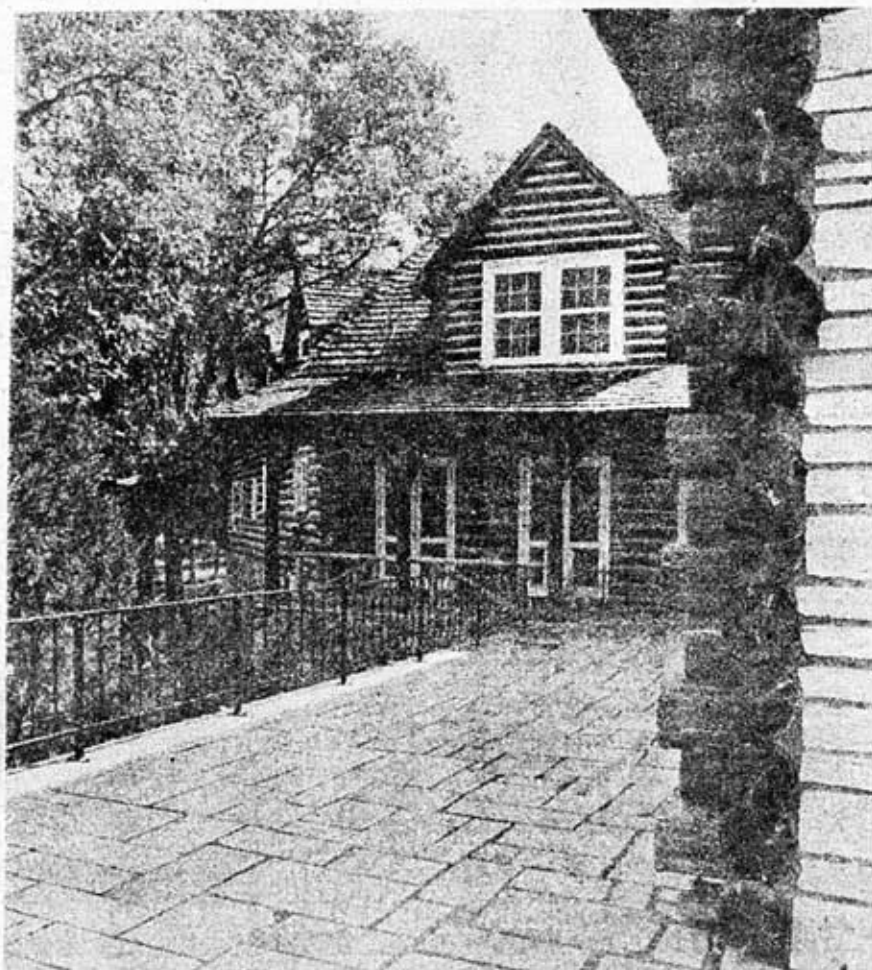


# WILLMORE LODGE!



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NEXT TO THE HUNGRY HOUSE CAFE  
IN WAYNESVILLE

There stands a majestic log structure situated north of Bagnell Dam known to people in the area as Willmore Lodge, although the Willmore Company was neither the first nor the last to own it.

Built in 1930 as an administration building for the officials of the Union Electric Company, the lodge cost \$135,000...a handsome price even today. Although it took only three months to construct, the preparation of the materials took two years.

Hand hewn pine logs of the finest quality were brought in by rail from the state of Washington and were put together solely with wooden pegs. Larry Runyan, the present occupant claims there isn't a single nail anywhere in the building...and to this day, there is not one bad log in the entire structure.

When asked how Union Electric was able to complete a project of this magnitude at the same time the dam was being constructed, Van Sutcliff, district manager for Union Electric, commented, "The construction took place during the depression, but money had been appropriated long before the crash." "Because the money was already in escrow, the company decided to go ahead with the project. The dam was the only major workings taking place across the country at that time, so people flocked in here from all over to find work." "Union Electric had 23,000 employees and people were lined up all over trying to get hired. With that many employees on the payroll, it was not difficult to complete both projects in record time.

