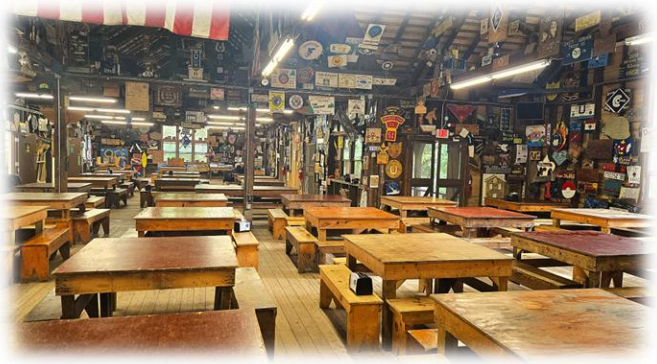
THE OCTORARO LOOP

The Horseshoe Scout Reservation Alumni Association (HSRAA) News

Winter 2025

Horseshoe Dinng Hall Heat Dilemma

Pete Motel: Camping & Properties Committee Chair.



This summer the mealtime temperatures of the Horseshoe Dining Hall were monitored, and confirmed what we already knew, anecdotally. Breakfast began at 85°F., lunches climbed to above 95°F., and dinners, made even more challenging by the insulating effect of Scout uniforms, exceeded the level of tolerability, and on one night even topping 100°F.

Since its construction in the early 1930s, the Horseshoe Dining Hall has been the heart of our camp. It is where we gather three times a day to share songs, cheers and family style meals. Whether as a scout or as a leader, those of us who have experienced this firsthand understand the importance of meals as the centerpiece of the Camp Horseshoe program experience.

This summer marked a turning point. It's become increasingly clear that our historic structure, built for a different era, needs improvements to continue providing the welcoming environment our scouts and leaders deserve during peak summer months.

The Council is developing plans to insulate, heat, and cool the dining hall's seating area. These renovations will not alter the character that makes this space special. The proposed design carefully preserves the open-stud construction and plaque-decorated walls that define the dining hall's timeless aesthetic. This renovation will ensure the space remains usable year-round, protecting and improving our summer programs and opening possibilities for expanded winter and shoulder-season use.

More information about renovation plans and fundraising will be available in future issues.

Hiking the Old Camp Road

By Eric Lorgus: Camp Staff 1966 – 73, 76 – 77.

If you never visited Camp Horseshoe before the mid-1980's, you never got to drive into camp on the "Old Camp Road", which ran beside the Octoraro Creek. To me, the old road and the vistas from Flagpole Hill and the chapel were the most scenic places in Camp Horseshoe. I have many fond memories of turning off Route 1 onto Horseshoe Road, passing the Mace farm and their hardware store, passing another farm where chickens were always crossing the road, then a windy turn downhill and across a small stream. After that there were about five ranch-style houses on the right before reaching the Iron Bridge which spanned the Octoraro. Beyond the bridge, it was all Camp Horseshoe property. The road proceeded past the old school before reaching the camp gate. It continued beside the creek except at the old mill, where the road diverged inland to pass the old mill race. It was such a scenic, verdant way to enter camp.

A few years ago, during an alumni reunion, Jim Goudie and I attempted to walk the old road out to the old church. The road was so overgrown we turned back. Determined to try again, Jim and I along with John Souder, Bill Grubb, Stuart Watson and Dave Anderson made another attempt in September. We had all served on Horseshoe staff in the 1960's and 1970's and we all remembered the old road well.

We proceeded down the hill from Headquarters, past Kindness and past the pool road. The old road was in remarkably good condition for a few hundred yards, the part that is much higher than the creek. We passed a short stone pillar with two metal rods poking up. I realized this is where the "The Scout Law is the Law of the Camp" sign once stood.

As the road got closer to the Octoraro, it narrowed to a footpath amidst untamed overgrowth. There were spots where the asphalt of the road was still visible, but mostly it was a dirt path.

When we reached the old mill, the road re-appeared and that section looked remarkably well preserved. The concrete block house looked as if had been recently painted and the roof was intact! Inside the house was a derelict typewriter. It reminded me of the days when the weekly Camp Echo was printed using a typewriter and mimeograph machine.

