
Franklin D. Roosevelt — “The Great Communicator”
The Master Speech Files, 1898, 1910-1945

Series 1: Franklin D. Roosevelt’s Political Ascension

File No. 471

1932 April 8

New York City, NY - Boy Scout Foundation
(Radio Address)

**Magnitude and accomplishment of the Boy Scout movement,
address over Station WJZ at the Luncheon of the Boy Scout
Foundation in New York City on Friday, April 8, 1932**

It is a rare treat, this opportunity to meet again with my associates of the Boy Scout Foundation.

I was startled with Mr. Collier's reminder that we have rounded out our first 10-year period. I feel that I am particularly indebted to him and his associates on the board and the members of the Advisory Council for what has been accomplished. And it appears to me that this tenth annual meeting of the Boy Scout Foundation can well be transformed into a report of stewardship to the people of this great city.

The progress which has been made in service to the youth of New York City and the Nation is due entirely to that vast army of more than 100,000 volunteers who, in one role or another, sacrifice time and effort to the cause of boys. To them the Nation owes a debt of gratitude.

It is somewhat difficult to visualize volunteer service on such a scale. Few fully realize the extent to which the burdens of public service—and

p. 593

I use that term in a very strict way—are assumed by volunteers. Few realize how helpless the regular agencies of government would be without this service. Hundreds of thousands of men and women are now engaged in emergency employment relief. Other hundreds of thousands regularly from week to week as volunteers are supplementing the work of the government through the citizen agencies with which they are identified. And so it is the volunteer, typical of the spirit of service, who is the backbone of social progress.

While my primary concern at the moment is that of the Boy Scouts, and the thousands of volunteers serving it, I want to project a plea in behalf of all character building and social service agencies during this difficult period. These agencies reflect an important phase of our recent progress; they are an integral part of our life of today; they express the hope of the future. Never perhaps in our history was the social service agency so urgently needed as now. And my plea is that this great service to America be protected from interruption or curtailment at this time.

The Boy Scout Foundation came into being 10 years ago because it was felt that there was a bigger opportunity in Greater New York for service to boys, which it was our responsibility to fill. There were then 16,000 Scouts. Today there are in excess of 32,000. We feel that progress toward one of our objectives has been made. But we recognize that there is a greater opportunity ahead. For in New York City 60,000 Scouts would not be considered adequate.

We realized then that the outdoor features of our program were paramount, but that our camping facilities were inadequate. Accordingly, we acquired and developed a wonderful 10,000-acre tract of land—a place the boys now call their own on which they are building not merely for their own use but for the joy of helping other boys in years to come.

The magnitude of that camping project is indicated by the substantial summer enrollment—3,500 boys can be accommodated daily.

That, too, was an achievement. But the full utilization of that tract, drawing thousands and thousands of New York City boys for citizenship and outdoor training each year, is but partially accomplished.

The outdoors is of special significance to the city boy living under crowded conditions. Life in the large city has lost its out-of-door opportunities. Artificial interests have been substituted. Normal, natural growth is threatened. Thus, the organized camp has a special mission. And it was visualized as something that would supplement in a fundamental way the efforts of the public school and the church to build the boys physically, mentally and spiritually. I wish that each of you within the hearing of my voice could visit the new camp which serves Greater New York.

It is gratifying to note that in the development of this great camp several friends have erected memorials.

I know of no more fitting tribute than to make it possible for some boy, or boys in generations to come, to have the benefit of this great outdoor university of character.

This is one direction in which we must provide for the permanency of the Boy Scout Movement. And I am happy to know that announcement of intention to make special gifts, or bequests, to the Endowment Fund, or specifically for the permanency of this camp, have been made.

Scouting, however, is not just camping. It is a leisure time program intended to give the boy something that challenges his interest and encourages self-improvement by diverting and directing his interest into worthwhile channels. Its unique methods of operation are of interest to educators and psychologists. To you and me, as citizens, the interest is primarily in results.

This is what Scouting achieves:

- It inculcates in the boy a definite sense of civic responsibility.
- It develops respect for the rights of others.
- It places the emphasis on honor and decency.
- It is constructive prevention.

But is not prevention rather than correction the solution of the crime problem? It is our positive duty to make the boy resourceful and trustworthy and he will not seek a gun at the point of which to make his livelihood. The racketeer and the gangster go out the window when Scouting comes in the door!

Thousands and thousands of New York City boys are eager to become Scouts. The outstanding opportunity offered to us is to make this program available to them. Our record of accomplishment so far should serve merely as a challenge—a challenge to expand the Boy Scout enrollment of this great city. That should be our objective! And I hope, in keeping with the proposals already made, the Boy Scout Foundation and its associated councils will undertake a most aggressive campaign to help more boys.