

Troop 103

The Reverend Dr. A.C. Adamz, of Christ Church Episcopal in Tracy City, Tennessee organized a Boy Scout troop (Troop 103) in 1927.* With his knowledge in natural history and his skills as a taxidermist, his troop opened a Boy Scout natural history museum—said to be the largest in the country. The museum was located in an abandoned store building. It had over 100,000 items representing nearly all classes of reptiles, birds, and animal life of the Cumberlands! There are more than 500 snakes, 400 turtle shells, and many lizards in the museum. Mounted specimens included: wildcat, opossum, groundhog, fox, squirrel, owl, blue heron, white crane, turkey buzzard, and scores of butterflies, moths, and other insects. In the museum were also found a display of basketry, tin can craft, and wood carving work done by local Boy Scouts, as well as Indian relics, fossils, and bird nests. Father Adamz and his scouts traveled and set up exhibits at the Chicago World's Fair in 1933, and the New York World's Fair in 1939.

In a Chattanooga News article dated January 20, 1933, Father Adamz told of his snake hunts with the scout troop, and of the annual snake suppers which they have enjoyed around their campfires. "Fried rattlesnake is good; tastes just like fish," he informed the reporters. The boys are learning the ways of the wildlife—how to capture dangerous snakes, how to train them, and extract the poison fangs.

In 1935, in an effort to raise money to send Life Scout, Earl Henley, to the Boy Scout National Jamboree in Washington, D.C., Father Adamz and his troop brought over 14 thousand items to Chattanooga for the Scouting Exposition that was open to the public—the admission to the troop exhibit was 10 cents. He advertised that one of his scouts, Ray Shelton—"just as an added novelty"—would bite the head off of a live water snake and the troop would serve fried snake meat to the public. Following a much publicized debate between the Scout Executive, Charles Peacock, the Chattanooga Humane Society, and Father Adamz, the scout was not allowed to bite the snake; however the troop did stage a big comeback by boiling serpents and making a nice snake stew. Samples were offered to the public. Assistant Scoutmaster Charles Williams said, "rattlesnake meat is the best delicacy, but we don't want to kill our only rattler, we we're going to cook a pine snake and maybe garnish it with a few water snakes." The troop did go back to Tracy City \$53.00 richer.

[Newspaper clipping](#) of the troop re-chartering in 1931.

Additional research from J.D. Broadwell from an interview with the Flury brothers at their store on 5/1/2023:

In the early 1930s when most of the town consisted of coal mine and lumber mill work, there started up a scout troop run by Episcopal priest "Father Adams" (Alfonso Constantine Adams,

went by "A.C"). This troop met in the upstairs of the old courthouse and had a "scout museum" consisting of a huge collection of locally acquired animal specimens, preserved in formaldehyde and by taxidermy. This museum was dispersed and it is unclear where all the parts ended up. They said there was an effort to put it back together ~10 years ago but nothing came of it. They mentioned snakes, embryos of animals in formaldehyde, a two-headed calf, and more. Neither brother remembers ever seeing a uniform or patch from this troop, or the troop #, and said that Father Adams died in 1948(?).

Tracy City Cub Pack, 1932:

