

## The History of Boy Scout Troop #347

The Troop was originally chartered on December 23, 1941 to the Washington Township School PTA. There were 16 Scouts led by Scoutmaster Ralph Brandeberry. Scouts on the roster included John Babcock, Richard Bader, Donald Buehrer, Charles Bortel, Alan Cole, John Current, Roderick Hicks, Ronald Hicks, Karl Hummel, Allen McElwrath, Robert Sears, Howard Shank, Lyle Wright, Dale Ribble, Elslow Williams, and Burdette Mozena. When the Troop rechartered in October, 1942, Ralph was again listed as Scoutmaster but he and three of the Committee members were listed as "serving in the military."

Over the next few years during the span of World War II, the Troop did not charter during the war. After the close of the war, the Troop was chartered to the "United Churches;" the Presbyterian and the Evangelical of Tontogany on August 8, 1947 with Mr. Brandeberry as Committee Chairman and Roger Kuder as Scoutmaster.

The Troop was chartered on August 28, 1948 to the Presbyterian Church with Robert S. Dickey as Scoutmaster. George Williams took over as Scoutmaster for the next two years while the Troop sponsorship remained with the church.

On April 23, 1951, the Troop's sponsor changed to American Legion Post #441 with Victor H. Emm as Scoutmaster. Vic served over the next two years in this position until he was replaced by Donald Buehrer in October of 1953 who served for the next two years. In October 1955 the Presbyterian minister, Robert Lucero, took over as Scoutmaster.

Joseph Stockner was the Troop's next Scoutmaster. Joe had been involved with the Troop for quiet a number of years as an assistant but became Scoutmaster in October of 1956. He served until Robert Bashore took over in October, 1957. One year later the Calvary United Methodist Church minister, Rev. Ezra Hinton, took over the post where he served until 1960. When Mr. Hinton moved on the Troop's charter lapsed.

In July, 1965 with the Odd Fellows as sponsor, Milt Spathelf, Sr. came on board as Scoutmaster with Buck and John Robinson as Assistant Scoutmasters. Due to commitments with his work at Davis Besse Nuclear Plant, Milt stepped aside in April of 1968 and his assistant, Gene Hardy, took over for the next year. Milt returned in April of 1969 and was Scoutmaster until 1974 with Joe Kaiser served as Assistant Scoutmaster for a majority of his tenure. It was during this time that the Troop's sponsorship changed to the Washington Township Volunteer Fire Department.

In 1974, Dave Schatzke became Scoutmaster and served for two years until 1976. Dave is pictured in the Village of Tontogany's Sesquicentennial booklet.

In 1976, the Troop's first Eagle Scout, Jeff Spathelf, became Scoutmaster and served into 1977. Ron Hafner, who had been Jeff's assistant, then took over the role in the fall. He served as Scoutmaster until the fall of 1991, becoming the longest-tenured Scoutmaster in the Troop's history. When interviewed, Ron mentioned, "I wouldn't trade those memories for anything in the world. They were some of the best times of my life."

Following Ron's tenure, Robert "Bob" Vollmar – Assistant Scoutmaster at the time – became Scoutmaster in late 1991 and served until 1993 when newcomer Rick Grimm took over the position, serving to 1999. During nearly seven years, Rick was assisted by John "Jack" Homan and William "Bill" Phillips.

Jeff Digby became Scoutmaster in 1999 serving into 2003 when Jack Homan took over the reins. In 2005 Jack moved on to replace Ron Hafner as Unit Commissioner and was himself replaced by Joel Horen.

Tontogany Troop #347, has been one of Wood District's most successful Boy Scout troops. They have been very active in the community and have, in previous years, become a force to be reckoned with at every District Camporee in the annual "Klondyke Derby." In addition to the countless weekend campouts and weeks at summer camp, they have sent Scouts to Philmont Scout Ranch in Cimarron, New Mexico; the Boundary Waters in Ely, Minnesota; Tinnerman Canoe Base on the Georgian Bay in Canada; and white water rafting on the New River in Beckley, West Virginia. They have canoed over a dozen rivers in northern Michigan, explored the caves of southern Indiana, and ventured to the BSA Sea Base in the open waters off the Florida Keys.

There are many more adventures that may not be listed here but they have made memories and friends that will last a lifetime. Scouting, through this Boy Scout Troop, has influenced some very fine young men along the way. Being a member of this Troop – Eagle Scout or not – should make you proud to know you were part of an institution that upheld the Scout Law and Oath to its very highest.

*The information contained in this history was researched and compiled by Ron Hafner, Scoutmaster from 1977-1991, and presented in conjunction with the unveiling of a dedication plaque of Eagle Scouts and Scoutmasters to the Washington Township Volunteer Fire Department in August, 2003.*

*Research credits: Erie Shores Council Archives, OA Museum at Camp Miakonda, DeVilbliss Scout Reservation; the Rev. Rick Hoff and Jackie Shank. Edited and updated by Jakob Grimm, February, 2007.*