



Members of Boy Scout Troop 31 gather in the 1950s for an event at the Flint IMA.

True blue: Boy Scout troop flourishes at church for 75 years

By Jerry Wright
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Court Street United Methodist Church's Boy Scout Troop 31 is celebrating something few troops have achieved, a 75th anniversary.

It is the oldest continuously chartered troop of the 96 in the Tall Pine Council, said Herb Wansitler Jr., leader of the troop from May 1990 to August 1992 and chairman of the Diamond Jubilee Committee.

Troop 31 is the eighth oldest in the state out of 1,230 troops and 412th oldest in the nation out of 44,513 troops, he said.

"It is the dedicated adult leadership, outstanding programs, great Scouts and the cooperation of our sponsoring organization that have allowed us to make it 75 years," Wansitler said.

Troop 31 was organized by Charles P. Coates, a member of the Court Street church, in June 1918. An application for a Boy Scout troop charter was made on Oct. 1, 1918, and the charter was issued Oct. 31, 1918.

During World War I, the troop's members served as messengers for the War Board, selling Liberty Loan bonds and collecting War Savings stamps, ac-

ording to troop records.

One of its first members was Harding C.S. Mott.

"More than 1,000 boys have gone through the troop in its 75 years," Wansitler said.

Membership now numbers 36 Scouts and 30 adults.

This year has been special in more ways than one, he said.

Already five of the troop's members have become Eagle Scouts, which is the highest honor a scout can receive. The five bring the troop's Eagle Scout total to 48 in its history.

During the Persian Gulf war troop members wrote letters to service people in the Gulf and took part in a song written by local composer Walter White called "Bring Them Home Alive."

The troop has completed more than 1,000 hours of service to the Court Street United Methodist Church in the past three years, Wansitler said.

The troop's Diamond Jubilee Committee has planned several events this year.

They include a family lock-in at the YMCA, a wilderness survival weekend, a 22-mile hike, a nine-day trip to Mammoth Cave in Kentucky and Great Smokey Mountains National Park, a troop alumni reunion Aug. 14, a merit

badge fair and a special church service on Oct. 31, the anniversary of the date the original charter was issued.

The troop also will produce Diamond Jubilee patches, neckerchiefs and other anniversary commemorative items, and gather old troop memorabilia for a display to mark its anniversary.

At the Tall Pine Council's 75th anniversary camporee, on June 4-6, the troop will serve as hosts.

Troop 31 has had only 17 scoutmasters in its 75 years, he said. The longest serving scoutmaster was Norman Asselstine, who served 35 years from 1941 to 1974, and then later for two additional one-year terms.

Robert Bigler was Troop 31 committee chairman for half a century from 1941 to 1991. Both men, now in their 80s, are still active in the troop.

Current scoutmaster is Matt Kelley of Flushing, who succeeded Wansitler in the position last August.

Former members interested in attending the alumni reunion on Aug. 14 may contact the Court Street United Methodist Church, leave their name and phone number, and someone will get back with them, Wansitler said.