Scouts' role in propaganda, as propaganda illustrates the growing relationship between the government and children as state programs used a group of children's bodies and actions as a means of supporting the war both physically and emotionally.

## Chapter 1

### Militarism and Masculinity

One way World War I propaganda reached the masses was outlining gender roles and expectations for both males and females. Wartime propaganda defined civilians as objects and created a vision of war profoundly gendered, “raced” and made imaginary.<sup>28</sup> For the government to properly motivate civilians, home front expectations were defined for all members of society, even young people had roles to play. Having a successful home front effort meant having lively participation by all. The Boy Scout movement wanted to raise strong, prepared boys to tackle the challenges faced by their nation. The program utilized themes of community involvement to put scouts into a position to show off masculine ideals on the home front.

Ideologies existing prior to the conflict were repurposed to boost the nation’s patriotism. Many influential men, such as Theodore Roosevelt, were convinced that “overcivilization” the overburden of urbanization and industrialization was causing the feminization of American boys, leading to a crisis of masculinity in western nations during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Roosevelt felt those who lacked vigor could aspire to become more manly through physical activity, and what was more physically demanding than war? Prior to WWI a great deal of boys’ organizations arose to combat the threats of overcivilization, one of them being the Boy Scouts of America.

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<sup>28</sup> Tammy Proctor, *Civilians in a World at War, 1914-1918* (New York: New York University Press, 2010), 275.

Understanding the push behind the overcivilization issue led the BSA founding leadership to promote these ideals within their movement; which was then used by state agencies to propagate a willing war populace.

Gail Bederman has studied the dilemma threatening men's manliness during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. One individual highlighted in her study was Teddy Roosevelt, who also plays an important role in this chapter for his influence in early American Scouting. Bederman notes Roosevelt's beliefs on manhood called for a mix of a moral manliness and violent masculinity. Men should possess Victorian ideals like: strength, altruism, self-restraint, and chastity, while also seeking thrills and adventure.<sup>29</sup> Roosevelt and other militarists invested in the BSA program to carry out these ideals of masculinity. However, Scouting historians note that the BSA leadership also wanted to include training young men as followers of international good will prior to the Great War.<sup>30</sup> Although this training was well intentioned, a growing climate of militancy believed such ideas were threatening the future of the United States.

Kristin Hoganson contributes to the study of the manhood crisis by underlining how militant masculinity drove war mongering policies in late 19th century America, in an effort to increase the country's manliness. Influential white men felt their position in society was becoming increasingly weaker (less manly) due to the urban and industrial decaying of society, which threatened their class, national privileges, and status

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<sup>29</sup> Gail Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 172.

<sup>30</sup> David I. Macleod, *Building Character in the American Boy: The Boy Scouts, YMCA, and their Forerunners, 1870-1920* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983), xviii.

(especially to women).<sup>31</sup> Militant masculinity arose from the notion that manly character was a prerequisite of full citizenship and political leadership.<sup>32</sup> Some US politicians worried their politics were becoming increasingly feminized. Eventually peace became synonymous with effeminate behavior, something that men like Roosevelt wished to stamp out. To combat feminine politics, a new generation of soldier-heroes was needed to boost the nation's manliness; and the ideas of serving the State and manliness were linked going into the Great War. At the conclusion of her study Hoganson shows how the ideal of militant masculinity continued the US debate of entering WWI. It was concluded by militarists who declared that war would counter the effeminizing tendencies of peace and would bolster American manhood.<sup>33</sup> These familiar beliefs continued in WWI propaganda and were altered to fit the message of national unity, that all males must serve their nation.

While Roosevelt believed proof of a man's virility came from living a "strenuous life," and the willingness to fight was a necessary part of his concept,<sup>34</sup> the BSA program was simply appealing to young boys. Popular literature before and during the war told tales of manly heroes conquering the wilderness. Through these ideals, Roosevelt felt American men could forge a powerful nation. Strenuous activity was made viable to young boys through Scouting's outdoor adventures; and members are expected to live by the Scout Law, a moral code that defined the model Scout.<sup>35</sup> The combination of thrills

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<sup>31</sup> Kristin L. Hoganson, *Fighting for American Manhood: How Gender Politics Provoked the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 201.

<sup>32</sup> Hoganson, *Fighting for American Manhood*, 10.

<sup>33</sup> Hoganson, *Fighting for American Manhood*, 206.

<sup>34</sup> Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization*, 171.

<sup>35</sup> The Scout Law: A scout is Trustworthy, Loyal, Helpful, Friendly, Courteous, Kind, Obedient, Cheerful, Thrifty, Brave, Clean, and Reverent.



and a moral code made it easy for Roosevelt to endorse the BSA. His presence in the movement granted him great influence in early years of American Scouting. He and other militarists saw Scouting as ideal grounds for preparing young men to become ideal patriots who would come to their country's aid. In Scouting's early years their identity was formed, part of that story accounted for them pandering to militarists like Roosevelt.

The characteristics listed on the inside cover of the BSA handbook correlate with Roosevelt's idea of the model man. Roosevelt shared the founder of Scouting, Lord Baden-Powell, views of the military identity in Scouting. Roosevelt's presence in Scouting was quite significant. His endorsement gained him the title of Honorary Vice president of the BSA. He also appears frequently in BSA publishings in this era. First, a letter which he wrote was placed in the Boy Scout handbook. Second, he shows up numerous times in *Boys' Life*, in the recurring segment "A Boys' Life of Roosevelt." One journalist remarked on Roosevelt as a "masculine hero of muscle and mind."<sup>36</sup> These stories detailed both physical and mental challenges Roosevelt faced throughout his distinguished life. The BSA publicists use him as a larger than life individual, a model of manly character that boys should emulate. Every time the print mentioned him it referred to him as "Colonel Roosevelt." His military title demonstrates the respect the BSA had for Roosevelt, and an understanding of his vision for the movement. TR's military type training "Americanized" boys, good citizens in peace always ready for war.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Arnaldo Testi, "The Gender of Reform Politics: Theodore Roosevelt and the Culture of Masculinity," *The Journal of American History* 81, 4 (March 1995): 1514.

<sup>37</sup> Ross F. Collins, *Children, War, & Propaganda* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2011), 162.

The US was going to need every man it could muster upon entering WWI. The US armed forces began building up in 1916, however by 1917 quotas were not met thus creating the need for the Selective Service Act. Propaganda became a driving force generating the participation expectations for all members of society. During the war manliness meant serving one's country. All males had a duty to serve in any way possible for the war effort. Organizations, like the BSA, stepped up to prove their worth to their nation.

Initially the BSA was about double the size of the US army, though this figure would eventually be dwarfed by the 4 million men enlisted into military service.<sup>38</sup> Still, Scouts served a purpose in the overall war effort. Propaganda depicted children not just as victims of war but, more importantly, as the future warriors in the conflict.<sup>39</sup> The BSA would contribute to this dual identity of children's involvement, national leadership quickly volunteered their members to aid in the war effort. The war provided boys a chance to serve their country, when the older men were sent to Europe. Scouting performed its various wartime duties in their communities, providing young men a chance to demonstrate their patriotism.

Wartime expectations presented military service as a symbol of masculinity.<sup>40</sup> Home front masculine expectations during the war helped militarize civilian men's lives equate a true man to serving his country. A man could not only fight but serve the home

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<sup>38</sup> William Murray, *The History of the Boy Scouts of America* (New York: Boy Scouts of America, 1937), 105.

<sup>39</sup> James A. Marten, *Children and War: A Historical Anthology* (New York: New York University Press, 2002), 116.

<sup>40</sup> Proctor, *Civilians in a World at War, 1914-1918*, 3.

front, and either service was seen as patriotic. The BSA was presented as an path to fulfilling masculine expectations, and shaping masculine ideals amongst adolescent males. *Boys' Life* issues show how this theme bolstered new levels of patriotism. WWI children's literature and the accompanying imagery communicated the expectations to boys to their country both on and off the battlefield, *Boys' Life* and *Scouting* magazine communicated constant barrage of militant, masculine messages boys encountered. These messages helped spur boys to do their duty on the home front, getting them out into their communities.

### **Dealing with Militarism in Early Scouting**

The Boy Scout movement harbors military roots, as it was founded by a military hero of the Boer War, Lord Robert Baden-Powell. He found that many British troops went to war ill-prepared to handle strenuous battle fatigue. At the Battle of Mafeking, when Powell's forces were surrounded, he utilized young men to carry out simple military operations as messengers and Scouts during the siege. Powell took his experiences in the Boer War back to England after the war to mold new, fitter generations of English youth. He believed outdoor activity could combat overcivilization, and in 1908, Powell founded the Scouting movement. He envisioned Scouting as a process of making boys ready for war. Although he reassured naysayers that this process was a means of producing good citizenship,<sup>41</sup> Scouting was an early step in a boy's development as a soldier. "Scouting for boys," he said "originated in the Training that

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<sup>41</sup> John Springhall, "Baden-Powell and the Scout Movement before 1920: Citizen Training or Soldiers of the Future?," *The English Historical Review* 102, 405 (October 1987): 942.

was given to Army recruits before the final instruction in drill and strictly military details. It is therefore the essential training to put into boys before they become Cadets.”<sup>42</sup> In his mind, he wanted to prepare men to serve the British Empire.

English Scouting took a military form through Powell’s vision. When Scouting made it’s way to the United States in 1910, leaders debated over the direction of their respective movement. Before the BSA solidified its position as the dominant Scouting group in the country, there existed several other developmental boy organizations with similar outdoor activities and goals. Ernest Thompson Seton’s wanted his organization, the Woodcraft Indians, to reconnect with nature and to teach boys outdoor skills. Daniel Carter Beard’s Sons of Daniel Boone based itself in the lore of American frontiersmen. Like the Woodcraft Indians, boys were put into an outdoor environment, while teaching them strength in character. Together these two groups helped to create the earlier core of the BSA. A crossroad came early in the BSA’s history in regards to handling the inherent militarism adopted from British Scouting. Leading the charge of antimilitarism was Seton. As a leading Scout Executive Seton was troubled over the military nature found in the BSA program. He wished to emphasize his ideals of connecting more with nature, which was the foundation of his Woodcraft Indians.<sup>43</sup> However, he was in the minority. Most Scouting executives sought to balance naturalism and militarism in the BSA identity and appeal to a variety of influential people, enhancing the growth of the young movement. Many of Scouting’s sponsoring institutions were nonmilitary institutions like

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<sup>42</sup> Baden-Powell, “Notes on the Boy Scout Movement in South Africa”, August 1912, SAA, TC/53.

<sup>43</sup> David C. Scott & Brendan Murphy, *The Scouting Party: Pioneering and Preservation, Progressivism and Preparedness in the Making of the Boy Scouts of America* (Dallas: Red Honor Press, 2010), 151.

schools, community centers, and churches so the BSA toned down their war rhetoric to appease them.<sup>44</sup> The Young Men's Christian Association, in particular, urged the BSA to keep a peaceful theme within the program, as it was the YMCA that provided the national leadership with offices and other infrastructure to get things started. Without these meeting places Scouting's early footing would have been insecure.



*The Official Handbook for Boys, Second Edition (1914): Inside Cover.*

Seton was not alone with his concern of militarism in Scouting; the public also voiced their worries on the matter. Prior to America's entry into WWI, Socialists and urban workers believed Scouting would be used as a police force at home, or even help train future soldiers for war. This connection stemmed from the use of the military to stamp out strikes justifying their fear of the BSA's quasi-military approaches. Scouting leadership countered such claims by describing Scouting as "not military in thought...although it does instill boys the military virtues, such as honor, loyalty,

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<sup>44</sup> Benjamin R. Jordan, *Modern Manhood and the Boy Scouts of America: Citizenship, Race, and the Environment, 1910-1930* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016), 102.

obedience and patriotism.”<sup>45</sup> This memo later became a notable addition to the second edition of the Boy Scout Handbook, as the inside cover. The image above demonstrates the balancing act that the BSA performed in the early years. It states the plan is “not military” and “advocating universal peace.” Yet Scouts wore military-like uniforms.<sup>46</sup> Further reassurance was spread through local council officials by conducting newspapers statements such as this, “...the national organization will not commit its members to any distinctive military operations, and no local organization will have authority to do so.”<sup>47</sup> The BSA leadership did not wish to lean one way or the other on this debate.

Still the public’s first impressions of Scouting suspected an organization designed to springboard boys into future military service. One such article from the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* refuted these concerns.

“Continuing their attack of the Boy Scouts organization, which they look upon as a deep conspiracy to inoculate the coming generation with militarism, Socialist organs are quoting from the index of the Boys Scouts of America Handbook, prepared by Ernest Thompson Seton. That the book is stuffed full of teachings leading to slaughter is supposed from the following chapter headings: ‘War Songs,’ ‘Morse Code,’ ‘Use of Firearms,’ ‘First Aid to the Injured,’ ‘Tracking or Trailing,’ ‘Hostile Spy,’ ‘Long Range Shooting,’ etc.... The handbook prohibits firearms to anyone under 14 years of age, and the very brief chapter on the subject consists of warnings against carelessness....The whole book smells of the woods,

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<sup>45</sup> *Scouting*, Volume 4, Number 22, April 1, 1917, page 6.

<sup>46</sup> Most early Scouting uniforms were surplus from the Spanish-American War.

<sup>47</sup> “Officials Deny Boy Scouts Will Enter ‘Active Service,’” *St. Louis Post Dispatch*, February 20, 1917, p. 3.

not of the military camp. Its teachings inspire manliness and personal initiative, not a love of war...Militarism is a real evil, but the fight against it is weakened by arousing prejudice against such a wholesome movement as the Boy Scouts of America.”<sup>48</sup>

Although concerns existed, the tone of this article depicts Scouting as favorable to developing young men. This article also distinguishes a difference between militarism and manly behavior taught by the Scouts. Before the war this divide was apparent, however during the war militant masculinity would overwhelm boys on the home front.

