

The Totoket Historical Society, Inc.

## History of North Branford

by

A. Lauretta Plumley

1965

Transcribed and Digitized

by

Theodore Groom, Ph. D.  
Chairman, Technology  
The Totoket Historical Society, Inc.

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Edward Smith Library  
3 Old Post Road  
Northford, CT 06472  
(203) 484-0469

## Introduction:

A. Lauretta Plumley was a former teacher and had taught in several one-room schoolhouses in New Haven and Middlesex Counties. She was also an author and lecturer on Connecticut history and legends. She wrote a series of articles for the New Haven Register describing little known places of interest in the State of Connecticut. These articles date from the 1930s to the 1940s. Ms Plumley was also the librarian at the Northford Library in 1943.

One should note here that this document is clearly not "history" in the academic sense. There are no references given anywhere in the work and many of her statements are more myth and legend than acknowledged fact. Several statements in the document are incorrect. Without doubt, though, much of what she says here is true, interesting and has historic value. This document is more the "Story of North Branford" than the "History of North Branford."

I have transcribed the document exactly as written with one grammatical exception. If a sentence ended with a quotation mark Ms Plumley consistently placed the period outside of the quotation mark. I have placed the period inside the quotation mark.

As mentioned above there were no references whatsoever associated with this document. The footnotes found within have been added to note historical errors found in the document.

Theodore Groom, Ph. D.  
Chairman, Technology  
The Totoket Historical Society

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## **Chapter I**

### **Its Background**

## Its Background

More than three centuries have passed since the Mattabeseck Indians dwelt in this section of Connecticut known as North Branford. Their chief was the mighty sachem Sowheag, with headquarters in Middletown. Montowese, a son of Sowheag, was the petty Chieftain who ruled over the South Central part of his lands; a region noted for its scenic beauty and famous for its hunting and shell fishing. The Indians called the place "Totoket" which means "place of the tidal waters," so called because the tide of the Branford River carried fresh water from the hill streams to the sound and flooded back salt water from the sea.

Unfriendly tribes from New York State often invaded the territory supervised by Montowese to hunt and fish. When Theophilus Eaton and John Davenport of New Haven Colony offered to purchase Totoket from the Indians, Montowese was glad to make terms with them, not only as a commercial transaction but because he saw in the white man a defensive alliance who would protect his people from their enemies and their hunting and fishing grounds from hostile tribes.

Totoket was purchased in December 1638 and included Branford, North Branford and Northford, this being all one region until the year 1831. Therefore, for many years the history of these communities were closely related.

The boundaries of Totoket when acquired from Montowese have remained the same to this day and are as follows: on the south, Long Island Sound; on the west Stony River and Great Pond (Lake Saltonstal); Thence North to the Wallingford line. The Northern boundary was set by taking a line ten miles back from the shore. The Eastern Boundary was a line ten miles east from the Quinnipiac River and running due north to the Wallingford line, meeting in the center of Paug Pond

Since the adjacent towns have been subdivided from the original settlements, like North Branford from Branford, the names on today's maps are as follows: On the south, Branford; on the West, East Haven and North Haven; on the North Wallingford and Durham and on the East, Guilford and North Guilford.

After the purchase of Totoket, New Haven Colony did not expand as expected and for several years the place was used only for hunting and fishing by the Indians and their white neighbors. Efforts were made to induce people from a distance to come to Totoket and make their homes. July 1, 1640 Samuel Eaton, brother of Theophilus Eaton, Governor of New Haven Colony was sent to England

to form a company to settle in Totoket. The venture failed.<sup>1</sup>

March 26, 1644 the General Court of Connecticut met and "it was ordered that to whom the affayers of the Town is intrusted shall dispose of Totoket according as in their wisdom they see cause."

About this time the residents of Wethersfield appealed to Gov. Theophilus Eaton and members of the New Haven Colony to help them settle differences which had arisen among these people. Their problem was the establishment of a church and its leader. Rev. John Davenport and several others went to Wethersfield. They believed that the only peaceful solution to this problem was for some of the people to leave and form a separate settlement. Davenport urged the group to move to Totoket. This proved to be a happy decision for it provided the emigrants a new home near an established colony and solved the problem of settling Totoket.

Dates conflict as to the exact time that the people of Wethersfield came to the region of Totoket, but it is usually conceded that they arrived early in the fall of 1644, having spent the Spring and summer making the journey. Undoubtedly most of the people travelled by water coming down the Connecticut River, then along the shore until they reached Branford. However it is known that many travelled on foot coming over the hills and through the vallies driving cattle before them and carrying their few household goods on pack horses or pole litters such as was used by the Indians when they jourined from place to place in the summer.

The following bill of agreement was entered on the records of New Haven Colony in 1645 but no date is given: "Totoket, a place fit for a small plantation betwixt New hauen and Guilford & purchased from the Indians, was granted to Mr. Swayne & some others of Wethersfield, they repaying charge which is betwixt 12 & 13 pounds & joynig in one juristiction with New Haven and the afore named plantations vppon the same fundamentall agreement settled in October 1643 which they duely considering, readjlye accepted."

## Geology

The Geology of North Branford, like the rest of Connecticut shows evidence of the Triassic period of earth's history. At this time shale and sandstone were laid down as layers of mud, sand and gravel in streams and shallow lakes. Dinosaurs, strange reptiles, now extinct, roamed the countryside during this period and their

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<sup>1</sup> Samuel Eaton accepted a lucrative position in England never returned to New England.

tracks have been found in the hardened mud in the vicinity of Lake Gaillard. Specimens of fossil fish have been taken from the shale deposits in a river bed which once flowed down the face of Bluff Head, the northern extremity of Totoket Mountain. Examples of these are on display in the Peabody Museum in New Haven.

Totoket Mountain, which extends from the Southeast to the Northwest of North Branford, is the result of that age when volcanic activity was effective in the development of the physical geography of the State. Pressure from within the earth pushed up the earth's crust and from the fissures and cracks in the surface flowed out lava which resulted in trap rock deposits. Small deposits of lead and coal have also been found in the Mountain and a rather large deposit of limestone has been quarried near the Durham line.

The glacial period of the State's history left its mark on North Branford. The topography shows the results of the era in many places for we find great boulders, exposed rocky ledges, deposits of sand and gravel, ponds, small water holes and swamps left in its wake as the glacial melted and disappeared. Of great historical value is Linsley's Pond which is one of the few glacial water pockets in the world. This spring fed lake has had the water traced back to the Glacial era and people from many countries have come here to study the Lake's formation.

The first settlers found North Branford a thickly wooded area with several large streams of fresh water. Many wild animals lived in the woods and on Totoket Mountain. The Indians burned over a spot each year after which the grass grew in abundance. It was here that deer came to feed and were easily hunted by the Redmen. This place was called Bare Plains by the colonists. Bears, wolves, wild cats, and foxes roamed the woods. The hunters also found a plentiful supply of small animals and birds.

Old timers told weird stories of how the wolves would come out of the woods on moonlight nights and run up and down the roofs of the salt box houses howling to their mates. Many residents had fur robes made from the hides of the bears killed on the mountain. The last bear seen in North Branford was in 1863 when he came to drink from the spring on Forest road. A hunting party of the Town's young men was formed and he was killed on the Mountain Top near Drowning Pond. His meat was divided among the members of the hunting party. His hide was made into a carriage robe and was exhibited for many years at local Fairs.

