

A BRIEF HISTORY OF AKELA WAHINAPAY LODGE #232

by Tom Reddin

Akela Wahinapay Lodge was granted its first Order of the Arrow charter on March 24, 1943. Jack B. Hodges was the Caddo Area Council Scout Executive at the time; he signed the charter application and served as the 1st Lodge Staff Adviser. Charter member, Charles L. “Pop” Gardner, was appointed as the 1st Lodge Adviser and following the first Ordeal, held at Camp Pioneer, charter member William N. Harkness, Jr. was elected to be the 1st Lodge Chief.

In the 1930s and 1940s another honor camper society existed at Camp Pioneer called the Tribe of Ku-Ni-Eh. The Tribe was a very widespread honor camper society that was in existence in a number of Scout councils in Ohio, Wisconsin, Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia, Indiana, Illinois, North and South Carolina, and Texas. It was created in 1922 in the Cincinnati Area Council in Ohio by Arthur E. Roberts, their Scout executive and camp director.

During the early years at summer camp, Mr. Roberts saw a need to develop a brotherhood to honor a select number of Scouts each week who best exemplified the Scout Oath and Law. After months of searching, Mr. Roberts found what he considered to be the best ceremony for inducting candidates into the brotherhood. This ceremony was based on a ritual used by a band of the Maidu Indians of northern California. The ritual was a rite of passage from boy to man and tested the youth in the virtues necessary to become a brave.

He named the society: The Tribe of the Ku-Ni-Eh. Ku-Ni-Eh means “Order of Manhood”. The symbol of the society was the “We-Hin-Ah-Pay” which means “Rising Sun”. The design was found in the base of a Maidu Indian ceremonial basket of the same name. A Ku-Ni-Eh handbook from 1923 is known to exist, and a ceremonial manual was also published and copyrighted by Mr. Roberts in 1926. Membership in the Tribe of Ku-Ni-Eh was reserved for those who in the opinion of the camp staff had proven themselves worthy of the honor as follows:

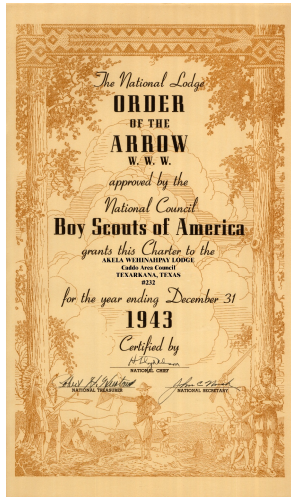
- Loyalty to the ideals of Scouting,
- Orderliness and neatness of person, tent and camp,
- Advancement in the program of Scoutcraft,
- General out of doors knowledge,
- Helpfulness towards new boys,
- Participation in construction and sanitation,
- Participation in the programs, and
- Cheerfulness in service and discipline.

Drawing on this heritage, the name chartered for the new Order of the Arrow lodge was Akela Wehinapay Lodge #232 which means “The Chief is the Arrow of Light”. The word “Akela” in the name came from Rudyard Kipling’s *The Jungle Book*. Akela was the fictional, great gray Lone Wolf in Kipling’s stories. He was the leader of the Seeonee pack of Indian wolves who presided over the pack’s council meetings. In the Hindi language Akela means single or solitary.

In 1941, the Webelos rank had been added to the Cub Scout, BSA program. The symbol for the new Webelos rank was the Arrow of Light. The Arrow of Light design had seven rays depicting the seven days of a week and a reminder to "do one's best" every day. The arrow in the design forever points upward and onward toward good citizenship, and also has the meaning of world friendship symbolized by the Golden Arrow.



So the symbolism of the chief and the Arrow of Light seemed appropriate as the basis of the new lodge name. All that was needed was a word to represent the Arrow of Light. The word that met this need was "We-Hin-Ah-Pay" from the lodge's roots in The Tribe of the Ku-Ni-Eh. The symbol of the Tribe was the "We-Hin-Ah-Pay" meaning "Rising Sun" in the Maidu Indian language. The same word, spelling, and meaning also appears in the Sioux Indian language. Scout Executive Jack B. Hodges began his Scouting as a volunteer in a Scout council next to the Conquistador Council, New Mexico. Their council camp was named Camp Wehinahpay. So he knew the name, its meaning, and of course the meaning of Akela. The name, "Akela Wehinahpay Lodge", appeared on the first lodge charter and on the charter membership cards.



The spelling evolved from "Wehinahpay" to "Wahinapay" through misspelling. In fact by November 1943, it was already being spelled "Wahinahpay" in the *National OA Bulletin*. The silent "h" in the third syllable disappeared shortly thereafter through usage. "Wahinapay" does not exist in any language, but in the lodge name it means "Arrow of Light".

The original totem of the lodge was the Arrow of Light from the new Cub Scout Webelos rank which began in 1941. There is no evidence that lodge members ever knew that this was their totem. During the summer of 1949, a special OA committee was formed at Camp Pioneer to develop a lodge emblem. The committee decided on a Caddo Indian Water Bottle as an appropriate design that would also reflect the Caddo Indian history of the area.

The new lodge totem had the shape of the Caddo Indian Water Bottle outlined in black with a green background. Superimposed on the bottom portion of the bottle was a red arrow, pointing upward to the left and a yellow powder horn hung by a black thong from the middle of the arrow's shaft. Lettering on the totem included a white, stacked WWW on the neck of the bottle and white CADDO curved around the bottom. The green background stood for the trees and forests in the area; the red arrow, the Indians; the powder horn, the early pioneers; WWW, the Order of the Arrow; and CADDO, the Scout council. The black outline tied the Indian, the pioneer, and the Scout together in the Brotherhood called the Order of the Arrow - until death. This lodge totem design was produced as the 1st lodge patch and was worn by members on the upper right sleeve of their Scout uniform.



Over the years Akela Wahinapay Lodge has been an active member of the area and region/section structure of the Order of the Arrow. The lodge has been recognized many times for its skill in Indian dancing. Section conclaves have been hosted by the lodge in 1951, 1964, 1972, 1976, 1990, 1996, 2000, and 2005. Lodge delegations have attended all national meetings and National Order of the Arrow Conferences since 1943.

Since formation, Akela Wahinapay Lodge has produced one national conference vice chief; three area chiefs, four vice chiefs, and two secretaries; two section chiefs, five vice chiefs, and two secretaries; and 44 Founder's Award and 284 Vigil recipients. The lodge has been nationally recognized many times, including the 1979 E. Urner Goodman National Camping Award, the 2000 National Service Award, and the 2018 National GEO History Website Honor Lodge. The lodge often achieved National Standard, Honor, and Quality Lodge and Journey to Excellence - BRONZE in 2015, GOLD in 2016 and 2018, and SILVER in 2017.

