



**“A Waltz Back In Time”
2016**

Quietly nestled amongst the grand oaks of the Missouri Ozark hills, sits the true meaning of vacation, a “Haven of Rest” for young and old. Wildwood Springs Lodge sits picturesquely above the beauty of the Meramec River and has for 94 years.

Originally a private club, Wildwood was the dream of a group of sportsmen who had been coming to Steelville to hunt and fish for many years. Sometime in the early 1920’s these men formed a club to purchase the land. This club came to be known as the Wildwood Springs

Resort Association.

Most of the club

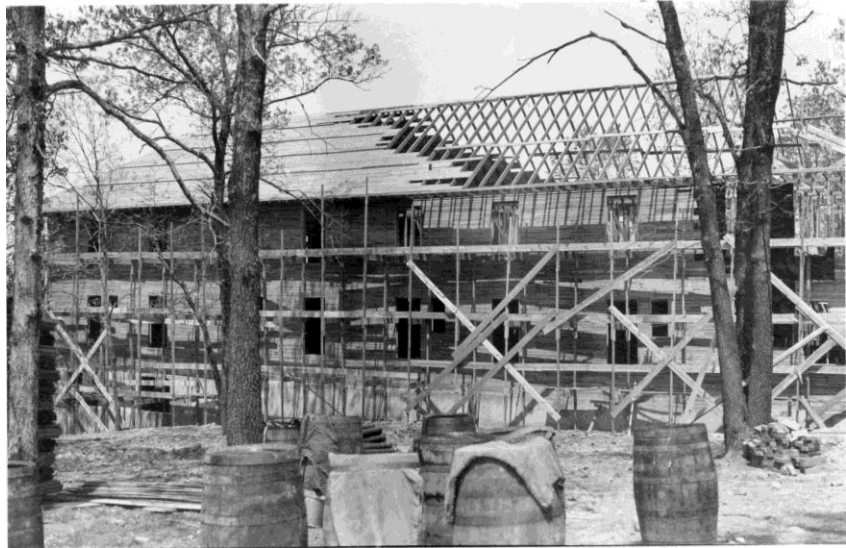
members were

business men from St.

Louis. When coming

down from the city,

they always found



rooms in town, but soon the club decided to build a lodge for members and their guests.

Mr. W.H. Forester, who served as president of the resort association, originally planned the resort with 300 or so cabins, a golf course, horseback riding, and a swimming pool.

However, the cabins never really did take shape. Instead the grand lodge you see today is what came about. George Hummel, an architect from Rolla, designed the building, a two story stucco structure containing fifty-three rooms, sixteen on the main floor and thirty-seven on the second level, a spacious lobby, a large dining room and a modern kitchen.

On Monday, January 16th Mr. Hummell started laying out the hotel building and vowed to complete by June 1, 1922. In the 1920’s the lodge was ultra-modern. It was the first

real hotel in the city of Steelville and it was furnished with new furniture, indoor plumbing, and running water, and this was just the beginning.

Wildwood's water supply was provided by the springs from which it got its name. The largest spring was found on the other side of the river. The water was piped under the Meramec and pumped up the hill into the lodge. The lodge also had its very own water tower to ensure water availability. Once during a large flood when Steelville's water pump became flooded, the city got its water from the lodge.

