

# Making a Scout Stave

The staff or "stave" is an important part of a Pathfinder's equipment, especially when hiking or camping. It is six feet (or 1.74 meters) in length. Sometimes it carries at its top or on one side a [carved head or figure of the Patrol animal or bird](#) of its owner. If someone in your Scouting group is interested in metalwork, you can also [make hiking staff medallions](#) to commemorate shared events or individual achievements. Such staves become prized souvenirs of your Scouting days.

Preferably, an Pathfinder hikes out into the woods to select and secure their staff, having first obtained the necessary permission; it should be a stout straight wood, about 1 1/2" (or 3.5 or 4 cm's) in diameter.

Suitable woods are hickory, ash, oak, iron wood (or "muscle wood"), and good grades of elm, sugar maple, wild cherry, yellow birch, mountain ash, and Saskatoon.

The staff was adopted by the

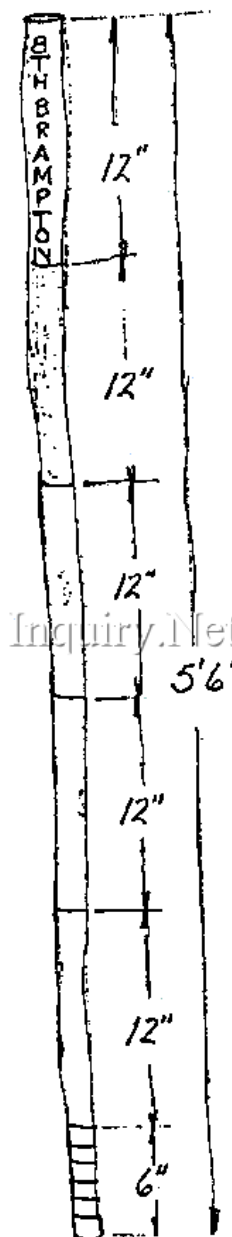
Founder, Lord Baden-Powell, because of its usefulness during one of his early military campaigns in the jungle country of West Africa. He used it for testing the depths of swamp holes and dark streams; for guarding his face when pushing through heavy bush; for feeling his way in the dark; and for carrying bundles over his shoulder when wading a stream.

Pathfinders have found many other uses for the staff. It can be especially useful when used with other staves as poles for making an emergency shelter; for signaling; for improvising a flagpole; for building a light bridge; as handles for an improvised stretcher; for the forming a barrier to control crowds, and for jumping ditches.

The staff should be carried slung over and behind the right shoulder. The thong is passed through two small holes about 10" (or 26 cm's) apart in the upper third of the staff, so placed that the staff clears the ground by several centimeters. The thong is secured by small stop-knots.

## Making Your Hiking Stave

1. Select and cut straight, 6 foot sapling, approximately 1 1/2" diameter at thick end (Ash, Maple, and Birch, are good)
2. Store in cool dry spot for 3-4 weeks.
3. Trim to 5' 6" length.
4. Remove bark. The second 12" may be left on with bark for a better grip.
5. Trim knots and smooth.
6. Mark at 12" intervals beginning at top (the thick end).
7. Mark top 6" at 1" intervals (thin end)
8. Decorate top with Troop, Patrol, or personal symbols.
9. Treat with oil stain or preservative.
10. Cover bottom end with metal or rubber chair glide or crutch tip.
11. Take stave to camp, hikes, and weekly meetings.



## Michael Playle on Scout staves

When we were invested it was our task to find or obtain a stave or stick and to make it "your own." Mine remained with me during my scouting life and to this day I still have it. The first rule was it had to be *at least* as tall as you were.

Often Patrol names were carved in them and measurement in inches for the first foot then every foot was marked the key to these were they were "yours" an individual mode of expression.

Many of us fitted ferrules but there were also those of us who chose not to. My own was a piece of wood from a peach tree with the bark stripped of then my name cut in with my knife. The stick was dried and in the early days many people oiled them with linseed oil.

I had carved out 2 bands around the stick and painted these in my patrol colors (Red and Black).

Mine was shellacked and leather bands tied around it at intervals

and then shellacked again

Our staves were kept in racks in our patrol corners and the key to it is the reverence with which they were treated.

Any wood can be used. In New Zealand, Manuka makes a good stick. Many people have a suitable stick at home or can put the word out to family members. Next time you go to camp go "stave" hunting. Often branches that are fallen reveal beauty when stripped and

whittles right .

Accumulate them slowly encourage and adopt them as troop treasures. Think of all the

things you can use them.

If you read *Scouting for Boys* it will tell you how to measure the height of an object using a stave.

You can use them for walking sticks, playing games, on parade, pioneering, for carrying troop colors, making a stretcher, and loads of other things.

## BP on Scout staves

The Scout staff is a useful addition to the kit of the Scout. Personally, I have found it an invaluable assistant when traversing mountains or boulder-strewn country and especially in night work in forest or bush. Also, by carving upon it various signs representing his achievements, the staff gradually becomes a record as well as a treasured companion to the Scout.

The Scout staff is a strong stick

about as high as your nose, marked in feet and inches for measuring.

