



THE OCTORARO LOOP

The Horseshoe Scout Reservation Alumni Association (HSRAA) News

Fall 2026

A Century in the Making

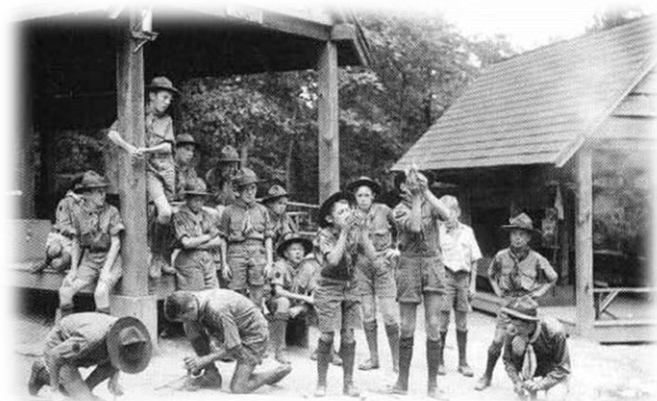
By: Ethan Bilson, Horseshoe Camp Director

Almost 100 years after its first camping season in 1928, Camp Horseshoe continues to be the destination of choice for hundreds of Scouts and Scouters seeking adventure, fellowship, and an escape into the outdoors each summer. Over six weeks of programming, scores of troops make their home in the Loop of the Octoraro Bend, participating in Scoutcraft, outdoor adventure, leadership development, and countless camp traditions. Nearly one hundred staff members have the dust of Horseshoe forever stuck in their moccasins, returning each summer to make camp their home while serving the next generation of Scouts. Troops travel from across Pennsylvania and neighboring states with strong representation from Maryland, New Jersey, Delaware and New York to experience what makes Camp Horseshoe unique. Half of those in attendance at camp each summer come from outside of Chester County Council.



To a visitor returning after decades away, Camp Horseshoe can feel wonderfully familiar. Each evening, troops still march at Retreat, passing the staff in review before heading to dinner. On Thursdays, the pace of camp slows as troops prepare outpost meals in their campsites,

spending the evening cooking together and leading their own programs beneath the trees. The Dining Hall, adorned with nearly a century of plaques, signs, and troop flags, still echoes with songs, cheer competitions and staff chants. Longstanding traditions like Paul Bunyan Field Day and the Water Carnival continue to bring the entire camp together each week. Many troops still camp in the original stockades, standing for nearly a century as living reminders of the earliest days of Scouting at Horseshoe. At first glance, not much appears to have changed.



Yet that appearance of permanence is only part of the story. The Horseshoe Scout Reservation has continually evolved since Chester County Council purchased the property in 1928 and welcomed its first campers that same summer. Taylor, Crockett, Carson, Boonesboro, and Sherwood were among the original stockade campsites constructed during those first years. Soon afterward, McIlvaine Lodge and several other buildings were built using timber salvaged from an abandoned mill keeper's house found on the property. The camp pool was constructed in 1930. At the time it was the largest in-ground swimming pool east of the Mississippi.

Every generation has added something of its own to Horseshoe. The 1990s saw the creation of COPE (Challenging Outdoor Personal Experience) course, taking adventure into the treetops, along with a program for 1st year Scouts, Trailblazers.



The early 2000s brought significant investments in infrastructure, including new pavilions in Campcraft, Trader Bill's, and the expansion of the Unified Range. During the 2010s, Handicraft embraced industrial arts with the addition of Blacksmithing and Welding, the STEM center was established for science, technology and innovation, and Mountain Biking is one of the camp's newest opportunities for older Scouts.

That process continues today. New program areas are developed, facilities are renovated and improved, and new opportunities are created to meet the interests of today's Scouts while preserving the traditions that generations of campers cherish. The camp our alumni remember exists because those who came before them invested their time, talents, and resources to ensure it would continue to serve future generations.



Every structure at Camp Horseshoe was once a new building. Every beloved tradition was once a new idea. Every program that today's alumni remember was once an experiment created to meet the needs of the Scouts of its day.

For Camp Horseshoe to remain the place generations remember so fondly, it must continue to grow. Historic buildings require ongoing care and restoration. New facilities will eventually be needed. Programs must continue to evolve to reflect the interests, abilities, and aspirations of the youth we serve. Growth is not

the opposite of tradition—it is how traditions endure. Our motto at Camp Horseshoe is often misquoted as "Keep the Tradition." While we are proud stewards of nearly a century of history, that has never truly been our charge. Our motto is "Join the Tradition." Those words remind us that Camp Horseshoe has never been frozen in time. Every Scout, Scouter, staff member, and volunteer add another chapter to the camp's story. Each generation inherits the traditions built by those before them while leaving something new for those yet to come.



As Camp Horseshoe approaches its centennial, we celebrate not only the remarkable legacy entrusted to us, but also the opportunity to shape its future. We invite every member of the Horseshoe family to join us in ensuring that the next hundred years are every bit as meaningful as the first.



The Executive Board consists of no more than (15) fifteen people. The candidates nominated at this year's July reunion for the 2026 – 2027 year include: Steve Miller, Andy Smith, John Kemmerer, Sam Mantegna, Mike Arles, Andrew Coe, Jon DiVirgilio, Mark Herman, Eric Lorgus, Chris McConnell, Mark Siegle, Damon Sinclair, Mike Grosik, Frank Keegan, and Owen Cutler.

The executive board meets every other month, September, November, January, March, May and July. Our goal is to directly support both camps of HSR and to preserve and promote the spirit of brotherhood among the reservations' alumni. As a board member you have the voting power on project ideas to enhance the camping experience beyond the required maintenance.

2026 HSRAA Annual Reunion

Decade photos; Once again the 1960s have the largest group of alumni attending this year.



Be sure to join the HSR alumni crew next July, in celebration of Horseshoe's 100th birthday!

Camp Staff of the Year Award

HSRAA is proud to sponsor the Camp Staff of the Year. This year's recipients: **Aaron Webster** at Horseshoe and **Hannah Schifter** from Ware.



"In recognition of their outstanding work and dedication to Camp Horseshoe and Ware, honoring their contributions as staff members, enhancing the positive impact the staff has on the lives of Scouts at the Horseshoe Scout Reservation over the past 99 years"

New Updates to HSRAA.org



In addition to photos from this year's reunion, here's a list of what's new on our website:

- Added to the "The HSR Timeline", "2026 Camp Staff", & "Matje Eagle Resource Center" exhibits to the Virtual Museum.
- On the Virtual Museum (VM) page, added the "What's New" and "Stats" menu items.
- Over 275 newspaper articles were added to the "Meet the Press" exhibit and other exhibits.
- Added over 600 new artifacts to the VM.
- A Quick Tools menu to the website for a few helpful features.
- Full breadcrumbs on each VM exhibit page.
- A "Time to Read" feature for each VM exhibit.
- A chatbot (in development) named "Milton" to the website.