After the mill, the road narrowed again to a dirt path. It was so bad that four of us walked past the overgrown stone walls where the camp gate once stood, without recognizing it. The narrow path continued until we reached a clearing with a wide dirt road. We had reached civilization again, and in the distance was the old school! During my days on staff, it was only in fair condition, so I expected it to be in ruins by now. I knew nothing about its history. I had only been inside it a few times. It was only used for storage.

I was amazed to see it not only still standing, but in good condition. I noticed a contemporary house up on the hill behind the school, built sometime after the old road was closed. Later, I checked the land records and there is a couple who own six parcels in that area. So, the school has a new owner who is taking care of it. What a pleasant surprise.

Beyond the school we could hear cars crossing the Iron Bridge. At that point we turned back.

Walking the old road out to almost the bridge may seem trivial, but to all of us it was like a visit to an old friend, to see how he is doing. Along the way, we had seen trail blazes for both the yellow and red trails, so I'm guessing the old road is part of the Horseshoe trail system. We've heard rumors that the old road might be re-opened to serve as an emergency exit from the camp. That's a good idea. It's such a scenic road, framed not just by the Octoraro Creek but also by a lush canopy overhead. It's a shame to see it so abandoned.

If you go. Walking from Kindness Center, the road eventually narrows into overgrowth, but there remains a path. It's muddy in sections. Be on the lookout for the stone pedestal that used to hold the "Scout Law is the law of the Camp" sign. The old gate has two overgrown stone walls. You can't miss the school. From Route 1, Horseshoe Road is drivable to the Iron Bridge. There, a metal gate blocks Horseshoe Road and there are a few private residences on the other side. Best to walk it from camp.

Deck being installed in Staff City

During the OA Brotherhood weekend a deck was installed in front of the cabins in staff city. In the background of the photo above is the proposed site for the staff city pavilion, near the bridge that crosses over to the female staff area.

HSRAA wants to build a common meeting area next spring that will serve the camp staff and can also be used when hard cover is called. This project supports the camp's most valued asset, our camp staff. To accomplish this goal, we need your help to help fund our effort. Please renew your HSR alumni membership for 2026.

Joseph Trimble Rothrock Father of Forestry

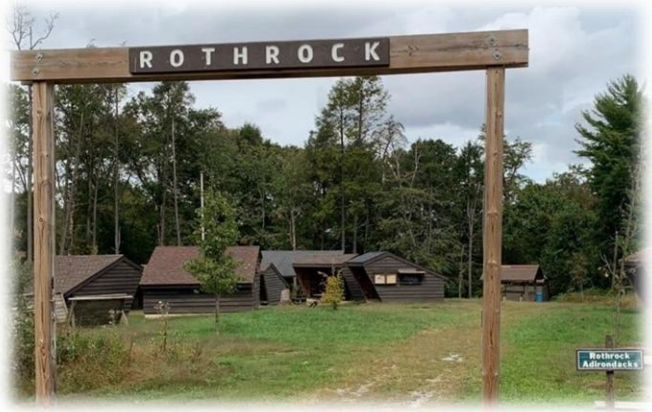
By: Ed Layton, Conservation Committee, Chair

Most Scouts and Scouters who hike the trails of the Horseshoe Scout Reservation know how special our 800+ acres of forest are, but few realize that one of the true pioneers of American conservation has a direct connection to Chester County Council and to Camp Horseshoe itself. Joseph Trimble Rothrock (1839–1922), often called the "Father of Forestry" in Pennsylvania, was a physician, naturalist, and tireless advocate for conserving forests at a time when most of the state had been stripped bare by logging and charcoal production. Rothrock understood that without careful stewardship, Pennsylvania's woodlands and the wildlife, waters, and communities that depended on them would not survive. His vision helped shape the system of state forests we still enjoy today.

Rothrock's influence extended far beyond the forests themselves. He served as the first Commissioner of Forestry for Pennsylvania and was instrumental in creating the very concept of scientific forestry in America—using thoughtful planning and management to sustain healthy forests for future generations. His legacy is why Pennsylvanians today can still enjoy millions of acres of public forestland that provide recreation, clean water, wildlife habitat, and timber resources.

