

R. KELLY BRYANT, Jr.

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September 22, 2003

Mr. Thomas A. Stith, III
222 Shalimar Drive
Durham, NC 27713

Dear Mr. Stith:

Re: Rocky Mount Family History

In going through some files at our home place on Pennsylvania Avenue in Rocky Mount, we (my sister and I) ran across the enclosed letter which might be of interest to you and your family.

This is the only file that we located on this event. It appears that your grandfather, Mr. Thomas Stith of Rocky Mount was at that time stripped of his position and program of a Boy Scout troop where he served as scoutmaster. As I remember, the troop was registered with St. James Baptist Church.

Apparently, he was restored to the position because Mr. John H. Lucas, my sister (Miss Maggie P. Bryant, 1605 Lincoln Street here in Durham) and I remember Mr. Tom Stith as scoutmaster in the 1920's and we think he was still serving when we finished high school and left home in 1935 and John left in 1936. We can remember his weekly march with his scouts and drum corps from his home at 509 Atlantic Avenue to the church on East Thomas Street about 10 blocks away.

I also remember attending a scout leader's conference in Wilson about 1948^{12/1/51} with Mr. C. C. Spaulding and others from Durham. An announcement was made at that meeting by a white official from East Carolina Boy Scout Council that they have had a boy scout troop for blacks in Rocky Mount since 1943. This came as a surprise to me because your grandfather had his troop years before and the enclosed letter to my father dated August 23, 1919 tells why--they did not recognize your grandfather and his boy scout troop at that time. It could be that surviving family members may not remember or have knowledge of this incident that happened in 1919. The "Mr. West" referred to in the letter was Chief Scout Executive James E. West, Executive Board, Boy Scouts of America, New York, NY. Please let me know when your grandfather passed so that I might have some idea as to when his scouting career ended.

There was a Mr. Grimes came to Rocky Mount when I was about 12 years old (1929) and took a neighborhood group of us hiking, fishing and swimming but were never called scouts.

Black scouting in Durham began with a Troop 55 at Hillside High School in 1931 and was transferred to White Rock Baptist Church in 1932. Mr. James W. Carrington, Mr. J. M. Schooler and Mr. Nathaniel B. White are some of the surviving leaders in the early troop.

I became active in the Occonechee Council of the Boy Scouts in 1943 as a neighborhood commissioner and later as a member of the Advancement Committee for Durham County. Two Boy Scouts were sent to my home in 1951 by Mr. E. W. Midgette, principal, to ask me to serve as the scoutmaster of Boy Scout Troop 187 at Burton Elementary School until one could be found.

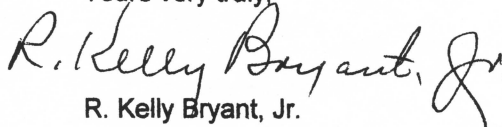
Well, I served as scoutmaster from 1951 through 1988 (37 years) and some 400+ scouts were associated with Troop 187. The troop was then moved from Burton School to Asbury Temple United Methodist Church, 201 S. Alston Ave., under new leadership.

One incident—we were often told of was the time in the 1930's when black scouts were told that they could not wear boy scout uniforms downtown in Durham. Mr. George W. Cox, Sr., Executive Vice President of NC Mutual Life, got a group dressed in uniforms and went downtown—the sun rose in the east and set in the west as always. Mr. Cox was living when I heard about this event.

There is a long story on the integration of the Occoneechee Council, BSA, in the Raleigh/Durham area—maybe we can talk about that sometime.

I hope that you will find this interesting. If there are questions, please give us a call.

Yours very truly,



R. Kelly Bryant, Jr.

Enclosure:

cc: Mr. James W. Carrington
Mr. John Harding Lucas
Mr. Nathaniel B. White