"We will be prepared" : scouting and civil defense in the early Cold War, 1949-1963
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Abstract:
During the early Cold War, 1949 through 1963, the federal government, through such agencies as the Federal Civil Defense Administration (FCDA) (1950-1957), the Office of Civil and Defense Mobilization (OCDM) (1958-1960), and the Office of Civil Defense (OCD) (1961-1963), regarded children and young adults as essential to American civil defense. Youth-oriented, voluntary organizations, including the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) and the Girl Scouts of the United States of America (GSUSA), assisted the federal civil defense programs by promoting civil defense messages and agendas. In this thesis, I will explore how the GSUSA and BSA translated federal civil defense policies for their Scouts. What were the civil defense messages transmitted to Scouts during the early Cold War? How were those messages disseminated? Why? What was the social impact of BSA and GSUSA involvement with civil defense on America’s evolving national ideals?

Description:
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Civil defense in the 1950s called for people to take what shelter they could. After the Soviet Union detonated its first known nuclear device somewhere in Kazakhstan on August 29, 1949, US anxieties about the threat of nuclear annihilation rose significantly. President Harry S. Truman's Federal Civil Defense Administration program began requiring schools to teach children how to dive under their desks in classrooms and take cover if bombs should drop, according to History. How protective such actions would be in an actual nuclear strike continues to be deb In 1949, the communists triumphed in the Chinese civil war, and the world's most populous nation joined the Soviet Union as a Cold War adversary. In 1950, North Korea invaded South Korea, and the United Nations and the United States sent troops and military aid. Communist China intervened to support North Korea, and bloody campaigns stretched on for three years until a truce was signed in 1953. By early November 1963, the number of US military advisers had reached 16,000. Even as the military commitment in Vietnam grew, JFK told an interviewer, "In the final analysis, it is their war. They are the ones who have to win it or lose it."