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# *A Look Back 100 Years: Karl Asplund and the Boy Scouts*

by Natalie Gacek

100 years ago Karl Asplund started the first Boy Scout troop in St. Charles. The Boy Scouts of America organization was first established two years prior, in 1910, as part of a world wide scouting movement. The stated goal of the Boy Scouts was "to teach [boys] patriotism, courage, self-reliance, and kindred values."

Karl Asplund displayed these characteristics and was an excellent example to the many Scouts with whom he worked over the next 37 years.

Asplund first arrived in St. Charles in 1896 but left a short time later to fight in the Spanish American War. Upon returning to St. Charles, he took a job as a carpenter at the Moline Malleable Iron Works Foundry.

Asplund was involved in the community and especially interested in the youth of St. Charles. In 1912, with a sponsorship from the American Legion Post #342, he formed Boy Scout Troop #1. The Troop is still active today and sponsored by the American Legion. Asplund served as Scoutmaster for Troop #1 for 14 years and as Scout Counselor and Commissioner for another 23 until his death in 1949.

At the time of his death at age 87 Asplund was known throughout



*Boy Scout Color Guard. From left: ? Johnson, Irving "Bill" Powers, Wirth Gustafson, Adolph Anderson and leader Karl Asplund.*

the Scouting community as the world's oldest Scout. Over the years he received many Scouting awards, including the Silver Beaver Award in 1932. According to the BSA the Silver Beaver Award is a distinguished service award given to adult leaders who implement the Scouting program and perform community service through hard work, self sacrifice, dedication, and many years of service.

In honor of the 125th Anniversary of Karl Asplund's birth, St. Charles Mayor, and former Boy Scout, Fred Norris proclaimed November 7, 1987, as Karl Asplund Day in St. Charles. The proclamation was issued "in recognition of his outstanding service to his country, the Boy Scouts of American and to the youth of this community."

In addition to his many Scouting honors, Asplund was also a Master Mason in Unity Lodge

#48, an honorary member of the Alpha Phi Omega fraternity at Northern Illinois State Teachers College, recipient of a Citation of Recognition from the American Legion, and was recognized by the Centennial Committee of the St. Charles Chamber of Commerce for his "meritorious service rendered in connection with the St. Charles Centennial Celebration and St. Charles Day at a Century of Progress."

While Karl Asplund has been gone for over sixty years, his contributions to St. Charles will be remembered by many for years to come.

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