Each bedroom in the 29 room structure is named for a town that was either destroyed or moved when the Lake of the Ozarks was created. The names are engraved on plaques over the doors. In each room is a buzzer wired into a master key box in the kitchen.

When the guest desired service from the kitchen, the button was depressed and the corresponding tag flipped up on the key box to show the maids which room was buzzing. The operation still works today, but is mostly used as a toy by the Runyans. When Runyan buzzes his wife in the kitchen, his location in the house determines whether she goes to his aid. "If he's down in Linn Creek," she says, "I don't bother."

Louis A. Egan, president of Union Electric at the time of the lodge's construction, had signs placed throughout the house with instructions such as "Don't place or hang items over this register.-Louis A. Egan." The sign remains intact.

"The lodge was never built to be a home," says Runyan. "It was built to accommodate several people at one time." That explains the unusual layout. Entrance is made into a large room, 78 feet by 54 feet, with 35 feet high ceilings. Off to the left are five bedrooms, each with its own bathroom. Above the main room is a balcony, named Hurricane Deck, with a huge master bedroom off to one side. This particular room was used almost exclusively by V.I.P.'s. Off to the right of the main room is the dining room, 16 feet by 26 feet, which leads to a kitchen pantry and then to the kitchen. Continuing on through the kitchen are the quarters the Runyans occupy during the winter months. This area contains four more bedrooms and several more bathrooms.

All of the house except the main room and the Hurricane Deck area are heated by electricity. These rooms are heated by oil, but the Runyans don't even attempt to heat them during the winter. "During the first three months we were here," relates Runyan, "our oil bill for those rooms was \$1,300."

On the far wall of the main room are two maps which are from before the construction of the dam. The

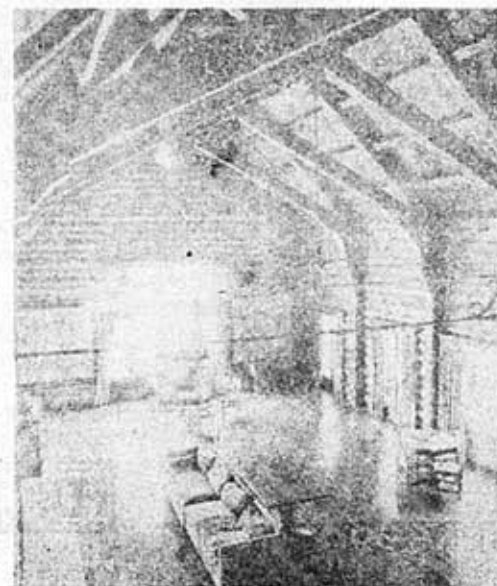
maps are original and the lettering is faded, but the names of towns such as Arnold's Mill, Zebra and Nonsuch can still be read.

During the time Union Electric owned the lodge it was used as a retreat for some famous people. President Franklin D. Roosevelt visited the area during the time, and could have stayed in the lodge.

In the early 1940's, the Federal Power Commission passed a ruling that utility companies could not own any property whose need could not be justified. As Union Electric was unable at that time to prove the building was essential for its operation, they were forced to sell the entire 29.2 acre estate.

The Willmore Company purchased the estate in 1945 and used it as a leasing property until Harold Koplar bought it in the early 1960's when he purchased the Horseshoe Bend acreage.

Koplar has the estate up for sale, but so far it has not sold. The property is listed as an ideal site for a restaurant but Runyan and his family do not wish to see it become a commercial endeavor. "The lodge is a landmark that belongs not to an individual, but to everybody," says Runyan. "An individual would destroy certain parts to create doors, walkways, or driveways. They would be destroying something of a historical significance." Mrs. Runyan added, "Somebody just needs to love it."



Willmore Lodge