

Time Tracs

By Jim Ingram

Second in a series

Economic problems overwhelmed the Association and Bellevue Island changed hands several times. A new Assembly Resort Association was formed by John Winter in 1913.

This new company purchased the Assembly Resort interests including the Bellevue Hotel and Auditorium. A big chautauqua was held in 1914 and signaled Winter's success in consolidating the bankrupt or faltering firms into his own resort company.

Lake Orion was to become known as "the Chautauqua of Lower Michigan" and Bellevue Island was the center of these chautauquas.

Thousands of people would crowd onto the island to hear prominent evangelists such as Billy Sunday and Homer Rhodaheaver and political speakers such as William Jennings Bryan and his "Cross of Gold" speech. They would give their speeches in the auditorium on the lagoon.

Bill O'Brien tells the story of his family leaving their cottage for mass in the village at 8 a.m. After mass they had breakfast and then tried to get back to their cottage on the island. The crowds were so large it took them until 6 p.m. to reach their cottage.

These chautauquas were not just for religious study. They also emphasized the arts. It was a way of bringing classical and vaudevillian music, theater and elocution reading to rural America.

Schools were often associated with chautauqua as it was in Lake Orion with the Auditorium School. It offered classes in music, theater, dramatic speaking and business. Diplomas were given to people who completed summer school programs sponsored by the chautauqua.

Another religious service held on the island was the Galilean Service. It was essentially a church



Cottage owners on Lake Orion could attend Sunday religious services at Sunset Landing.

service one could attend by boat.

These were held at the Sunset Dock which is now the Sunset Beach Club. They took place on Sunday evenings as the sun was setting.

Another location for Galilean Service was the lagoon in the center of the island. Boats would come up the the canal from the main lake to the lagoon for the service. Bellevue Dock in front of the Bellevue Hotel also hosted these services.