

# Reflections on Branford's varied neighborhoods

During the year 1994, we have celebrated 350 years of the founding of our town with many fine events and shared the rich history that is still in the making.

Since the Colonial period, Branford has been divided into sections or large neighborhoods that often contain smaller communities within.

Branford's neighborhoods, of which there are many, have distinct histories that vary chronologically, by family, geography, architecture and culture. It is most interesting that these areas have geographic boundaries that are very ill defined yet also have educational, voting, zoning and social boundaries that have varied through the years. People, however, are very firm about which neighborhood they belong.

It is our neighborhoods that have defined our past and our present and are the kind of places that even if you leave, somehow you always find your way back...

*Short Beach* was the last of the shoreline communities to be settled because of lack of access except over the road the Colonists called The Alps. It was originally called Scotch Cap, whose district extended as far as Standard Avenue. The first year-round home was built in 1849, known as the "49er," and still stands today.

After the Civil War, a summer hotel and cottages were built along the shore attracting many visitors. Today Short Beach is a small year-round community in which many of the early families still live.

*Granite Bay* was a heavily wooded area established at the turn of the century with smaller summer and year-round homes and named for the beautiful coast. The northern most section was called Klondike. Nearby is Killam's Point, established in 1880 by Henry Killam, a New Haven carriage manufacturer.

*Double Beach* was settled in the early 1800s by the Linsley and Lanphier families who farmed the area. The well-known Double Beach House operated for many years and today is the site of Echlin manufacturing headquarters. Johnson's Point lies to the south with its many fine homes built in the early 20th-century. Lanphier's Cove, named for the original family, contains dozens of small summer cottages. Brockett's Point was established by William Brockett of North Haven, who built a number of summer cottages along the shore for his family and guests.

*Branford Point*, known by the Colonists as Mulliner's Point, was named for Thomas Mulliner



## PICTURES OF THE PAST

Jane Peterson Bouley

photograph gallery and restaurant.

Today, Pawson Park is a desirable year-round community. Also on the Indian Neck peninsula are Summer Island and Sunset Beach, which still retain their summer cottage atmosphere. The boundaries of Indian Neck today have a broader definition and include South Montowese Street to Limewood Beach.

*Haycock Point* is a small, private peninsula named for the rock at the point that resembles a "haycock" or pile of hay. The homes were built early in this century by Richard and J. Hubert Bradley of Branford Center.

*Hotchkiss Grove* was settled by the Blackstone family in the late 18th-century and the homestead still stands on First Avenue. A section of Hotchkiss Grove was known as Blackstoneville. Emerson Hotchkiss of Waterbury purchased the homestead and 100 acres in 1886 and built summer cottages with common rights to the beach. The "Grove" was a section of trees between Seventh and Eighth avenues used by the family as a picnic spot.

*Pine Orchard* was settled in the early 19th-century by the Baldwin, Sheldon, Hoadley and Hall families. It was originally called World's End for the creek that ran through it. As the area was developed as a summer resort, the name was changed because of its abundance of pine trees. It is noted for its fine homes and scenic views. The Pine Orchard Country Club was founded in 1901.

*Stony Creek* was the first shoreline district to be settled in the 1700s by the Howd, Palmer, Barker, Frisbie, Cook and Rogers families. The families farmed the land and utilized the water for fishing and

with a number of hotels, including the famous Montowese House. The Oweneo Inn has been in continuous operation since 1847.

*Pawson Park* was originally used as grazing land for sheep and 200 acres were leased to Samuel Beach in 1866. He developed a day summer resort named for Pawson, a Totokett Indian, that included a skating rink, merry-go-round,

live here. Blackstone Acres, which was developed in 1954, is named for the family.

*Mill Plain* was named by the Colonists and was settled by the Palmer, Barker, Harrison and Bartholomew families who farmed the land well into this century. Most of Branford's ice was cut at Mill Plain and a small cemetery pays tribute to those early settlers. A small section of the area is known as Short Rocks.

*Brushy Plain* was also named by the Colonists and was one of the routes to North Branford, then known as North Farms or the Second Society. The Stent family owned many acres of farm land here, which was not developed until the last quarter century.

*Branford Center* encompasses a large neighborhood with its many fine residential streets and stores along Main Street. There was formerly a separate Branford Borough in the 1800s, which was later dissolved. Branford Center has two longtime sections - Fourth Ward, also called by the Colonists as the Quarter, and Canoe Brook.

*Cherry Hill*, on one of the highest points in Branford, has an interesting history. Daniel Morris planted 300 cherry trees on his farm and sold the fruit. Schuyler Hamilton, grandson of the famous statesman Alexander, purchased the upper class farm in 1859 and built a fine mansion. Used as a dairy farm by movie mogul Louis Sagal until after World War II, the area was commercially developed in the 1950s.

*Branford Hills* was called the Great Hill by the Colonists and was used as the route to East Haven and beyond. The Plant family purchased many acres and became one of the largest producers of strawberries, peaches and other produce in the Northeast. The section where Branhaven Plaza now stands was known as Plantsville. Slowly the farm land was sold and the road commercialized. Lake Saltonstall at the western boundary of Branford has been very important to the town's history serving as an iron works, summer resort, water reservoir and today a recreational retreat.

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Jane Peterson Bouley is town historian for the town of Branford.

*Below, spending a day in Indian Neck in 1909.*

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*Branford Point*, known by the Colonists as Mulliner's Point, was named for Thomas Mulliner who was living here before 1644. The Branford Point Hotel stood where the public beach is today. The fine harbor where the Sound and the Branford River meet has throughout the town's history been a center for boating.