The appeal of Scouts serving their country can be demonstrated by a period painting by Robert Robinson titled “His Hero.” In this piece a Scout held a book called “Heroes of History” as he gazed into a mirror at his reflection is himself as a highly decorated war hero. Boys yearned for thrills and adventure something the BSA and Roosevelt understood. Teddy’s reputation and escapades combined with the BSA program allowed the Boy Scouts to expand. The BSA could ill afford to lose the influence of a man who put their organization on the map over the contents of the program.

Even with the outbreak of WWI the BSA continued their neutral stance, until the November 1914 issue of *Boys’ Life*. This particular issue presented an aggressively anti war message to the readers. However, the negative reactions from the militarist camp this issue shocked the BSA to retreat back to neutral stance until America’s official entry.

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<sup>48</sup> “A TERRIBLE WAR CRY.” *St. Louis Post - Dispatch* (1879-1922); Sep 10, 1911; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: St. Louis Post-Dispatch pg. 4

Roosevelt took a pro-war stance during the US neutrality. In fact when the German embassy put out their travel advisory for ships like the *Lusitania*, he believed that itself was an act of war.<sup>49</sup> Seeing the BSA take a pacifist stance was not favorable in his eyes. He wrote to James E. West stating, “The effort to prevent boys of this country...from being trained to arms so that they could serve the country...from my point of view represent treason to the country and treason to the cause of humanity.”<sup>50</sup> This suggests the influence certain pro military individuals, like Roosevelt, had on Scouting. As David Macleod states, the BSA was hostage to Roosevelt and other advocates of military training for boys.<sup>51</sup> To promote peace was seen as effeminizing for their boy readers. In a society where influential men equated manliness with always being prepared for conflict, this particular issue threatened their hold in the BSA.

Robert Robinson, “His Hero,” *Liberty* (7/4/1925).



<sup>49</sup> Scott & Murphy, *The Scouting Party*, 178.

<sup>50</sup> Roosevelt to West, 30 November 1915, Daniel Charter Beard Papers, Library of Congress, Washington.

<sup>51</sup> Macleod, *Building Character in the American Boy*, 179.





(LEFT): C.R. Macauley, "The Hope of the Future," *Boys' Life* Volume 4, Number 9 (November 1914): p. 8

(RIGHT): J.C. Leyendecker, "Weapons for Liberty," *Boys' Life* Volume 8, Number 5 (May 1918): cover.

Scouting literature and artifacts published during the war portrayed Scouts with Uncle Sam. Before WWI, Uncle Sam was not the lead caricature representing the US; that honor belonged to Lady Liberty. However from 1914 to 1918 the BSA had only two images of Scouts with Lady Liberty. This comparison of Lady Liberty represents a shift of presenting more masculine imagery for boys. The most infamous being the 1918 Third

Liberty Loan Drive poster by J.C. Leyendecker depicting a Scout arming Lady Liberty. The other came from the November 1914 antiwar issue of *Boys Life* magazine. This image offers a different message. Here a young Scout leads Lady Liberty away from the war, devastation, and death of Europe toward on a path “Permanent Peace”.<sup>52</sup> The image reinforced a warning of the horrors of war, the hazy background only illuminates the words: war, devastation, and death.

These two images demonstrate how the BSA came around in preparing to join the US war effort. The change is a microcosm of civilians being militarized on the home front. It also demonstrates how American citizens made a 180 degree turn on their position on the war. Fredrick Paxson notes the effort to mobilize the American people as “a matter of continuous negotiations.”<sup>53</sup> Meg Albrink also feels gendered arguments utilized throughout the war were altered to meet the needs at the time,<sup>54</sup> perhaps suggesting the government had to shift meaning of the war to account for their fluctuating war aims from 1914-1918. This also suggests the evolution of Scouting’s position toward the war.

Another angle to take away from these two images are their differences. The Scout matures from one image to the next, suggesting by analogy that BSA has not only matured but Scouts have stepped up to the challenge of the Great War. Now the Scouts and America were part of this conflict and the public turnaround toward the war. It was

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<sup>52</sup> C.R. Macauley, “The Hope of the Future,” *Boys Life* 4, 9 (November 1914): 8. Though it should be noted that initially I saw Lady Liberty leading the scout toward peace, both interpretations are equally insulting to masculinity movements from that time.

<sup>53</sup> Abrahamson, *The American Home Front*, 130.

<sup>54</sup> Meg Albrink, *Picture This*, 314.

rare to see Scouts with Lady Liberty. Scouting images usually contain Uncle Sam during the war. These sort of images demonstrated the “extent to which masculinity is fragilely constructed and performed through war in the twentieth century.”<sup>55</sup> A new image of masculinity presented itself in propaganda throughout the war. Prior to the war militarism and manliness were not necessarily linked, but the influence from men like Roosevelt dictated how males could become ideal patriot on and off the battlefield with militant masculinity. With these ideals in place there was little room for feminine images depicting wartime service, especially among men.

The antiwar *Boys' Life* issue backlash led the BSA to use less of Lady Liberty in its war campaigning. After the image of the Scout depicting him taking Lady Liberty away from the horrors of war, the BSA never exerted anti war messages. The backlash of this issue came from the rage of superpatriots who did not wish children to know the realities of the war, especially trench warfare. Roosevelt wanted manhood, not education, as the main goal of the education received in Scouting.<sup>56</sup> Instead a mythical idealism of war was produced by the propaganda machine during the war years. It is possible that images such as these could be seen as weak and perhaps even provoke fears of lagging manhood in the US. After the debacle of this anti-war issue, other popular children publications followed suit, keeping published messages neutral.<sup>57</sup> The BSA capitulated to the pressures of American nationalism during WWI,<sup>58</sup> showing pro war images.

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<sup>55</sup> Peter H.Jachimiak, “‘Woolly Bears and Toffee Apples’: History, Memory, and Masculinity in Charley’s War,” *The Lion and the Unicorn* 31, 2 (April 2007): 171.

<sup>56</sup> Testi, “The Gender of Reform Politics,” 1522.

<sup>57</sup> Collins, *Children, War, & Propaganda*, 269.

<sup>58</sup> Macleod, *Building Character in the American Boy*, xviii.

## Militant Masculinity and World War I

Militant masculinity called for men to follow chivalrous code of conduct while accepting the need to fight to assert one's manliness. This theme was instilled in boys throughout the conflict. Warring nations rely on new and younger recruits,<sup>59</sup> and *Boys' Life* stories helped indoctrinate its readers with military fantasies, implanting the idea of becoming a future warrior for the cause. Militarism and masculinity went hand in hand. *Boys' Life* magazine presented many tales of masculine boys and men doing their part for the war. The meaning behind these stories was to promote home front expectations of these young men. These bits of propaganda were communicated through various sources, which all had as their purpose to unite the American people behind the war. Ideals of masculinity being familiar concepts from the era and were useful for propaganda in reminding young men what all males could do in their country's time of need.

While propaganda was geared to stimulate feelings such as courage, honor, and glory, which were linked with militant masculinity, however, and a low volunteer rates necessitated shame and coercion, to questioning of the virility of the unenlisted man.<sup>60</sup> Anyone not serving his country was seen as an unfit man (or even un-American). Even Scouts came under scrutiny on their dedication to the war effort. One example published in *Boys' Life* on the eve one of the Liberty Loan campaigns asked, "What are you going to do Scout? Just read the papers and talk loud about victory? Or help WIN that victory?"

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<sup>59</sup> Celia M. Kingsbury, *For Home and Country: World War I Propaganda on the Home Front* (Lincoln: University Nebraska Press, 2010), 8.

<sup>60</sup> Meg Albrink, *Picture This: World War I Posters and Visual Culture*, ed. Pearl James (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), 314.

If you're a true American, you'll be selling bonds."<sup>61</sup> If a Scout were to fail in his duty, he was letting his country down. In order to be seen as a loyal American, Scouts had to serve their country.



Norman Rockwell, *Boys' Life* Volume 7, Number 2 (June 1917): p. 4.

*Boys' Life* reinforced how Scouts' daily actions could help win the war. A particular advertisement from the magazine targeted males' duty to Uncle Sam. "You want to be a man right now and be big enough to fight for Uncle Sam. Here is a way you can fight and be a real help" a hook that strikes at the reader's patriotic sentiment. Military service had become a symbol of masculinity during the 20th century,<sup>62</sup> yet boys

<sup>61</sup> "Work or Be Junked," *Boys' Life* 7, 10 (October 1918): 3.

<sup>62</sup> Proctor, *Civilians in a World at War, 1914-1918*, 3.

could not join. Instead they were on the home front. “The more fish you catch,” said a *Boys’ Life* issue, “That is helping Uncle Sam...That is being a real soldier ‘over there.’”<sup>63</sup> If a simple task like fishing was deemed necessary for US victory, then this message told boys that there were various avenues to war service. The message also beckons boys to the ideals of militant masculinity, being a real man meant to helping Uncle Sam in any way possible.

All males had a bit to play in the war and the November 1917 issue of *Boys’ Life* included one story that reinforced this notion. “The Heroic Thing” revolves around an American boy named Reddy who eagerly wanted to join the fighting. His father insists that the boy stay home, “The country wants men and you’re only a kid...Your job, son, is to stay home and do your day’s work- go to school, build yourself physically, make a man of yourself.”<sup>64</sup> The story suggests that that boys need to prepare themselves to become the men who will eventually fight. While the message initially appears antiwar, it says that a boy’s duty was to build himself to be a proper man. In the meantime, he could serve in other ways at home. Propaganda thus helped to create a wartime culture for American children militarizing them in the process.<sup>65</sup>

In the *Boys’ Life* story Reddy wanted to prove himself a true man by becoming a soldier. The theme of being a “real man” recurred throughout the wartime propaganda. Going back to the advertisement “Come on Fellers and Fish for Uncle Sam” from *Boys’ Life* May 1918 issue, it instills themes of food conservation but also masculinity. The title

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<sup>63</sup> “Come On Fellers and Fish for Uncle Sam!,” *Boys’ Life* 8, 5 (May 1918), 2.

<sup>64</sup> Hermann Hagedorn, “The Heroic Thing,” *Boys’ Life* 7, 9 (November 1917), 11.

<sup>65</sup> Ross Collins, *Children, War, & Propaganda* (New York Peter Lang Publishing, 2011), xv.

itself gives away the point, to conserve food for soldiers abroad by taking up fishing. If you were a male on the home front your duty was to help conserve food for abroad. Once again Uncle Sam is persuading how people use their free time. “You can fish evenings, mornings, holidays, week-ends, and every spare moment. Just think of the fun...” Everyday actions were dictated to serve Uncle Sam, meaning that a child’s life was to be totally dedicated to the war effort.

Another ad posted in *Scouting* enticed men returning from the war to join the BSA by becoming Scoutmasters, with lines such as “SCOUTING for REAL MEN” and “Red-Blooded Men Needed as Volunteer Scoutmasters.”<sup>66</sup> Another poster announced a call for “Soldiers, Sailors, and Civilians.” The former poster contains a copied letter from the Secretary of War urging men to help Scouting grow. These posters also show how males were bombarded with the notion of militant masculinity. Servicemen and civilians alike were targeted; positioning noncombatants as recruits was a tactic to militarize civilians lives during the war.<sup>67</sup> Terms “red-blooded” or “real men” stimulated patriotic fervor, or as Ronald Schaffer puts it, “drawing up national reservoirs of patriotism.”<sup>68</sup>

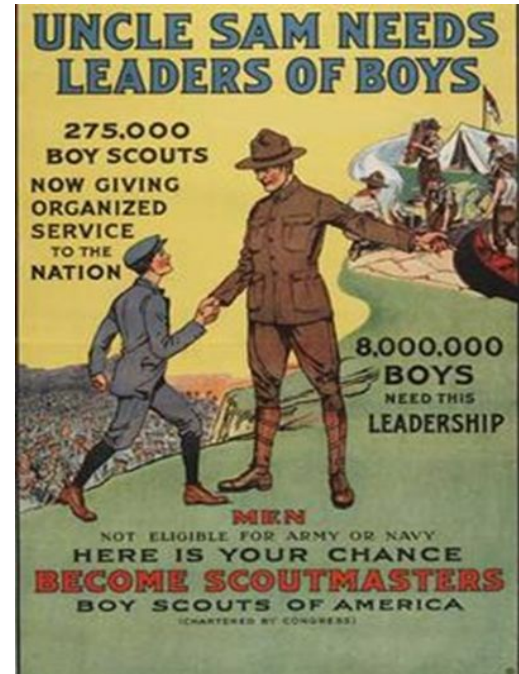
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<sup>66</sup> “How Many of these Posters Will You Use?,” *Scouting* 7, 7 (February 13, 1919), 8.

<sup>67</sup> Celia Kingsbury, *For Home and Country*, 269.

<sup>68</sup> Ronald Schaffer, *America in the Great War: Rise of the War Welfare State* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), xii.





