

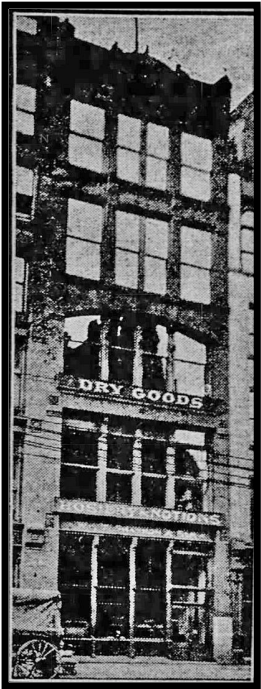
Back in the Country...

Bell Acres Stories

By Debby Rabold

William Thomas Shannon Glenfrew & Signal Farms

The Shannon family's story began in 1847 when young W. T. Shannon, not long from his native Ireland, arrived in Pittsburgh where he would amass wealth and property as a dry goods business owner. Following his partner's retirement in 1882, Shannon (pictured right) reorganized the business as **W. T. Shannon and Son**, and moved the wholesale establishment to Liberty Avenue. The son was Robert Frew Shannon, who along with his parents and siblings, resided in Edgeworth where he once served as a Leet Township road supervisor.



Active in Sewickley society, Robert (pictured right) was not only a successful businessman, but also a passionate horticulturalist specializing in roses and a national award winning dairyman who bred Jersey dairy cattle. One family story tells of how Robert refused to deliver milk to those he thought were not living a properly moral life!

In addition to the Edgeworth Lane homestead "Glenfrew Farm" (1885), Robert purchased "Signal Farm" (1907) in nearby Sewickley Township. Signal Farm was 92 acres of rolling hillside on Turkeyfoot Road between Camp Meeting Road and Beadnell Drive.

In 1911, Robert announced he was wealthy enough to live comfortably and sold the **W. T. Shannon & Son** wholesale business to the **Rosenbaum Department Store** in order to allow more time for farm activities. His retirement, however, was short-lived. In the Fall of 1916, at age sixty-two, Robert unexpectedly died following a brief illness.



Robert and Emma Shannon were the parents of four sons and a daughter. Named for his grandfather, their son William Thomas entered the family business after graduating from New Hampshire's Phillip-Exeter Academy. Having ran track while at Exeter, it was not surprising that William registered for the first **Pittsburgh Press Marathon** scheduled for Saturday January 30, 1909.

GLENFREW FARM

Edgeworth Station, Allegheny County, Pa.
and 907 Liberty Street, Pittsburg, Pa.

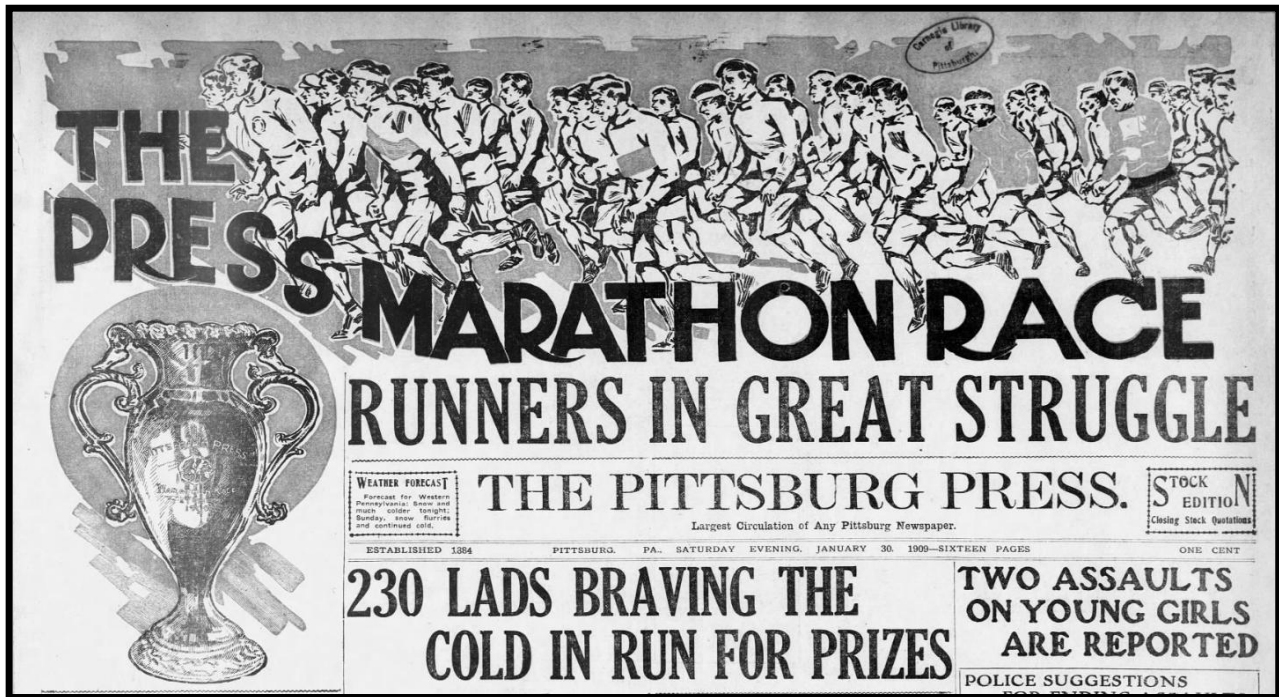
Jersey Cattle
Milk-Butter-Quality.