## Settlement

We have no record as to the exact date of the settlement of North Branford. Branford grew and in due time the settlers needed new lands to pasture their cattle and cultivate. This led to the expansion of the original colony and they came into North Branford then called North Farms, sometime during the latter part of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. These farmers reached North Branford by following the Indian Trails over Sibbie's Hill or through The Queech. Many took the trail over Lit Hitt's Hill and pushed into the section now called Northford. The Indians called the place "Paug" but the early settlers called it "Salem" meaning 'peace.' Public records of December 9, 1751 refer to the place as Northford. When or why the name was changed is not known but it is believed to be the shortened form of the phrase "North of the Ford" since the Farm River, then a mighty stream, had to be forded to reach this location.

For many years the farmers were away from Branford only during the Spring and Summer months. They would harvest their crops and at the first sign of frost return with their cattle to their homes in Branford.

Records of March 4, 1687 show that Branford granted John Maltbie, John Roswell, Samuel Hoadley, Joseph Foot, Josiah Frisbie, William Barker and Isaac Bartholomew that section of North Branford known as Bare Plains. It is here that the first permanent dwellings were built. However there seems to be some evidence that Jonathan Rose built himself a home in Hop Yard Plains just inside the North Branford Town line before that date.

Benjamin Howd built a home in Northford in 1680. This was purchased in 1720 by Lieut. Joseph Linsley and later became the property of Solomen Linsley. The house has been restored and stands today at Sol's Path, Middletown Turnpike.

Sons and grandsons of the original settlers came to North Branford and Northford to make their homes. Rev. George I. Wood writing in 1850 said: "Probably there are few, if any communities in the State in which so large a portion of the present generation of residents are the direct descendants of the original settlers of the soil." Even today are to be found the names of Augur, Baldwin, Bartholomew, Beers, Foote, Harrison, Linsley, Page, Rose and Wheaton whose forefathers were among the first settlers of this town.

The early homes were sturdily built and many stand today as silent witnesses of that former era. Virgin lumber of oak, walnut and chestnut was used for frames which were built around a central chimney constructed in many cases of field stone. The "Salt Box" with two or four rooms downstairs and a loft above was the popular pattern of the day. Fireplaces were built in the rooms to furnish heat. The kitchen was usually the largest room in the house and was used as the family room.

A large fireplace built in the room not only provided heat but was the place where food was cooked and water was heated.

Pine, cherry and white wood was used to finish off the interiors. The Isaac Linsley House built in North Branford in 1699 and the Bela Foote House built in Northford in 1690-1719 are fine examples of these early homes. Many more early 18<sup>th</sup> century homes still stand in North Branford and Northford as monuments of that period when the growth of Branford was expanding.

The first residents of the village enjoyed at best a rough existence. Each household had to raise its own food stuffs, its cattle, hogs, sheep and poultry. The wool was carded and spun into cloth from which clothing was made for the family. Animal hides were tanned and shoes, saddles and harnesses were made from the leather. Fields of flax were grown. This was woven into cloth and made into household linens and clothing. When a girl married she took with her the linens which she had made herself as a part of her dowry. When a boy became 21 he was given a shirt of homespun linen called a "Freedom Shirt." He was now of age and did not have to take orders from his family. Many times the boy at this age left his home to make his own way in the world.

### Indian Neighbors

The Indians of Branford were called the "Quinnipiacs" a family of the Mattabeseck tribe, with Montowese, son of Sowheag, as their Chieftain. Opinions differ as to the number of Indians here in 1644, but there were probably not more than fifty families in the community. They hunted and fished for most of their food, However they did raise maise, a yellow corn, beans and squash. The corn and beans were combined into a dish called succatash, which they flavored with meat or fish. Much of the corn was dried and made into meal. This meal was made into small cakes which were baked. The Indians used no seasonings for they had neither salt nor spices. The Indians have been known to travel miles and have nothing to eat for days but a corn cake.

The Indians made their garments of skins and hides taken from the animals which they caught for food. The skins were cured by taking out the oil and fat with a smooth stone. For months the women of the tribe worked on the skins to make clothing for the family. When the oil and fat had all been removed, the skins were soft and pliable, and could be drapped about the body or made into simple garments.

The whitemen found the Indians friendly. They learned from them how to



raise maise, beans and squash. Succatash became a popular dish and is still served in North Branford.

The Indians made their cooking utensils from clay which they found along the river banks. These were dried in the sun, then glazed with clay which was made into a liquid by adding water. These vessels were both fire proof and water tight. Baskets made of reeds and bark were used by the Indians as containers to hold their meal and beans.

The Indians made dyes from bark, weeds, berries and nuts. They used this dye to decorate their clothing and their baskets. The basket maker of the family had his own mark which he painted on the baskets he made. They taught this art to the colonists who dyed the woolen and linen cloth in soft browns, green, blues and reds.

The Indians moved from place to place. In the summer they lived near the shores to fish and hunt in the woods nearby. In the winter they made their homes in caves or rudely built bark houses, several families living together. A known Indian site in town is Pistapaugh Hill off old Post Road in Northford. The rock ledge shows evidence of a place where skins were worked and several indentations where maize was ground into meal. A large hole in the side of the ledge was used as an oven by the Indians and the walls still show signs of smoke from their fires.

Nearly all of the Indians had left this part of the State before the Revolutionary War. One of the last to live in Branford was Asa. He was converted to the Christian faith and when he died he was buried in the Cemetery on Montowese Street. His resting place is marked by a small white stone inscribed "Asa – A GOOD Indian."

There were Indians in Northford as late as 1805; Chief Tommy and Jennie Squaw. Tommy lived on Totoket Mountain and his memory has been perpetuated by the name Tommy's Path, a road off Route 22. He travelled this path from his home to the village. He is buried on the Mountain but the location of his grave is not known.

A notation in the Northford Congregational Church stipulating "She shall sit in the Negro Pew and no where else when attending services here" is our final record of Jennie Squaw.

### **Slave Population**

Many residents of North Branford and Northford owned slaves before the

Revolutionary War and between the years 1773 and 1776, it is reported that there were at least fifty in the town. These were given their freedom, due largely to the sermons preached by the Rev. Samuel Eells. An old negro, the property of Dr. Linsley of Northford, called Dick, was given his freedom and a home lot on Totoket Mountain. This is known as The Dick Lot and is one of the scenic places of the village. When word came that the British had landed in New Haven all the able bodied men left to fight. Dick led the women and children to his home for safety. Tradition tells us that a lady who had just finished her week's baking put the loaves of bread into a sack to take with her as she rushed to safety. The loaves fell from the sack and left a well marked trail for the enemy if they had reached the town. Gad Asher, who served as General Greene's servant in the Revolutionary War was the property of a North Branford Resident. He was given his freedom for this service and Gad Lane is named for him.<sup>2</sup>

### Highways

Branford records list no roads or highways when North Branford was settled and the residents travelled over the Indian trails which were narrow and twisted, running uphill and through vallies. Nearly all of these were foot paths so that walking was the main means of transportation. As time went by the settlers widened these paths and made it possible to travel on horseback. Later the same trails were made into cart paths. The road beds were unimproved and during the winter and spring it was often impossible to travel even on horseback.

Branford records list the building of two improved highways to North Branford in 1712. One came north over Bushy Plain and the other to Bare Plain over Loyd Hill's Hill, then west to North Branford Center.<sup>3</sup>

In 1740 a road was built from Northford to New Haven "over the causeway" which included "Long Bridge" over the Quinnipiac River. In 1784 the Old Post Road Company purchased this road and continued it to Middletown. Houses in the village were set apart as "Ordinaries" where people could stop overnight and could be fed. One such place in Northford was the Bela Foote dwelling. During the period that a house was used as an Ordinary all taxes were abated. It is believed

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<sup>2</sup> Gad Asher, according to his grandson in his book "Incidents in the life of the Rev. J Asher," 1850, was born in Guinea, Africa, captured by slavers at age 4 and sold into slavery in Guilford, CT. He agreed to serve in the Revolutionary War in exchange for his freedom. At the end of the war, his master charged him the forty pounds he paid for him. Gad married and lived in North Branford on Beech Street. There is no documented evidence that he served as Gen. Nathaniel Green's servant. He did serve as servant to a Regimental Major the early 1780s.

