

## Overview of Bella Vista History

I have been asked to write an occasional column about Bella Vista history, to be called Past Perspectives. Since areas on both sides of Lake Bella Vista were recently approved to be annexed into the City of Bella Vista, I thought I would start with one of those areas, up on hill on the east side of the lake, the area most people today call Bella Vista Heights.

To give you some background first, though...a couple from Bentonville, the Bakers, were the first to recognize the vacation possibilities of this area, and in 1915, they built a dam across Sugar Creek to form a lake, which they named Lake Bella Vista. They sold the lake and surrounding property to the Linebarger Brothers in 1917. The Linebargers wanted to sell lots to people and then build summer cottages for them, so they needed a place to house their guests when they came to check out the area. They built three lodges up on the hill on the east side of the lake. The attached picture was taken in the 1920's showing one of these lodges, and a walkway going up the hill. There is still visible today a segment of sidewalk starting up the hill by the parking lot on the east side of the lake.

After several decades, the Linebargers decided to sell. When they sold the resort to E. L. Keith in 1952, the old lodges were in disrepair so he tore them down. He built his family home on that site in 1954, which still stands and is now the residence of his son, Gene Keith, and family. E. L. Keith wasn't interested in selling lots, he just wanted people to come vacation at the resort, so he housed them in the old Sunset Hotel, built in 1930 on Sunset Drive, and he built a motel along 71 right by the lake.

When Mr. Cooper bought the Lake Bella Vista resort from E.L. Keith in 1963, as well as farms all over what is now the City of Bella Vista, he wanted to sell lots of course, so just like the Linebargers many years before, he needed more places for guests to stay while they took sales tours. His solution was to bring in the mobile homes that are still located up in Bella Vista Heights. Following is an excerpt from Dr. Gilbert Fite's book, "From Vision to Reality, a History of Bella Vista Village 1915-1993":

*"In his deal with Keith, Cooper had acquired several hundred lots in the Skyline Drive and Mount Pisgah Loop area of old Bella Vista. It was decided to place new mobile homes on some of those lots.... In January, 1966, crews began preparing concrete slabs on which to place the mobile homes and adjacent driveways for parking.... Within 90 days from the start of construction, 200 mobile homes were in place. Next the company started to sell these homes for around \$7,000 each. It required \$1,000 down and payments of \$100 a month. Then, if the buyer agreed, the company would lease the house back for \$100 month and use it to house visitors. Buyers of one of these homes got a terrific deal. They put up on \$1,000 in cash and, by leasing the house back to Cooper, had a home free and clear at the end of five or six years.... This area later became the home of many permanent residents."*

Xyta Lucas  
Docent  
Bella Vista Historical Museum



Early picture of East side



Towing a mobile home to its new location near Skyline Drive in March, 1966.