



Council Shoulder Patches

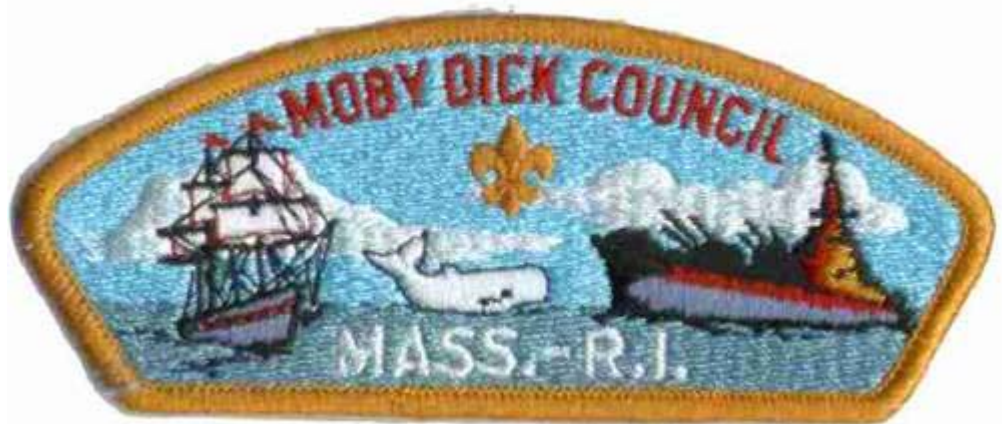
The ISCA Getting Started Collecting Series

Council Shoulder Patch or CSP collecting is very popular Scouting collectible. In 1970, Boy Scout councils started issuing what we now call CSPs or council strips. In 1970, a letter was sent to every council. Stapled to the letter were three CSPs that came to be known as “The National Sample Set”. These were samples of what the new CSPs might look like from Circle Ten Council, Paul Bunyan, and “Columbiana-Johnny Appleseed” which was a combination of two councils in Ohio. They had three shapes, all of which were used, but the shape of the Circle Ten sample became by far the most common.



National Sample Set

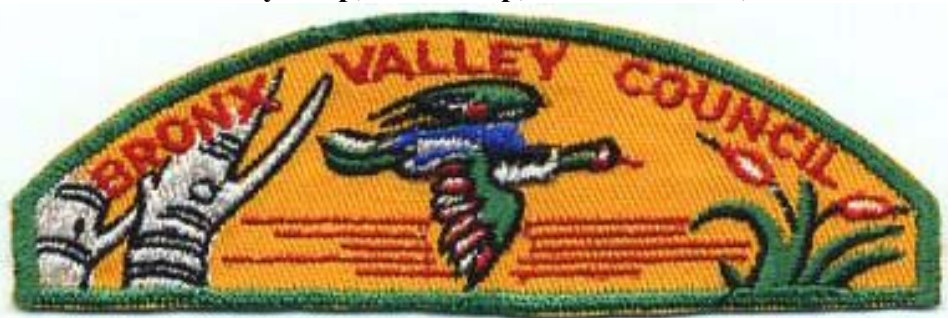
By the 1973 Jamboree at Moraine State Park in Pennsylvania, CSP collecting had become well established. Every Scout council issues one or more CSPs for us to wear on our left shoulders. Most of us have one on our uniform. CSPs often contain some images that tell something about the council. For example, Occoneechee Council from Raleigh, North Carolina, has the state bird, mammal, flower, and tree (cardinal, a gray squirrel, flowering Dogwood, pine), and image of the state (the council symbol), and the sun. Look at the CSP on your uniform. What images are there? Why? If you don't know why, ask your Scoutmaster, and if he or she does not know, ask another leader or ask them to find out why. You also may be able to find out at your council's web site.