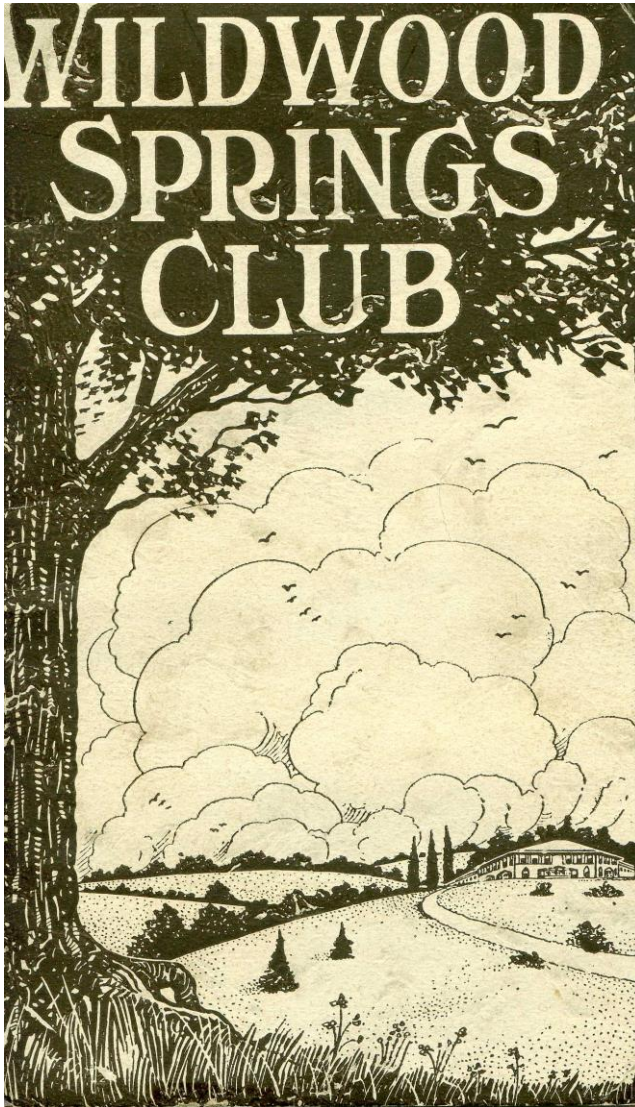


**“Wildwood Springs Hotel will be the pride of Crawford, a place of beauty, recreation and it is needless to say all the benefits derived thereby.”—
Crawford Mirror
January 19, 1922**

The lodge was founded during the golden days, the memorable roaring 20's. Wildwood wasn't the first of its kind to spring up around the Mid-West, but it sure left an impression on the minds of its guests. Tapered through the streets of Steelville and all the way down the main drag were flyers for the opening. Twenty-Five Hundred people joined in the festivities on the grounds. The activities were hosted by the Wildwood Springs Resort Association. There was music played by the infamous Wildwood Orchestra, a finger-licking-good barbeque, games, and tours throughout the lodge. And of

course, no truly *Grand* opening is complete without its very own parade. This was a day Steelville will long remember.

By the mid 1920's the major shareholders in the Lodge were Dr. John Zahorsky



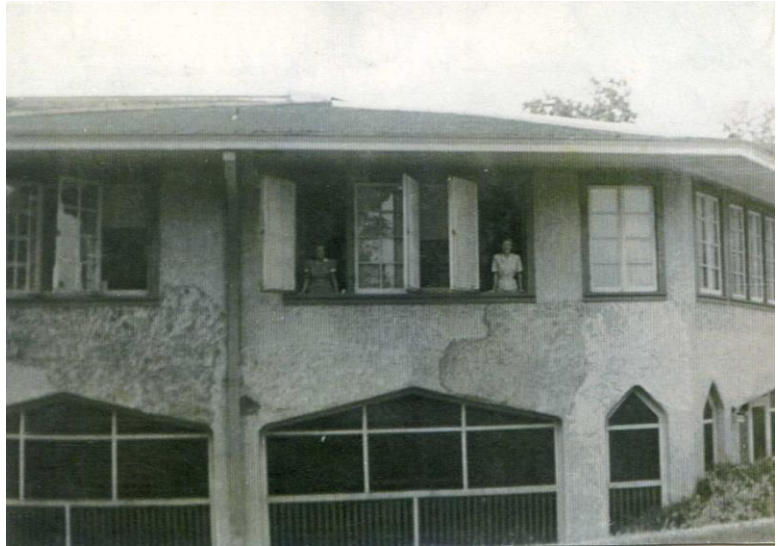
and Mr. Remensnider. They are the two that decided to open Wildwood to the public rather than opening it to membership holders only. The manager at that time was Joseph W. Cushing.

Mr. Cushing came to the lodge by means of the river, just as people did in the older days. He was on a floating trip with a few college friends when he saw the grand lodge sitting high atop the bluff. Once he found out that it was a summer vacation resort he applied and was hired on as manager for the lodge and returned each summer. He not only

fell in love with the lodge itself, but he also fell in love with Mr. Zahorsky's beautiful daughter Elizabeth. During the 1930's and throughout the late 1940's Elizabeth & Joseph Cushing were the host owners of Wildwood.

Resort hotels continued to be popular throughout the 1930's, but with the 40's came war time, men were gone and women worked in defense plants. There was little time for people to take such

leisurely vacations. During the Second World War the lodge was leased to the department of war. It was a new generation and women began to make their mark on history. The war department sent women down from the big cities



to make bandages in the vacated building and do other jobs necessary to support the war. After the war was over the majority of the jobs all returned to the big city and the lodge became a small neglected treasure waiting for someone to discover its true beauty.