(LEFT): "Scouting for Real Men," *Scouting* Volume 7, Number 10 (March 6, 1919): p.8. (RIGHT): Boy Scouts of America, "Uncle Sam Needs Leaders of Boys," <http://media.digitalpostercollection.com/2015/08/Uncle-Sam-Needs-Leaders-Of-Boys-Become-Scoutmasters.jpg> Accessed: 10/10/2016

One way the State and Scouting drew up on these reservoirs was by enlisting those men unable to serve in the military to aid Scouting efforts. Much of Scouting's local leadership was called upon to serve in the armed forces. New Scoutmasters were needed to replace the vacancies caused by the war. The BSA and even the army recommended to those exempt from military service to help on the home front as being Scoutmasters. It was advertised as, "Working under the Boy Scout program, a man has the opportunity to train and direct the future manhood of the Country in such a way that great good will result."<sup>69</sup> This tactic of getting military trained individuals to join on as Scoutmasters was successful. Scouting Annual Reports from 1917-1919 show a doubling

<sup>69</sup> "An Opportunity to Serve," *Scouting* Volume 5, number 9 (September 1, 1917): page 1.



of Scoutmasters with a military background.<sup>70</sup> The desire to have these men as leaders demonstrates that they were the kind of individual both the BSA and government wanted teaching boys manly values on the home front.

Another byproduct of war stories in children publications was that they created a favorable version of war for children. Segments of popular war stories were published in *Boys' Life* magazine. By doing this, the BSA spread the ideas of ideal war participation. Also the BSA did their bit to promote gender roles during the war by capturing the imagination of their readers. Other editors also embellished their pages with serials and dramatized stories of military men finding adventure and heroism on and off the battlefields.<sup>71</sup>

*Boys' Life* published a recurring segment called "Letters of a Boy Scout in Wartime." One from May 1917 depicts a troop's Scoutmaster going off to war. Although they were without a Scoutmaster, the Scouts understood the situation and declared their intention to run the troop while he was away. "And folks who couldn't go would help in the war just the same by doing what soldiers would be doing if they were home." By doing this the Scouts are stepping up to the mantle of responsibility of being the "men of the house," while others went to the frontlines.

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<sup>70</sup> 1917- 264 *Scouting* Volume 4, number 22 (April 1, 1917): p. 35; 1918- 426 *Scouting* Volume 6, number 8 (April 15, 1918): p. 68; 1919-480 *Scouting* Volume 7, number 20 (May 15, 1919): p.170

<sup>71</sup> Collins, *Children, War, & Propaganda*, 246.

This story wanted scouts to understand that war may be necessary and that they must play a part on the home front. The focus was on the collective whole, as opposed to today's spotlight on individualism. Everyone had to rally to the flag if America were to be victorious, and everyone had to play to their gendered roles. These types of literature promoted child enthusiasm in the war, a popular culture of propaganda to ensure moral and intellectual mobilization of the children. A man was to be out and about aiding in the war effort in any little way.

Popular images and characters captured children's attention to help explain the expectations of children on the home front. In Boys' Life issue from December 1917 lies a two page ad of a popular children's character, Tick-Mouse (during the war Captain Tick-Mouse). The letter was addressed to both boys and girls to "Serve America First" by catching slackers. This advertisement is encouraging children to get out and be part of the war effort. "Will you help us? Will you help us *catch the slackers*? Will you come with me and some real detective work for your uncle Sam? Do this and you'll be helping to win the war!"<sup>72</sup> Incorporating Uncle Sam and Miss Columbia in this piece reaches out to all children, as boys and girls are needed to win the war.

## Conclusion

Stories published in *Boys' Life* stirred young men to rally behind the war. These stories and images created expectations for boys in a warring culture and, more importantly, it made the war acceptable for children. Expectations for males meant they

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<sup>72</sup> "Serve America First: A Letter from Tick-Mouse," *Boys' Life* 7, 10 (December 1917): 2-3.

had to be willing to fight. Every man had a role to play in the war and Scouts became the ideal masculine symbols of home front service. This reputation, established prior to the war, allowed Scouters' communities to recognize that these role models of young men and reinforce the idea of Scouts being manly patriots.

Before seeing Scouting's involvement in the community, it is important to understand what motivated these Scouts. The BSA program pressed upon their members that it was everyone's duty to serve their country, to be a proper man meant to help serve the nation in any way possible. The Boy Scouts would showcase their manhood by getting out and participating in government home front programs. Now that the expectations were set, it was up to thousands of Scouts to spread these ideals themselves and to promote home front service.

## Chapter 2

### Forming a Public Image through Recognition

Messages of patriotism and duty bombarded common citizens on how to participate on the home front. But how else could the government reinforce their war service programs? True having the home front expectations plastered everywhere helped get the message out, but having individuals leading by example presented a stronger way of promoting war service. Therefore it was in the federal government's best interest to highlight the efforts of individuals going over the top on the home front. The Boy Scouts provided such an opportunity to show off young men going above and beyond to help their country win the war. This chapter will examine how federal and public recognitions put Scouting on a pedestal of home front service. These recognitions will range from comments of praise to physically awarding individuals for their efforts. Recognizing Scouts highlighted both government service and examples of model citizens, especially the expectations of men.

The previous chapter featured an analysis of the painting Robert Robinson "His Hero," this era painting captured the essence of boys who dreamed of military glory. Glory and courage were seen as characteristics of the the ideal man. In the painting the boy's reflection shows himself in a military uniform with numerous medals pinned to his chest. Hence the boy fantasizes to be like those in his book "Heroes of History." As the Scout seeks recognition of his deeds it also allows for the government to rally further

participation from the Boy Scouts. Scouts proudly displaying their awards made them stand out as the ideal patrons of the home front efforts, thus promoting further war service.



Robert Robinson, "His Hero," *Liberty* (7/4/1925).

Lightly touching on the previous chapters efforts, the Robinson painting displayed what the ideal man for the period, a heroic warrior. Themes of masculinity dominated early Scouting so it only makes sense that the movement adjust to society's image of masculinity as well. Such an image was ideal for the federal government promoting war service at home. Now the analysis of this painting could end there, but why all the medals on Scout's chest? Should the boy be content with simply being a good soldier doing

one's duty? Images like this one promote the romanticization of war,<sup>73</sup> yet providing incentives allowed the government to present what was expected of the public regarding wartime service.

Many State entities and individuals publically commended Scouts on their service in the war. The BSA eagerly served in the war effort, this lead to the group taking on a variety of tasks. Awards like pins and medals were symbols of a Scout's efforts. Furthermore, by accepting these various wartime responsibilities the BSA gained notoriety from notable figures and the communities the Scouts served. The Great War home front provided ideal conditions for Boy Scouting to be recognized on a national stage, while forming their patriotic identity in the process. Recognizing such model individuals allowed the State to reinforce their war aims on the home front by constantly reminding the public of contributors doing their bit. The recognition placed upon Scouting demonstrated how these young men were utilized as examples of home front service.

Historians have tackled the difficult undertaking the federal government undertook during the Great War of corralling support for the war effort. How was the government to motivate a divided populace? Ronald Schaffer stated how the best way in influencing Americans was by providing everyone with a stake in National Security, in order to create a united home front.<sup>74</sup> Once again, everyone had a bit to play on the home front. In order to tap into Americans sense of patriotism the government chose to

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<sup>73</sup> James Alan Marten, *Children and War: A Historical Anthology* (New York: New York University Press, 2002), 118.

<sup>74</sup> Ronald Schaffer, *America in the Great War: The Rise of the War Welfare State* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 217.

motivate through incentives rather than entirely on punishment.<sup>75</sup> Under such tense conditions government agencies were willing to work with cooperating groups, such as the BSA, to achieve their war aims; furthermore by taking this approach the participating organizations also benefitted themselves. Historian James Abrahamson also asserted that groups used the wartime government to advance their own interests.<sup>76</sup>

The government understood the situation and made efforts to incentivize citizens and groups to participate in the war. For example, Liberty Bonds provided a form of incentive as they promised interest for investors. It was in American Scouting's best interests to utilize the government to build legitimacy to their young movement. BSA membership grew exponentially during the war. Part of this growth came from war programs that recognized those who came to their country's call of duty.

Achievement and recognition are key features in the Scouting movement. Government agencies utilized this concept by awarding individuals who participated in wartime services. During the war Scouts were issued special insignias, awards, and medals for active participation in war service projects,<sup>77</sup> some presented by the National Scouting leadership and others through government agencies. In this chapter, acknowledgement of one's good deeds enticed and encouraged war service participation, the government's mobilization children's senses linked new ways of being patriotic.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Schaffer, *America in the Great War*, xii.

<sup>76</sup> James L. Abrahamson, *The American Home Front: Revolutionary War, Civil War, World War I, World War II* (Washington D.C.: National Defense University Press, 1983), 87.

<sup>77</sup> Mitch Reis, *The Boy Scouts of America During World War I & II* (Windsor: Mitchell E. Reis, 1984), 74.

<sup>78</sup> Robert N. Gross, "'Lick a Stamp, Lick the Kaiser': Sensing the Federal Government in Children's Lives during World War I," *Journal of Social History* 46, 4 (Summer 2013): 983-984.

The State tapping into BSA's program provided an opportunity to to use these young men to assist on vital war work, while promoting an image of ideal war service to the public.

### **Federal Recognition**

American Scouting's first bit of federal recognition came in the form of a Federal Charter in 1916. Federal recognition was something the BSA sought since the beginning; it would legitimize the program's footing and claim over other boys movements. The previous chapter mentions how the BSA balanced its military identity to create broader appeal for the program. Appeasing both sides was also essential in securing a federal charter. To secure the charter the national BSA leadership lobbied for support. William D. Boyce, one of the founders of US Scouting, lobbied to multiple congressmen in 1910 for a federal charter.<sup>79</sup> The next six years of debate were fraught with obstacles from various congressmen, whose primary issue in recognizing Scouting was due to the militaristic ideals instilled in the movement. Over time, more were swayed over and the final report on the matter stated, "their [BSA] training as an auxiliary force in the maintenance of public order...providing first-aid and practical assistance in times of great public emergencies."<sup>80</sup>

Although issued before America's entry into conflict, this document plays a valuable role in the development of early Scouting. The most important effect was the BSA's monopoly on the terms "Boy Scout" and "Scouting."<sup>81</sup> The Boy Scouts became

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<sup>79</sup> David Scott & Brendan Murphy, *The Scouting Party: Pioneering and Preservation, Progressivism and Preparedness in the Making of the Boy Scouts of America* (Dallas: Red Honor Press, 2010), 96-97.

<sup>80</sup> House of Representatives, 64th Congress, 1st Session, Report No. 130, February 7, 1916.

<sup>81</sup> Scott & Murphy, *The Scouting Party*, 169.



the sole group leading the Scouting movement in America; allowing the spotlight to be fixed on them later on. Officials saw the potential these well trained boys could have in times of tribulation which were just around the corner. Furthermore, Scouting volunteers bolstered their resolve, thanks to this federal recognition. They felt like they were providing direct service to the nation itself.<sup>82</sup> Their renewed vigor showed when only months later America called upon their people to set up and take on wartime responsibilities.

When the war came to the US, the BSA was ready with a plan of participation the day after Congress's declaration of war. Scouts were to coordinate with government and other agencies to aid in the war. Notable government figures, like the president, the secretary of treasury, and the secretary of war took time to thank the Boy Scouts' efforts; even state governors increased their notes of support due the increase of Scouting service nationwide.<sup>83</sup> President Woodrow Wilson maintained correspondence with BSA president Colin Livingston during the war, copies which were then published in both *Scouting* and *Boys' Life*. In one excerpt Wilson expresses themes of gratitude and motivation:

"I beg every member of the Boy Scouts of America to realize the service rendered by the boys had been greatly appreciated by the whole Nation and that not only the officials of the Treasury and of the various Liberty Loan Committees are looking to them for effective work in the Fourth Campaign, but that the whole

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<sup>82</sup> Benjamin R. Jordan, *Modern Manhood and the Boy Scouts of America: Citizenship, Race, and the Environment, 1910-1930* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016), 28.

<sup>83</sup> Jordan, *Modern Manhood and the Boy Scouts of America*, 111.

country, which is already proud of them, expects it. There is no better way in which they can show their desire to help win the war.”<sup>84</sup>

Here the president communicates the government’s need for the Scouts work, and that they are examples of service to the country. While the president is grateful, he still expects more in the upcoming liberty loan campaign. The push to do more showed Scouts getting out into their communities and effectively supporting the war. Therefore, Wilson saw Scouts as an effective means of supporting the war by expressing his pride in what they accomplished. The government used the Boy Scouts as ideal symbols of wartime commitment by placing more jobs upon the organization throughout the course of the war, thus pushing more Scouts into their communities.

Scouting media printed frequent images featuring Uncle Sam with Boy Scouts. The most frequent of these images was Uncle Sam personally thanking a Scout for this work. These images usually show a simple handshake between Uncle Sam and a Scout. One such example from July 1918 contained the caption: “U.S. and Son: Partners.”<sup>85</sup> It appears this title suggests the government and Scouts are equals, both were equally vital to America’s war success.

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<sup>84</sup> Woodrow Wilson, “White House Correspondence with Mr. Livingston,” August 23, 1918.

<sup>85</sup> Charles Dana Gibson, “U.S. and Son: Partners,” *Boys’ Life* 8, 7 (July 1918): 3.



Charles Dana Gibson, "U.S. and Son: Partners," *Boys' Life* Volume 8, Number 7 (July 1918): p. 3.

President Wilson recognized specific units for their Liberty Loan sales. He presented a flag to a troop from each state who had the highest bond sales. Although this trend only occurred for the second and third Liberty Loan campaigns, the president is still making time and effort to thank these troops. *Boys' Life* printed a list of these units on both occasions, by posting this information was designed to inspire pride in the program and also motivate those seeking recognition. These efforts note how acclaimed Scouting was to high ranking officials.