<sup>3</sup> To get from Bare Plains to North Branford Center one must go "East."

that among the guests entertained at the Bela Foote Place was Benjamin Franklin when he was making a trip from Philadelphia to Middletown.

There were no direct paths from Northford to North Branford for many years. Each community attended church services in Branford but travelled over different trails. Each community carried on its own activity independent of the other until the building of the second church parish in North Branford Center.

## **Chapter II**

**18<sup>th</sup> Century**

The early settlers of North Branford were people noted for their self reliant nature as well as for general intelligence. Agriculture was their chief occupation and fertile fields and luxuriant meadows soon were producing many crops and providing feed for large herds of cattle. The forests of the country side furnished lumber for buildings and for export. In 1697 William Hoadley was granted the privilege of setting up a saw mill on Farm River. He had to agree to sell boards at five shillings a piece and to saw lumber for settlers "Not taking more than half a log for doing it."

Among the earliest mills were fulling mills for shrinking and cleaning woolen cloth and barker mills for tanning hides. Edward Petty had one of the first mills of this kind in North Branford center in 1734 which he ran in connection with a saw mill. In 1742 Barnabus Woodcock had a fulling mill and barker's mill on Long Hill. This he sold to James Burwell who was permitted to set up a fulling mill on the river just south of the North Branford Congregational Church. John Maltby owned a fulling mill on Farm River in Northford. This was located on Forest Road near the Bunnell property. He purchased this mill from Calvin Mansfield who moved to North Haven about 1799. The following advertisement was run by Maltby in the Connecticut Journal in 1801"

"John Maltby"

"Informs his customers and others, as water is scarce among  
The clothiers, he has a good supply of water and dresses clothe in the neatness  
order, that he is in want of what is

Called cash, for which he will dress cloth on the shortest

Notice

He lives in Northford a place called Pog  
North from Branford along as you jog"

As the town grew more and more land was developed for farming and as early as 1735 we find records that grains were being exported abroad. Wheat was raised in quantity but very little rye. However a grain called "mastlin" was raised extensively and exported. The farmers would plant two thirds of a field in wheat and one third in rye. When the grain was harvested, it was ground into meslin meal. This was used for making bread. Corn and flax were raised to be sold in the British Isles. Wheat delivered in New Haven sold for five shillings a bushel. Two shillings a bushel was considered a good price for green corn and two shillings six pence when dry was the common price. Young beef sold for 16 to 18 shillings, ox beef sold for 20 shillings and winter beef brought 24 shillings. These prices seemed to remain the same for twenty or twenty five years going up just before the Revolutionary War.

North Branford soil was suited to the growing of fruit trees and there were

many orchards of apple and cherries by 1775. Cider was a profitable commodity and many cider stills were erected in town during the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Cider brandy was distilled and was among the exports of both districts of North Branford.

Bayberries were shipped in quantities abroad and were used in the making of candles, blacking and salve. In 1717 shipment of these berries were regulated by a Town law which prevented their being picked on the highways until September 15. A fine of ten shillings was imposed on anyone who broke this law.

### Parish Established

North Branford settlers were pious, God fearing men and women given to worship. For many years they travelled each Sunday to Branford to attend service there. Those from the first district took an Indian trail which led them through the woods and swamps. It was a difficult and unpleasant journey which had to be made on foot or on horseback. Leaving before sun up they went in a body, the men carrying their guns to protect them all from wild beasts and hostile Indians who came here from other communities.

Those living in Northford travelled over Lid Hitt's Hill an Indian trail running over several hills and through the valley near Great Pond.

The first church in Branford was a small unpretentious building. It was "four square" in form, made of rough hewn logs, the roof thatched with coarse sedge grass from the river banks. The floor was of bare hard earth and it was probably not more than 30 feet long 20 feet wide and 4 feet high. What few windows it had were covered with glazed paper. A palisade of logs six feet high surrounded the church property and sentinel was stationed outside to watch for hostile Indians. Nearby on the church grounds were Sabba-da-houses<sup>4</sup>, little shed like buildings where families gathered during the noon recess to eat lunch. There were no fires in the church but the Sabba-da-houses had fire places where the worshipers could warm themselves during the cold winter months. Services lasted all day with a two hour sermon in the morning and a two hour sermon in the afternoon, with an hour recess at noon. In the winter the return journey was often made in the dark.

Like all Congregational Churches the men and boys sat on one side of the church and the women and girls on the other. The lengthy sermons were seldom comforting since they predicted all sorts of punishments for the "wicked who inhabited the earth." A thying man was appointed by the Deacons to keep all

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<sup>4</sup> In most histories of the area these houses were called Sabbath-day-houses

persons awake during the preaching. He carried a long pole with a metal knob on one end and a rabbits foot on the other. If a man was caught dozing he was rapped on the head with the metal knob. Women were gently tickled on the cheek with the rabbits foot to awaken them.

The trails to Branford were almost impassible in the Winter and Spring months. In 1717 the people of North Branford petitioned the General Court of Connecticut to establish their own church parish. A committee was appointed to investigate the matter and to draw up boundaries between the two parishes. The committee reported that North Branford was not yet able to support a separate parish but did recommend that since "part of each year is troublesome to go to Branford to worship, permission be given to the people of North Branford the right to have their own minister four months of the year for three years, when they could petition for their own church again. They were to pay Branford church only one third as much as the Branford people<sup>5</sup>.

North Branford began to have the services of a minister for a much longer time each year. In the Autumn of 1722 a Parsonage lot was purchased and 200 acres were given by the Proprietors for the parsonage lands near Great Hill. May 12, 1724 it was voted in Town Meeting to build a meeting house in "North Farms" as the population of that part of the Town had increased. The building was to be 45 by 35 feet. Trouble between the residents of Branford and North Branford delayed the building of the church. A committee was appointed to settle the difficulty and the General Assembly ordered that the church be built in 1725.

The building of the church having been settled three sites were proposed but at last all agreed to build the church just a few feet south of the present ediface.

Rev. Samuel Russell of the Branford Church offered prayer at the erection of the frame. It was a plain unattractive building 45 feet long and 35 feet wide. It had three doors on the East, West and South with circular stone steps leading up to the threshold. The many windows had diamond shaped panes of glass. Inside the galleries were on three sides of the building, high and shut in. The pulpit was also high and lofty from which the minister could look down on his Congregation. Above the pulpit was a roof-shaped board. Bats took up their abode in the sounding board and we are told occasionally on a dark Sunday they would fly about causing a great deal of discomfort to the congregation.

The first pastor of this new parish was the Rev. Jonathan Merrick who served North Branford for 43 years. He lived in a house which was built by the Town when the church was erected. It stood at the corner of Route 80 and Route 139 until it was torn down in 1964. Rev. Merrick conducted a large farm in

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<sup>5</sup> I believe this should read "They were to pay Branford Church only two thirds as much as the Branford People."

addition to his ministerial duties He was a Fellow of Yale College from 1763 to 1769. He died in June 1772 age 72 and left an estate of 3365 pounds showing that he was a man of thrift and successful in the business of farming. Rev. Samuel Eells succeeded Mr. Merrick and served the church for 35 years being the pastor during the Revolutionary War.

