

SOIL AND PLANT SCIENCE DIVISION

Technical Soil Services

Special Projects Office and Connecticut NRCS

U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service (USDA-NRCS) Investigates a Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Camp

Purpose

On September 26, 2023, at the request of the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, NRCS staff completed a ground-penetrating radar (GPR) investigation (fig. 1) to identify and locate remnants of buried structural features related to the CCC camp at the Shenipsit State Forest located in Stafford Springs, Connecticut. NRCS Soil and Plant Science Division Special Projects Office and Connecticut NRCS State Office staff (fig. 2) fulfilled USDA NRCS's commitment to protect and enhance our nation's historical sites by the conducting this GPR investigation.



Figure 1.—NRCS staff conducting the GPR grid survey.



Figure 2.—The GPR survey crew from the NRCS Connecticut State Office; the NRCS, Soil and Plant Science Division Special Projects Office; and the NRCS, Soil Science and Resource Assessment Division (Acting Deputy Chief Dr. David Lindbo is in the green jacket).

Camp Conner, Stafford Springs, CT

The CCC, a part of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal, was a voluntary government work relief program that ran from 1933 to 1942 in the United States¹. It was designed to supply jobs for young men and to relieve families who had difficulty finding jobs during the Great Depression. The CCC supplied manual labor jobs related to the conservation and development of natural resources in rural lands owned by federal, state, and local governments.

In Connecticut, the CCC had 21 camps with an estimated 5,000 to 15,000 men serving from 1933 to 1941. Camp Connor was the name of the Shenipsit State Forest CCC camp (fig. 3); it operated from September 5, 1935, to May 23, 1941¹. The CCC military style camps were temporary communities with structures such as barracks, staff quarters, mess and recreation halls, educational buildings, lavatories and showers, offices, tool rooms, blacksmith shops, and motor pool garages. The structures had no permanent foundations.

¹Matthew Ranelli, "Civilian Conservation Corps in Connecticut," Connecticut – History; Environmental (General); Historic Conservation, October 4, 2023, <https://www.cga.ct.gov/PS99/rpt%5Colr%5Chtm/99-R-0955.htm>.

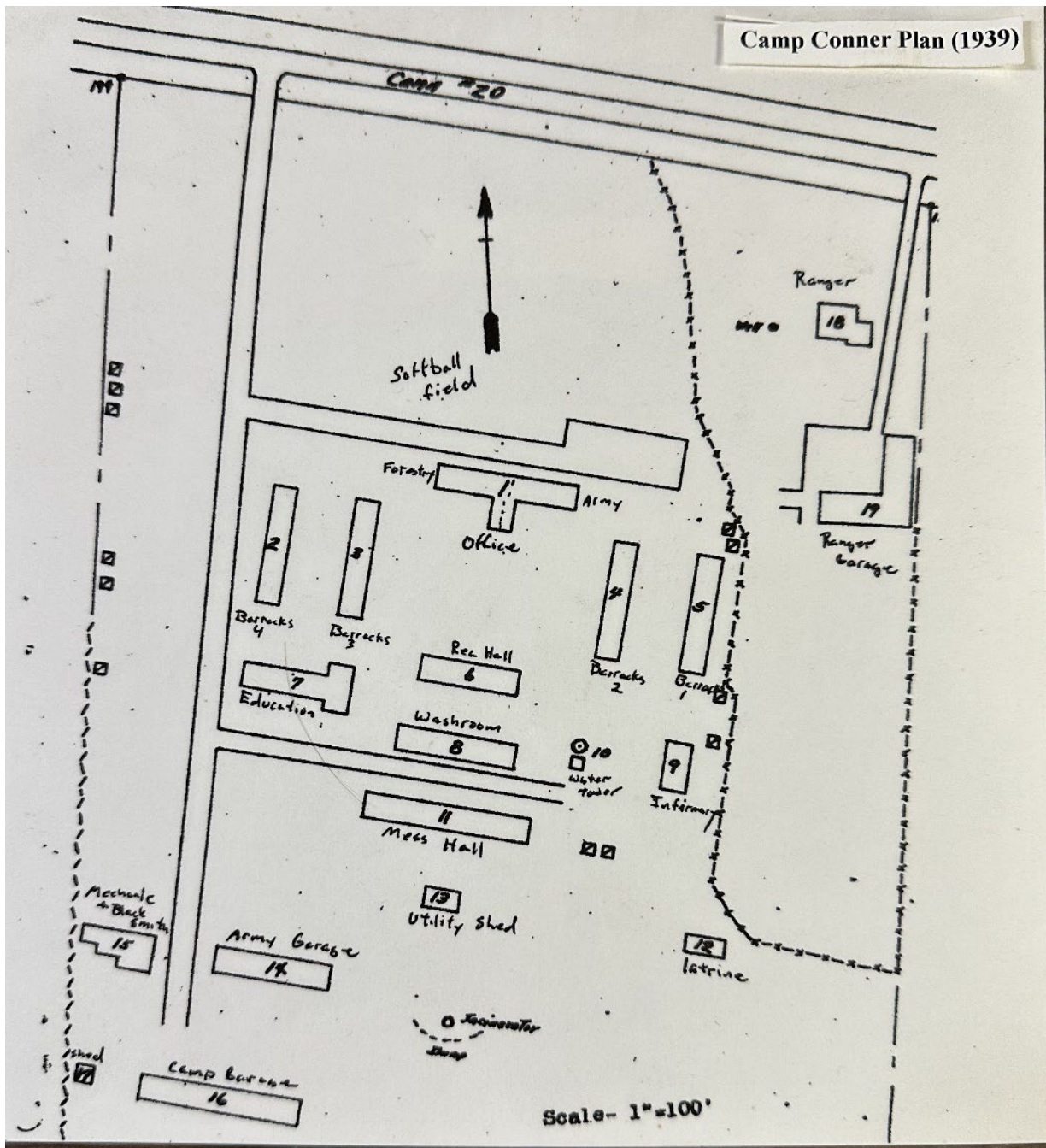


Figure 3.—A drawing of the Camp Conner plan dated 1939. Notice barracks 3 and 4 are southwest of the office, also known as the headquarters, which is still standing today and houses the museum.

