



Harvey Gordon at his desk at the 1937 National Scout Jamboree. Photo courtesy of Ten Mile River Scout Museum (www.tmmuseum.org)

Harvey A. Gordon: Scout camp builder

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Early Years

Harvey Adam Gordon, son of Adam Oscar and Minnie Gordon, was born on January 19, 1884 on a farm near Raleigh, IN. He graduated from the Raleigh High School, the

Richmond, IN Commercial School and studied at the Wharton School of Commerce, University of Pennsylvania.

Family Life

Gordon married Bonnie Rebecca Pritchard and had two sons: Richard O. Gordon (born circa 1909) and Robert A. Gordon (born circa 1906). They divorced in N.Y. State Court in 1930 while he was employed by the

N.Y.C. Boy Scouts. Gordon remarried and his new wife Lylyan Gordon survived him after his death in 1938.

Volunteer Scouter

Gordon became Scoutmaster of Troop 42, Pittsburgh on March 27, 1913 and served as a member of the Pittsburgh Council Camp Committee. After moving to Philadelphia he served as Scoutmaster of Troop 15 and in various local volunteer positions: deputy commissioner, senior deputy commissioner, executive committeeman of the Scoutmasters' Round Table, and member of the Philadelphia Local Council. Prior to entering Scouting professionally, he was an engineer for various railroad companies.

Manhattan Council Executive

In January 1917, Gordon entered professional service as Scout executive of Manhattan Borough Council. *The New York Herald* noted at the time that Gordon was an experienced outdoor man and hiker and built himself a log cabin with the same tools the pioneers used. In March and June 1917, Mr. Gordon mobilized 1,400 Manhattan Scouts in Central Park, each time in less than three hours.

In December 1917, Gordon was

appointed chief field executive of Philadelphia Council. During the spring of 1918, he became Scout Executive of Philadelphia Council. In March 1919, he raised \$23,000 in a fundraising campaign in Shamokin and Coal Township, PA.

Regional Service

In April 1919, Gordon was appointed deputy field commissioner of Region 3. Over the following months he was promoted to deputy regional executive and then regional executive of Region 3.

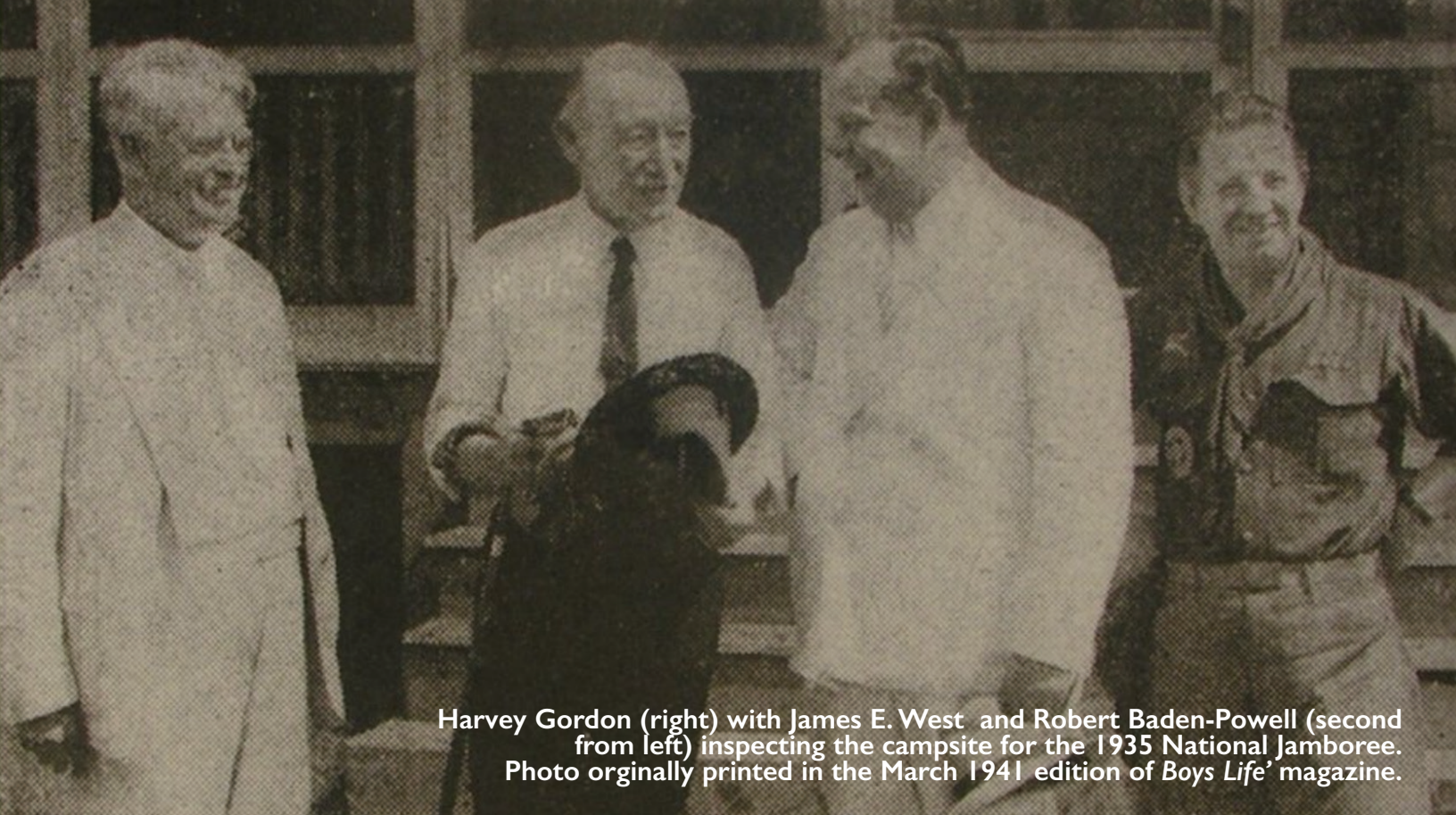
Chief Camp Director - Kanohwahke Scout Camps