### Northford Parish

When the parish of North Branford was formally established the people of Northford attended services there. The Indian trails were still followed and the journey could only be made on foot or horseback, worshippers often leaving by sun up and not returning until after sun down. The heavy snows of Winter and the deep mud of Spring made the seven mile journey almost impossible several months of the year.

In 1734 the General Court of Connecticut, upon petition of Peter Tyler, Samuel Harrington, Bezaleel Tyler and others of the Northerly inhabitants of the North Parish resolved: "That said memorialists shall be allowed liberty to have some Orthodox minister preach the gospel to them during the months of December, January, February and March annually, and during said time they shall be free from paying church rates to the North Parish."

This argument continued for eleven years when steps were taken to organize an Ecclesiastical Society and five years later a church was formally instituted.

The affairs of the Community were at this time in what might be called a "formative State" and the time during these five years were occupied in matters somewhat preliminary to the regular order of an established society such as planning for schools, providing a place for public worship, making arrangements for ministerial support and hearing candidates for settlement.

When Northford became a distinct religious community public worship was held in the home of Isaac Ingraham until the building of the first meeting house. In June or July of 1746, a year from the establishment of public worship in Northford, the General Court appointed commissioners to "locate a meeting house." This was unnecessary since members of the church parish could not agree where the edifice should stand. The committee voted that "Said house of worship be erected on the highway, on the west side of the path, twenty rods north of Samuel Bartholomew's house, the sills to enclose a walnut straddle theron standing, with a heap of stones around it." The location is just north of the present Northford Congregational Church.



The building was framed of wood. We have no record of the size or height. However the records do say that "it was large, open, cold and barnlike poorly provided in the essentials of comfort and even health as evidenced by the fact that there no heating appointments, other than foot stoves until seventy years after it was built." The inside of the building was not completed until 1752 and it was not until 1760 that the galleries were erected. The building was without a steeple until 1796 when this was added and a bell installed. This meeting house was used as a place of worship for one hundred years.

Rev. Warham Williams was the first pastor to serve the Northford Church. He was the grandson of Rev. John Williams of Deerfield, who was captured by the Indians in 1704 and taken to Canada and the son of Rev. Stephen Williams of Longmeadow, Massachusetts. A graduate of Yale College, he was a tutor there and later served as a Fellow during his ministry here. He is reported to have been a man of "noble and commanding figure with a high forehead and expressive countenance" and as having uniformly worn the white wig of olden times when appearing in the pulpit. He served this church for 38 years with great success the membership being 256 individuals at the time of his death.

He was succeeded by the Rev. Matthew Noyes who was ordained in March 1790. Rev. Noyes received his academic education at Yale and studied theology under Rev. Dr. Whitney of Brooklyn, Conn. He died in September 1837 after forty-four years as pastor here. Barber, in his Historical Collections, says, "that he was considered one of the wealthiest clergymen in the State." His memory has been perpetuated by such names as Parsonage Hill, Parsonage Meadow and the like, all being lands which he once owned. It has been said that he often went to the woods to get inspiration for his sermon and a habit of his was to carve his initials in a rock on which he might be sitting. Such a rock was discovered in 1931 when Clintonville Road was being rebuilt and was placed North of the Congregational Church as part of the Town Centennial Celebration .

### **St. Andrews Episcopal Church**

The Episcopal Society in Northford was organized on April 20, 1763 and plans were made to build a church. The committee appointed Paul Tyler, Samuel Maltby and John Todd and they were instructed to erect a church building by November. They purchased property from James Howd on The Old Post Road between William Douglas School and the adjacent house.

There are no records of the type of building constructed but it may be

assumed that it was plain and simple in structure. The first minister was Rev. John Lyons. The growth of the parish was slow and it would appear that it did not expand to any extent until after 1800.

### **Enrolled Church**

Several members of the Northford Congregational Church became dissatisfied with the church doctrine and the teachings and preaching of Rev. Matthew Noyes and in 1801 separated from the church and formed the Enrolled Church. A building was erected where worship was held until 1833 when by council and assistance from outside ministerial help the members again united with the Congregational Church. During the thirty years five pastors preached in the church Rev. Mr. Barrows, after Professor at the Andover Theological Seminary, serving the longest period. No minister was ever installed in this church.

The church was sold for fifty dollars by Jacob Frisbie, Thaddeus Maltby and Julius Maltby to Jared Hawks and Joel Rogers and moved by them to their own property

### **Early Education**

Shortly after the establishment of the church parish the residents of North Branford organized their own Ecclesiastical Society and the records of the church were then separated from the town records. The society was open to membership to all in the district whether members of the church or not. As soon as the parish was organized plans were made to educate the young.

The Town of Branford set aside forty acres of school lands for North Branford on March 29, 1732. In 1734 sixty acres were granted for schools in the region of Great Hill and on November 5, 1736 it was voted by Branford to build a schoolhouse near Edward Frisbies' on County Road. In 1760 the people of Bare Plains built their first school house and that same year those living north of Great Hill were granted money for school purposes.

Until 1752 the entire Northford Parish was comprised in one district. At this time two districts were established, one North of the church and the other south. Later two more districts were added, one in 1765 and the other in 1769. A common school education was provided for all and this was supervised not by the Town but by the Ecclesiastical Society. The ministers of the church often served

as supervisors and also instructed those who wished, in advanced studies.

A deep interest was taken in these primary schools and although there were no schools of higher learning the thirst for knowledge was so keen that many acquired education in colleges and professional schools elsewhere.

A. C. Pierce, in his Centennial Address<sup>6</sup> in 1876 said: "Few parishes in the State and perhaps in none of equal population have given to the world so large a number of liberally educated men-so goodly an number of emigrant sons, who have served their generation in the varied fields of professional labor as Northford."

Records show that as early as 1876 four of Northford's young men had entered the legal profession, Noah Linsley, Douglas Fowler, George Hoadley and Gustave Elliot. Those who had graduated from Medical School were Doctors John Augur, William Baldwin, Lyman Cook, Harvey Elliot, Malachi Foote, William Foote, Selmon Frisbie, Stephen Todd, Augustus Williams, Joseph Foote, Chauncey Foote, Jared Linsley, Benjamin F. Harrison, D. A. Tyler, Benjamin Fowler, Johiel Hoadley, Anson Foote, Elizur Beach and John Linsley.

Fourteen young men became ministers and preached in many parts of the world. Rev. Samuel Whitney and Rev. Eli Smith engaged in missionary work in the Sandwich Islands and in Syria. While there Rev. Smith translated the Bible into the Arabic language. Others who preached the word of God were: The Reverends: Medad Rogers, Lemuel Tyler, Jonathan Maltby, Ives Hoadley, Isaac Maltby, Oliver D. Cook, James H. Linsley, John Maltby, Erastus Matby, Benjamin Page and Harvey Linsley.

Mrs. Epaphras Chapman and Mrs. Dwight Baldwin were two of the first women to enter the Missionary field in Connecticut. Mrs. Chapman served among the Indians and Mrs. Baldwin to the Sandwich Islands.

Miss Martha Russell a native of Bare Plains was an author of note whose works of fiction have been read and enjoyed by many.

