

Pictures of the Past

Sheldon House: the jewel of the summer hotel era

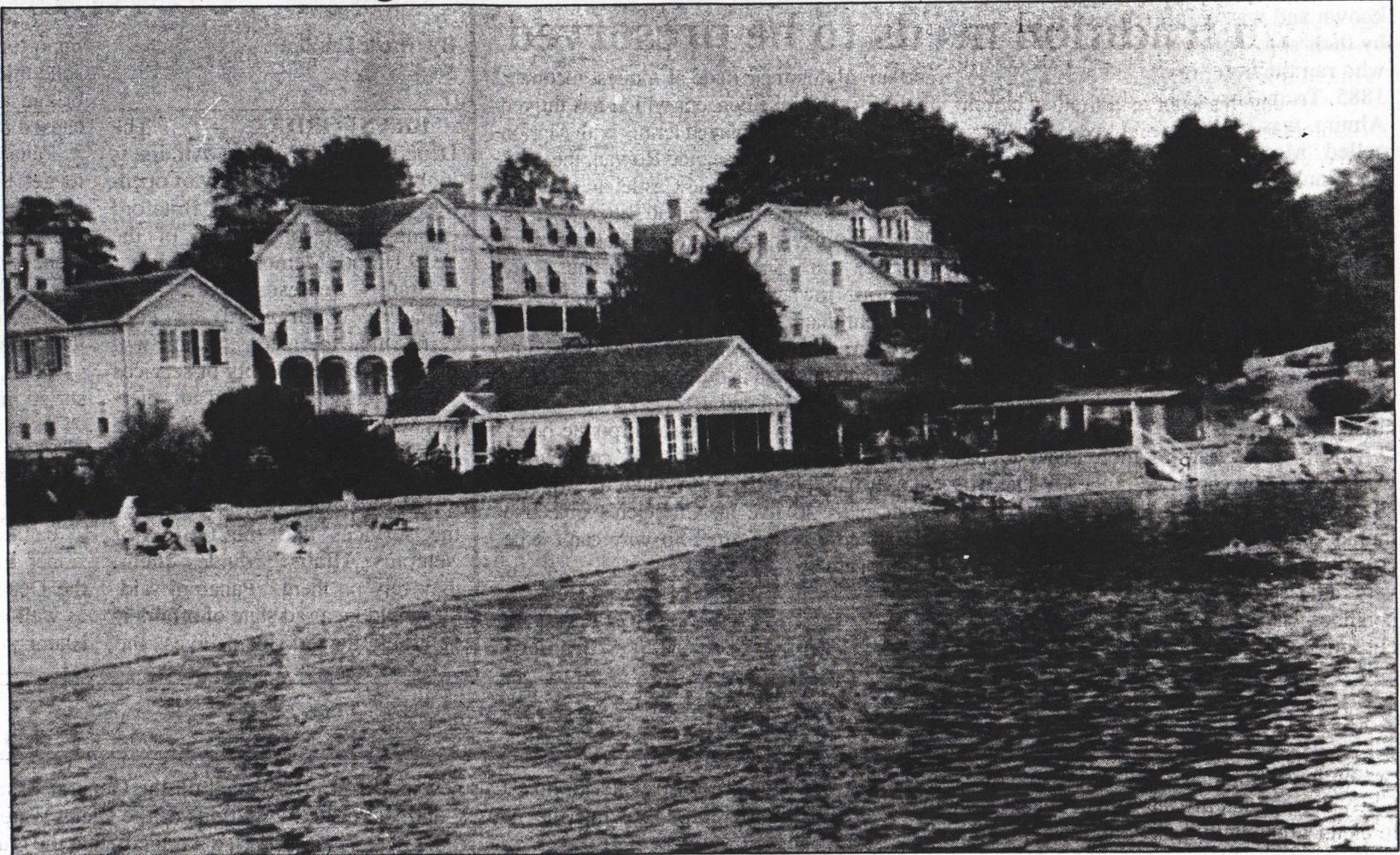
By Jane Peterson
Bouley

Special for the Review

Among the 19 summer hotels that once dotted Branford's shore was the Sheldon House.

It stood on the bluff between the Pine Orchard Club and Thimble Farms with a magnificent view of the Thimble Islands. Jerry Sheldon and his wife Katy Lanphier of Branford started the hotel as a boarding house. It became well known and was enlarged by their son, Truman, who ran the hotel until 1885. Truman's wife, Almira, was fondly called "Mother Sheldon" because of her hospitality and fine cooking.