Wilson and others so highly respected the BSA that the president awarded the Scouts' service after the war. On May 1, 1919 Wilson issued a proclamation declaring the week of June 8-14 as Boy Scout Week. He announces the government's appreciation for

what the BSA wartime accomplishments. “THE BOY SCOUT MOVEMENT should not only be preserved, but strengthened. It deserves the support of all public-spirited citizens.”<sup>86</sup> He further declares the BSA had done a fine job up until this point with a small portion of boys (ages 12-18). In 1919 there were around 375,000 Scouts in a nation with 10 million Scouting age boys.<sup>87</sup> This was the highlight of governmental recognition during early Scouting. It caps off Scouting’s great undertaking, the First World War. To Scouting the war brought legitimacy from the federal government.

### **Public Recognition**

Not only were Scouts recognized by State figures, but the public also saw a devoted group of young men serving their country. Some printed media during the war pictured Scouts as heroes on the actual battlefield, and through such heroic actions they are properly recognized. Historian Paul Holsinger’s study showed how Scouting dime novels capitalized on the romanticism and popularity of the movement. During the war these dime novels depict Scouts performing heroic deeds, and even partaking in the fighting.<sup>88</sup> Notable figures from the war stories would award these Scouts. Recognition was received from generals from all major Allied powers. At times Scouts even helped the Germans, though they were never presented with their medals, such as the Iron Cross.

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<sup>86</sup> Woodrow Wilson, “By the President of the United States A Proclamation” May 1, 1919.

<sup>87</sup> It does not seem this promotion had any effect. The total number of Scouts dips in 1919, though this number bounces back a year later. Though it is difficult to get an accurate picture of Scouting’s early numbers due to the flux of Scouts that drop out each year, a problem that still exists.

<sup>88</sup> It is worthy to note that these stories were published without BSA approval, these tales were the work of the authors’ imaginations. The BSA believed the Scouts’ place was serving the home front.

<sup>89</sup> Paul Holsinger, “Down with the Kaiser and Up with the Flag: Or, How the Boy Scouts of America Won the First World War,” *Dime Novel Round-Up* 58, 3 (1989): 39.

Holsinger found that were some 40 full-length novels featured Scouts in war-related activities.<sup>90</sup> The authors presented Scouts as being in the thick of the action. These tales contained acts of valor as the Scouts physically participated in the fighting. These books demonstrated the impressions young boys consumed about the war and the perceptions of the early BSA. Similar to the BSA's stance on the war prior America's involvement, discussed in the last chapter, these novels presented a trend of Scouts starting neutral but ultimately swinging into full opposition against the Kaiser and his terrible Huns.<sup>91</sup> A similar transition also occurred with Scouts being on the battlefield, but with the onset of American involvement more stories depicted these fictional Scouts that "went on rampages" against the enemy.<sup>92</sup> Fictional Scout stories not always glorified the war itself,<sup>93</sup> but they praised the Scouts' efforts in winning the war.

*Boys' Life* short stories, when compared to the dime novels, illuminated a more quiet sense of recognition. Scouts performed patriotic duties because they were pleased to do so, something the BSA national office exemplified themselves upon the US entrance into WWI. "The Young Patriot" depicted a Scout reciting the "Gettysburg Address" as part of his town's Independence Day celebration. The young Scout performed this task not for public praise, but to instill patriotic pride in his father. For the Scout, having the two of them honor the American flag at the end of the festivities was reward enough.<sup>94</sup> Unlike military action tales that rewarded Scouts for daring feats, stories in *Boys' Life*

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<sup>90</sup> Holsinger, "Down with the Kaiser and Up with the Flag," 36.

<sup>91</sup> Holsinger, "Down with the Kaiser and Up with the Flag," 38.

<sup>92</sup> David I. Macleod, *Building Character in the American Boy: The Boy Scouts, YMCA, and Their Forerunners, 1870-1920* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1983), 173.

<sup>93</sup> Holsinger, "Down with the Kaiser and Up with the Flag," 40.

<sup>94</sup> Michael V. Simko, "The Little Patriot," *Boys' Life* 7, 2 (July 1917): 42.

recognized Scouts for being patriotic without the expectation of reward. The national office wanted Scouts to perform home front services cheerfully and willingly, and throughout the war *Boys' Life* propagated the need to serve through various means. This example sought to get Scouts out into their communities and get their efforts recognized. Scouts interacted with their respective communities on behalf of the government by participating in home front efforts. The war service programs allowed for visibility of Scouts at work promoting America's role in the war.

Scouts seen in public aiding in the war effort put attention on the program. Short stories and articles published in *Boys' Life* during the war gave a glimpse of boys performing heroic feats, but geared more toward cheerful home front service, the manner more comfortable with the national office. In various issues of *Boys' Life* throughout the war a piece titled "Official News: What Every Scout want to Know" presented news on Scouting war efforts from the Chief Scout Executive James West. These recurring articles mainly informed Scouts about achievements made in Scouting during the war. The highlights of these articles recognize troops and individual Scouts who achieved above and beyond in various war service projects. Names, sale numbers, and even pictures of the Scouts were presented. By presenting all this information perhaps it encouraged Scouts to push themselves to sell more bonds.

The April 1918 issue presented liberty bond collections of Scouts in their cities and states in a well organized fashion. Similarly, newspapers across the country also presented numbers of state and city contributions. One such *New York Times* article gave the liberty bond sale numbers of major cities and comments on those achieving and those

lacking. “Detroit went over her maximum quota of \$43,000,000 today, taking first honors for a major league city...Other than the Atlanta district, certain sections of the St. Louis and Dallas districts are making the poorest showings.”<sup>95</sup> This is another example of dual use of public shaming and recognition.

The same could be said about the BSA showing their bond drive standings to all Scouts; recognizing one’s contributions has the ability to inspire further efforts. The same April issue of *Boys’ Life* encouraged Scouts to reinvigorate efforts stating, “Hearty congratulations to all of the winners and earnest wishes that all of the losers as well as the winners will do even better next time!”<sup>96</sup> The passage recognized both winners and losers, but gave extra encouragement to losers to keep pace with Scouts excelling with bond sales. The idea behind this message was to get Scouts more involved in the war effort, leading them to be a more frequent sight in local communities.

The Boy Scouts made the headlines multiple time usually exemplifying their services on the home front. Their efforts in Liberty Bond campaigns were presented as a means of recognizing how these young men were truly making a difference. The Boy Scouts had a reputation of being “gleaners after the reapers.”<sup>97</sup> Major newspapers remarked of Scouts’ abilities to find those who had been skimmed over in the initial sweeps. The public read of Scouting’s efforts, and this created another chance for individuals to hear how Scouting was supporting the war. *The New York Times* recounted the amazement of Scouting’s tenacity in the First Liberty Loan drive:

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<sup>95</sup> “Loan Drive Near 2 Billions on Eve of the Final Week,” *The New York Times* (October 21, 1917): 1.

<sup>96</sup> James E. West, “War Work of the Boy Scouts,” *Boys Life* 8, 4 (April 1918): 26.

<sup>97</sup> William Murray, *The History of the Boy Scouts of America* (New York: Boy Scouts of America, 1937): 108.

“More than \$17,000,000 bonds were subscribed - and in great part from the tin can savings banks in the cellar, the hole behind the brick in the chimney, the asset of the weekly wage envelope, the little hoard in the savings bank and, and other such small resources of capital.”<sup>98</sup> Numerous stories like this one wrote of the Boy Scouts’ ability to get bond buyers to spare the little they had for the war effort.

The previous article showed a glorification of Scouting's gleanings, but there differing language existed in the media over the same deeds. The *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* depicted Scouts as bond hunters:

“St. Louis Boy Scouts have wig wagged the Liberty Loan organization not to be concerned over the seeming indifference of St. Louis to its failure to reach its quota...Boy Scouts to scurry for the four corners of the city on a slacker hunt...and smoke out every St. Louisan to show an order for a bond or reason why.”<sup>99</sup>

Both articles convey the same message, that slackers existed on the home front, yet the Scouts were able to find the final holdouts. These articles garnered public approval of Scouting’s efforts. Their gleanings ability was particularly noteworthy as adult bond sellers were unable to reach these certain individuals that the Scouts procured. Scouts extraordinary gleanings efforts were perfectly displayed in a cartoon on the back cover of *Scouting* in April 1918. As Uncle Sam collects numerous subscriptions on top his wagon, a Scout tries to help with the main effort. The boy’s Scoutmaster reminds him that his place is with the other Scouts collecting from the forgotten corner. This image

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<sup>98</sup> Mortimer L. Schiff, “American Boy Scouts as Bond Sellers,” *The New York Times* (June 24, 1917): 1.

<sup>99</sup> “4500 Boy Scouts Here Open Drive for Liberty Loan: Campaign Plans Include Canvass to Smoke Out All in City Who Have Not Bought Bonds,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* (April 28, 1918): 9B.



demonstrated Scouts' success with bond sales; while their best feat was the ability to reach untapped sources of revenue, they also had a knack to effectively sell the war to others.

Having an understanding of where Scouting's sales were most effective demonstrated who these Scouts were reaching out to. Numbers provided in both *Boys' Life* and *Scouting* showed how effective sales were in major cities. In the First Liberty Loan Campaign Scouts from Cleveland, Ohio led the way selling \$1,182,100 of bonds. New York sold \$575,250, Boston managed \$410,750, while St. Louis raked in \$391,050.

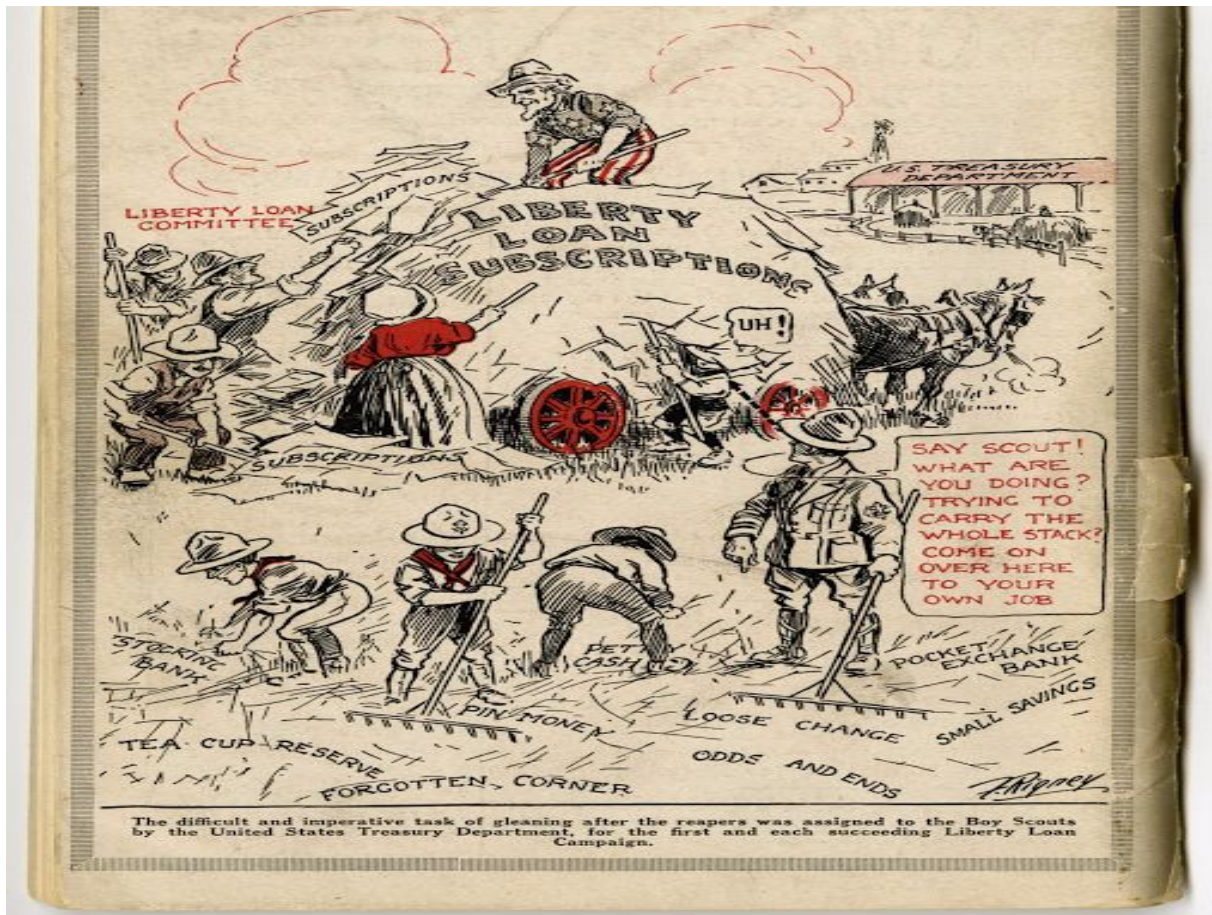
<sup>100</sup> All these cities had significant German and Irish populations demonstrating that Scouts were effective in urban areas with greater resistance. The numbers posted about the Second Liberty Loan drive yielded greater results: St. Louis Scouts led with \$5,098,850; New York had \$1,329,650; Boston \$1,201,250; and Cleveland with \$1,712,050.<sup>101</sup> Some 10,000 subscriptions represent these figures for the first loan drive, while about 45,000 subscriptions sold in the second.

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<sup>100</sup> "The Banner City in Each State," *Scouting* 5, 11 (October 1, 1917): 3.

<sup>101</sup> James E. West, "Wark Work of the Boy Scouts," *Boys' Life* 8, 4 (April 1918): 27.

*Scouting* Volume 6, Number 8 (April 15, 1918): Back Cover.