## Revolutionary War

On a Sabbath morning in 1777 while the Rev. Mr. Eells was conducting service, news came that General George Washington was in the vicinity of New York with a company of not more than 1500 men and that he needed help. He called upon the men of Connecticut to help him. Rev. Eells read this appeal from

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<sup>6</sup> "North Historical Discourse" by the Rev. A. C. Pierce, October 1876. This document is available at both Town Libraries.

the pulpit and asked for volunteers. At the close of the service sixty men volunteered and chose Rev. Eells their Captain. The officers and privates were as follows: First Lieutenant, Samuel Baldwin; second lieutenant, Jacob Bunnell; sergeants, Ebenezer Linsley, Isaac Foote, John White, Lud Munson, Abraham Foote; corporals, Uriah Collins, Samuel Harrison, Samuel Brown, Jacob Page; musicians, John Bunnell, Joseph Wheaton, Moses Baldwin; privates, James Barker, Jacob Barker, Ambrose Baldwin, Daniel Baldwin, Phineas Baldwin, Benjamin Bartholomew, Gideon Bartholomew, Jarius Bunnell, Jonathan Byinton, Aaron Cook, Titus Cook, Hooker Frisbie, Isaac Frisbie, Samuel Ford, Gideon Goodrich, Daniel Hoadley, Samuel Hoadley, Ralph Hoadley, Jarius Harrison, Rufus Harrison, Isaac Hanford, Benjamin Harrison, Rueben Johnson, John Linsley, Jonathan Munson, James Pierpont, Samuel Peck, John Potter, Solomon Rose, Billy Rose, Johnathan Russell, Ebenezer Rogers, Herman Rogers, Joseph Smith, Dow Smith, Allen Smith, Othniel Stent, Ebenezer Trusdell, Solomon Tallmadge, Asa Todd, Jonathan Tyler and Medad Taintor.

A true patriot, Mr. Eells had often spoke out from the pulpit against the "unjust and arbitrary measures of the British Court." He called upon all men "in duty to God and themselves and the country to resist and withstand." Rev. Eells returned at the close of the Revolutionary War and served his church until 1808. Butler Harrison was captured and was some months on a prison ship. Simeon Rose died while in Service. Gad Asher colored, served for eight years as the servant of General Nathaniel Green<sup>7</sup> and Gideon Rose, slave of Justice and Lydia Russell Rose who served in the war were given their freedom when it ended.

Residents of Northford were no less loyal to the cause of freedom. In 1777 at a meeting of the parish it was voted: "to take the oath of fidelity to the American States." It was also voted "that the law made to prevent extravagant prices on provisions, clothing etc. shall be duly observed in this parish."

Captain William Douglas of this community joined the armed forces in 1775. He took part in the capture of St. John Canada and with him from Northford were; Sergeant Levi Minson, Corporals Josiah Fowler, James Hinshaw, Benjamin Hinshaw and privates Nathaniel Bunnell, Caleb Cooke, Samuel Cooke, John Elwell, Joseph Hawkins and Abner Thorpe. Jonathan Maltby, a freshman in Yale at the time wrote "The capture of this place occasioned a thrill of joy. A brother of General Ethan Allen brought the good news to New Haven, Colonel Fisk ordered out the cannon. Thirteen thunders (one for each state) echoed to the shouts of the warm hearted. The gallant Allen, soldier like leaped onto the cannon at least five times, swung his hat and cried 'God save the Continental Congress. Three

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<sup>7</sup> See Footnote #1

Cheers<sup>8</sup>“

Douglas led a detachment of men to New York in January of 1776. Northford men in this expedition included Joseph Bunnell, Solomen Linsley and Thaddeus Maltby. Ensign Titus Munson of Northford died on Long Island during this battle.

In May 1776 Lieutenant Ambrose Baldwin led a company of men to join Washington's troops. Accompanying him from Northford were Sergeant Benjamin Norton, Corporals Thaddeus Maltby, Daniel Bartholomew, Peter Farnam, Factor Munson and Dick Negro.

Colonel Douglas raised a company of 500 men from New Haven County in the Fall of 1776. He was a tanner by trade and from his own leather he fashioned a cap for each of these men. They were known as Douglas's 'leather caps' and it is believed that this was the first regiment of Connecticut Troops. They were ordered to New York.

During the winter of 1777 Colonel Douglas contracted a cold from which he never recovered. He returned home and died in May. His resting place is marked by a sandstone Monument in the Old Northford Cemetery and has become an Historical Shrine preserved under the auspices of the Northford Historical Society. At his death Colonel Meigs became commander of the "leather caps."

Sergeant Levi Munson was captured by the British and spent two years in an English prison, being exchanged in 1780. Told by an English officer, "You have seen enough, you will never fight us again." Munson replied, "I will fight you at the first opportunity." He was commissioned a Lieutenant and fought during the rest of the war.

Jonathan Maltby and Solomon Tallmadge under the leadership of Captain Treat of Milford took part in the capture of Burgoyne. Josiah Fowler was with Major Meigs troops when ninety of the enemy were captured in New York and marched through Northford to Hartford. They encamped for one night in Northford, some being guarded in the Episcopal church while the others camped in a meadow on The Old Post Road.

Elihu Fowler one of Northford's best marksmen was in the Battle of White Plains. He is reported to have said, "I had as many fair shots at the enemy as I ever had at a squirrel."

Jonathan Finch and Peter Lyon were in Washington's Troops at the surrender of Cornwallis.

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<sup>8</sup> From "A Sketch of the Pilgrims of Branford also North Graduates of Yale" by The Rev. Jonathan Maltby, 1844. This document is available in both Town Libraries

Those who died in defense of their country from Northford were Thaddeus Maltby, Daniel Bartholomew, Factor Munroe and Dick Negro<sup>9</sup>. The records show that there were but four families of Tories in North Branford at the out break of the Revolutionary War. Three from Northford, whose names were not listed, had their lands confiscated and they were driven from the district. Abiathir Camp of North Branford escaped with his family to Canada and the Town confiscated his property.

### War of 1812

The residents of Northford responded to the call of the War of 1812 and their duties seem to have been to patrol the coastline of New Haven and vicinity. The enemy did not come to this location and they were soon discharged. Joel Augur at the age of 21 joined the service and at the first operated a patrol boat. Later he was commissioned a Lieutenant of the First Company, 1<sup>st</sup> Regiment of Horse Artillery of Connecticut. He was a very strong young man and this amusing incident has been recorded when he was serving in the War of 1812. The men in service had little to do and so devoted a considerable time to social affairs. One evening Joel accompanied a comrade who was going to visit a young lady. Just before arriving there, it is reported that Joel threw the young man over a fence into the bushes and spent the evening with the young lady himself.

In later years he was asked by a comrade to apply for a pension for serving in the war of 1812. This he refused to do saying that all he had done in that war was to ride horse back between New Haven and Fort hale. The comrade applied and got the pension.

### Zion Church Parish

For many years the Episcopalians in North Branford had attended services in Branford. March 12, 1812, a meeting was called in the home of Chauncey Linsley to form an Episcopal Parish. A petition was presented to the Bishop Rt. Rev. Abraham Jarvis, on March 10, 1812 requesting this parish. He at first suggested that the members in North Branford attend services in St. Andrew's Church in Northford. However on April 12, 1812 the Zion Episcopal Parish was organized , with Augustus Baldwin, Jesse Linsley, Jonathan Foote, Jacob Turner, Sherman Bunnell, Jacob Tyler, Nicholas O. Thompson and Jonathan Potter members of the

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<sup>9</sup> I believe she is confusing Tull Dick with Dick Negro. They were two slaves, one from North Branford, Tull Dick, who served and was killed at The Battle of Brandywine and the other who lived in Northford and is remembered for leading the women and children to safety when the British invaded New Haven.

vestry being in charge. In a short time twenty families became members of this parish. Services were conducted in the homes of members by the Rev. Elijah C. Plumb until 1818 when it was voted to build a church. The building committee was David Rose, Samuel Baldwin Jr., Chauncey Linsley, Augustus Baldwin and Jesse Linsley as treasurer. They were unable to receive public land on which to erect the building, so they purchased a lot from Jarius Harrison and set apart a portion of this for burial purposes. Alterations were made to the building in 1827, 1840 and 1863 when it was enlarged to seat 150. In 1864 it was duly consecrated by Bishop John Williams. The church has been served by priests from parishes in adjoining towns.

