

As Camp Drake prepares to commemorate the 100th Anniversary of the Boy Scouts in 2010, it is fitting to share a news story of our camp's namesake, who helped lead the fledgling Scouting movement in this area in the 1920's. Although the lifestyles and amenities changed with the modern times, the Boy Scouts of America is still inspiring young people to reach their full potential.

ROBERT J. DRAKE BOY SCOUT LEADER

Mr. Drake was born February 15, 1898, to Frank and Alma Drake, in Lima, Ohio. His father preceded him in death on August 13, 1928. He was survived by his mother; a sister, Mrs. Lois (Drake) Rowland of Delaware, Ohio; and brothers, Francis Drake, of Toledo, Ohio, and Richard C. Drake, of Chicago, Illinois.

Died March 3, 1929, at McKinley Hospital located on the campus of the University of Illinois, in Champaign-Urbana, Illinois; cause of death was scarlet fever. Mr. Drake was 31 years old. Mr. Drake's funeral services were conducted at the First Methodist Church, Champaign, Illinois, by Rev. Clifford Northcott. Mr. Drake's family was accompanied at the services by Walter Swearingen, President of the Boy Scout Council. Champaign and Urbana schools were dismissed for Mr. Drake's funeral services. News of Mr. Drake's death caused great shock in the community. Leaders in all civic groups expressed profound sorrow at the loss of the man who was known as the "General" to those boys he worked with in Scouting, even though he never served in the military.



When Mr. Drake was 2 years old, the family moved to Chicago from Ohio. While in Chicago, he graduated from Hyde Park High School. During his childhood in Chicago, he became prominently identified with Boy Scout work, becoming the first in Chicago to become an Eagle Scout. In 1915, Drake acted as Camp Director for Boy Scouts at Seattle, Washington. He also had been in charge of Camp Hatetakwitit, near Weldon Springs, Illinois, where local Boy Scouts had their outings. In 1917, he entered the College of Commerce at the University of Illinois, in Champaign-Urbana, Illinois, from which he graduated in 1921. That same year, he became Scout Executive of Arrowhead Council, which office he held while at the same time, acting as instructor in Scoutcraft in connection with the University of Illinois.

Sorrowing hundreds filled the auditorium of the First Methodist Church in Champaign, Illinois, for the service the day after Mr. Drake's death. To honor Mr. Drake, members of Boy Scout troops, totaling over 300, ranging in ages from 12 to 19 years old, assembled across the street from the church in West Side Park, and marched as a body into the church. Local Civic organizations also attended in groups, including 65 men from the Kiwanis Clubs, as well as a large delegation from the Champaign and Urbana Rotary Clubs, Lions Club, and Exchange Clubs in Champaign and Urbana. Mr. Drake belonged to the Kiwanis Club.

Mr. Drake was eulogized by prominent citizens of Champaign and Urbana, Illinois, including Dr. Homer A. Hindman, who represented the Boy Scout Council of which he also is a member. Dr. Hindman recounted the growth of the organization since Mr. Drake's coming to Champaign. Also speaking at the services was Renick Buckles, himself an Eagle Scout, and one of the "General's" closest friends. He expressed the feelings that the Scouts had for Mr. Drake, stating that they should carry on as Bob would have wanted them to do, and to continue the work of the Scouts. After his tribute, Mr. Buckles requested the entire assembly rise as taps were sounded by another local Eagle Scout, "Teke" Wiley. A.F. Claude, Deputy Scout, and an executive from Regional Headquarters in Chicago, offered the Scout prayer, after which the services were adjourned by Rev. Northcott.

The next morning, Mr. Drake's mother, along with other family members left for Chicago by train, accompanied by a group of Scouts, as a Guard of Honor, composed of locals, including Lester Leutwiler, Billy Woods, Renick Buckles, Billy Knight, John Barth, Ralph Seeley, and "Teke" Wiley. Also traveling with the group was Walter Swearingen, President of the Boy Scout Council and Prof. A.R. Knight. After a short service was held at the Hyde Park Church, Chicago (where Mr. Drake attended as a child), Mr. Drake's body was laid to rest in Oak Woods Cemetery, on East 67th Street in Chicago, Illinois. Taps were sounded once again by "Teke" Wiley, closing the services.

On September 28, 1931, it was announced to the public that through the generosity of the local Exchange Clubs of Champaign and Urbana, the Kiwanis Club of C-U, the Lions Club of C-U, and the Rotary Clubs of C-U, 148 acres of land near Oakwood, Illinois, had been acquired for a permanent camp which can be used year round for the Boy Scouts. On May 28, 1932, this camp was dedicated to the memory of Mr. Drake and was officially named "Robert J. Drake Memorial Scout Camp".