

Back in the Country...
Bell Acres Stories
By Debby Rabold

VALLEY HOMES
(1943-1954)



Valley Homes was constructed on 93 acres at the corner of Big Sewickley Creek & Turkey Foot roads. (undated photo)

Hoping to alleviate the critical wartime housing shortage, the US Government constructed 372 units for shipyard and defense workers' families in the Ambridge-Neville Island area. Built in then Sewickley Township, the cinder block and concrete structures were intended as temporary housing with a life expectancy of just five years.

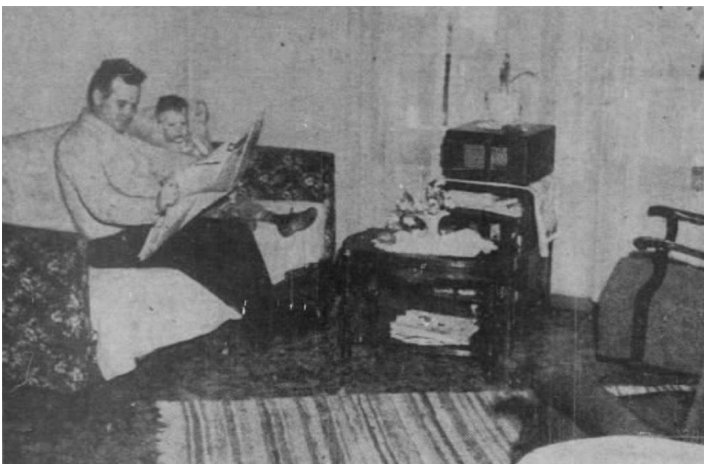
Rents ranged from \$26.50/month for three rooms to \$32/month for a five-room unit. Units were furnished with coal stoves and ice boxes with tenants providing their own coal and ice. The neighborhood included a general store and community center. Housing was segregated with nine buildings designated for African American families.

Despite defense workers moving from the area at war's end, *Valley Homes* remained open beyond five years to provide much needed housing for returning veterans and their young families. Six hundred persons resided in *Valley Homes* in 1952. Because the housing was always considered temporary, funding was never provided for maintenance and upgrades. As a result, the buildings deteriorated while the public increasingly demanded that *Valley Homes* be razed.

Sewickley Township officials initially offered to purchase the property, but after much public debate, declined to do so. Remaining tenants were given until 1 January 1954 to vacate the premises, though a few remained until the wrecking crew arrived later that summer.



Coal bins lined the streets of *Valley Homes*. (undated photo)



Interior views of *Victory Village* defense housing on Big Sewickley Creek Road in adjacent Leet Township. Here, rent was 50 cents more than at *Valley Homes* because these units had electric refrigerators. (P-G photos 1946)