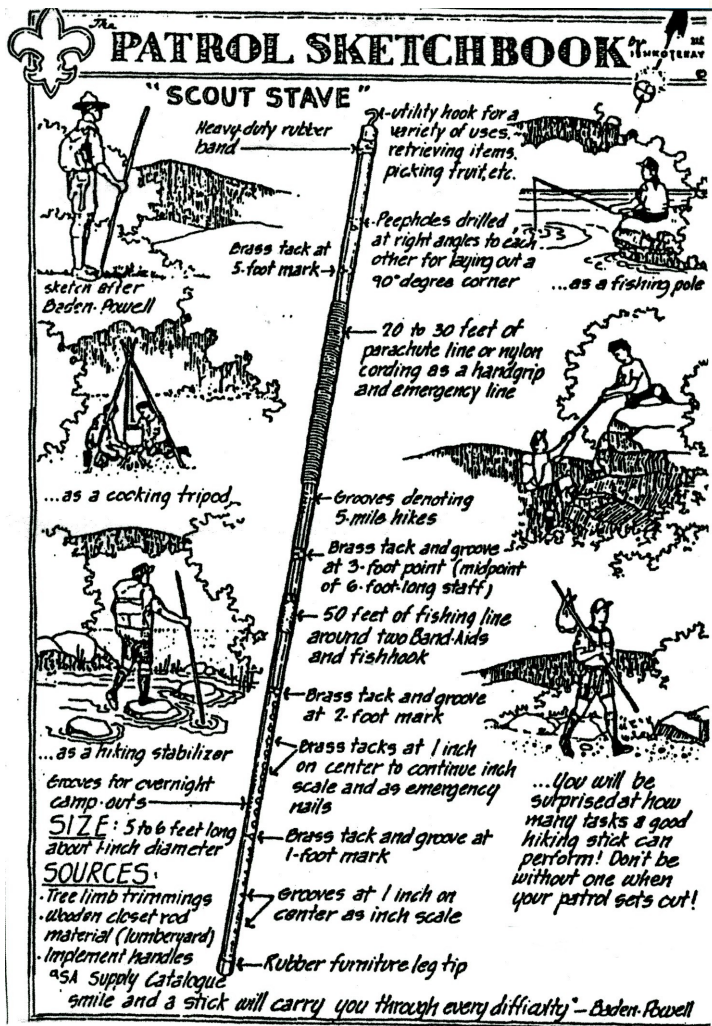
The staff is useful for all sorts of things, such as making a stretcher, keeping back a crowd, jumping over a ditch, testing the depth of a river, keeping in touch with the rest of your Patrol in the dark. You can help another Scout over a high wall if you hold your staff horizontally between your hands and make a step for him; he can then give you

a hand from above.

Several staves can be used for building a light bridge, a hut or a flag staff.

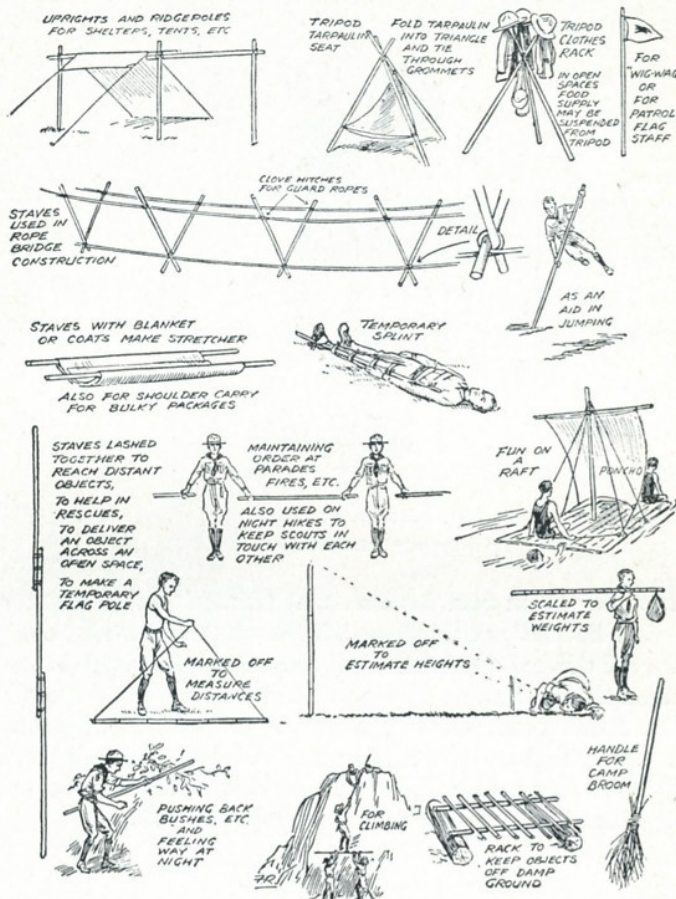
There are many other uses for the staff. In fact, you will soon find that if you don't have your staff with you, you will always be wanting it.

If you get the chance, cut your own staff. But remember to get permission first



## PRACTICAL USES OF THE STAFF

Some of the practical uses of the Scout staff are told in these pictures:



Practical Uses of the Staff