Edward and George Sheldon, sons of Truman and Almira, continued the family tradition and ran the successful Sheldon House until their retirement in 1910. The hotel was purchased from the



Sheldon brothers by H. MacDonald Allen, who was a popular host. He made many improvements to the hotel and it

was known as a place of fine dining, serving French cuisine. During the summer months the newspaper would list the many guests from far and wide that came to stay at the Sheldon

House. Upon Allen's death in 1930 the complex was purchased by the A.M. Young Company of Pine Orchard and was managed by Carl Graves for 30 years.

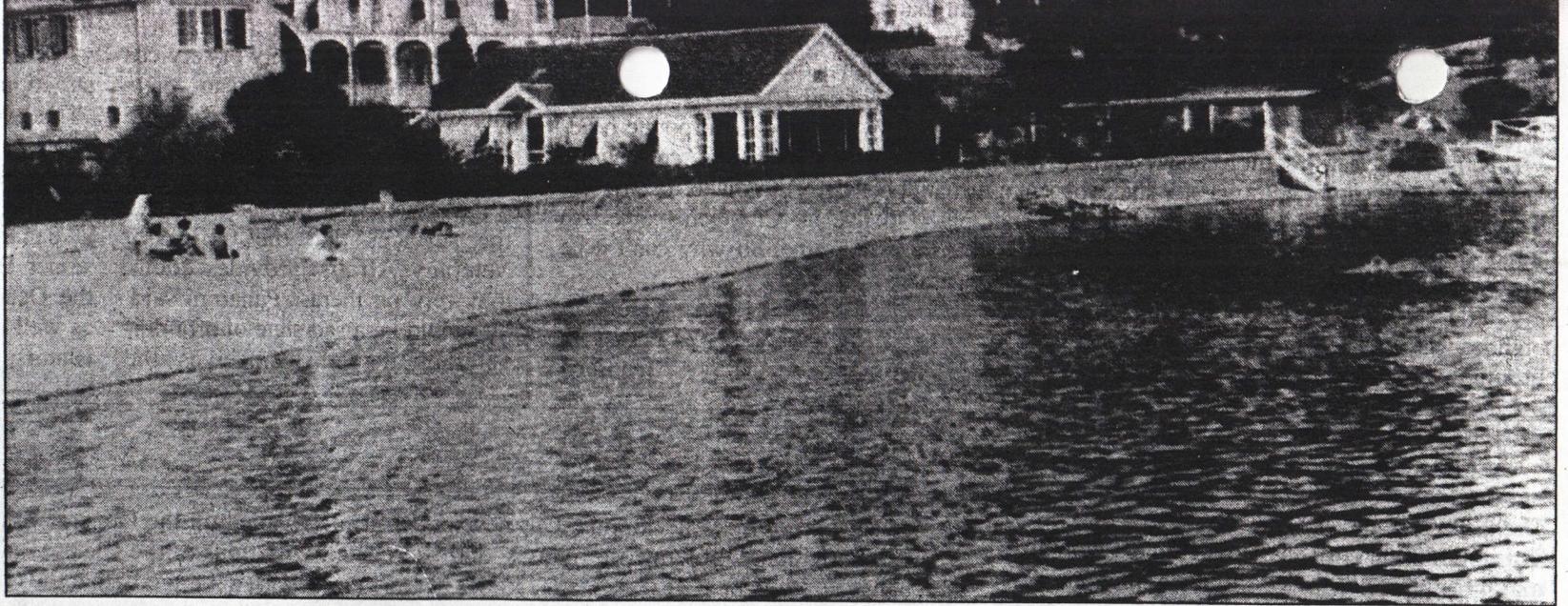
Photo courtesy of the Branford Historical Society
The Sheldon House, circa 1930. The hotel could accommodate 100 guests in its many buildings. There was the main house, an annex, two large cottages, two garages and eight bungalows.

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tings and even had movies in the evening for the children in the "What Not" cottage. After World War II, the summer hotel era in

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and even had movies in the evening for the children in the "What Not" cottage.

After World War II, the summer hotel era in Branford was coming to a close but the Sheldon House remained open longer than most. In 1960, it closed its doors after 119 years of continuous operation and the five acres with 500 feet of waterfront was sold to a developer. The entire complex was torn down to make way for new housing except for one bungalow that still stands today on the site just east of the Pine Orchard Club.