The lodge was purchased in 1948 by Ben and Sonya Finkel who tried to continue running the lodge in its same rustic traditions. They brought the worn, neglected building to its former glory and soon after, the lodge earned a reputation for cleanliness and the best food in the country. During the Finkel era the lodge became more of a family



vacation spot. A place for Mom, Dad and the kids to leave the troubles of home, get away, relax and have a good time. Bob Bell grew up across the street from the

prestigious lodge and spent many summers mowing grass and helping in whatever way he could. The owners, Ben & Sonya Finkel, had no children so Bob became somewhat of a surrogate son.

The lodge was mostly closed for roughly ten years before the Bell family decided to adopt it into their lives. The lodge was completely restored to the elegance of its 1920's appeal. And to renew its former reputation the lodge was reopened on Memorial Day of 1993, 71 years from its first grand opening. The Bell family including parents, Paul and Delores Bell, sons Bob Bell (and wife Kathy), Dennis Bell (and wife Elaine), and John Bell (and wife Melanie), and daughters, Jean Thomasma (and Husband Lanin) Lucy Bell (and husband Loren Weitzel), and Susan Bell, are all involved with the upkeep and operation of the historic lodge. The family has brought up their many children to work and be a part of the



lodge as well. Emily, Meghan, Lindsey, Jack, Joe, Rachel, Torston, Sarah, Trevor, Kate, Steven, and Dawson, can all be found at the lodge during the summer keeping the Grand Lady at her best. One more of those Children, Stefanie, is now the General Manager working to help carry on the legacy that her family has created.

As the lodge began its long era of new people, food, and stories, people flocked from each corner of the country to enjoy the “romance of a real vacation”. Numerous places near the lodge attracted the attention of many of the guests such as Meramec Caverns, the fresh water springs, and the well-known wineries. Folks could dance the night away in the main lobby to the music of the Wildwood Orchestra or play a round of golf on the nine holes. People continued to come to the lodge for a one-night stay, a weekend get-away, or a week of rest and relaxation.

Wildwood would not be completely described without introduction to its menu. Originally Lucy, Bob’s sister and Delores, Bob’s mother, were praised for their superb meals which they produced nearly entirely by themselves. His mother made each delectable desert from scratch, and it was always prepared fresh. The family served a variety of dishes each meal.

Today’s meals reflect the same good ‘ole country cooking just as they did back then. The meals are prepared by our very own Wildwood chefs, Jeannette Freeman, Cindy Blankenship, Eric Jacobson, and Stu Ha’d, prepare each meal with the finest of



care and makes each one to perfection. You haven’t truly experienced good food until you’ve tried one of our picnic dinners here at the lodge. Pulled pork, barbeque brisket, homemade potato salad and

fresh watermelon, sounds amazing doesn't it? Or one of Jeannette's mouth-watering brownie pies. Jeannette has been at the lodge for many years now and continues to bring a sense of home comfort to every dish. Her love of cooking truly shows in her personal favorite dish, the chocolate truffle cheesecake. Her husband Bill Freeman is a welcoming face for the lodge. He enchants the guests with his adventurous stories and even helps Jeannette in the kitchen. He provides just one of the many friendly faces at the lodge.

For almost 20 years now, Wildwood has also gained a reputation for hosting a series of incredible and unique concerts. The Wildwood Concert Series has been known to include acts such as Leon Russell, The Guess Who, America, Ozark Mountain Daredevils, POCO, and The Marshall Tucker Band. Bands set up in our lobby in front of the fireplace and we can fit about 250 guests for each show. People from all over the world have come to enjoy the special Wildwood Experience and Bands ask to come back year after year because of how much they enjoy playing for our crowds.



Presently the Lodge is a ghostly image of the 1920's with its original building structure and same elegant ambiance it had back then. The rooms relate the true 1920's setting. The areas are equipped with at least one bed, their original dressers, a small writing desk, a working sink, and a rug the size of the room. The lodge is and always will be a very family oriented establishment that provides a place for relaxation and good times. Since Wildwood's reopening in 1993 it has gained a respectable number of satisfied customers. With its recapturing of the historic 1920's and friendly services from the Bell family and the Wildwood Staff, the lodge is destined to remain the "Grand Hotel" of Steelville Missouri for a long time to come.

So whether or not you want to have fun in the sun or just get away and relax, Wildwood Springs Lodge is the place for you. You might want to take a refreshing dip in the pool, play an evening game of cards, or just sit in the dining room enjoying a delicious meal while overlooking the beautiful Meramec Valley through the glistening French windows.

At Wildwood it's all about you. And now you too can take a waltz back in time

