



Collecting Camp Patches

The ISCA Getting Started Collecting Series

Camping has always been a significant part of Scouting. Today, over 800 National, Regional and Council camps across the United States provide long and short term camping experiences for Scouts each year. In addition, there are many more Scout camps around the world. The patches that are issued to the campers and staff help to remind them in later years of their many wonderful experiences, and camp patches have become a specific area of interest to some collectors. Camp patches come in many different shapes, sizes, and materials. They may or may not indicate the year in which they were issued.

Sometimes a camp may issue the same (undated) style of patch for many years but change the color of the patch or its border to show how many seasons the Scout has attended. Buffalo Trace Council, for example, did this in the 1960s. Although there is virtually no standardization for camp patches, it is their uniqueness that often makes them appealing to the collector (see page 3).

Your first camp patch collection consists of all of the patches that you earned from your troop's regular summer camp for each of the years that you attended. Next, you might work on adding patches issued for each year that the camp existed. Sometimes, extra patches from past years are available for purchase at the camp, Council Office or Scout Shop. If you are collecting patches from a camp that has been around for a long time, the older patches may be hard to find.



As your interest in camp patches increases, you may try to collect one camp patch from every state or council. When trading for a patch from a camp that you are unfamiliar with, you should get as much information as you can about the camp. You should try to find out the age of the patch, the name of the council (if it is not on the patch), and you should also try to learn something about the camp itself. Part of the fun of camp patch collecting is learning about camps in other parts of the country or the world.

Some advanced collectors look for patches from all camps in a particular state or area of the country. Others have limited their collection to specific items such as old felt camp patches, patches of a particular shape, or patches from camps that are no longer in existence. Some specialize in staff items. Still others may try to get one patch from every camp. The most serious camp patch collectors will keep every issue from every camp. Almost all collectors, no matter what their specialization, have a camp patch collection from their local area. Deciding what to collect is, of course, completely up to you.

My advice to you if you are considering beginning a camp patch collection is to start with what you have and what you know. At first, just trade one for one. Learn as much as you can about the patches issued by the camps you want to collect by asking Scouters or other collectors who might know something about them. Although there are a few comprehensive sources of information about Scout camp patches that are available, none is as complete or detailed as those for CSPs or OA flaps. The site www.campimages.com currently has over 5000 images of camp patches, and it can be very helpful.

Although collecting camp patches is becoming more popular, it is not nearly as common as collecting council or OA patches. For this reason, you will sometimes need to “cross-trade” other types of patches (CSPs for example) to obtain camp patches. Camp patches of comparable vintage are usually traded one for one while older camp patches generally have a greater value than more recent ones. Determining the relative values of most camp patches continues to be a “seat-of-the-pants” type of exercise since there is not much sales data available for most of them. If interest in camp patch collecting continues to increase, I would expect someone to publish a price guide in the near future.

If you spent a week at a Scout camp this summer, you more than likely had a lot of fun, enjoyed being in the great outdoors, earned a merit badge, advanced in rank, and earned a camp patch. Congratulations - you are now a camp patch collector!

-- J. Robert Hall

