

Back in the Country... Bell Acres Stories

By Debby Rabold

Brookside Drive-In

**Big Sewickley Creek Road
(1947-1987)**



The drive-in was once a staple of family entertainment and date nights. Reaching their peak of popularity in the 1950s, drive-in theaters provided movie goers privacy to eat, smoke, talk and dress as they pleased, something they were unable to do in movie houses. Kids could sleep in the back seat while mom and dad enjoyed the latest double feature, hoping fog would not blanket the screen!

The first drive-in opened in 1933 in New Jersey. In July 1947, Robert Thomson and Elson Marr opened Brookside, which had a single screen, individual speakers and a 400-car capacity. A small play area sat below the screen and kept the kids entertained while they patiently waited for dusk and the cartoon to begin. Throughout the evening, families could visit the snack bar.

Only after the November 1955 general election was Brookside permitted to show films on Sundays. Until then, Blue Laws did not allow Sunday entertainment. By a vote of 604 to 227, Franklin Township voters approved Sunday movie entertainment.

Admission was originally 50 cents per person, but young movie goers found ways to avoid paying. Crawling under or climbing over the fence that surrounded the drive-in was one way. The driver would pay an admission before pulling up to the fence to meet his buddies. Others might hide in the trunk or lie covered on the floor of the back seat.

One gentleman recalled working at Brookside during his high school days. Hoping to increase sales, the bosses had him walk car to car selling snacks, but he discovered it wasn't such a good idea to tap on darkened windows!

Eventually, drive-in movie theaters lost their appeal. Brookside closed in the Fall of 1987 and the site is now a garden center and greenhouses.





Brookside photos are courtesy of Mel Martz.



● **BROOKSIDE** ●
DRIVE-IN THEATRE
Six miles northeast of Ambridge
on Big Sewickley Creek Road
2 Shows Nightly—Box Office Open 7:45 P. M.
First Show 8:45 P. M.
Second Show 10:45 P. M.
ROY ROGERS
"DON'T FENCE ME IN"





Aerial view of Brookside Drive-In (1967).



"Born on a mountain top in Tennessee..."

The Davy Crockett television series, 1955 film and theme song were popular with young audiences.