A Brief History on BSA Square Knots

By Dr. Craig Murray

During the beginning years of Scouting, adults and boys were presented with medals to signify awards they received. These medals were worn at all functions. In 1934, to replace award recognition medals at less formal occasions, BSA issued ribbon bars. The first ribbon bars included: Honor Medal, Silver Buffalo, Silver Beaver, Eagle, Quartermaster, Scoutmaster's Key, and Scouter's Training Award. When the Silver Antelope award was introduced in 1943, a ribbon bar was issued for the new award.

In the January 1947 issue of SCOUTING, it was announced that the wearing of ribbon bar pins had been suspended to avoid confusion with military ribbons. The new insignia for recognition of Scout honors was to be an embroidered square knot on a khaki cloth. By October 1947, the eight awards mentioned above were available as square knot emblems. The first eight square knot emblems are illustrated below.

Above are the first BSA knots:
Honor Medal, Silver Buffalo
Silver Antelope, Silver Beaver, Eagle Scout
Quartermaster, Scoutmaster's Key, Scouter's Training Award

Three more square knots were added in 1950, acknowledging awards earned as Explorers. They included Ranger, Ace (Air Explorers) and the Silver Award shown respectively below.

Ranger **Ace** **Silver**

(Note: While these three square knot emblems have been discontinued, it is interesting to note that both the Ranger and the Silver awards are again part of the Venturing program. You can read more about *Scouting's First Ranger Award* on this web page: http://www.sageventure.com/history/ranger/.)

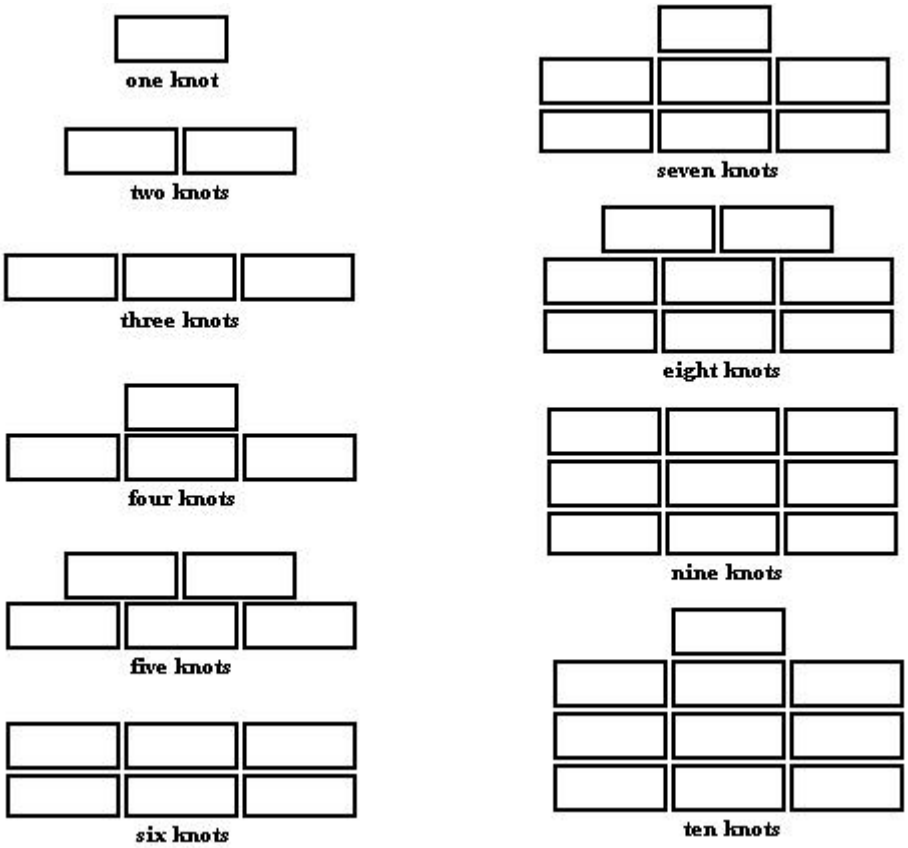
Beginning in 1966 with the Eagle and Silver Beaver square knots, while continuing to make the emblems with a khaki background, BSA introduced square knots with a dark green background to match the Explorer uniform. Shortly thereafter, they included the Scouter's Key and Scouter's Training Award square knots with a dark green background. BSA made these four square knots with the dark green background until 1979, when they discontinued not only the dark green Explorer background, but also the navy blue and a white background that matched the Sea Scout uniform.

Issued for the Explorer Uniform 1966-79
Silver Beaver, Eagle, Scouter's Key, Scouters Training Award

Since the 1950's, many more square knots have been developed to represent awards. Today, there are over 30 square knots for uniform wear.

Initially, BSA established a specific order in which the square knot emblems were to be worn on uniforms. However, beginning in 1980, BSA dropped the order of precedence and allowed Scouters to determine the order of their square knots on their individual uniforms.

In order to preserve some form of uniformity, the BSA's Uniform and Insignia Committee developed a wearing arrangement for the square knot emblems on the field uniform. It is illustrated below:



For more information about square knots and private issue square knots, please visit *Illustrated History of BSA Square Knot Evolution and Private Issues* by George Crowl at http://www.sageventure.com/history/knothist/.

The knot images shown above are taken from the work of George Crowl.