

Historical merit badges help Boy Scouts celebrate Scouting's past

A merit badge called Computers would sound just a crazy to a 1910 Boy Scout as a merit badge called Tracking sounds to Scouts today. That's because the BSA's list of available merit badges has evolved through the years as the interests of boys have changed.

In honor of the BSA's 100th Anniversary, though, today's generation of Scouts will get the unique opportunity to experience some of the activities their predecessors enjoyed. That's possible thanks to the BSA's new **Historical Merit Badge Program**, a set of four discontinued merit badges that today's Scouts can earn.

Boys can earn any or all of these merit badges:



Carpentry

First offered in 1911 and discontinued in 1952. Sample requirements: demonstrate the use of tools, such as a miter and bevel; build a simple piece of furniture for use at home.



Signaling

First offered in 1910 and discontinued in 1992. Sample requirements: build a simple buzzer or blinker capable of sending Morse code messages, and send a message of at least 35 words; send and receive messages using semaphore flags at a rate of at least 30 letters per minute.



Tracking

First offered in 1911 (as Stalker merit badge) and discontinued in 1952. Sample requirements: recognize the tracks of 10 different animals; give evidence to show you have tracked at least two different kinds of birds or animals, documenting their speed and direction.



Pathfinding

First offered in 1911 and discontinued in 1952. Sample requirements: be able to guide people to important places within a three-mile radius of your home; submit a scale map of your community.

Sounds like a blast, right? But there's one catch: Boys must start and finish all requirements within the year 2010. So if your guys built furniture for their patrol kitchen at last year's summer camp, they can't use that product for the Carpentry merit badge. And don't delay—after Dec. 31, 2010, these merit badges will go back on the “retired” list.

If this is a program you want to bring to your troop, the BSA suggests you track down merit badge counselors soon. For Carpentry, contact a local cabinet-making business. A nearby Homeland Security office could help you with Pathfinding. Signaling would benefit from the help of a local amateur ham radio group. And for Tracking, try your state's department of natural resources. Those are merely suggestions. Be creative!

For more information, look for a special Web site and a printed guide by the end of the month. That's where you'll find the complete requirements for each patch. The BSA also plans to deliver a guide that will help councils and districts host a historical camporee or similar event to offer these merit badges.

The Historical Merit Badge Program gives you the perfect chance to organize exciting activities for your Scouts, while connecting them with the BSA's rich past. It's another example of the BSA's devotion to *Celebrating the Adventure, Continuing the Journey*