

= Arthur Rose Eldred =

Arthur Rose Eldred ( August 16 , 1895 ? January 4 , 1951 ) was an American agricultural and railroad industry executive , civic leader , and the first Eagle Scout in the Boy Scouts of America ( BSA ) . As a 17 @-@ year @-@ old candidate for the highest rank bestowed by the BSA , he was personally interviewed by a panel composed of the youth organization 's founding luminaries , including Ernest Thompson Seton and Daniel Carter Beard . Eldred was awarded the coveted distinction of Eagle Scout on September 2 , 1912 , becoming the first of more than two million boys in the U.S. since then to earn Scouting 's most vaunted rank . Eldred also received the Bronze Honor Medal for lifesaving , and was the first of four generations of Eagle Scouts in his family .

A graduate of Cornell University , Eldred enlisted at age 22 in the United States Navy in January 1918 , nine months after the U.S. entry into World War I. After serving aboard various Navy vessels and seeing combat in that conflict , he then worked in the agriculture and produce transportation industries , serving as a railroad industry official . Eldred continued as an active Scout leader and school board member throughout much of his adult life .

= = Scouting as a youth = =

Eldred was born in Brooklyn , New York , and raised in Oceanside , Long Island , New York by his mother after his father died . Eldred 's older brother , Hubert W. Eldred , was instrumental in starting Troop 1 of Oceanside , Long Island , New York in November 1910 . Troop 1 was fully uniformed and their appearance so impressed Chief Scout Executive James E. West that he asked the troop to serve as honor guard for the visit of Baden @-@ Powell , the founder of Scouting . West paid the expenses for the troop to travel to New York on January 31 , 1912 . Baden @-@ Powell inspected Troop 1 , and spoke with Eldred at some length .

In March 1911 , Eldred earned First Class rank . In April 1912 , he completed the 21 merit badges required for Eagle Scout . Merit badges are awards for mastering skills taught in the Scouting program . At the time , only 141 merit badges had then been earned by about 50 Scouts . As originally implemented , Eagle Scout was part of the merit badge system and was not a rank . Thus Eldred , like several of the early Eagles , did not earn the Life or Star awards that later preceded Eagle Scout . Eldred 's merit badges were noted in the Honor Roll of the August 1912 edition of Boys ' Life .

Eldred did not have a troop board of review , a review by the adult troop leaders to ensure eligibility . Instead , Eldred had a thorough National Board of Review consisting of West , Ernest Thompson Seton , Daniel Carter Beard , and Wilbert E. Longfellow , who wrote in the Handbook for Boys on life @-@ saving and swimming . At the time there had still not been a council @-@ level system for Eagle Scouts boards of review . West informed Eldred of his Eagle award in a letter dated August 21 , 1912 . This letter also informed Eldred of the delay in the medal , caused by the fact that the design of the Eagle Scout medal had not been finalized . Eldred was presented Eagle Scout on Labor Day , September 2 , 1912 , becoming the first to earn Scouting 's highest rank , just two years after the founding of the BSA itself .

In August 1912 , Eldred was camping with the troop in Orange Lake , New York . While swimming in the lake , fifteen @-@ year @-@ old Melvin Daly , another Scout who was a non @-@ swimmer , began to drown . Eldred rescued Daly with the assistance of Merritt Cutler . Chief Scout Seton presented Eldred with the Honor Medal for this action .

= = Education and career = =

Eldred entered Cornell University in 1912 and graduated in 1916 having studied agriculture . At the university , Eldred was a member of the Alpha Zeta fraternity , president of the Agricultural Association and participated in track and cross @-@ country .

= = = Naval service = = =

Eldred enlisted in the United States Navy in January 1918 , during World War I. He was initially assigned to the Philadelphia Naval Yard before shipping out on the transport USS Henderson ( AP @-@ 1 ) on Sunday , June 30 , 1918 from Bush Terminal in Brooklyn , New York for overseas duty . On July 1 , 1918 his convoy spotted two enemy submarines and attacked them with depth charges . It is not known whether the submarines were damaged . During the Henderson 's seventh troop transport voyage to France there was a fire on board on July 2 , 1918 , that resulted in the ship returning to the United States . All but one or two of those on board were rescued by the destroyers USS Mayrant ( DD @-@ 31 ) and USS Paul Jones ( DD @-@ 10 ) and eventually taken aboard the USS Von Steuben ( ID @-@ 3017 ) , which continued to Brest , France , where Eldred 's knowledge of French proved useful . From there , he was sent by train to Italy .

Eldred arrived in Italy in July 1918 and eventually at Sub Chaser Base 25 , located in Corfu , Greece in September 1918 . There he served as a machinist aboard submarine chaser SC @-@ 244 , where they patrolled the Strait of Otranto and were engaged in combat . While in Corfu , Eldred and many others got sick with the flu during the 1918 flu pandemic . The conditions at the hospital were so bad that he had to crawl to a stream to get water , which resulted in a permanent scar on his left hip . Eldred began his return to the United States and arrived in Malta on December 25 , 1918 . By February 1919 , he was in Gibraltar . He was given the option of staying in the Navy until they arrived home in six months or being discharged and paying his own way home . He elected the discharge and was separated from the Navy on March 4 , 1919 . He met some U.S. Army soldiers who were en route to America aboard an Army troop ship . They took him aboard as a stowaway and loaned him an Army uniform . Eldred slept in a life boat on the way back to America .

= = = Business and civic endeavors = = =

After the war , Eldred worked for a dairy , then became the agricultural agent for Atlantic County , New Jersey in 1921 and established the Atlantic City municipal market . He later promoted produce transportation for the Reading Railroad . As the trucking industry became a major competitor for the carriage of agricultural products , Eldred became the manager of the Eastern Railroad Association 's Motor Carrier Committee . He also served on the Camden County Council , the Clementon School District Board of Education , and also served as Overbrook Regional school board president .

= = Adult Scouting life , descendants , and legacy = =

Eldred was a board of review examiner throughout the 1920s . He was later the troop committee chairman for Troop 77 in Clementon , New Jersey . Eldred 's descendants have followed in his footsteps . Eldred was present when his eldest son , Willard " Bill " G. Eldred , had his Eagle Scout ceremony on October 27 , 1944 . Eldred also had a younger son , Arthur , and one daughter , Patricia . Two of Eldred 's grandsons are also Eagle Scouts : James I. Hudson III ( 1968 ) and Willard " Bill " Eldred ( 1977 ) . Four of his great @-@ grandsons , Kyle Kern , Tyler Eldred , Tennessee Abbott , and Bobby Hitte , were Scouts as of March 2007 , working towards Eagle Scout . Tyler Eldred and Kyle Kern did not make Eagle Scout and were no longer in Scouting as youths by July 2009 . Tennessee Abbott had his Eagle Scout ceremony on May 2 , 2010 . Bobby Hitte became an Eagle Scout in 2012 , 100 years after Arthur and another Eldred descendant , Jack Eldred , had joined Scouting .

Eldred died at the age of 55 from colon cancer on January 4 , 1951 at his home in Clementon . He is buried in Berlin Cemetery , Berlin , New Jersey . The National Eagle Scout Association chapter of the BSA 's Theodore Roosevelt Council in Massapequa , New York is named in honor of Eldred . In October 1976 the Village of Rockville Centre , New York honored Arthur Eldred by dedicating Eagle Scout Park in the village in his memory . The ceremony was attended by his widow , son Bill and grandsons .