

History & Purpose of the Order of the Arrow

The Order of the Arrow was created to serve as a useful purpose: to cause the Scout Oath and Law to spring into action in all parts of the nation. To this day, we are dedicated to this high purpose. The Order is a thing of the individual rather than a thing of the masses; the ideals of brotherhood, cheerfulness, and service spring to life in each of us. The Order is a thing of the outdoors; from life in the wilds comes a precious ingredient that our country needs to survive-self-reliance. One of the Order's greatest achievements is, and will continue to be, the strengthening of the Scouting movement as an outdoor experience.

The Order of the Arrow was founded during the summer of 1915 at Treasure Island, the Philadelphia Council Scout camp. The camp was located on a 50-acre wooded island located on the Delaware River between New Jersey and Pennsylvania, and historical records show that it was an early camping ground for the Lenni Lanape, or Delaware, Indians. During that summer, E. Urner Goodman was selected to serve as camp director, and Carroll A. Edison was appointed assistant director. Together, these men decided that they wanted to create an honor society as a definite form of recognition for those Scouts in their camp who best exemplified the spirit of the Scout Oath and Law in their daily lives. Since the Delaware Valley was rich in Indian tradition, it seemed only natural to base this society, this brotherhood of honor campers, on the legends and traditions of the Delaware Indians. Thus the foundation was laid for the Order of the Arrow.

Next for Goodman and Edison were to determine how new members would be selected. They decided that it was best to use a democratic process, thus creating a unique custom that members were elected by non-members. There has been no change in this procedure since that time. After candidates for membership were selected, they gathered in a selected section of the forest for an induction ceremony. Goodman and Edison presided over the council fire as Chief and Vice-Chief, respectively. A guide brought the candidates to the council fire where they performed several tasks. The completion of the tasks taught lessons about brotherhood, cheerfulness, and service — the three principles of the Order of the Arrow. After the ceremony, to recognize the members of the Order, each member was given a sash emblazoned with an arrow, similar to the sashes of today.

The Order grew slowly over the years, but as scouting council from across the country learned of the ideals and purposes of the Order of the Arrow, the development of the Order flourished. Today, each council of the Boy Scouts of America sponsors an Order of the Arrow lodge. Though these lodges are different from that original lodge — Unami — founded on Treasure Island, they differ only slightly. Members of modern lodges are still selected by non-members, and the ideals of the Order continue to be based on Lenni Lanape tradition and the principles of brotherhood, cheerfulness, and service. In fact the original purposes of the Order of the Arrow have changed only slightly:

To recognize those campers — Scouts, Explorers, and Scouters — who best exemplify the Scout Oath and Law in their daily lives and by such recognition cause other campers to conduct themselves in such a manner as to warrant recognition.

To develop and maintain camping traditions and spirit.

To promote Scout camping, which reaches its greatest effectiveness as a part of the unit's camping program, both year-round and in the summer camp, as directed by the camping committee of the council.

To crystallize the Scout habit of helpfulness into a life purpose of leadership in cheerful service to others.

As a member of the Order of the Arrow, one should be reminded that, while the Order's role includes service to Scouting on a national, regional, sectional, and local level, it is one's own council that has the most need. The Order is not an end unto itself, but is for a higher purpose. Individuals are inducted into the Order of the Arrow — not so much for what you have done, but for what you are expected to do. Taking that Obligation of the Order requires a promise, on one's honor, — to be unselfish in service and devotion to the welfare of others. This is not an easy pledge to fulfill, for there are few who live a life of cheerful service in this world. For some, the Order will be like a super-nova, shining brilliantly for a brief time and soon crumbling to ashes. For others, the Order will kindle a flame of brotherhood, brighter than a thousand suns, lasting throughout eternity. The challenge is to kindle that flame of brotherhood throughout the rest of life. This is a difficult

challenge, but members would not have been selected to join the
of this challenge. Remember, "he who serves his fellows
greatest."

Order if their peers did not think them worthy
best, is of all his fellows,