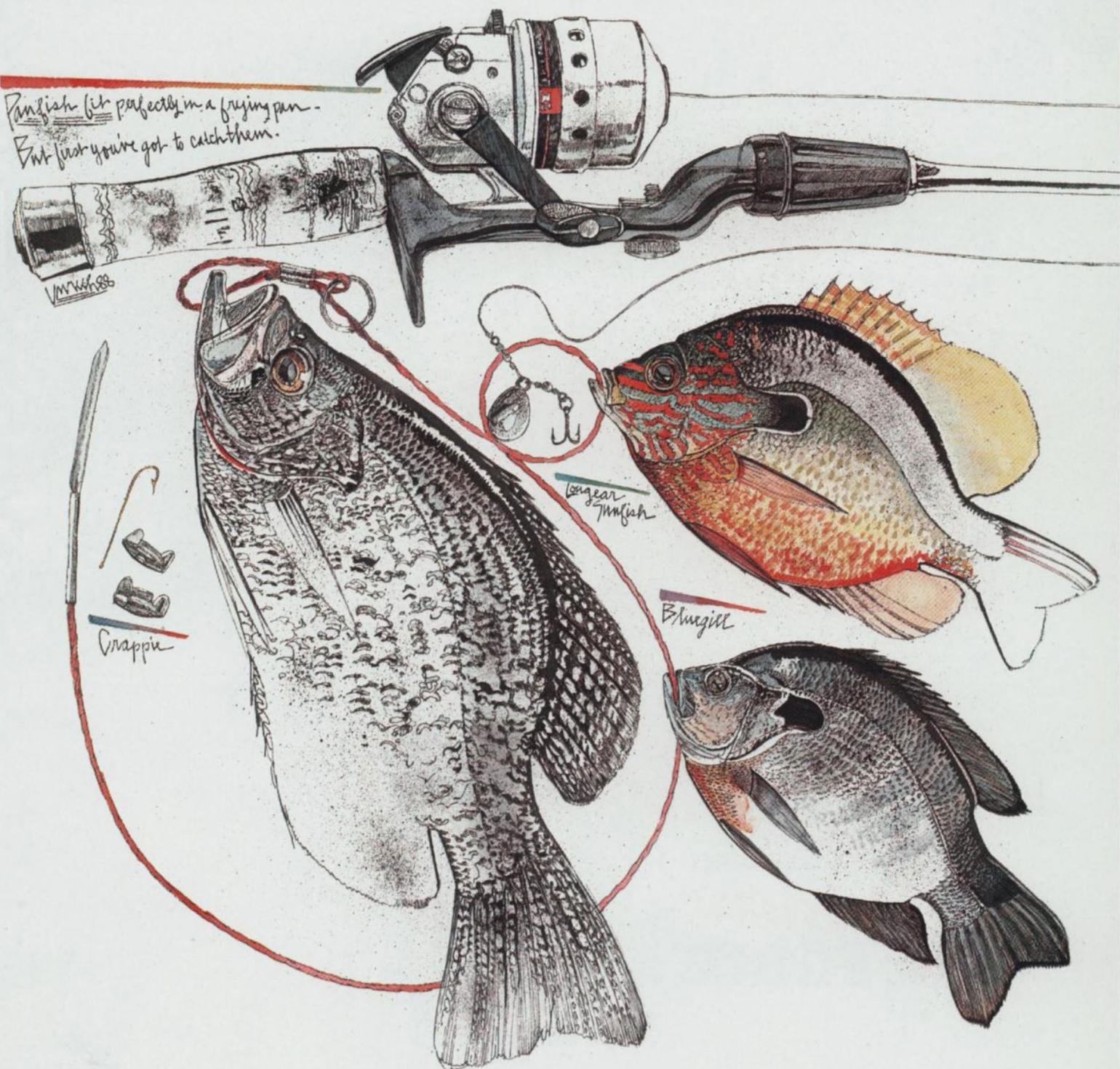


BOYS' LIFE

For
All
Boys

Panfishing: A Beginner's Guide



Scouting's stamps

BY J. G. NASH

More than 200 countries have issued stamps featuring Scouts.