### **Burial Grounds**

Like many New England villages Burial Grounds were located in the Church yards. The Town granted North Branford the rights to have a burying yard near the church on March 3, 1726 and the first burial recorded as that of Isaac Bartholomew in 1727. He was the first regular physician in North Branford.

A cemetery plot was laid out in Northford before the church parish was established about a half mile south of the present church building. This comprised about a half acre and was enlarged by the purchase of one acre and sixteen rods of land from Mrs. Eunice Evarts in June 1848. Dr. Jared Linsley made the purchase and paid the sum of \$110 dollars for the property. September 24, 1852 he deeded this property to the fifth school district. Levi Brockett of North Haven laid up the stone wall about the cemetery and members of the school society were taxed to pay for it.

Both churches in the district buried their dead in this cemetery. Among the grave stones is one inscribed to Captain Stephen Smith of the Revolutionary War who died June 22, 1851 age 100 years 3 weeks.

Jerome Harrison of Bare Plains deeded a half acre of land to be used as a cemetery for that district in 1860. In 1877 the Bare Plains Cemetery Association purchased an additional acre and added this to the original piece. The first person to be buried in the cemetery was Miss Amoret Harrison, only daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Jerome Harrison, who died in April 1860.

A Union Chapel was erected in Bare Plains, near the cemetery in 1880. This was to be used by all Faiths in the community. However, Rev. Charles Page, a Congregational minister conducted services her for many years.

## **Chapter III**

### **19<sup>th</sup> Century**



The Town of North Branford continued to grow and prosper after the Revolutionary War. The many eighteenth and nineteenth century houses still standing is indicative of the thrift and ability of the early inhabitants of the community.

The seat of government was in Branford and we find that the residents of North Branford and Northford took an active part in the affairs of the Town. The General Court of the Colony of Connecticut met twice a year in May and October and Branford sent two delegates to each session. Many of these delegates had their homes in North Branford or Northford, In 1818 the Constitutional Convention was held in August and Branford sent Eli Fowler and Jonathan Rose to represent the Town. The Constitution passed by a vote of 163 to 151 and following its adoption there were yearly meetings and Branford was represented by two delegates.

The first political parties were the Whigs and the Tories. The Whigs were the true American Patriots and supported the Revolutionary War as opposed to the Tories which were in most cases driven from the town and their lands confiscated. As the political parties changed in the country, Branford changed too and we find that the predominating parties were the Federalists, The National Republicans and the Republicans. All townspeople belonged pretty much to the same party but many had dissenting views. In 1882 when Andrew Jackson was elected President of the United States<sup>10</sup> the Democratic Party was born and from then on two parties prevailed in the Town.

In 1812 the Middletown Turnpike was built from New Haven through Northford to Middletown. This was a toll gate highway with gates at Rising Sun Tavern, the North Haven Northford line tended by Gideon Todd who was proprietor of the Tavern. A second gate near the Northford Durham line was kept by Amos Harrison.

In 1825 the Essex Turnpike was built from New Haven through North Branford to Essex and Old Saybrook, both ship sailing points at that time.

Transportation to and from New Haven became easier for both communities and both increased in population, As early as 1799 North Branford had petition the General Assembly to be set aside from Branford as a new town. The petition failed at this time. After building the Essex Turnpike a second petition was presented and in May 1831 the General Assembly passed an act making North Branford a Town.

The board of selectmen of Branford met with the leaders of the petition and drew up the terms under which North Branford could rule itself. The terms

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<sup>10</sup> Andrew Jackson served as President of the United States from 1829 to 1837.

provided that those residents who were receiving town aid would be divided equally between North Branford and Branford<sup>11</sup>. In the future each Town was to be represented in the General Assembly by one delegate.

The first town election was held in the Congregational meeting house June 18, 1831 with Benjamin Page acting as clerk. He was elected as clerk and as treasurer. Jesse Linsley, Samuel Bartholomew and Eleasor Harrison were elected first Board of Selectmen. The highway districts were changed and John Maltby, Jonathan Rose 2<sup>nd</sup>; Timothy Bartholomew Jr., Richard Linsley, Jared Potter, Rufus Rogers 2<sup>nd</sup> and Levi Rose Jr. were placed in charge to keep them in passable condition.

It was voted to hold the Town Meetings alternatively in the North Branford Society and the Northford Society. At the next regular meeting Rufus Rogers 2<sup>nd</sup>; Ralph Linsley and Samuel Foote were elected as a board of relief. Town meetings were held each year and during the first years the First Selectman served but one term.

Transportation and communication between North Branford and Northford was difficult at this period in our history and after the organization of the Northford Congregational Church parish the development and expansion of each district became strictly a community matter.

Farming was the principle occupation of the residents of North Branford. Fields of grains and vegetables were grown and the fertile pasture lands provided an abundance of feed for the herds of cattle. Milk and beef were among the chief exports of the village. In 1780 Branford was a port of entry and the products of North Branford were taken by ox cart to be placed on ships going to ports all over the world.

The soil was suited to growing fruit trees and many farmers cultivated various kinds of fruit. Apples were the chief of these products and the dried fruit, cider brandy and vinegar were exported. Other fruits raised were cherries, peach and pears and were sold locally and in near by communities. Northford became known for a special pear called "The Northford Seedling." This was a chance seedling which grew near a sickle or seckel pear on the property of Levi Tallmadge the former home of Col. William Douglas. Mr. Talmadge cultivated this seedling and pears produced from it were larger than the sickle pear with a coarse brown skin. However they were of excellent flavor and were especially good for canning and pickling. Soon every farmer in Town had a Northford Seedling Pear tree and today a few of these trees are still to be found in Northford. However the fruit

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<sup>11</sup> The terms provided that those residents who were receiving town aid would be divided between North Branford and Branford based on population.

deteriorated due to the ages of the trees and the diseases of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Many farmers supplemented their incomes with other occupations. George Ford learned how to tan leather from his father-in-law and established a tannery in North Branford with his brothers. They became noted for the fine saddles and harnesses which they made from this leather and exported to many countries. Local leather was used in making of shoes. Shoemaking was a trade followed by a few craftsmen, the art of which had been passed from father to son and been learned originally in England. A shoemaker would go to the home of a family and remain there until he had made footwear for all. He was as clever in making dainty slippers for the ladies as he was in making copper toed shoes and brogans for the men and boys for the family. The names of these artisans have been lost but samples of their crafts can be found in the homes of several local families.

The Linsley Axe Mill on Linsley Pond was owned and operated by Edward A. Linsley for a number of years. It was later run by his son George and by his grandson Marvin B. Linsley. Marvin was killed in an accident at the mill when he was 21. The mill was closed down and the Linsleys became prosperous farmers.

Mr. Glover operated a bone mill on Clear Lake which was formally known as Glover's Pond. Bone was shipped by boat to Branford from New York and taken by ox cart to Glover's Mill where it was ground into meal and reshipped to New York.

Captain Joel Howd conducted a potash mill for many years at Sandy Hollow.

Charles Page was born in North Branford in 1839. He received his early education in the local schools, attended high school in Meriden and graduated from the Yale Divinity School. He owned a great deal of property in North Branford. He built a grist mill and saw mill, which his son Edson C. Page operated on Page's Pond in Mill Road until 1912. The building is still standing and has been converted into an attractive dwelling.