## Medals

Military medals have been a tradition in the US military since the Revolutionary War. The Scouting movement with its military identity also uses medals as recognition. Scouting's efforts on the home front can be seen in the same light. There is meaning behind each medal, as they came to represent one's commitment to the war effort.

Displaying these on one's chest showed great pride in his work, but it can also suggest to the viewer that he can do more to help.

These home front medals represented what each Scout contributed to the war effort. The primary medals awarded to Scouts during the war dealt with selling bonds or War Saving stamps or Victory Gardening. Time and effort went into each award and the Scout exerted some form of sacrifice for the war. During parades and canvassing efforts in neighborhoods, Scouts wore their service medals. In a way medals act as both shaming and recognition tools of propaganda. A shaming message would look like, "look what this Scout has done for the war" which may be more than the viewer's contributions. On the other hand they demonstrate one's patriotic pride, their willingness to complete these tasks shows one's love for their country.

WWI propaganda utilized tools like shaming or bullying to coerce its audience. "When Johnny Comes Marching Home Again" presents an example of shaming to stir boys with Americanism. Medals, patches, and other forms of achievement are common place in the Scouting movement. This image uses that familiar feature to shame those not doing more for their country. The image consists of a victory parade for US doughboys. Everyone in the picture has a medal pinned to their chest except for one Scout. One soldier recognizes this which follows with the caption "What's the matter Scout. Weren't you in this War?"<sup>102</sup> The lone, medal-less Scout has his head sunk in sorrow.

This image dives into a new set of questions dealing with Scouting on the American home front. How did symbols of recognition, such as medals, create links

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<sup>102</sup> *Scouting* 6,9 (May 1, 1918), 23.

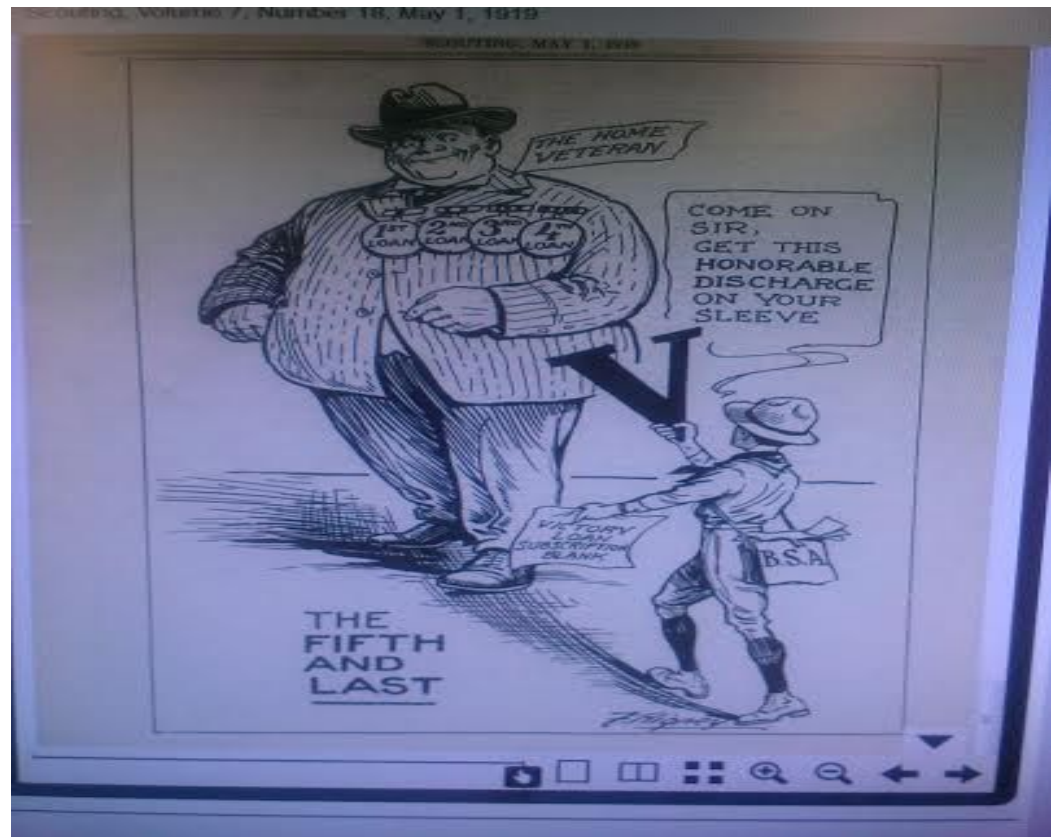
between Scouting and the government? We begin to see how the the federal government used Scouting to interact and potentially influence individuals on a local level. Many medals were presented by the Department of the Treasury, Agriculture, and the National War Savings Committee.



*Scouting* Volume 6, Number 9 (May 1, 1918): p. 23

“The Fifth and Last” cartoon continues to delve into another aspect of this propaganda machine: recognition of one’s war efforts. There were a total of five Liberty Loan Campaigns, the fifth known as the Victory Loan Drive. Figure 2 posted in *Scouting* magazine presents a Scout offering another liberty loan to a the “Home Front Veteran.” On his chest he displays all four Liberty Loan medals. The scout offers him the chance to

complete his collection with one last medal. This image demonstrates the power of recognition has over some people.



“Ninth Annual Report,” *Scouting* Volume 7, Number 20 (May 15, 1919); p. 108.

These images represent dual methods which present their respective audiences with a single message, there was always something more one could do on the home front. Earning and displaying an award becomes a means of propaganda. Edward Bernay, a member of the Committee on Public Information, believed propaganda to act as an “invisible government.”<sup>103</sup> Taking this idea, medals act as an invisible hand of the government to Scouting, as they are made possible through government-backed activities.

<sup>103</sup> Edward L. Bernays, *Propaganda* (New York: Horace Liveright, 1928), 9

Publicly showing one's patriotism demonstrates success on the American home front. In this manner anyone could look at an individual, in this case a Scout, and see what they contributed to the war effort. The BSA catapulted itself to new heights due to the great deal of praise received during the war.

A total of 13,231 Ace Medals were awarded by the end of the war. To achieve this medal a Scout had to sell at least 25 subscriptions of War Stamps totaling \$250. A Scout continued this work by receiving bronze, silver, and gold palms to add to the medal. Doing so meant they went above what was minimally required; one earned bronze for selling an extra \$100, silver was an extra \$1000, and for gold the Scout had to sell \$5000. These incentives produced the following results: 40,000 bronze, 2516 silver, and 416 gold palms earned throughout the war. These numbers show the commitment from Scouts to sell stamps, but also the desire to continue and push for greater achievement. Around 2,189,417 war stamp subscriptions were sold.<sup>104</sup> Although a relatively small organization at the time, the Boy Scouts certainly had the ability to reach out to millions throughout their communities.

Another common medal was the Treasury Medal. Similar to the Ace Medals there was a chance to build upon a Scout's initial achievement. The medal was given to each Scout who sold ten or more Liberty Bonds. Bars were added to the medal for every ten bonds the Scout sold in other bond campaigns. Over 75,000 medals and about 35,000 bars were earned throughout the five Liberty Loan Campaigns. This brass medal reads "Every Scout to Save a Soldier" on the front, promoting a strong sense of patriotic duty.

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<sup>104</sup> Though many of these subscriptions were likely sold to repeat patrons.

These Scouts were aiding soldiers abroad, therefore anyone who helped a Scout helped the war effort. The reverse side of the medal reads “Presented on Behalf of the U.S. Treasury Department for Service in the Liberty Loan Campaign.” A blank space provides the Scout to etch his own name on the medal, recognizing the the individual and their contribution to war service. The Scout’s name is also literally linked to this government agency as it appears next to each other. Furthermore, the government recognized the efforts of these Scouts.

The Treasury Medal gives another demonstration of recognition from the US government. The sheer number of medals awarded show how much the government invested in Scouts by taking the time to produce the medals and bars. The high medal count also tells a tale of tremendous activity from the Boy Scouts. At least 75,000 Scouts sold more than ten Liberty bonds who could then display their achievement for others to see. Furthermore it represents, like the Ace Medals, how successful Scouting was at reaching out to the community and getting millions to support the war.

Great efforts were made to encourage the boys to participate in all these programs via *Scouting* and *Boys’ Life*. Much emphasis was put on earning medals from war services. These programs were being promoted so much that some Scoutmasters worried that regular programs were being crowded out by the war programs.<sup>105</sup> In a July 1918 issue of *Scouting* one article piece explains that Ace Medals were to be presented in a “public ceremony with a view of stimulating interest.”<sup>106</sup> On the same page is an image of a “service box” and a “slacker box.” The Service Box contains multiple files about Ace

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<sup>105</sup> Macleod, *Building Character in the American Boy*, 181.

<sup>106</sup> “1,200,000 W.S.S. Cards Received at National Headquarters Where are the Other 11,800,000?,” *Scouting* 6, 14 (July 15, 1918): 3.



Medals. These two pieces of information combined show the BSA National Headquarters wanted Scouts' efforts presented to the community demonstrating their role to help with the war.

Court of Honor ceremonies are designed to recognize Scouts individual achievements. Normally their troop and family members gather for the award recognition. So when the National Council clearly requests "public ceremonies" for the presentations, it is interesting that they ask for this parameter for an already public ceremony. Many of these war service medals were sponsored by government agencies, therefore the boys' achievements were possible due to government sponsored programs, so these boys were awarded for government work. When these medals were worn in public it showed their support given to the government.

Medals are utilized as symbols for many things. Here they served as a means to demonstrating one's patriotism, but also to incentivize these young men into further service. One *Boys' Life* article read, "Will you have a War Emblem to wear beside your Scout badge?"<sup>107</sup> Constant reminders of how Scouts could help served as a way to get them out into their communities, thus earning various achievements. In addition this allowed for other opportunities for their actions to be seen and felt by community members.

## **Conclusion**

There were various types of recognition in *Boys' Life* and newspapers, along with federal officials illustrating Boy Scouts as the ideal home front patrons. From this, lofty

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<sup>107</sup> The Second Phase of the War: The Trenches Have Been Established- Defend Them!," *Boys' Life* 7, 2 (June 1917): 34.



platform, the BSA became well recognized within their communities, in particular as patriots willingly accepting tasks from Uncle Sam. The norm the government wished to reinforce was that everyone had a bit to play in the war. The Boy Scouts demonstrated how they lived up to the expectations of militant masculinity. Highlighting the BSA's service through recognition promotes participation from more individuals.

Examples of militant masculinity could now be broadcasted to the home front thanks to the Scouts. When the media and government placed exclusive attention upon the Boy Scouts' efforts, it becomes propaganda as it exemplified model citizenship. In order to keep the home front functioning, there needed to be numerous volunteers supporting the war effort. The Boy Scouts became examples of ideal home front patrons, and then were perceived as model of manly behavior on the home front to the public through these varying forms of recognition.

## Chapter 3

### Actions Speak Louder than Words

The many war programs established by federal agencies put the Boy Scouts in a position to lead by example. Their example, set by the federal government, showed that the two supported the same message: a need for strong participation on the home front. This chapter will examine the actions these Scouts performed; and how these actions not only supported the war with resources, but added more advocates to the war effort from their communities. Children were targets of propaganda encouraging them to participate in wartime activities in their communities. Historians, like Celia Kingsbury, believe, “Children were thus recruited, with the hope that they would not only become warlike themselves but would pressure their parents to do the same, thereby becoming an important part of the propaganda machine.”<sup>108</sup> Therefore, Scouts became a way for wartime expectations to reach deep into their communities.

BSA members’ activeness during the war lead to another type of propaganda, propaganda through one’s involvement. Their actions were exemplified last chapter, now how did the Scouts themselves stack up as propaganda? Scouts actively participating on the home front helped to support the war by reinforcing wartime expectations with their presence in their communities, by leading by example, reminding everyone of the importance federal officials placed on all home front endeavors. Furthermore, by seeing a

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<sup>108</sup> Kingsbury, *For Home and Country: World War I Propaganda on the Home Front* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2010), 171.

young person doing more for the war effort, than say an adult or even other children, it resonates a quite shaming that some propaganda possesses.

Prior to the war, American public life at home was organized by voluntary associations; they provided social services, regulated economics, policed crime, and managed community norms.<sup>109</sup> The US government believed the best way to promote the war was by working through these voluntary groups. This cooperative established a link between the federal government and local communities. The Boy Scouts became a perfect means of reaching out into communities across the country. The government now had a way to spread support across the country, and driving this cooperation was the use of propaganda. By examining Scouters (youth and adult participants) and their part in the American WWI home front, one sees that they represent a microcosm of wartime expectations of both children and adults. No matter one's age, everyone had a role to play on the home front. There were numerous ways individuals could contribute whether it be big or small. Scouters voluntarily took on every task the federal government asked of them. This was ideal as US officials needed a culture of volunteerism at home, as many sacrifices were to be asked of the American people during the war.

Although Scouts participated in many WWI activities, three will be focused upon in this chapter. The specific roles of selling Liberty Bonds, gardening for victory, and acting as government dispatchers of American propaganda demonstrate not only the essential role Scouting had on the home front, which I discussed in the previous chapter,

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<sup>109</sup> Christopher Capozzola, *Uncle Sam Wants You: World War I and the Making of the Modern American Citizen* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 7.

but how Scouts spread the ideals of home front participation to society set by the federal government.

