



Pictures of the Past

The body of water between the towns of Branford and East Haven was known to the Quinnipiac Indians as "Lonotonoquet" or Tear of the Great Spirit. The English settlers who came in 1644 to Branford called it the Great Lake and after an iron works was established on the shore, the lake became known as Furnace Pond.

After the Iron Works was dissolved, much of the land along the lake was owned by William Rosewell of Branford, a wealthy ship merchant. His daughter Elizabeth in 1700 married Gurdon Saltonstall who would become governor of the Connecticut Colony.

Gurdon Saltonstall was born 1666 in

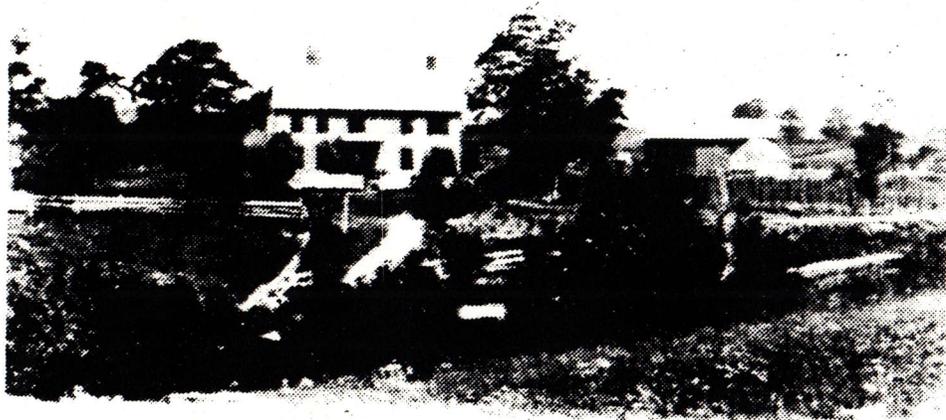
Haverhill, Mass., and attended Harvard College. He was ordained as a minister in New London in 1691 and soon gained a reputation as a dynamic preacher. After his marriage to Elizabeth Rosewell he built a mansion along the shore of Furnace Pond which was one of the most elegant homes in the area. The windows were adorned with tapestries woven to depict a hunting scene and were imported from England. The house had a massive oak stairway and brass doorknobs and fixtures. Saltonstall made his permanent residence in New London but probably stayed in Branford for short periods as business dictated. He was elected governor in 1708 and served until his death in 1724. He was an influential and powerful politician and was most famous during his term of office for the Saybrook Platform which provided for a consociation of the state's churches

and was also the chief proponent of bringing Yale College to New Haven instead of Hartford.

At Saltonstall's death the mansion would pass to his son Rosewell of New London and Hartford and was managed for Rosewell by local farmers. The last of the Saltonstalls to own the farm was Rosewell Jr., who was a recluse and made the Branford mansion his year round home. Rosewell died 1788 in Branford at the age of 56 and is buried at Center Cemetery.

The farm was sold by the Saltonstall family and was occupied by several families the last of whom was William Hartley. The house burned to the ground in 1909 but the foundation can still be seen on the east side of the lake named in honor of Governor Gurdon Saltonstall.

Jane Peterson Bouley



The Governor Saltonstall mansion

(Editor's note: Pictures of the Past, by Jane Peterson Bouley, will be appearing as a monthly column in the Branford Review.)