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Troop 103 Celebrates Its 90th Anniversary By Recreating A Historic Troop Photograph

When the leadership of Troop 103, chartered to St. Joseph Church Holy Name Society in Hanover, were planning the celebration of the troop's 90th anniversary, an outing to the Gettysburg National Military Park emerged as a key component of the festivities. But not for the reasons you may think.

Troops making the journey to the Gettysburg battlefield are pretty common around these parts, but Troop 103 wasn't intending for their Scouts to learn much about the history that took place there back in 1863 on this particular trip. This time, the focus was on their own troop's history.

One of the personal stories behind this summer's Gettysburg trip belongs to John T. Murphy, an 81-year-old retiree who was Troop 103's third-ever Eagle Scout many years ago. John was one of the 13 brothers and sisters in his family and Scouting had a big impact on his life. In addition to earning his Eagle Scout award, John worked for several years on the summer camp staff at Camp Conewago in the late 1930's.



George Murphy, one of John's brothers, passed away back in 1998. Not too long ago, John said he was contacted by George's wife, Mary, who had come across a number of Scouting items that were her husband's and she asked John if he wanted any of his brother's Scouting stuff or if the troop might be interested in receiving these things. Among these items was a Troop 103 group photograph taken at Devil's Den on the Gettysburg battlefield back in 1919 (above right). Devil's Den is one of the more-famous landmarks at Gettysburg - its distinctive huge granite formations and steep cliffs had a significant impact on the fighting between Union and Confederate armies back in 1863.

John, knowing that the troop was already actively planning its 90th anniversary celebration, took his brother's copy of the 1919 photograph to the troop. Frank Sanders, who led the committee planning the troop's 90th anniversary celebration, and troop committee chair Bob Zinn were both already on board with the notion to recreate the 1919 photo. The anniversary committee (unbeknownst to John) had previously seen a copy of the 1919 photo that existed in the troop's archives and that discussions about restaging the picture with current troop members had brewing for a good while.

Zinn was especially interested in trying to mirror as much of the detail from the original 1919 photo as possible in the 2008 version (shown below). Sanders remembers that while the current troop members were excited about being part of the troop's history, the picture was taken on a very hot day and Zinn was meticulous in getting all the details just right. How close did he come to matching everything up? Take a look at the two photographs and compare them for yourself.

If you look closely at the top row of Scouts in the 1919 photograph, the Scout at the far left (with his arm on his side) is John Murphy's father - Nicholas Murphy (just age 16 at the time the picture was taken). Nicholas would go on to receive the Silver Beaver Award from the council in the 1940s. In the front row on the far left is Thomas L. Murphy, John Murphy's grandfather. Thomas helped organize Troop 103 when it was founded in 1918. The 1919 photo is a great piece of Scouting history, with the long-ago images of Murphy's father and grandfather showing the earliest beginnings of the impact that Scouting would ultimately have for generations of the Murphy family.

Congratulations to Troop 103 on its 90th anniversary and for sharing their story of this very special remembrance with all the Scouts and Scouters in the York-Area Area Council.


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