Before CSPs, most Scouts wore two patches with the names of their communities and states. Community and state strips were usually made on red cloth with a white border and lettering and no other pictures or images. (Other colors were sometimes used earlier and for Cub Scouts and other branches of Scouting.) Some Scouts, mostly adult Scouters wore red and white strips that just had the council name. CSPs are typically more detailed and colorful. Before CSPs, in some cases many years before, a few councils issued colorful shoulder patches that were worn like CSPs. Some people collect these pre-CSPs, for example from Chief Shabonna, Bronx Valley, and other councils. These are usually much harder to get than regular CSPs.



Community Strip, State Strip, Red and White, CSP



Bronx Valley Pre-CSP

There are many ways that you can collect CSPs. Most people start by buying one extra from their council and saving it without sewing it on a uniform. Then you can buy a few extra CSPs and trade them for others. Some people start by trying to collect every CSP from their council, or one CSP from every council in their state. If you are in the OA, you may want to collect one CSP from every council in your section. Some Scouts just collect CSPs they like; others may have theme collections such as CSPs with birds or bears. As your collection grows, you may want to try to collect one from every



Some CSPs have a Nonstandard Shape



Shoulder Activity Patch - SAP

current council (over 300) and later include merged councils (councils that no longer exist, over 200 more). Many merged councils are as easy to collect as current councils, although some are much harder. Some traders try to get the first CSP from every council.

There are other council shoulder patches besides CSPs. JSPs, or jamboree shoulder patches, are issued to a council's contingent members. Some councils issue sets of JSPs for each jamboree. JSP trading is very popular at jamborees. Other shoulder patches include SAPs or Shoulder Activity Patches. These could be issued for camporees, camps, other events, for those who donate to a Friends of Scouting campaign, to Philmont or other high-adventure base contingents, and so on. SAPs have become more and more popular in recent years.

We often say
“knowledge is key!”
This means that it is
very important to learn
as much as you can
about the area you
collect. The more you
know, the better you can
do, both in life and in
collecting. Most older
traders are glad to help
you learn. Also, there
are books about CSPs
and about many other
areas of collecting.
Ask other traders to
show you their books.
Eventually, as your
collection grows, you
will want to obtain
books yourself. You
can also learn more



about CSPs on the web, for example at <http://councilstrip.com/begin.html>,
<http://www.gilwell.com/firstCSP/>, and the ISCA site <http://www.scouttrader.org/>. You
can get a free list of all current and merged councils from
<http://councilstrip.com/begin.html>.

When you begin trading, just trade one-for-one: one of yours for one of theirs. If someone wants two for theirs or ten for theirs, find someone else to trade with. As your knowledge grows, and you learn which patches are more valuable and which are more common, you can start acquiring more valuable patches. There are thousands of CSPs that you can get with a one-for-one trade. Don't worry that you may not get a certain cool patch that you really like. You will almost certainly find it available again.

One of the hard parts about patch collecting is getting duplicate patches (often called “dups,” rhymes with “oops”) to trade. CSPs from your own council may cost a lot of money. CSPs costing more than 3 or 4 dollars each are not unusual. So you may not want to buy a bunch of CSPs from your own council to get started. Your council's Scout Shop may sell CSPs from other councils in your area. Some of these may be cheaper than your own. Your council's Scout Shop may also be able to order patches from other councils

that may be cheaper still. Depending on where you live, having the Scout Shop order them and picking them up there may be cheaper than having them shipped directly to you. You may have a leader in your troop who sometimes goes to your Scout Shop who can pick them up for you. Another source for duplicate CSPs is at Trade-O-Rees and from patch dealers. You may be able to go to a Trade-O-Ree and buy duplicates for as little



as \$2 each. I recently saw some duplicate CSPs for sale for 75 cents each! You have to be pretty lucky to find any that cheap. There are also professional patch dealers that you can find on the web that might sell you inexpensive duplicates. Just as knowledge is key, so is persistence. Shop around. Keep looking. The more you look, the more likely you are to find great deals. Ask traders you see at Trade-O-Rees if they have any duplicates they can sell inexpensively to help you get started.

-- Warren F. Kuhfeld