Berkshire Hogs
Good Ones.
All Registered Stock.

Rhode Island Reds

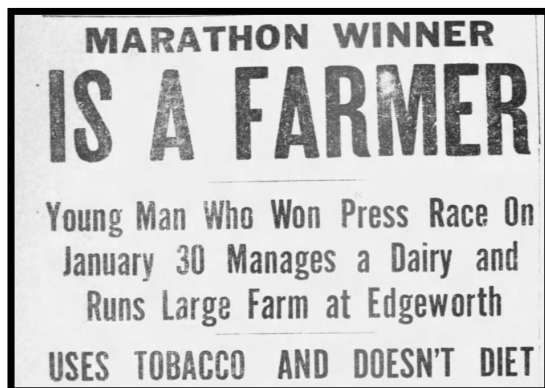
Black Orpingtons
For Eggs and Meat.
Prize Winners, too.

Airedale and Scotch Terriers
The kind that are tractable, mind their own business
and go for tramps and vermin

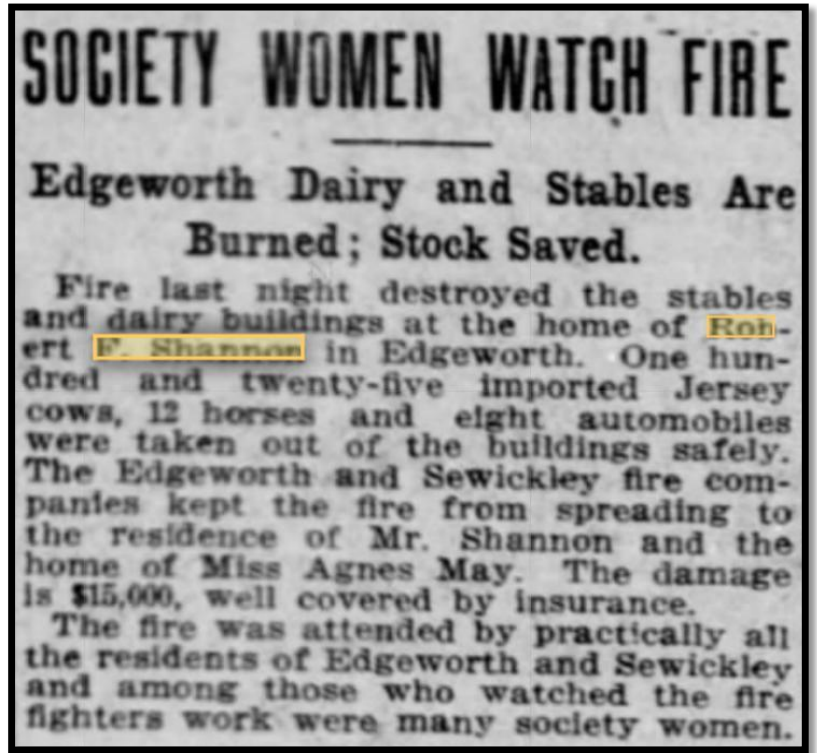
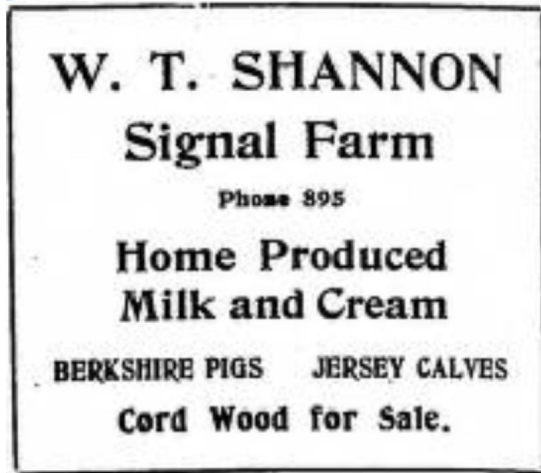


That morning, seven first class rail coaches pulled away from Pittsburgh's Fort Wayne station, carrying runners and coaches to the starting point in Rochester, Beaver County, where despite cold wind and snow, an estimated crowd of 10,000 onlookers gathered to witness the 12:30 afternoon start. Runners were dressed in everything from running clothes to heavy winter wear.