The homes along Harbor Street were built by the Linsley, Averill and Shepard families in a variety of architectural styles. To the north is Dutch Wharf, also known by the Colonists as Dutch House or Dutch House Quarter, and presumably named for the Dutch who traded along the shore before the settlers came in 1644.

*Indian Neck* is historically the peninsula south of Sybil Creek and is the land the Totokett Indians reserved for themselves. Much of this land was later owned by the First Ecclesiastical Society and leased to the homeowners.

The Society sold the land in the 1960s. Indian Neck was a tourist area

ran through it. As the area was developed as a summer resort, the name was changed because of its abundance of pine trees. It is noted for its fine homes and scenic views. The Pine Orchard Country Club was founded in 1901.

*Stony Creek* was the first shoreline district to be settled in the 1700s by the Howd, Palmer, Barker, Frisbie, Cook and Rogers families. The families farmed the land and utilized the water for fishing and clamming. Stony Creek was famous at the turn of the century for its oysters, granite quarries, summer hotels, architecture, social activities and tours of the Thimble Islands, much of which is still evident today.

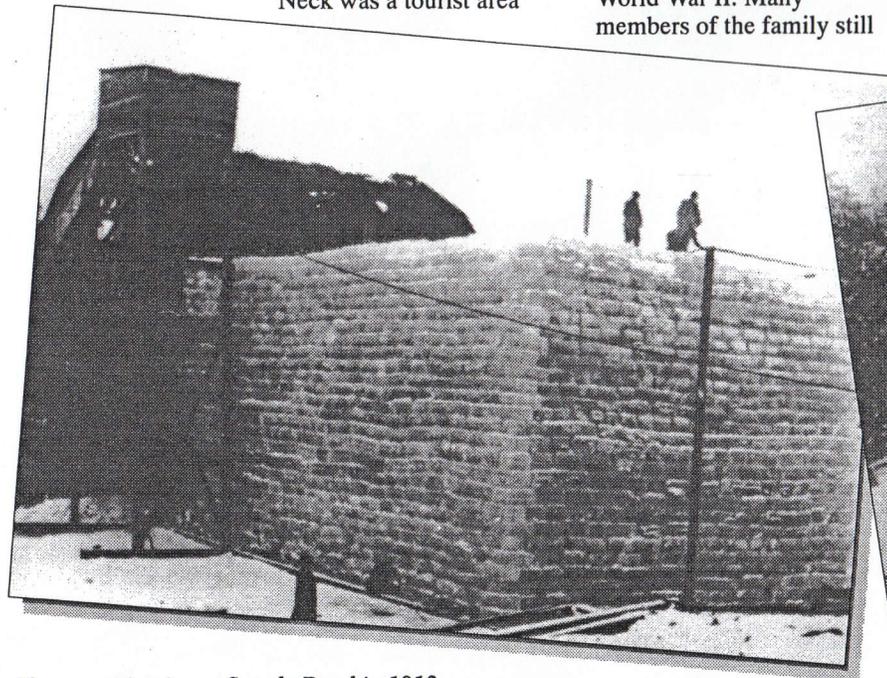
*Paved Street District*, including a section called Flat Rock, was a distinct section of the northern part of today's Leetes Island Road to Route 1. Older residents still call this road Paved Street.

*Damascus* was settled by the Blackstone family and the area was farmed until World War II. Many members of the family still

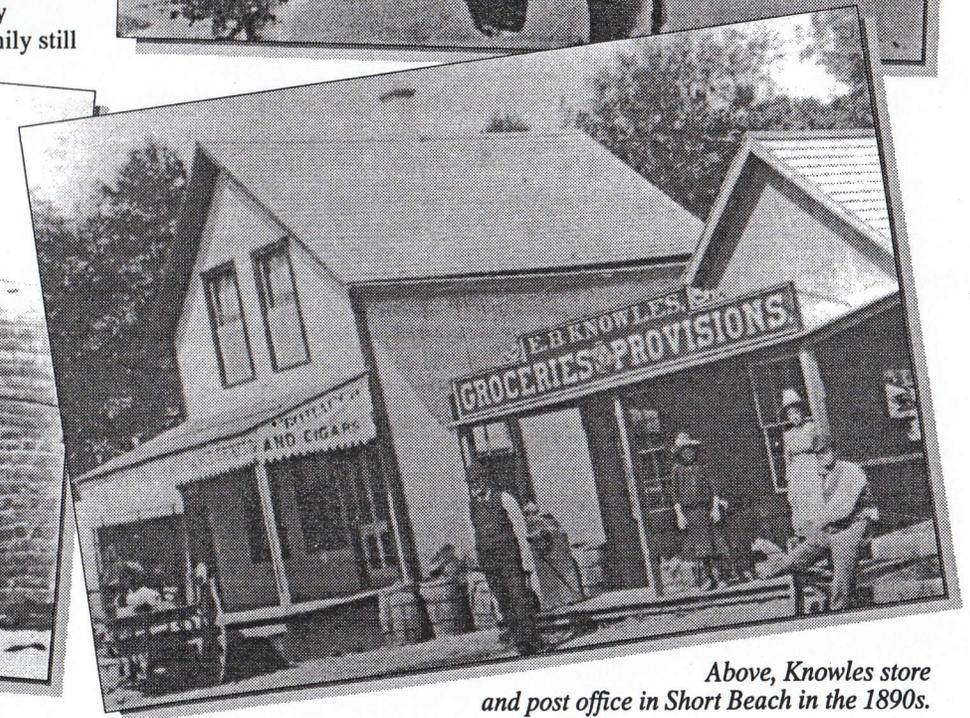
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*Below, spending a day in Indian Neck in 1909.*



*Above, cutting ice at Supply Pond in 1913.*



*Above, Knowles store and post office in Short Beach in the 1890s.*