In 1864 Alden H. Hill came to North Branford from Killingworth. He purchased land here and engaged in the lumber and ship building trade for fifteen years. He conducted operations in the Chidsey Mills which he bought from the Chidsey family. Mr. Hill became part owner in many ships which sailed to all parts of the world. Giving up ship building he continued in the lumber business and sold this product to a number of Mexican and South American ports as well as to Galveston, Texas and Norfolk, Virginia. His son Alden J. Hill continued in the lumber business and construction work until his death. His son Alden S. Hill took over and continued to operate the business which has been a prosperous industry in North Branford for one hundred years, the oldest business to be in continuous operation in town. All three men were ardent republicans and served the Town of

North Branford as First Selectmen for many terms.

Clarence W. Barker established a card printing business in Branford in 1879 which he moved to North Branford in 1883. He added a toy and novelty department to the business.

Judson Smith was a tinsmith by trade. He was appointed the first Postmaster of Totoket in 1889 when that district received and dispatched mail.

Sedley D. Bartlett opened a store in Totoket in 1882 and this was followed by one opened by Ralph Beers in North Branford Center in 1883. Mr. Beers was appointed Postmaster of North Branford in 1883 and served until the office was closed.

Northford, located in the valley of the Farm River and on the main highway between New Haven and Middletown became an industrial community different from the rest of the Town.

Many of the residents of this community tilled the soil, raised cattle and sheep and carried on a successful farming program. Benjamin Johnson of Northford owned many acres of oak wood land from which he supplied the shipyards in Fair Haven with "elbows" for the bows of many ships which were built there<sup>12</sup>. Johnson transported this timber by ox cart. It has been said that when he started out on the journey to Fair Haven the forty carts drawn by eighty heads of oxen were like a parade.

There was a brown Stone quarry operated by the Jones family of Northford on the hill side between Middletown Turnpike and Foote Hill Road. Stones from this quarry were used to build the present Northford Congregational Church in 1846. Many foundations of the pre-Revolutionary houses were laid up with this stone. The stone wall around the Old Northford Cemetery is constructed from stones quarried in Jones' Quarry.

There was an unusual number of men in Northford known as inventors and by using their own ingenuity and original ideas are responsible for the industrial era which this community enjoyed for a number of years.

The water of the Farm River was used as power to turn the weels of the mills located on its banks where a vartiety of articles invented by the men living there were manufactured.

The inventive genius of Maltby Fowler and his six sons provided a large number of useful and mechanical articles which contributed much to the ease and

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<sup>12</sup> Wooden "elbows" were attached to the interior sides of the ship frame and used to support the horizontal beams on which the deck planking were laid. They were used all over the ship, not just in the bow.

comfort of life here and in adjoining communities.

Maltby Fowler came to Northford from Milford where he had been in the coopering business. He established a wagon factory here and built the first four wheel vehicle in the state. The axels were made of hard wood and there were two half springs of steel instead of the one spring in wagons of later date. The first vehicle was so well constructed that it is known some lasted for at least a hundred years.

The firm of Maltby Fowler and Sons placed their names on many articles. A machine for the manufacture of buttons was invented by Mr. Fowler and soon this product was being made in bone, horn, ivory and wood. Later the buttons were made of pewter. This machine was small and could be used in a wood shed and kitchen. We find that many families in Northford made buttons in their spare time which were distributed for sale by the Fowlers. Shellack was combined with sawdust to make large buttons for men's overcoats.

The business grew and the making of combs was introduced. A small machine invented by the firm was used universally for the making of pocket combs. Combs were made in Northford of ivory, wood, tin and German Silver. Small wooden boxes for holding leads for pencils were manufactured in the comb shop, another of Mr. Fowler's ideas put into action.

The six sons of Mr. Fowler had an aptitude for mechanics and developed into skillful and useful inventors. DeGrass and Thaddeus however, accomplished the most work and produced more inventions then the rest of the brothers combined.

Fred fowler in April 1854 entered into partnership with Isaac and Francis Bartholomew as The Northford Manufacturing Company and they built the Northford Tin Shop. Assisted by Isaac Bartholomew he invented the first machine in the world for making perforated tin ware. The factory employed from twenty five to thirty hands. Tin pails, pans, cake boxes, plates, colanders, potato mashers, nutmeg graters, tin cups, lamps and tin spoons were made here and sold at home and abroad.

The company made hooks and eyes and the women and girls of Northford earned money sewing these onto cards. They earned from six to twelve cents a day.

Fred Fowler invented a machine for drawing out brass tubing, a screw machine which would turn out six thousand screws per minute and a cigar machine which was a complete success.

Horace Fowler invented embossed rolls which were used in the making of silk hats. He sold this machine to Hunt in New York City. Horace died shortly

after this invention, but among his effects were found a set of dies from which was developed the principle of forming solid heads on pins.

The making of pins was another important industry in Northford and DeGrass and Thaddeus Fowler were responsible for the invention of machines for making pins, the pins manufactured in Northford were made of iron and the machine turned out 120 a minute. The machine invented by DeGrass Fowler for sticking pins on the paper as they were made was purchased by the American Pin Company of Waterbury and is still in use. He also invented a machine for making hair pins and made these for a short time in Northford. The machine made a pin at every revolution of the main shaft and turned out between one and two hundred pins per minute. This machine was first sold to Prow and Eaton then to Slocum and Gillson of the American Pin Company.

Thaddeus Fowler left Northford to become superintendent of the United States Pin Company in Seymour. There he invented a machine for sorting pins, separating the straight pins from the crooked ones. However before he left the village he invented a machine for making horse shoe nails, the first pointed nail of its kind. These were manufactured in the Paug Manufacturing Company located on Northford Pond. Thomas A. Smith was the last president of the company and sold to a firm in Chicago. Stock in the company is still paying dividends to local holders of shares.

DeGrass Fowler invented a machine for making cigarettes. It was a perfect working machine and would turn out forty cigarettes a minute. This machine was sold to a New York company and moved to Cuba.

George Fowler in company with his brother DeGrass manufactured a jacket lamp in Northford. This was wholly of tin with the exception of the burner which was made of brass. Sperm oil was burned in these lamps which had one or two wicks. George invented a machine which made a complete and perfect globe for these lamps. Sheets of tin were run through a set of rolls coming out in the form of a spheroid.

The Rivert Company of Northford was carried on in the Paug Manufacturing Building, A machine invented by George Fowler made platina riverts which were used in riveting false teeth to plates. It was a delicate machine, intricate in its construction and turned out one hundred riverts per minute.

A power press constructed with a slide box and eccentric ring is considered the most valuable and useful invention produced by DeGrass Fowler with the Co-operation of his brother George. The press was manufactured in Northford for several years, later being sold to Styles and Parker Press Company of Middletown.

Maltby Fowler survived all of his sons but George and Thaddeus and was associated with them in their various businesses. This was the era of the "tin peddler" a term used for those travelling merchants who loaded their wagons with various wares which they sold or traded throughout New England and New York State. Maltby Fowler had four wagons on the road as early as 1840 and these were supplied for the most part during the years they ran with articles invented and manufactured in Northford

E. Chapman Maltby built a large factory on Farm River a mile north of the Congregational Church, where he engaged in the manufacture of a number of articles including wooden buttons, wooden spoons, and dipper handles. He imported cocoanuts from which he made the first dessicated cocoanut in the world. For a time as many as forty people were employed in this factory. However being a true Yankee he soon found use for the cocoanut shells, which he made into a very useful dipper<sup>13</sup>. Often times a large seed was found inside the cocoanuts. These Maltby manufactured into fancy buttons which were known as vegetable Ivory buttons and were in demand for trimming suits and dresses. These were made in various sizes. They were ivory in color with a tiny brown ring in the center.