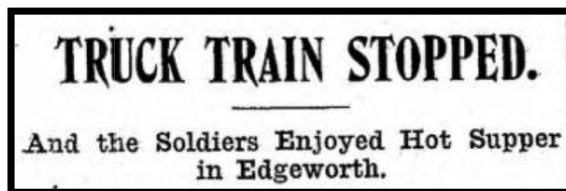
The race route followed the old Beaver Road through Ambridge and Sewickley into Allegheny City before crossing the river into downtown Pittsburgh where the race would finish at the Press Building. Not only did runners have to contend with winter weather, but also a combination of mud, ice and rutted roads. The stretch between Haysville and Glenfield was a foot deep in mud. Spectators lined the route, many of whom offered the runners food and drinks. Crowded city streets made it difficult for runners to pass through, but at 4:11, William Shannon (pictured right) was the first of 157 runners to cross the finish line, becoming a Pittsburgh sports hero. Following this win, William continued to run for the Pittsburgh Athletic Association's track team.



William remained in Edgeworth until his marriage to Miss Eleanor Morgan in 1913. Following an overseas honeymoon, the young couple moved to Signal Farm where William continued to operate a dairy for several years before becoming a Sewickley realtor.



Following Robert's death, his prized Glenfrew herd was sold. Emma Shannon (pictured below) continued to live at the farm, remaining active in civic affairs. Two of her sons served during World War I. In 1918, twenty-one-year old James was killed in action during the Battle of the Marne and is buried in the Sewickley Cemetery. Son Alex also served in France as part of the Motor Supply Transport Service. When Emma learned Alex's truck train was to pass through Sewickley prior to deployment, she arranged dinner in her home for all 87 soldiers.



William wanted to convert the Edgeworth Lane property into apartments following his mother's death (1937), but was prevented from doing so by local zoning regulations. It was not until 1957 that the Shannon's three story Victorian was razed and the land divided into lots that became Myrtle Lane.



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William and Eleanor Shannon were the parents of four children, but only the two youngest survived beyond infancy. Their daughter Harriet passed at age fifteen, leaving their youngest son William Morgan as the couple's only surviving child. Young Billy and his father enjoyed many adventures together from hunting and fishing to digging for arrowheads and other treasures. After military service during WWII, Bill married and relocated to New England where his family continues to reside.

As well as being an avid hunter and angler, William Thomas (pictured right) enjoyed gardening and wine making. He is remembered for his sense of humor and ability to tell a great story. Relatives routinely visited the farm to enjoy wonderful Sunday dinners.



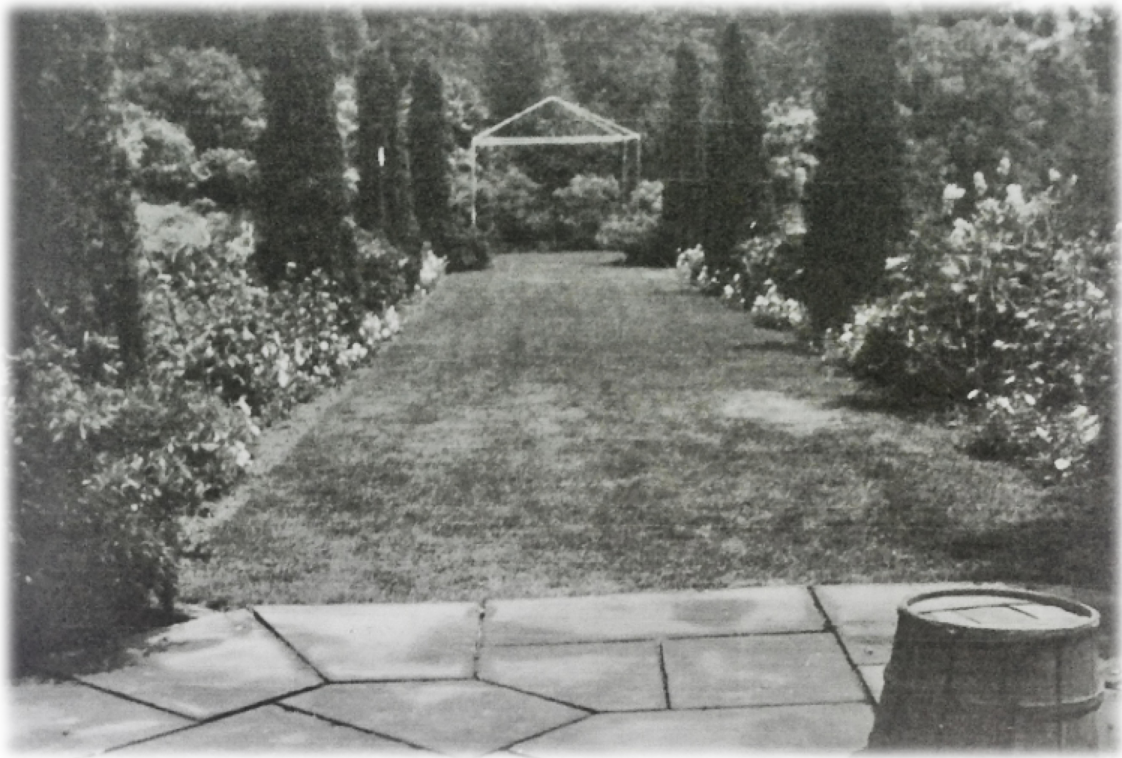
Eleanor (pictured below) was active in the community and is remembered as being elegant and more reserved than her husband, but also generous to those in need. With their long-time housekeeper Helen Clark, the Shannons often spent winters in their Florida home. Eleanor passed in 1946 followed by William in 1953.

