

The Story of Scouts and Inventions at the American Textile History Museum

On a recent day at ATHM, a group of 30 Boy Scouts from several troops proudly showcased prototypes of the inventions they had created as part of the “Inventing Badge” program. One group created a solar-powered fan and water bottle. Another created specialized pans for heating over the open fire or grill.

Scouts of America recently announced the comeback of the “Inventing Badge”—which had not been offered since the 1930s—we were excited. In short order, our education staff designed a stellar program to fulfill the requirements



Boy Scouts participate in the Inventing Badge at ATHM.

filled with exploration, learning, and discovery, has been met with excitement and enthusiasm. After an introduction

“This is a wonderful program that the Museum offers the Scouting community, enabling these boys and girls to develop important skills while learning about the world and building self esteem.

We are always impressed during our visits here and we will definitely be returning again.”

—Karen Baird, Troop Leader, Troop 8, Peterborough, N.H.

Take a walk through the Museum and you are met with the stories of inventors and the way that they have shaped our lives with innovation. When the Boys

of the badge in just one visit, utilizing existing staff, exhibit, historical and material resources at ATHM.

The new “Inventing Badge” program,

to the Museum, scouts receive a tour of patented objects that have been acquired by the museum specifically to fulfill this badge’s requirements. They are introduced to the terminology surrounding inventions and read stories of inventors and how their inventions came about. After discussion, scouts get to work inventing! They sketch and create a prototype made from recycled materials, giving them an opportunity to practice, build, and demonstrate problem-solving skills. Group discussion offers them a chance to evaluate their work and the work of others, while being guided in promoting an invention while giving and receiving constructive criticism. As staff of the Museum, we have delighted in seeing the adults taking part in the program with as much interest as the scouts.

Over the years, the Boy and Girl scout programs have evolved around topics that were a natural fit for the Museum; sewing, fashion, stories of the past, textile arts, and silk screening, to name a few. The Girl Scouts have recently revamped their programs as well, with a new *Product Designer* program that brings out the creative inventors in our young ladies as well. ♦



Boy Scouts invented this microwave oven to wear on your head while camping.