

Back in the Country... *Bell Acres Stories*

By Debby Rabold



Boy Scout Camp Umbstaetter

Turkey Foot Creek had long been a favorite picnic destination for Sewickley area families, church and school groups when in the Spring of 1924, in memory of her husband, Mrs. James E. Umbstaetter made 105 acres of wooded hillside above the creek available to the Allegheny Council of the Boy Scouts of America for use as a campground. The Council included 7,000 scouts from Pittsburgh, most of Allegheny County and part of Beaver County. For the next twenty-four years, the camp gave thousands scouts an opportunity to enjoy a variety of summer outdoor activities.

Mrs. Umbstaetter was Wilhelmina Leet Shields of Edgeworth. Her husband was a banker by profession. Following his unexpected death in 1908, Mrs. Umbstaetter continued to reside in their Beaver Road home until her death in 1946. Her support of scouting went beyond providing land for the camp as she was often present at camp programs and provided funds to send two local scouts to the national convention each year.

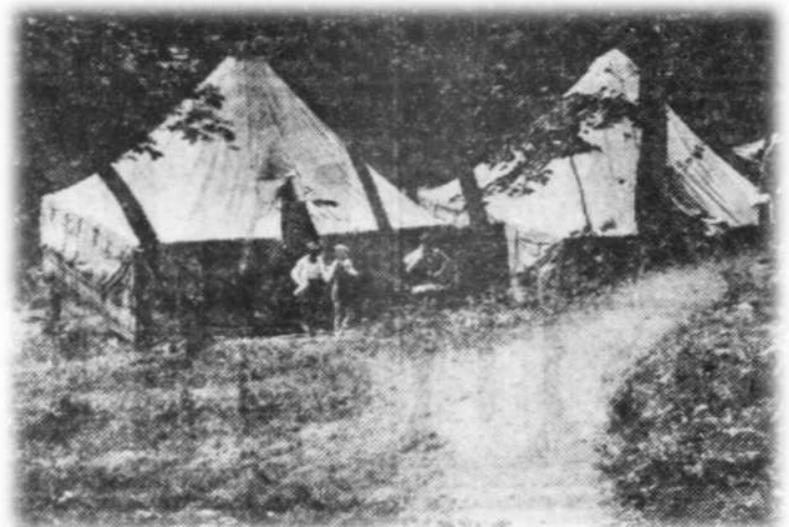


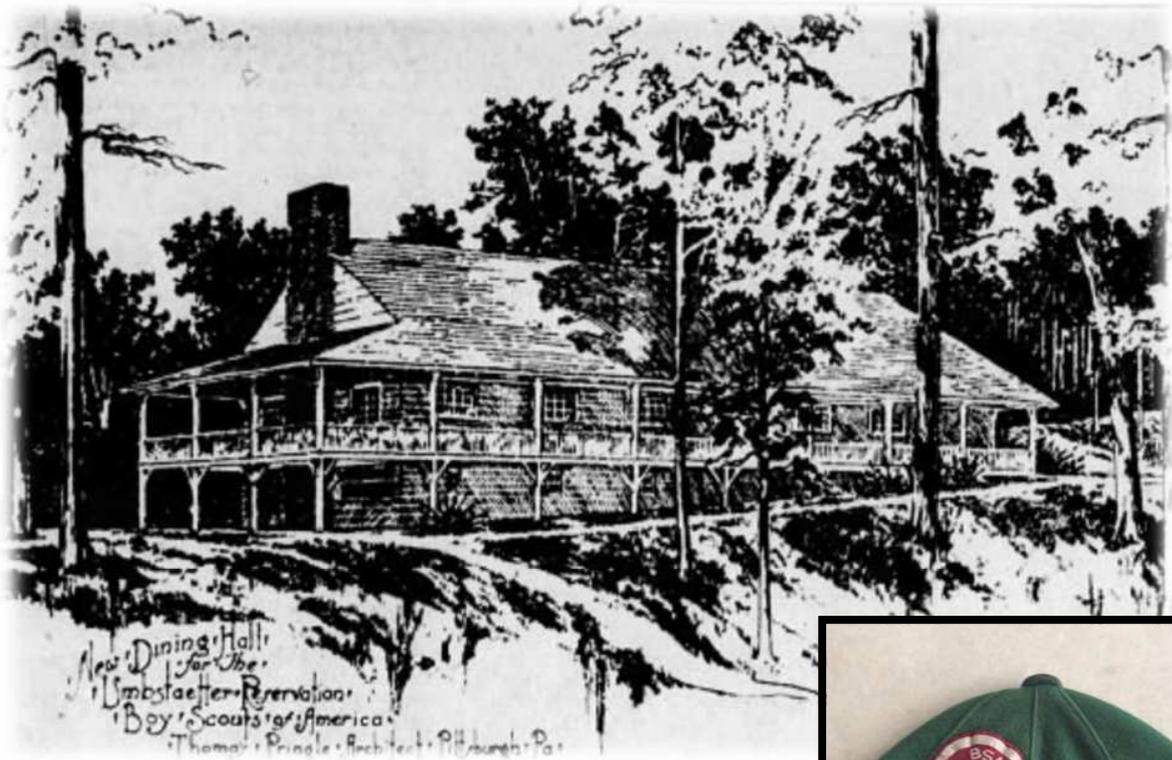
Nine hundred boys enjoyed five weeks of camping during the 1925 season, the year a dam was built across the normally shallow creek to create a five-foot-deep 150'x 350' lake for water sports. The following year, a pirate ship was built on the water (left). In 1930, a large cement pool that could accommodate up to 200 swimmers at one time was built at the corner of Sevin and Turkey Foot roads on the old pageant field above the lake. Fifteen hundred scouts camped that summer.

Umbstaetter featured several stockades or clearings where troops pitched tents and built campfires (below). One imaginative stockade had a Swiss Family Robinson theme with tent platforms built in the trees. A large central dining hall and numerous support buildings including a hospital and museum

dotted the hillside. Overlooking the camp was a watchtower and nearby water tower.

In May 1946, Mrs. Umbstaetter deeded the camp to the Boy Scouts. In 1949, the property was sold to the Ambridge Greek American Progressive Association that used the former camp for recreation. Eventually, the property was acquired by the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy and is now part of the Bell Acres Nature Park, which is owned and operated by Bell Acres Borough.





The camp dining hall & beanie.



A view of the lake.

TURKEY FOOT
Swimming
Pool
AT GAPA PARK

Big Sewickley Creek Road—
 turn right at Union Supply
 Store—then ¼ mile to pool.
 (Formerly Old Boy Scout Camp Unkotsaetter)

Swim In Healthful Sulphur Well Water

MOONLIGHT SWIMMING For groups by appointment	PICNIC FACILITIES By appointment for 100 to 2,500 groups.	GAMES FOR ALL Flag Pong, Badminton, Shuffleboard, Swings
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1953 advertisement from the Sewickley Herald