In December 1919, while serving as Region 3 executive, Gordon was requested to take the position of chief camp director and organize the multi-council camping operation on the Kanohwahke Lakes in Harriman State Park, then under National Council control. In 1922, when the Boy Scout Foundation of Greater New York took over operation of the camps, they hired Mr. Gordon, who continued on as chief camp director until 1928. The Kanohwahke Scout Camps reached a maximum enrollment of 3,600 campers by the 1928 season.

Continued on page 7



Harvey Gordon, circa 1927. Photo courtesy of Ten Mile River Scout Museum (www.tmmuseum.org)



Harvey Gordon (right) with James E. West and Robert Baden-Powell (second from left) inspecting the campsite for the 1935 National Jamboree. Photo originally printed in the March 1941 edition of *Boys Life* magazine.

Grand Lodge National Scribe

On November 1, 1924, Gordon was elected national scribe at the Fourth Grand Lodge meeting of the Order of the Arrow, then at the Kanohwahke Scout Camps. The night before, he was inducted into the Vigil Honor of the Order of the Arrow. Gordon was reelected national scribe at Grand Lodge meetings in 1925, 1926 and 1927, serving until 1929. He was a member of the key national leadership team during some of the important developmental years of the Order.

Harvey Gordon was one of eleven individuals that received the O.A.'s Distinguished Service Award in 1940 (posthumously), the first year this recognition was given.

Director of Construction, Ten Mile River Scout Camps

In 1927, the Boy Scout Foundation of Greater New York (led by Foundation President Franklin D. Roosevelt) purchased the Ten Mile River Tract near Narrowsburg, NY. Gordon was appointed director of construction of the new Ten Mile River Scout Camps, which by 1930 replaced the Kanohwahke Scout Camps as the N.Y.C. Scouting summer camp. Gordon was responsible for the design and construction of the five original T.M.R. Borough Camps. According to the 1930 U.S. Federal Census, both Harvey Gordon and

his son, Richard O. Gordon resided in Tusten, NY, and were listed as construction engineers.

In October 1929, Gordon notably ran for the position of Tusten Town Supervisor as a member of the Republican Party. The Boy Scout Foundation of Greater New York, his employer, ordered him to withdraw from the election.

World Jamboree Service

In July 1929, Gordon served as chief quartermaster of the BSA contingent to the third World Scout Jamboree in Birkenhead, England. He was responsible for physical arrangements, including site design, equipment and food service. Gordon played a similar role as director of physical arrangements for BSA contingents at the 1933 and 1937 World Jamborees.

National Camp Engineer

Following major completion of the Ten Mile River Scout Camps, in July 1930, Gordon was hired by National Council, BSA as the first national camp engineer. He personally inspected hundreds of camps and made recommendations for each. Gordon standardized designs for camp layouts and many camp structures. BSA councils were asked to send him contour maps of their properties and he suggested layouts for their new camps.

In 1935, Gordon was promoted to national director of the new Engineering Service.

1935 National Jamboree

From late December 1934 to approximately October 1, 1935, Gordon served as director of physical arrangements for the 1935 National Jamboree, in Washington, DC. He was in charge of the layout, construction, and physical arrangements for 26,000 persons, including plans for cooking, sanitation, handling of all equipment, creation of the trading posts and post office, transportation at camp, communications and camp security. 90% of the construction work was completed when the Jamboree was canceled on August 8, 1935, due to outbreaks of polio in the vicinity of Washington, DC. Mr. Gordon was then responsible for breaking down the Jamboree site.

1937 National Jamboree

From November 1936 to July 1937, Gordon led a 46-person staff as director of physical arrangements for the 1937 National Jamboree, in Washington, DC.

Gordon borrowed equipment from the War Department and did whatever was needed – and was one of the persons most responsible for the success of the event.

The 350 acres of Federal park land used were divided into 20 sections

which were surveyed by his staff.

4,000 tents accommodating 33,000 Scouts and officers were set up in the vicinity of the Tidal Basin and the Washington Monument, making a real camp city. Five miles of water lines and ten miles of telephone lines were laid, connected to 100 telephones.

At the peak of construction there were 105 carpenters, 30 plumbers and helpers, 150 from the C.C.C., 50 supervising engineers, accountants and checkers and a maintenance crew of 48 men in charge of canvas.

Twenty central kitchens were constructed, one per section. An estimated 250 tons of food and 1 million gallons of water were used daily.

At the time, the 1937 National Jamboree was the high point in the history of Scouting in the U.S., with 27,232 Scouts and Scouters attending.

Death

Harvey Gordon died in New York City on December 15, 1938 after a long illness. His body was brought back to Indiana for his funeral. Arthur Schuck, national director of operations for the Boy Scouts of America, an associate of Harvey, read his eulogy.

He is buried next to his parents in Raleigh, Indiana, about 11 miles from where he was born.