### **War Salesmen**

A major challenge in running any war is paying for it. Secretary of the Treasury William Gibbs McAdoo found that it was necessary to build relations with all kinds of investors, especially among with middle and working class.<sup>110</sup> He also saw that European nations “noisy drives” to sell bonds to their citizens, and drew inspiration there to flood the American people with the Liberty Loan drives. Coordinating with the Committee on Public Information, propaganda operations aimed to promote “patriotic rather than commercial motives.”<sup>111</sup> This was how the CPI sold the war, as a valid means of accomplishing the nation’s need to “draw up the national reserves of patriotism.”<sup>112</sup> The CPI’s goal was to get Americans to buy into the war, both emotionally and financially.

The BSA’s national office immediately leapt into the voluntary spirit the State needed. The day after war was declared, the National Council assembled a plan of action for how Scouters were to help in the war effort. Initially Scouts were to assist with planting victory gardens with coordination through the Department of Agriculture, help with Red Cross efforts, and aid the Navy Department with surveying the American coastline.<sup>113</sup> Right from the start the BSA was in cooperation with government agencies.

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<sup>110</sup> Sung Won Kang & Hugh Rockoff, “Capitalizing patriotism: the Liberty Loans of World War I,” *Financial History Review* 22, 6 (January 2006): 45. McAdoo noticed in the Civil war that private firms succeed in selling bonds to the middle class.

<sup>111</sup> James J. Kimble, *Mobilizing the Home Front: War Bonds and Domestic Propaganda* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2006), 4.

<sup>112</sup> Schaffer, *America in the Great War*, xii.

<sup>113</sup> William Murray, *The History of the Boy Scouts of America* (New York: Boy Scouts of America, 1937), 105.

Soon Scouter's services would expand to other government offices, in this instance the Department of the Treasury. Prior to the First Liberty Loan Campaign members of the Treasury Department were in contact with numerous organizations to help in the major undertaking, including the BSA. The BSA was called upon by President Woodrow Wilson to aid the Treasury Department:

“It will be most gratifying to me as Honorary President of the Boy Scouts of America to have the Boy Scouts, their Scoutmasters and leaders throughout the United States lend their aid to the Secretary of the Treasury in distributing subscription applications and securing popular subscriptions to the Liberty Loan. This will give every Scout a wonderful opportunity to do his share for his country under the slogan ‘Every Scout to save a Soldier.’ I feel sure this request will find unanimous and enthusiastic response from Boy Scouts everywhere.”<sup>114</sup>

Throughout the war the president sent correspondence like this to BSA's President Colin Livingstone. This letter from President Wilson is one example of an attempt to mobilize the American people. He uses his titles, both President of the US and honorary president of the BSA, as a means to promote war work thus linking the government and the Scouts. As Schaffer put it, in an attempt to influence how Americans felt on threats to the nation the government provided everyone a stake in national security.<sup>115</sup> Furthermore, the president was appealing to the BSA's message and offered a

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<sup>114</sup> Woodrow Wilson, “White House Correspondence with Mr. Livingstone,” *Scouting* 6, 8 (April 15, 1918), 25.

<sup>115</sup> Schaffer, *America in the Great War*, 217.

chance to do some good in the community and for the war effort. This letter is a piece of propaganda, through targeting a specific audience, Scouters, to do their patriotic duty.

Perhaps the most successful service Scouters performed was their sale of Liberty Bonds. Scouts were given only four days to sell bonds during the First Liberty Loan Campaign, while adult salesmen were allowed to thoroughly reach out to buyers before Scouters were unleashed. Regardless of this handicap they would surpass all expectations. In four days' time Scouts raised \$23,238,250 during the first campaign in a house to house canvassing effort.<sup>116</sup> This house to house canvassing technique sold the war in two ways: first, door to door salesmanship was literally generating money for the war; and second the individual contact was selling support for the war. Scouts prided themselves in selling bonds to those who were skipped over, which earned them the nickname "gleaners after the reapers."<sup>117</sup>

Scouts were notorious for selling multiple bonds to repeat buyers. *Boys' Life* published the experience of one Scoutmaster who advised boys "DO NOT FAIL TO RETURN FOR REPEAT ORDERS." He demonstrated his point stating, "I took orders in excess of \$7000 after having been over the same ground at least twice before, and this in a little more than a city block."<sup>118</sup> It also appeared that scouts had a knack for what the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* called a "slacker hunt."<sup>119</sup> Newspapers nationwide, like the

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<sup>116</sup> Murray, *The History of the Boy Scouts of America*, 108.

<sup>117</sup> Murray, *The History of the Boy Scouts of America*, 106.

<sup>118</sup> Edward Hodgson, "Official News What Every Scout Wants to Know," ed. James E. West, *Boys' Life* 8, 8 (August 1918): 26.

<sup>119</sup> "4500 BOY SCOUTS HERE OPEN DRIVE FOR LIBERTY LOAN", *St. Louis Post - Dispatch* (1879-1922); Apr 28, 1918; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, pg. 9B

*Post-Dispatch* and *New York Times*, recounted the efforts of these boys and were astounded by the millions of dollars they raised in a short period of time. This kind of media attention shows how well Scouts were received in their communities. Scout troops are associated with local churches, schools, or community centers so it is easy to see how Scouts could sell multiple bonds to their friends and neighbors. Furthermore, by seeing this well organized, uniformed group in their communities created a reminding presence of the war effort around them. This consistency made the BSA a fixture of the home front efforts.

Scouts carried with them bond applications on their door-to-door campaign. This 11" X 17" double-sided document presented a message of grave urgency. The front side of the First Liberty Loan application blares a sense of urgency to the reader with the headline "HELP! Our Country Calls HELP!" The mixing of bolded words continues throughout the front page with these particular phrases:

"Our country is at War-you know that. How can we win-do you know that? Men and Money! Men are coming. Your bit is money. Not a gift- A LOAN. Your Government cannot protect you without CASH... Make your patriotism count double by acting NOW... BUY A LIBERTY BOND TODAY and your neighbors will follow your example. IF YOU REFUSE, nobody can take your place. Success depends upon what YOU DO NOW."<sup>120</sup>

This message would not be complete without a striking image to drive it home. If the words above were not strong enough to sway potential buyers, then this image was there

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<sup>120</sup> Boy Scouts of America, "Liberty Loan Application", June 11-14, 1917.

for extra encouragement. Uncle Sam stands in between a war torn France and the US home front, rallying citizens to purchase liberty bonds. Under the French flag women and children cry out for aid, while being surrounded by fallen soldiers. Uncle Sam gives them support through the generous American men, women, and children donors.

The whole front page of the Boy Scouts First Liberty Loan application acts as propaganda. Emphasis is given to certain phrases, urging participation in the war effort. The image completes the message. It portrayed that numerous Americans, young and old, men and women, were eager to help by buying bonds. This image displayed children in the role of victims and participants. Historians notice this feature throughout WWI propaganda: children being displayed as targets, but also wanted to show they accepted the war effort enthusiastically.<sup>121</sup> The universal language in this application suggests that anyone could help with the war, the feature image supports this idea as it is a mixture of individuals coming to Uncle Sam's call. However it also serves as an example of the quite shaming that existed during the war. Historians have noted that fear of public shame drove many Americans to take out bank loans to buy more liberty bonds.<sup>122</sup>

The BSA drafted their first campaign's sales application, and then submitted it for approval through the Treasury Department, who in turn took the draft to the Government Printing Office for mass reproduction of the document.<sup>123</sup> The government's investment in the Boy Scouts in this manner demonstrated a cooperative relationship. This was a joint effort as the State provided the Scouts with the means to carry out the the sales

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<sup>121</sup> James A. Marten, *Children and War: A Historical Anthology* (New York: New York University Press, 2002), 4.

<sup>122</sup> Kimble, *Mobilizing the Home Front*. 17.

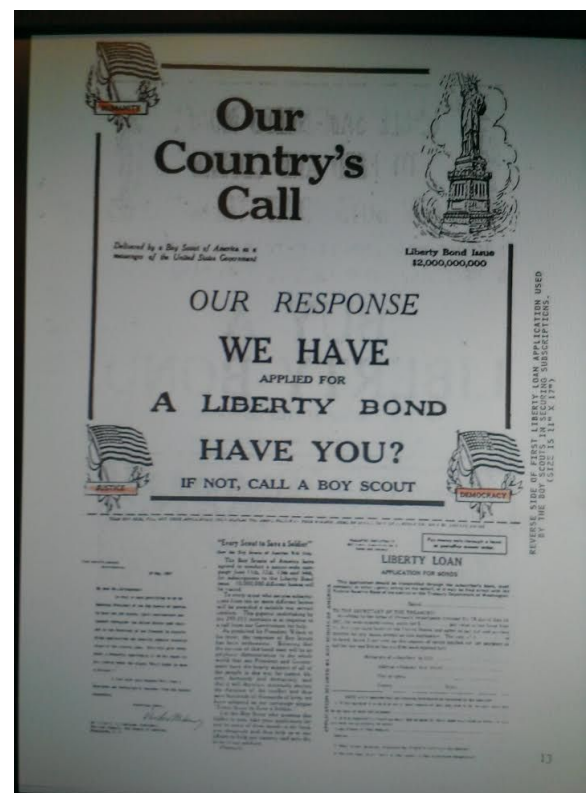
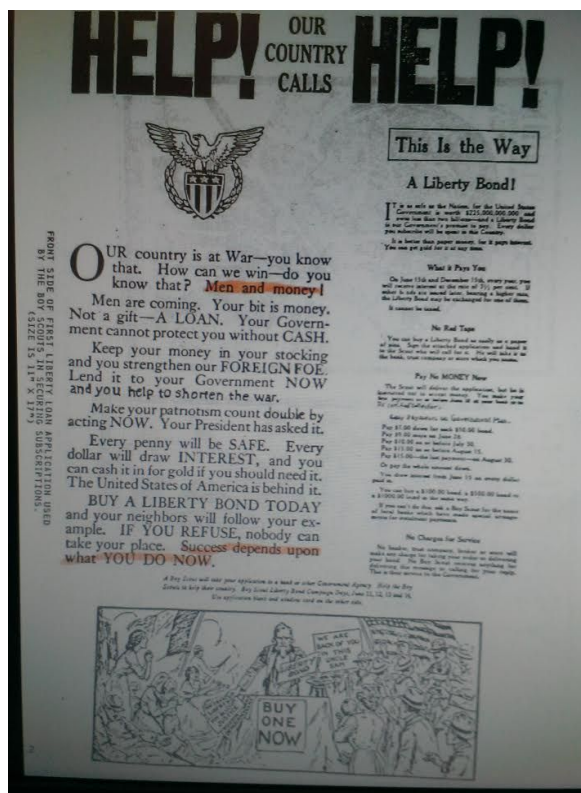
<sup>123</sup> Murray, *The History of the Boy Scouts of America*, 107.



campaign, allowing them to sell and promote the war effort for the Department of the Treasury. The application serves a link between the Scouts and the State, it was a BSA initiative supplied by a federal entity. The State's efforts were a factor in getting the Scouts out into their communities, from there the boys became a means to aid the war effort. These documents acted as an extension of Scouts' propaganda actions. These applications distribute a message of the war's aims on the home front. This message was a coordination between the federal government and the BSA, as both wanted strong support at home. Furthermore, Scouts' house-to-house tactics created a more personal touch to their work, where the adult bonds salesmen typically only sold bonds in public domains. The personal interaction between the Scout and his neighbors sets the stage for potential quite shaming that other propaganda creates.

(LEFT): Front of BSA's First Liberty Loan Application. (RIGHT): Back of of BSA's First Liberty Loan Application. Copy from Mitchell Reis, *Boy Scouts of America During World War I & II* (Windsor: Mitchell

Reis, 1984), 12 & 13.



The ability to raise so much money even when a community was already combed by other bond salesmen impressed officials enough to invite the BSA to the Second Liberty Loan Drive. Once again President Wilson asked for help, and his letter was included on the BSA's Second Liberty Loan application. This certain part drew some notice:

“My earnest wish is that every Scout leader give every Boy Scout an opportunity to take a definite part in this practical method of giving expression to his Scout obligation of service to our country.”<sup>124</sup>

This is another message that targets multiple audiences. Wilson wants the Scouts to do their part in selling liberty bonds, and asks adults to give every Scout the chance to help. By doing this Wilson asks the youths and adults to coordinate on the home front. The patriotic language on the home front provides us a look at the expectations of civilians.<sup>125</sup>

Messages between the Boy Scouts headquarters and government officials were one way or another promoted Scouting's aims and patriotic duty to the country. The first two liberty loan drives are deemed successful by the BSA and federal government, however the Third Campaign and beyond saw lacking support. Only half the nation's troops participated in the Third Loan, and only about 7.1% of Scouts sold ten or more subscriptions.<sup>126</sup> The applications used during this campaign were even toned down

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<sup>124</sup> Wilson, “White House Correspondence with Mr. Livingstone,” Second Liberty Loan Application, September 20, 1917.

<sup>125</sup> Celia M. Kingsbury, *For Home and Country*, 6.

<sup>126</sup> Ross F. Collins, *Children, War, & Propaganda* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2011), 168.

compared to the first two. In fact the wordy front page promoted Scouting efforts in the war effort. A considerable number of young men still answered the patriotic call to serve on the home front.

Children were encouraged to both sell and invest in liberty bonds.<sup>127</sup> *St. Nicholas*, a popular children's literary magazine, quoted, "The bond buyer does himself a service, too, because the money saved is invested in the safest security known and will someday be returned with a goodly amount of interest added."<sup>128</sup> This message from *St. Nicholas* was similarly presented in other children publications. The April 1918 issue of *Boys' Life* features an advertisement for War Saving Stamps asking boys specifically to purchase them. The caption reads, "MY BOY! Will You Lend 25c to Uncle Sam to Help Save Her Boy's Life?"<sup>129</sup> This CPI message put pressure on the reader to be proactive in the war effort. They could also fuel patriotism in slacking members of society, *Boys' Life* published a story of a Scout who wanted to convert his skeptical father to remember in the many blessing America has given them.<sup>130</sup> Schaffer's work notices that a common tactic of propaganda at the time was to remind the audience of all the blessings and liberties America has given them.<sup>131</sup> Children were constantly reminded that this war was being fought for for their future democracy.

