

Time Tracs By Jim Ingram

Third in a series on Bellevue Island

The Bellevue Hotel was a first class hotel in its time at the turn of the century.

I have a promotional brochure put out by the Lake Orion Summer Homes Company which describes the Bellevue in quite glowing terms. It was three stories in height with wide verandas on each floor, facing the lake. It was surrounded by spacious grounds.

Some of the early pictures show tennis courts in front of the hotel on the lake side. All rooms faced the lake and rented for \$4 a day and up, which was a luxurious price in those days. It was also lighted by electricity.

The Bellevue boasted a screened veranda dining room with chicken, frog legs and fish dinners as specialties.

Bill O'Brien tells of his family eating there on Thursday evenings as their cook had that day off. Bill said they set a first class table with linen, tablecloths, candles and silver flatware. A trio of string instruments serenaded the diners.

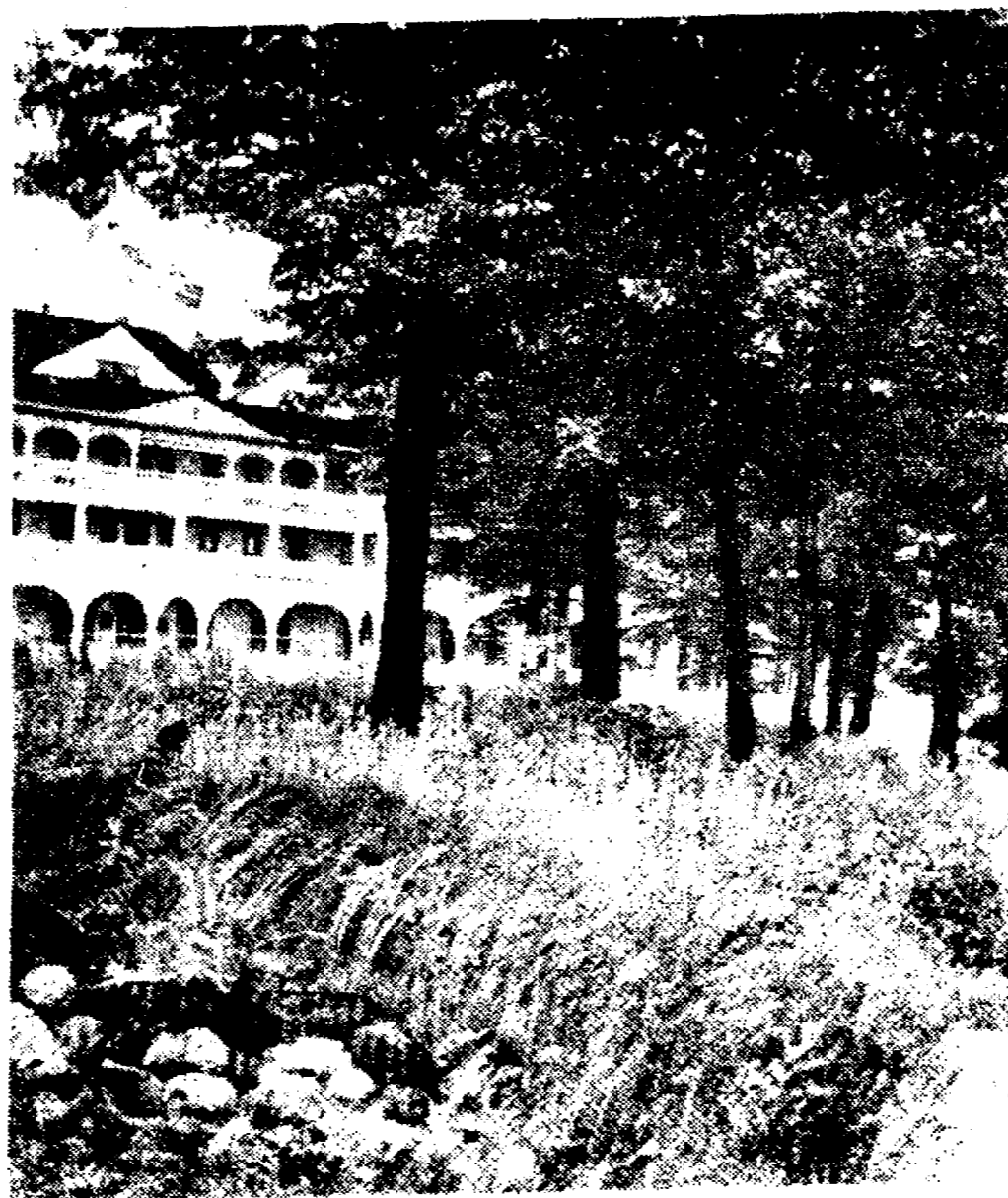
The Lake View Hotel was more modest with room rates of \$1.50 per night or \$9 per week. It was also three stories and advertised being a family hotel with delightful rooms and cool, shady porches.

It had an excellent table with luncheons prepared and served at private tables on the lawn.

Both hotels featured pure spring water served exclusively. Special rates and menus could be arranged for by clubs, societies, private parties and conventions. The season opened May 15 and closed Sept. 15.

Bellevue Island was prominent as a summer resort and chautaugua center through the 1920s. The stock market crash in 1929 and the ensuing depression severely limited the amount of money that people could spend on vacations in the 1930s.

In addition, the automobile had continued to



The Bellevue Hotel on Bellevue Island.

gain in popularity and affordability throughout the 1920s and into the 30s. People were less dependent on the public transportation of steam and electric trains which had brought them to Lake Orion as a resort during the first 30 years of this century.

The chautauquas were also gone by 1930 largely due to the advent of radio. Rural Americans could enjoy music and theater on the radio instead

of the chautauquas.

Bellevue Hotel went out of business and was torn down in 1934. The Lake View had preceded it. An interesting sidelight is that the lumber from the Bellevue was used by Bud Schaar to build his shop buildings at 140 Church Street.

The flagpole from the roof of the hotel was used as the flagpole in the yard of the former Sutherland house at 260 Cayuga Trail. The water tower which serviced the Bellevue was torn down and the lumber used to build the toboggan slide on Park Island.

The auditorium fell on disuse and was largely abandoned except for occasional use by a church group during the 1930s. It was torn down as a safety hazard in the mid-1940s.

The current cement bridge to Bellevue Island was built in 1928. The bridge with such graceful and sculptured lines was to signal a new beginning for the island.

Bill and Mary O'Brien represent this new beginning as they were the first people (except perhaps for the original settlers) to live on Bellevue Island year around.

Bill and Mary lived in the O'Brien cottage at 15 Highland in the winter of 1933-34. The O'Brien family bought this cottage in 1914. Bill and Mary continue to live there today.

The O'Briens have witnessed the second birth of Bellevue Island as part of a suburban lakeside community. Many of the old buildings and cottages have been torn down and large new homes rise in their place. The lagoon has been filled in and is now a park in the center of the island.

Many of these are impressive changes. But, I for one, am glad to see the O'Brien's cottage as well as some others around the lake as gentle reminders of our significant and noteworthy history.