THE VERY FIRST postage stamp which can be clearly associated with Scouting was made 87 years ago by British soldiers, at a far-off place called Mafeking (in what is now South Africa).

The British garrison there had been under siege by hostile settlers for almost a year. Bored by isolation, some of the soldiers amused themselves by making stamps honoring their commander—Col. Robert S. S. Baden-Powell. B-P started the worldwide Scouting movement seven years later.

Another stamp made at Mafeking has a link to Scouting. It pictured a boy delivering mail on a bicycle. The boy represented B-P's Cadet Corps, a group of youngsters that he later referred to as his "first boy scouts."

These stamps are so rare that if you come across one, it would be about like finding a \$1,000 bill. They're worth a lot because few were made and even fewer survived all these years. The process for printing them was similar to that for making blueprints. A transparent photograph was placed on a sheet of chemically treated paper and then exposed to a bright light. When the paper was washed with water, the places which had been shaded by dark parts of the negative appeared as white; the portion which had been exposed to light turned shades of blue.

The story of Mafeking stamps is only one of dozens of interesting facts you'll discover if you study postage stamps which feature Scouting.

Collecting Scout stamps can help you fulfill two requirements for the Stamp Collecting merit badge. It will also teach you about the history of Scouting.

Since those early "blueprint" stamps were made, more than 200 countries have produced postage stamps honoring Scouting. Curiously, the United States has issued only six (and one postcard); three of those stamps featured the Girl Scouts.

[The U.S. issued its first Boy Scout stamp (3-cent) in 1950, celebrating the 40th anniversary of the Boy Scouts of America and the second national Scout jamboree. Ten years later a second stamp (4-cent) was issued to commemorate the BSA's 50th anniversary. In 1967 the U.S. issued a 6-cent postcard honoring the XII World Scout Jamboree, held in Idaho. In 1985, during the 75th anniversary of the BSA, Boy Scouting was featured on one 22-cent stamp out of a block of four honoring American youth organizations.]

Some of the world's smallest and poorest nations, on the other hand, have issued many stamps on Scouting. For example, in 1979 Liberia issued a block of 50 stamps showing each of Norman Rockwell's BSA paintings.

The first country to portray a Scouting organization on its stamps was Czechoslovakia. In the wake of World War I (November 1918), while leaders were establishing their new nations, official Czech mail was delivered by Slovakian Sea Scouts. The stamps on the letters carried the words "POSTA CESKYCH SKAUTU," which means "Czech Scout Post."

In 1925 another small eastern European country—Hungary—was the first to show a Boy Scout on its postage.

There isn't space here to discuss all of the most interesting Scout stamps—you'll have to uncover them for yourself. But Korea's 1957 stamp showing a Korean Scout and a badge is worth mentioning. This stamp is special because it is largely a product of an American's long interest in stamps and Scouting.

Harry Thorsen, who has been involved

in Scouting for more than 62 years, became so fascinated with the aspect of Scouts on stamps that, in 1951, he founded the Scouts on Stamps Society International (SOSSI). He started with 10 members; today there are more than 1,600 representing 45 countries. (Thorsen also helped prepare the "Stamp Collecting" merit badge pamphlet.)

In 1956, Mr. Thorsen had Bill Rhee, the Chief Scout Executive of Korea, as his houseguest. Mr. Rhee was impressed with Thorsen's Scout stamp collection, and asked his help in getting a stamp issued in Korea. The '57 issue was the result of their joint effort.

"When countries issue Scout stamps, it's like they are giving their stamp of approval that Scouting is a worthwhile activity," Thorsen says. "They are also recognizing the big help Scouts have been over the years in the soup kitchens, during wars, just doing Good Turns daily." ♣

(To join the Scouts on Stamps Society International, write to Kenneth A. Shuker, 20 Cedar Lane, Cornwall, NY 12518. Annual dues of \$7.50 include monthly editions of the SOSSI Journal.)



Above: Stamp collectibles pictured with the merit badge pamphlet and BSA stamp album include Scout stamps and first-day covers.



Left: Longtime Scouter Harry Thorsen points to Baden-Powell stamps made in 1900. Stamps are on display in Thorsen's Museum of Scouting Memorabilia, Sarasota, Fla.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY J. G. NASH