It is not known when the Shannons closed the dairy business. In time, Signal Farm became a tree covered country estate featuring a lake, orchard and floral garden. In 1980, the property was opened for development as the Grouse Ridge sub-division.



Eleanor, Harriet and Billy at home.





Eleanor Shannon's Signal Farm rose garden. *"You could step off this porch, walk about 30' and climb a stone staircase to a beautiful English garden, approximately 50'x100', crisscrossed with narrow walkways and containing all sorts of vegetation, flowering shrubs, evergreens, perennials, annuals, just everything, always meticulously kept. It was Aunt Eleanor's garden, and just like her, elegant and beautiful."*

**BELL ACRES BORO—**

**93 ROLLING ACRES (½ Cleared)**  
 It's So Peaceful In The Country. Small lake—25 feet deep, good for swimming, fishing. 2½ Story frame residence having 5 bedrooms, 2½ baths, 5 fireplaces. 1st floor has 15 x 24'9 living room, separate dining room, kitchen, family room. Finished attic with good storage. Separate 3 room cottage with bath and heat. Separate 3 car garage. By appointment. **\$100,000**

*"...down the central hallway on the right was Uncle Bill's den. Magnificent wall paneling, at least four trophy heads mounted on the walls, all from his trips to Canada to hunt moose, elk and deer. Glass fronted bookcases all around and a large leather topped desk in the center of the room, and the whole place had a wonderful smell of pipe tobacco."*

*"One of my favorite memories was sitting on the floor, listening to Uncle Bill tell spellbinding stories about Edgeworth and Western Pennsylvania in the late 1800s. These stories would go on for long periods of time and you always wanted them to never end ..... This was not a farm. It was a country estate. Uncle Bill did have a real estate office in Sewickley behind the hardware store ..... It was a wonderful place to wander around in, filled with all sorts of interesting things to a young boy, and always smelling of pipe tobacco."*

[Thank you Dorothy Shannon Carter, Eleanor Shannon Butler, Jim Bianchi and Bill Hanable for kindly sharing your memories and photos.]





# **Grouse Ridge**

In Bell Acres Borough, only one-half mile from Sewickley Heights Golf Club and six miles from the Village of Sewickley.

Another Cole, Montgomery and Rust Community for gracious Traditional, Early American and Contemporary Homes.

This 100-acre preserve will have 21 spacious homes built on home sites ranging in size from one to six acres. Four lots are immediately available with an additional fourteen being developed for Spring construction. Grouse Ridge will be architecturally controlled and will have gas, electric and city water.

Cole, Montgomery and Rust, Inc. are builders of prestigious homes in other areas they have developed: The Village of Bradfordwoods, Hartswood Farms, Fairhill Farms, Glen Robertson, Franklin Village and Franklin Towne V. We are presently building homes in Edgeworth, Sewickley Heights and Osborne.

**Directions from Sewickley:** Beaver Road West  $2\frac{3}{10}$  miles to Campmeeting Road, right  $3\frac{3}{10}$  miles to Turkey Foot Road, then left  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile to the entrance of Grouse Ridge.

**COLE, MONTGOMERY AND RUST, INC.**  
THE VILLAGE OF BRADFORDWOODS



The Shannon's former home overlooking Turkeyfoot Road has been renovated. In January 1980, Cole, Montgomery & Rust began building the Grouse Ridge sub-division on the former Signal Farm.