What many may not know is that Rothrock also had a local tie to Scouting. He lived in West Chester from 1876 until his death in 1922. There is a historical marker on N. Church Street in front of his house. He served on the original board of the Chester County Council, BSA, bringing his conservation ideals into the DNA of our Council from the very beginning. To honor him, Horseshoe Scout Reservation dedicated the **Rothrock Cabin & Campsite**, a reminder of

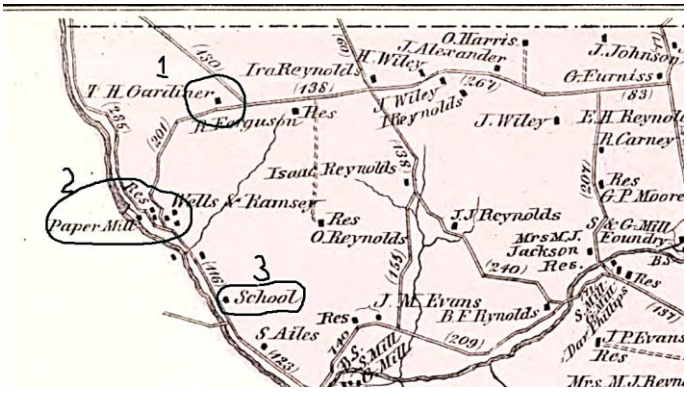
how deeply connected the camp's mission is to the values of conservation and stewardship.



Today, Chester County Council continues Rothrock's legacy by carefully preserving and maintaining the more than 800 acres of forest at Horseshoe Scout Reservation. Our staff and volunteers help preserve Horseshoe woods for future Scouts through erosion control, wildlife habitat projects, sustainable trail building, and responsible forest management.

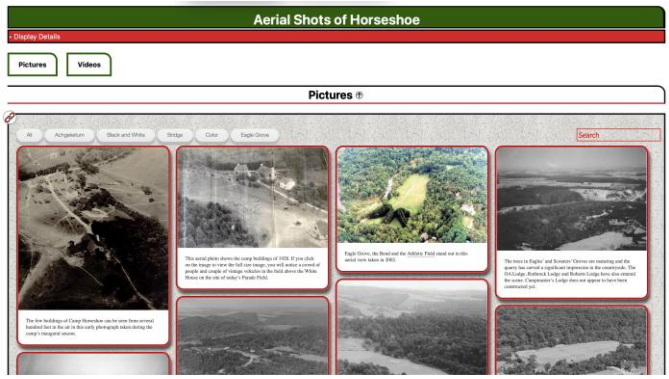
The next time you hike to the Octoraro or gather around a fire at Horseshoe, keep in mind that our camp contributes to a broader and more significant legacy. The Father of Forestry himself believed in protecting these woods, and it's now our turn to carry that torch. By caring for the forests of Horseshoe Scout Reservation, we are preserving both a local treasure and a proud piece of Pennsylvania's conservation heritage.

1877 Map of the Old Camp Road



This map from 1877 shows the beginning of the old camp road. Photos from Eric Lorgus' article show the school (3), and the paper mill (2). The building circled (1) is the stone ranger house at the current entrance to Camp Horseshoe.

Big Changes Coming to HSRAA.org!



We're thrilled to announce the newly redesigned HSRAA website is launching soon — and it's packed with exciting upgrades!

One of the biggest highlights is the completely reimagined **Virtual Museum (VM)**. With nearly **1,000 new artifacts**, the VM will offer a fresh, user-friendly experience featuring:

- A powerful new search tool
- Cleaner, more intuitive layout
- Image sorting in select galleries
- Easy artifact submission for contributors
- Personalized contributor pages to showcase individual submissions
- …and so much more!

Plus, for the first time ever, the entire site will be **mobile-friendly**, making it easier to explore HSRAA content on the go. The updated design will proudly reflect HSRAA's identity, featuring our signature, **red and green color palette**.

We can't wait to share it with you — so stay tuned! Follow HSRAA on social media for the official launch date and sneak peeks.

HSRAA HORSESHOE SCOUT RESERVATION ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

Do you have an event, article, photo, memory, etc., of interest to HSR alumni? The Octoraro Loop is printed quarterly and distributed to all active alumni members, the back issues are also posted on the HSRAA.org website. For more information, please contact Steve Miller at 610-715-2319, or steve.miller@foxroach.com