

Bell Acres History...

Lost history revealed in photo!

Granddaughters of the late William T. Shannon of Turkeyfoot Road found this undated group photo among family papers and wondered if it might be relevant to Sewickley area history. And the answer is yes!

W. T. Shannon was a Sewickley realtor who owned and operated the Signal Farm in Sewickley Township [Bell Acres]. Shannon was also active in the *Big Travis Hunting and Fishing Club*, an organization limited to thirty-five Sewickley Valley sportsmen.

Organized in 1912, the club purchased land on the Big Travis (Big Traverse) Creek in Beaver County's Hanover Township that would be used for recreation, hunting and fishing. In time, adjoining properties were added to where the club eventually owned over 400 acres of Big Travis Valley woodlands. The six-room lodge (photo) was completed in 1923. The highlight of the club's social calendar was the annual outing and dinner for members and their guests.

In 1935, the club sold its property to the National Park Service for use as a Recreation Demonstration Area to be built by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). Because of its central location, the tract was vital to the future park and had the government not acquired it, the entire project may have easily been abandoned. In 1945, park ownership was transferred to the state of Pennsylvania, which continued to make improvements. With over 7,000 acres, Raccoon Creek is today one of Pennsylvania's largest state parks offering a mix of recreational facilities and undeveloped natural areas.



This Bell Acres History article also appeared in the **Sewickley Herald**.