Today, the last remaining structure of CCC Camp Conner at Shenipsit State Forest is the headquarters building (fig. 4). This building is home to the Civilian Conservation Corps Museum, housing memorabilia from CCC camps throughout the eastern United States.

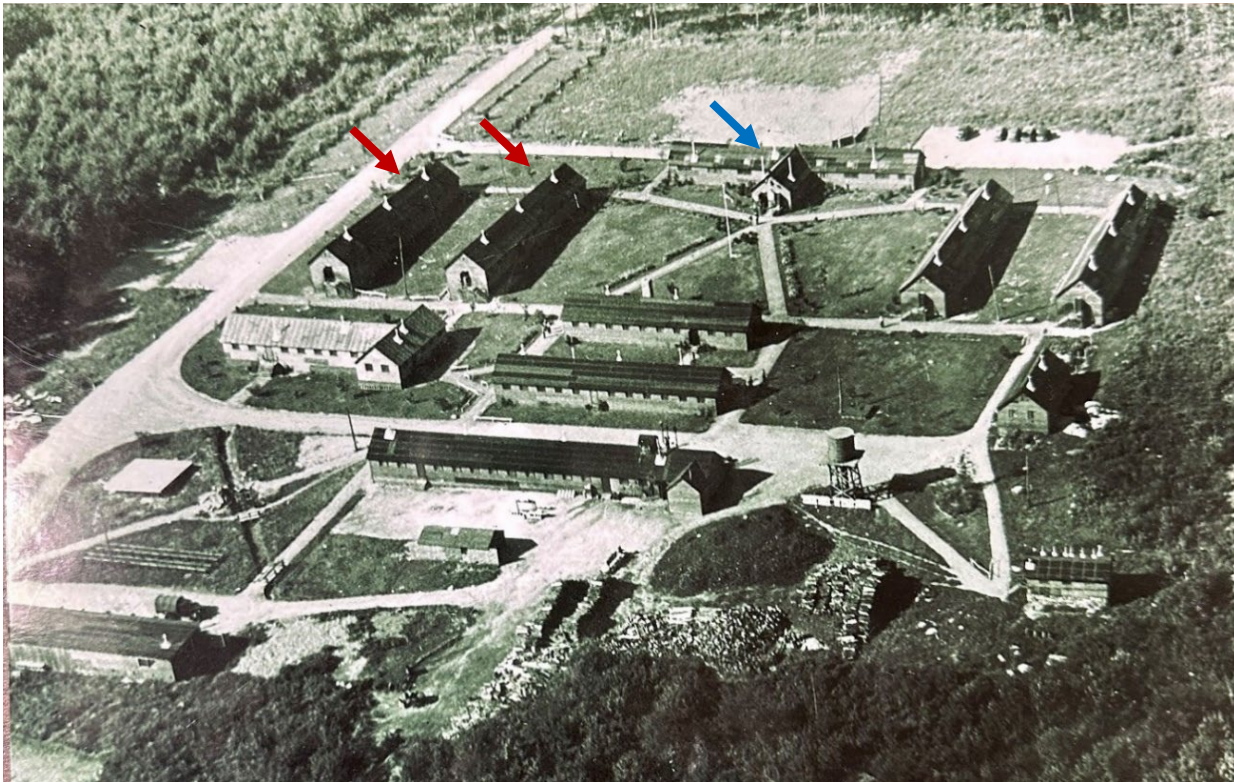


Figure 4.—An aerial photograph of the Camp Conner facing north. Barracks 3 and 4 are highlighted by red-colored arrows. The headquarters, highlighted by a blue-colored arrow, is the only surviving building from Camp Conner.

Summary

The GPR survey area is located within a soil delineation that is labeled 45A Woodbridge fine sandy loam, 0 to 3 percent slopes (fig. 5). Woodbridge soils consist of well drained soils formed in lodgment or dense till. They are very deep (greater than 2 meters) to bedrock and moderately deep (50 to 100 centimeters) to a densic contact. Rock fragments range from 0 to 35 percent. Because of their low clay, water, and soluble salt contents, soil scientists consider these soils well suited for GPR investigations.

Interpretations of the GPR data revealed natural soil materials having a moderately deep dense till layer, which is consistent with the Woodbridge soil series. The GPR data revealed no evidence of foundations for the former barracks, suggesting the presence of possible footings. Using GPR data, soil scientists may be able to interpret and ground truth what are likely footings set in a linear pattern, which will differentiate them from random rock fragments.



Figure 5. A SoilWeb image with soil lines and symbols from the Soil Survey of the State of Connecticut. The red-colored circle indicates the approximate location of the GPR investigation.