Children were part of selling and buying into the war on the home front. An example of this was the Boy Scouts work in the Liberty Loan Campaigns. Secretary

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<sup>127</sup> Ross F. Collins, "This is Your Propaganda, Kids: Building a War Myth for World War I Children," *Journalism History* 38, 1 (Spring 2012): 20.

<sup>128</sup> "A Bond in Every Household," *St. Nicholas*, July 1917, 782.

<sup>129</sup> Committee on Public Information, "MY BOY!," *Boys' Life* 8, 4 (April 1918): 48.

<sup>130</sup> Michael V. Simko, "The Little Patriot," *Boys' Life* 7, 3 (July 1917), 5 & 42.

<sup>131</sup> Schaffer, *America in the Great War*, 7.

McAdoo once said that his “unpaid helpers...went to work with patriotic fever that still thrills me with admiration when I think about it.”<sup>132</sup> These “unpaid helpers” efforts are notable, in five Liberty Loan campaigns the Boy Scouts sold 2,328,308 subscriptions, thus earning \$354,859,262 (averaging \$936 per boy).<sup>133</sup> According to data collected by the BSA, highly populated cities were where they found most of their success. Results from the Second Liberty Loan featured below show the top five performing cities with Scout sales. This trend continues with the President’s Flag award, which highlights each troop who sold the most subscriptions, who mostly resided in one of their state’s major cities.<sup>134</sup> These numbers display the effectiveness these Scouts had on selling the war in their communities. They reached out to numerous individuals plus got these people to say “yes” to the war effort by purchasing a Liberty bond.

City	Population	Subscriptions	Amount	Scouts Enrolled
St. Louis	687,029	18,371	\$5,098,850	2,023
Brooklyn	1,975,801	11,693	\$1,329,650	3,141
Boston	1,436,000	10,760	\$1,201,250	5,421
Memphis	131,105	10,572	\$2,847,050	751
Allegheny, PA	1,018,463	10,547	\$2,054,950	3,736

“War Work of the Boy Scouts,” *Boys’ Life* 8, 4 (April 1918), 27.

<sup>132</sup> William G. McAdoo, *Crowded Years*, 385.

<sup>133</sup> Murray, *The History of the Boy Scouts of America*, 135.

<sup>134</sup> Mitch Reis, *The Boy Scouts of America During World War I & II* (Windsor: Mitchell Reis, 1984),

## Food as a Weapon

Another war challenge that plagued the US was feeding themselves and other western Allied powers. After Congress declared war in April 1917 they passed the Food and Fuel Control Act. Through this act the United States Food Administration (USFA) was established with Herbert Hoover at the helm. He was given authority over distributing, importing, exporting, producing, purchasing, and storing food; to do this he needed Americans to voluntarily help with food conservation; the quickest way to accomplish this was playing to patriotic sentiments.<sup>135</sup> Propaganda once again encouraged individuals into war service, by 1918 there were 5,285,000 victory gardens nationwide.<sup>136</sup>

Historians understand on the importance of food during the First World War. Tammy Proctor, for example, emphasized early in her work that the war required an unprecedented amount of civilian labor and resources, and that food was as significant as weaponry.<sup>137</sup> This brings up the next major theme flooding child's propaganda, food conservation. Tanfer Tunc demonstrated how food was utilized as wartime propaganda. Complementing Proctor's view of civilian life becoming militarized, she shows how US dietary habits altered thanks to some persuasion from agencies, like USFA, in an conservation effort for the war.<sup>138</sup> Food propaganda centered around convincing the home front of food conservation was the way. Ross Collins search through multiple children

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<sup>135</sup> Tanfer E. Tunc, "Less Sugar, More Warships: Food as American Propaganda in the First World War," *War in History* 19, 2 (2012): 197.

<sup>136</sup> Charles Lathrop Pack, *The War Garden Victorious* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1919), 30

<sup>137</sup> Proctor, *Civilians in a World War, 1914-1918*, 3.

<sup>138</sup> Tunc, "Less Sugar, More Warships," 195.

magazines revealed that editors' primary suggestion for children to get involved in the war was by planting a garden.<sup>139</sup> In fact, on April 7, 1917 the National BSA Executive Board drafted a resolution of their type war service. First on this list records the cooperation between the BSA and Department of Agriculture to plant home gardens under the slogan, "Every Scout to Feed a Soldier."<sup>140</sup>

The Boy Scouts enthusiastically came to their country's aid under this slogan. Numerous issues of *Boys' Life* and *Scouting* magazines dedicated themselves to victory gardening. One phrase from an April *Scouting* article stressed the importance of food to the war as such: "A Scout with a hoe may equal a man with a gun."<sup>141</sup> These words display how men's media contain messages of militant masculinity during this time. For Scouting to be successful it needed both youth and adult leaders on board. To make the youth understood the amount of food needed, *Boys' Life* stated that the slogan meant that every Scout was to raise enough food from himself leaving the market for what the soldier needs.<sup>142</sup> This asked Scouts to raise their own food, while the markets were to supply the majority of the war effort. It was unlikely they could achieve this, but clearly the National Office was aiming high on their expectations for their members. These statements confirm the presence of militant masculinity propaganda in Scouters' lives; altering a relatively peaceful hobby, like raising food, and molding it into a tool of war.

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<sup>139</sup> Collins, "This is Your Propaganda, Kids," 17.

<sup>140</sup> Murray, *The History of the Boy Scouts of America*, 105. This resolution made appearances in the mid April issue of *Scouting* and in *Boys' Life* in May.

<sup>141</sup> *Scouting* 4, 23 (April 15, 1917): 3.

<sup>142</sup> "How the Boy Scouts Help in the War," *Boys' Life* 7, 2 (June 1917): 7.

Many advertisements posted in Scouting literature throughout the war prompted boys' interest in the war, this makes sense as advertisement and propaganda are synonyms. Food was advertised to spark patriotic fervor on the home front. One recurring advertisement in *Boys' Life* for Bristol fishing poles. The May and June 1917 issues position this ad at the start of the magazine. The title itself, "Come on Fellers and Fish for Uncle Sam," gives away the point, to conserve food for soldiers abroad by taking up fishing. The State was persuading the readers how to use their free time. "You can fish evenings, mornings, holidays, week-ends, and every spare moment. Just think of the fun..."<sup>143</sup> A poster created by the Department of Agriculture declared that, "Uncle Sam Expects You To Keep Hens and Raise Chickens."<sup>144</sup> Notice the language from this piece. Uncle Sam "expects" putting responsibility on children to take part of food conservation. The home front culture set children into the war through appeals of patriotism, heroism, duty, guilt, or shame.<sup>145</sup> These two ads establish how private and government agencies enticed children with all these senses.

These kinds of advertisements demonstrate historian Robert Gross's assessment of the federal government creeping into the lives of children.<sup>146</sup> It was not only the federal government that prompted blind, unquestioning patriotism, but also private advertisers.<sup>147</sup> The expectations gathered from these two advertisements was that children needed to be

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<sup>143</sup> *Boys Life* 8, 5 (May 1918): 2

<sup>144</sup> United States Department of Agriculture, "Uncle Sam Expects You To Keep Hens and Raise Chickens," 1918.

<sup>145</sup> Collins, *Children, War, & Propaganda*, 227.

<sup>146</sup> Robert Gross, "'Lick a Stamp, Lick the Kaiser': Sensing the Federal Government in Children's Lives during World War I," *Journal of Social History* 46, 4 (Summer 2013): 984.

<sup>147</sup> David Traxel, *Crusader Nation: The United States in Peace and the Great War, 1898-1920* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006), 355.

out in force helping in any way on the home front, in particular with food conservation. Food conservation was something anyone could participate in, a visible action of patriotic duty. Children were especially targeted for this task.

Scouting made its efforts known by maintaining community victory gardens. In fact Scouters were encouraged to get the community involved with food conservation programs. One requirement for the Gardening Medal states: “The Scout shall induce one adult not likewise engaged in food production or conservation to work with him or with some other person in the production or conservation of food during this period.”<sup>148</sup> If Scouts wanted to earn this medal they had to convert someone to the ways of food conservation. “The Boy Scouts of America will give a War Service Emblem to every Scout who successfully conducts a garden of his own and induces nine other people to do the same, or increase their acreage.”<sup>149</sup>

Approximately 214 of these medals were awarded by the Department of Agriculture in 1917. Since part of propaganda is to convince an individual to do something particular, this seems like a case where the Scouts acted as a means of propaganda. It is clear this is a way the government bridged the gap between themselves and private citizens to promote WWI home front activities. The requirement could simply ask Scouts to inform others about food conservation, rather it required the Scout to physically reach out to individuals in their community not participating. These actions brought people into the war effort, 214 successful cases in fact. This specific requirement

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<sup>148</sup> Mitch Reis, *The Boy Scouts of America During World War I & II*, 75.

<sup>149</sup> The Second Phase of the War: The Trenches Have Been Established- Defend Them!,” *Boys’ Life* 7, 2 (June 1917): 35.



put Scouts in a position to make a difference in the war effort. The Gardening Medal, backed by the Department of Agriculture, demonstrated how government agencies put Scouts in a position to promote war services on their behalf.

Some 12,000 Victory Gardens were maintained by Scouts on home front during World War I.<sup>150</sup> This whole program to raise victory gardens required Scouts grubbing through an entire growing season which becomes a long and toilsome task requiring land and resources not available to those living in urban areas.<sup>151</sup> So the numbers do not compare in regards to success between the agriculture and bond sale programs. Nevertheless food conservation did provide opportunities for Scouts to showcase their patriotism in their communities. There were some cases of 20 to 300 acre gardens maintained by groups of Boy Scouts.<sup>152</sup> This meant there were many bodies hard at work living up to the motto, “Every Scout to Feed a Soldier.” Their work ethic set the bar to their fellow neighbors by promoting food conservation projects the Scouts served as an active medium of propaganda.

### **Government Dispatchers**

Scouting’s actions till this point can be seen as propaganda by doing, or spreading war support by performing wartime sacrifices and duties publicly. Scouts also spread American propaganda from the source, the CPI. Headed by former muckraker George Creel, it was instrumental in selling the war to the American people and instilling their

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<sup>150</sup> Murray, *The History of the Boy Scouts of America*, 135.

<sup>151</sup> Macleod, *Building Character in the American Boy*, 175.

<sup>152</sup> Murray, *The History of the Boy Scouts of America*, 122.

love for their country.<sup>153</sup> He accomplished this through the distribution of pamphlets, posters, and presentations from public speakers. He once remarked how Scout dispatchers were, “In this task they are the direct representatives of the Committee on Public Information.”<sup>154</sup> These words demonstrated how government officials, especially Creel, felt Scouting's service as vital to the war effort.

President Wilson called upon Scouts as government dispatchers noting, “...to make them the Government Dispatch Bearers, in carrying to the homes of their community the pamphlets on the War prepared by the Committee on Public Information. The excellent service performed by the Boy Scouts in the past encourages me to believe that this new task will be cheerfully and faithfully discharged.”<sup>155</sup> This message was printed on the back of a Dispatch Bearer identification card given to each Scout who performed this task, keeping the expectations of the president close. This final sentence spoke to Scouts as it emphasized the expectations of Scouting, “A Scout’s duty is to be useful and to help others.”<sup>156</sup> It also connects to what Scouting officials saw as the key to their home front success, “the Scout obligation and the spirit to service.”<sup>157</sup> This dispatcher identification card provides another link between the Scouts and government service. Similar to the BSA’s Liberty Loan applications, this identification card is an

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<sup>153</sup> Abrahamson, *The American Home Front*, 120.

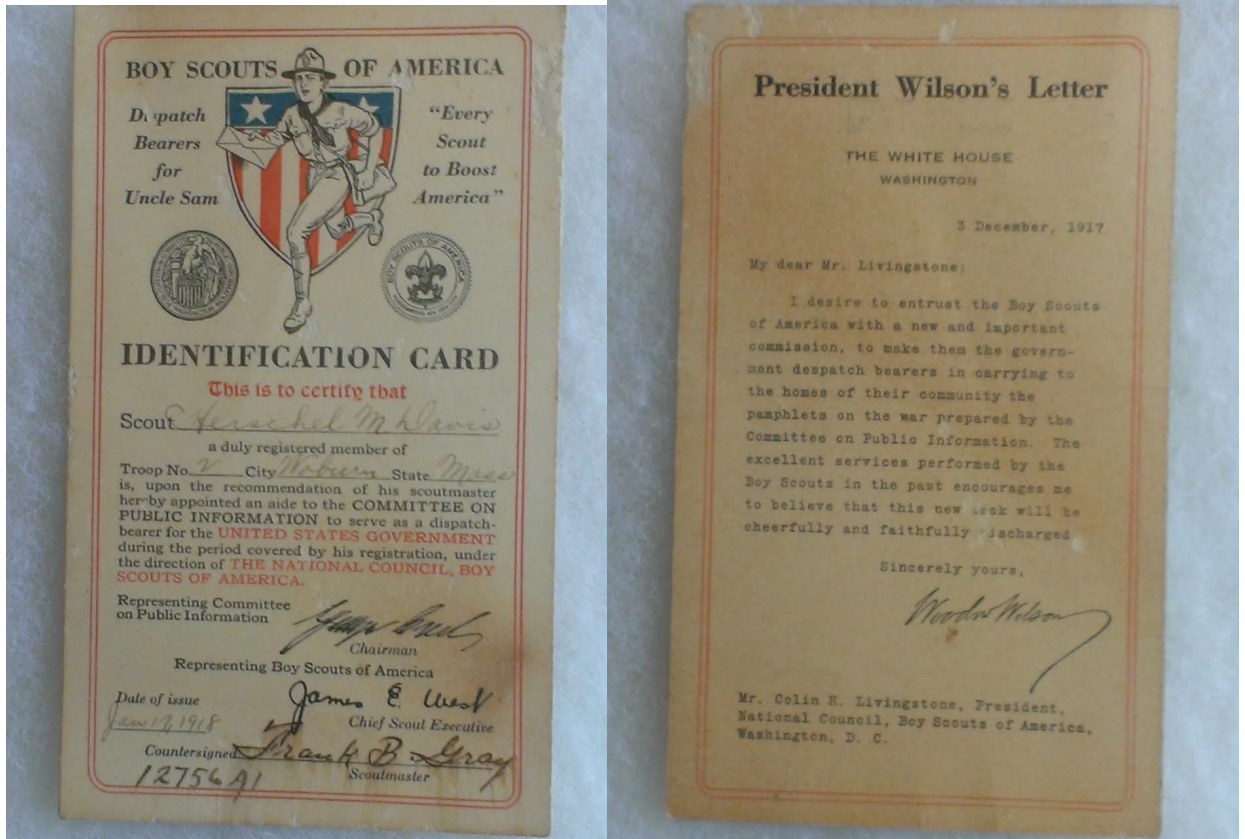
<sup>154</sup> Murray, *The History of the Boy Scouts of America*, 130.

