

October 2013

Most people in Bella Vista who are familiar with its history have heard about or remember the big Sunset Hotel that sat up on Sunset Drive on the west side of Highway 71. However, the Sunset was a later addition to the Linebargers' Bella Vista summer resort which they opened in June, 1917, at Lake Bella Vista.

The first lodging for visitors built by the Linebargers consisted of three lodges, with the cluster commonly referred to as "the Lodge," on the east side of Lake Bella Vista up on the hill in the area now known as Bella Vista Heights, at the intersection of Skyline Drive & Maple.

Valley View Lodge was the first one built, on the north side of Skyline Drive, in time for the resort opening in 1917. As noted in Gilbert Fite's book, From Vision to Reality: A History of Bella Vista Village 1915–1993, "There were accommodations for about 60 guests in the 30-room lodge located (up) on the hillside about 300 feet east of the dam. Rooms at the lodge did not have private bathrooms, but there was a shower and toilet at each end of the building, one for men and one for women." The lodge had a glassed-in lobby which connected the lodge to the main dining room to the right of the lodge. In addition to the dining room, which could hold 150 guests, the lodge contained a gift shop, post office, barber and beauty shops, and the resort office.

Across the street at the southwest corner of Skyline Drive & Maple was the Lake View Lodge, built in a U-shaped formation. The servants quarters were in the lower level. The west side of the lodge overlooked Lake Bella Vista; if it were standing today, it would look down upon the start of the walking trail on the east side of the lake.

Per Gil Fite, "During the winter of 1918-1919, (the Linebargers) built a new two-story lodge, which was later called Mountain View Lodge. It had 52 double and four single rooms." It was located up the hill above Maple, at the southeast corner of the intersection.

When the Linebargers decided to sell their summer resort to E. L. Keith in 1952, the lodges had outlived their usefulness so Mr. Keith razed them and two years later built his retirement home overlooking Lake Bella Vista where the Valley View Lodge had originally stood. He lived there until his death in 1993, and his family members continue to occupy the Keith home. Other private homes now stand on both sides of Maple, where the Lake View and the Mountain View Lodges once stood.

Picture 1: The Linebargers built a complex of lodges up on the hill on the east side of Lake Bella Vista, to house guests at their summer resort. Today's soccer fields are located in the field shown at the top of the picture.

Picture 2: An old postcard shows the scene going up the hill on Skyline Drive with the Lake View lodge visible on the right.

Picture 3: The two-story Mountain View Lodge, finished in 1919, stood on the southeast corner of Skyline Drive and Maple.