<sup>155</sup> Wilson, “White House Correspondence with Mr. Livingstone,” *Scouting* 5, 16 (December 15, 1917): 2.

<sup>156</sup> Sherman, “Patriotism and Citizenship,” *The Official Handbook for Boys*, 351.

<sup>157</sup> James E. West, “Official News What Every Scout Wants to Know,” *Boys’ Life* 8, 3 (March 1918): 34.

extension of of the Scouts' bodies as propaganda. It states that the Scout is an aide to the CPI with Creel's signature confirming it.



(LEFT): Front of BSA Dispatcher Bearer Identification card. (RIGHT): Back of BSA Dispatch Bearer ID card. Photos courtesy of Terry Grogan's World War I Collection. Acquired on (1/15/2015).

Under the slogan, "Every Scout to Boost America," these young men provided wartime information to their communities. Dispatch bearers were directed to pass along materials from the CPI to influential members of their community, who were to distribute

as necessary.<sup>158</sup> These dispatchers were a link in government involvement during the war. These Scouts and Scoutmasters being members of their communities were ideal candidates to find key community leaders and place the war information upon them. Their first task came in September 1917 to distribute pamphlets titled, “The President’s Flag Day Address, with Evidence of Germany’s Plans.”

Five million copies of these pamphlets were ultimately distributed. This work served as a means to justify American involvement overseas. Wilson’s speech primarily focused on Germany as a menace to world security. As he states, “Much as we had desired peace, it was denied us, and not of our own choice.”<sup>159</sup> This ideal of a stolen peace resonated with the Scouting message. The original Boy Scout handbook stated that no other country was less warlike than the US, or strived for universal peace.<sup>160</sup> Messages justifying the American cause was the job of the CPI. Having the government’s and Scouting’s messages be comparable perhaps help push Scouts into spreading vital wartime information, eventually the BSA distributed 30 million pieces of government literature.<sup>161</sup> This gave Scouts a chance to help build support for the war in their own communities.

Another way the Boy Scouts assisted the CPI was by acting as aides for the “Four Minute Men.”<sup>162</sup> This was a group of volunteers who presented war information in public

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<sup>158</sup> Murray, *The History of the Boy Scouts of America*, 129.

<sup>159</sup> Woodrow Wilson, “The President’s Flag Day Address, with Evidence of Germany’s Plans,” *Committee on Public Information*, (September 15, 1917): 7.

<sup>160</sup> Sherman, “Patriotism and Citizenship,” *The Official Handbook for Boys*, 339. Though it is greatly ironic that leading up to this phrase the chapter discusses the many wars leading up to that point in the nation’s history.

<sup>161</sup> Murray, *The History of the Boy Scouts of America*, 135.

<sup>162</sup> Murray, *The History of the Boy Scouts of America*, 130.

settings. They could deliver their rehearsed speech in four minutes, enough time to spare while people waited for their show at the theatre. Scouts were ready to hand out pamphlets or sell bonds after these presentations. *Scouting* reported that two Scouts in St. Louis were able to reach out to 150,000 people after theatrical performances one day.<sup>163</sup> Not only did Scouts pass out CPI information in their own neighborhoods, but to the larger public creating more visibility. This kind of public exposure created the opportunity for Scouts to reach out to numerous individuals. Bystanders could also get the impression of these two groups being together. This joint effort creates the association of Scouts as government aides preaching the government's home front expectations.

Successful propaganda also needs an element of familiarity to it, this allows it to relate to the audience and creates a connection between the viewer and the message. Christopher Capozzola writes of how the conditions on the home front were made more comforting by seeing familiar faces enduring similar trials. A person opens their door to a neighbor selling them a liberty bond, or on the flip side, an individual who notices a fellow crony in line at the draft board arguing their own draft-ability.<sup>164</sup> This relatability brings us back to Scouts being active in their communities; a familiarity that should have brought comfort to some watching these patriotic young men at work. Demonstrating that everyone has a bit to play, with the Scouts working toward victory, and helping to create a unified American home front.

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<sup>163</sup> "Preparing for Sunday," *Scouting* 5, 11 (October 1, 1917): 3.

<sup>164</sup> Christopher Capozzola, *Uncle Sam Wants You: World War I and the Making of the Modern Citizen* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 214. He goes on to ask how reassuring could this prospect be, as measuring it is difficult.

As government dispatchers for the CPI, Scouts were linked to the war's propaganda efforts. Furthermore, their actions presented how they themselves were government agents promoting the war effort. More importantly this activity got Scouts more involved and they presented home front expectations to members of their communities.

## **Conclusion**

This study showed the expectations of manly behavior on the home front, and how the Boy Scouts demonstrated this model citizenship in their home front communities. Federal agencies sponsored projects for Scouting to perform, later these efforts were utilized as examples of wartime service. The Scouts' actions and bodies thus act as propaganda by demonstrating model home front service. Federal officials and entities put Scouts in this position to promote the ideals of a strong, unified home front. The Scouts' actions help support the notion of a strong home front as it openly demonstrated what needed to happen for it to succeed. Therefore, the activities taken on by the Boy Scouts bolster the messages of home front support. Furthermore, it was federal government agencies that helped put Scouting in a position to demonstrate to local communities on the expectations of home front service. In this regard the Scouts themselves and their actions advertised acts of home front service.

## Conclusion

William Murray, a chief executive of the Boy Scouts of America during the war, remarked in his history of early Scouting that “there is no more thrilling chapter in the records of America’s participation in the World War than that of the Boy Scouts of America.”<sup>165</sup> This period indeed provides historians with an account of a group of children living up to their new wartime expectations. Much of the scholarly work on the World War I, home front focuses on ways the government coerced individuals’ participation. The Boy Scouts’ efforts played into government expectations of everyone having a bit to play on the home front. More importantly the situation showed how one’s actions can be perceived as propaganda.

According to estimates there were around 281,044 boys and 25,919 adults ready to serve in 1917.<sup>166</sup> This is a relatively small number compared to the approximately 10 million boys (ages 12-18) nationwide at the time. Nevertheless the BSA would ultimately be seen as ideal contributors of home front service. The government drew up “national reservoirs of patriotism”<sup>167</sup> to invigorate wartime support. The BSA naturally gravitated toward this patriotic call of duty, as it is a key component of their movement. Their 1914 handbook’s Citizenship chapter claims “In doing the ‘good turn daily,’ then, one has abundant opportunity to do his part toward the social betterment of the community in

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<sup>165</sup> William Murray, *The History of the Boy Scouts of America* (New York: Boy Scouts of America, 1937), 101.

<sup>166</sup> David Macleod, *Building Character in the American Boy: The Boy Scouts, YMCA, and Their Forerunners, 1870-1920* (Madison: the University of Wisconsin Press, 1983), 154.

<sup>167</sup> Ronald Schaffer, *America in the Great War: The Rise of the War Welfare State* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), xii.

which he lives.”<sup>168</sup> Always looking for a way to get involved in the community, the war provided an excellent opportunity for Scouts nationwide to do so.

Scouts participation in war work provided both the BSA and the government an opportunity to help each other. The war acted as a marketing tool for Scouting while the government promoted ideal wartime service to a divided populace. Initial propaganda efforts gave way to another wave of propaganda of ideal citizens, like the Scouts, venturing into their communities and demonstrating patriotism on the home front. An ideal patriot participated in home front services.

This study presented the progression of the Boy Scouts into a propaganda tool. The expectations of home front service was that everyone “do their bit.” According to the themes of militant masculinity boys in particular were told it was men’s duty to serve their country. Since this was the norm in the program it was easy for the BSA to eagerly jump to the government’s aid with wartime service projects. The government was continuously convincing civilians to support the war. It accomplished this task through various means of propaganda. Having a supportive group like the Boy Scouts provided an opportunity to showcase home front service. The Scouts were recognized with medals and awards highlighting their efforts. Federal officials also utilized Scouts as examples of home front service by publishing statements for Scouts and the public. This attention on Scouts put emphasis on their actions in their local communities. The Scouts’ bodies and actions became a type of visual propaganda.

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<sup>168</sup> Waldo H. Sherman, “Patriotism and Citizenship,” *The Official Handbook for Boys* (New York: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1911), 350.



Historians tend to focus on how the US government got citizens involved in the war. The Boy Scouts were one of many groups serving on the home front. Other organizations could provide examples of federal officials using participants' bodies as propaganda. But the Scouts were well-organized, and their uniformed bodies physically displayed the government's home front expectations. Edward Bernays, the leader of the Four Minute Men, stated in his work *Propaganda* that an "invisible government" was at work in all propaganda.<sup>169</sup> The boys bodies and actions in essence become an arm of the government propaganda campaign. Children leading by example in front of their neighbors allowed for the propaganda message to penetrate deeper into communities.

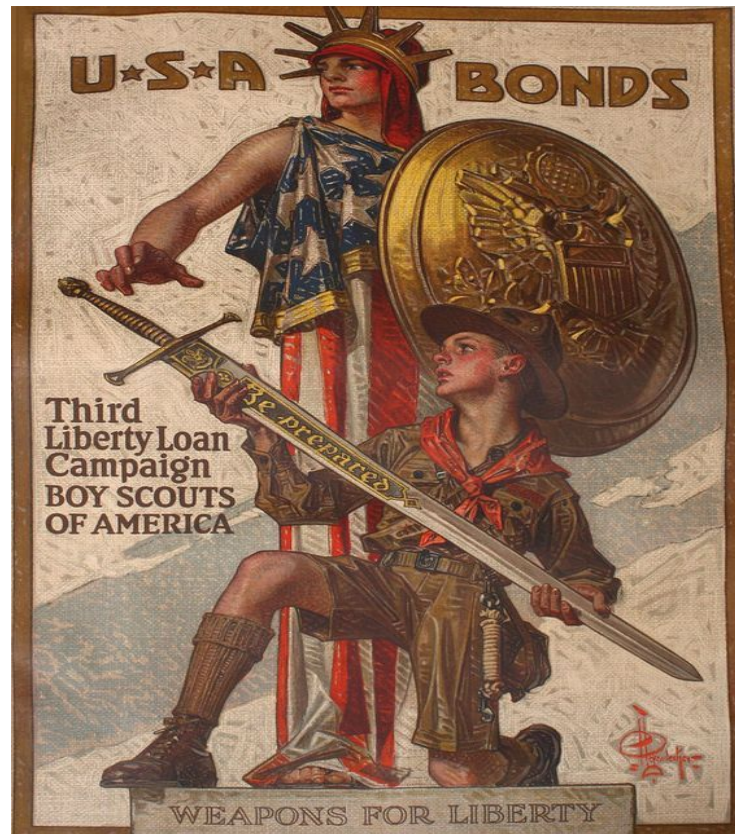
An individual's' actions and bodies acting as propaganda stretches the definition. The government put these boys to work serving home front needs with their communities, their neighbors who witnessed these actions saw wartime ideals first-hand. This idea breaks away from typical thoughts of seeing propaganda as a way to motivate children. Children are a necessary component to conducting propaganda in future wars. Furthermore the First World War developed a unified BSA and shaped their image as a patriotic organization. Propaganda's function was to instill these images in everyone to encourage further war service participation. Imagery in propaganda was powerful and during this period they elaborated idealized citizens contributing to war efforts.<sup>170</sup> These kinds of images were utilized with Scouting's war services. The Boy Scouts became symbols of the ideal citizen on the home front. One of Scouting's lasting images from the

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<sup>169</sup> Alan Axelrod, *Selling the Great War: The Making of American Propaganda* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009), x.

<sup>170</sup> Jeffrey T. Schnapp, "Epilogue," in *Picture This: World War I Posters and Visual Culture*, ed. Pearl James (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), 373.

war was J.C. Leyendeckers's Liberty Loan poster depicting a Scout arming Lady Liberty. This image is widely recognized among Scouts and helps cement their image of the ideal war helpers.



J.C. Leyendecker, "Weapons for Liberty," *Boys' Life* Volume 8, Number 5 (May 1918): cover.

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