Many of the dippers were trimmed with a Britannia rim and others were plain. In 1867 he advertised that he would "deliver his dippers to New Haven depot at the net cash price of Rimmed Dippers \$3.75 per dozen. Plain dippers \$3.25 per dozen.

The E. C. Maltby firm later became known as the Smith and Cowles Company. Under this name they continued to make the cocoanut dippers and added Britannia dippers. They also built agricultural implements including a wheel horse rake and made light iron castings to order.

Thelus Todd lived on Middletown Turnpike nearly to the Durham line. He owned a grist mill which was run by his son Milo. This was a prosperous business during the nineteenth century for much grain was raised in Northford. And Durham. Mr. Todd was a cattle dealer and every Fall went to New York State where he purchased several head of cattle to sell in Northford and vicinity. It is said that it would take twenty one days to drive the cattle from New York to Northford.

The Northford Creamery, the largest and most successful operation of its kind in this locality was located on the Farm River between the Paug

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<sup>13</sup> Actually the cocoanuts shells were first used to make dippers. Some time after the company had acquired a huge pile of waste cocoanut meat rotting by the side of the river and creating a terrible stench was there an effort to find some practical use for the cocoanut meat. The shredded meat was dried and sugar added to make the product we now recognize.

Manufacturing Company and E. C. Maltby's Brick factory. Milk from three hundred cows was processed daily into butter and cheese which was exported to the near by cities. Expert butter and cheese makers were brought in from Vermont and Massachusetts to run the Creamery and as many as twenty local people worked there.

During the Civil War straw paper was in demand for wrapping ammunition , clothing etc. In 1865 Milo Todd erected a large mill and bought a great deal of expensive machinery to manufacture this paper. The water from Farm River could not furnish enough power for this mill. Mr. Todd exchanged his mill with David S. Stevens who was making spoons in Quinnipiac. The local water power was sufficient for the spoon works and this was a leading industry in Northford for several years. As many as thirty people were employed by Mr. Stevens. Later the business was moved by David S. Steven's son Elizur Seneca to Shelton, Connecticut where he worked as superintendent.

David S. Stevens Jr. and his brother Henry M. Stevens opened a card printing business in their father's shop in 1875. Business cards were used extensively by men actively engaged in selling. In addition to the business cards the Stevens' Brothers manufactured fancy cards such as valentines, religious merit cards which were given to Sunday School children each month if they were present at classes every Sabbath. Merit cards were also given to pupils in local schools if they had not been absent during the week and had had perfect spelling and arithmetic papers. Later they added to their stock a card known as the "sparking card" which carried sentimental messages and was given by a bashful beau to the girl of his choice. Many a girl was wooed and won with these cards.

In 1880 the business had grown to such an extent that the shop was moved to the Maltby building. About this time the printing of Christmas cards became a successful industry in town. The firm employed fifty persons in the shop and many people took cards into their homes and worked on them. In this era the Christmas card not only carried the spirit of the season in appropriate greetings but were very elaborate in construction. They were trimmed with fringe, gold leaf and pretty pictures known in the industry as "scrapes." Northford cards were sold far and wide throughout the country and abroad.

The General Assembly met in 1868 and issued a charter to build a railroad from New Haven to Willimantic and providing for the building of a bridge over the Connecticut River at Middletown. Plans called for the railroad to run through Northford and it seemed certain that the community would become a leading industrial town. However these plans did not materialize. Tradition has it that in 1871 Lyman of Middlefield, then a representative in the General Assembly was more influential than Maltby of Northford and the course of the railroad changed to



run through Middlefield bringing it some three miles away from Northford's Manufacturing district.

Transportation to and from the railroad was difficult due to poor road beds almost impassable in winter and spring. This made it very hard to import raw materials and to export finished product. One by one the factories closed and the owners sold their patterns and machinery to firms in other communities.

The card business continued to flourish for many years. Cards were mailed out of the Northford Post Office and it is said that often times the mail was carried in hay wagons to the railroad station because of the heavy export of these cards.

In time the fad for fancy cards diminished and by 1890 the card industry in Northford was discontinued. Many families moved away and the empty houses falling into decay and the closed factories and mills gave this once prosperous village a "ghost town" appearance.

### Civil War

North Branford sent to the War between the States a limited number of men. However the regiments which they joined took part in many of the important battles and several gave their lives that the United States might survive.

When the first call for volunteers was issued by President Lincoln, DeGrass Fowler joined the fifth Regiment Connecticut Volunteers and Jesse Butler joined the sixth Regiment. DeGrass Fowler was commissioned a Lieutenant and served through the war. Butler was killed in the battle of Bermuda Hundred Virginia.

Lieutenant James Halsey Linsley led Company C tenth Regiment Connecticut Volunteers and those from North Branford and Northford in this company were Sylvanus Harrison, Josiah A. Smith and George H. Barns, J. Henry Palmer joined Company K the tenth Connecticut Volunteers and Albert H. Wheaton was in Company A of the tenth Regiment. He was one of the color guards in the battle of Newberne. Sergeant Henry E. Chitty of New London drooped the colors when his arm was shot off. Corporal Wheaton picked them up. As he did he was shot through his body and died the next day. His last words were : "I did what I could to guard the colors. I'd stand by them to the last. Where is the Regiment now?" Being told that it had gone on to do its work, he cried, "Glory! If I die tell my friends I gave up my life for liberty and I'd gladly give another."

Rev. Henry Cly Trunbull, chaplain of the tenth Regiment Connecticut

Volunteers wrote, "This is a noble Regiment. I do not hesitate to say that the moral standard is now as high in the camp of the tenth as with the same class of men in any part of Connecticut. I have heard more profanity in one day in some streets of Hartford than I have in any week since my arrival. Many are far more manly than when they left home."

The fourteenth Infantry Regiment was raised in response to an emergency call in 1862. Colonel Dwight Harris of Litchfield was instrumental in forming this Company and led it to the front as its Colonel. Known as the "fighting fourteenth" it took part in some of the most sanguinary battles of the war. John J. Bartholomew was wounded in the battle of Salisbury N. C. captured by the Southern Army and died in Salisbury Prison. Lieutenant Benjamin Maltby Linsley was missing after the battle of the Wilderness. William S. Jones who left with this Company returned to North Branford.

Another emergency call went out in the Fall and the fifteenth Regiment Connecticut Volunteers was enlisted. Captain Henry W. Stiles commanded Company K of the fifteenth Regiment. This was made up of fifty-two men from Wallingford, thirty from North haven and ten from North Branford. Those from North Branford were from the second district Northford and they were; Benjamin R. Down, Philo Foote, Jacob A. Smith, Charles B. Maltby, Elizur Harrison, Ambrose L. Dayton, Stephen Mix, Lorenzo Harrison, Henry N. Pardee and Edwin Buell. This Company took part in the capture of Kinston and all returned safely home.

In the Spring of 1863 General Hooker was in command of the Army of the Potomac. The twenty-seventh regiment Connecticut Volunteers were a part of this army and those from North Branford in this Regiment were; Josiah Johnson Company B and John S. Robinson Company F who lost their lives in battle; Charles A. Harrison Company B, Nathan Harrison Company B, Elizur E. Page Company F. Elizur G. Stone Company B. These men returned to their homes. It has been said of this Regiment "by the gallantry of its conduct it has won for itself and enviable name and reputation."

Two other local boys to lose their lives in service were James H. Scranton and Dayton R. Scranton both enlisted in Company F, twelfth Connecticut Volunteers.

North Branford erected the first monument in memory of its Civil War dead in the United States<sup>14</sup>. This is a beautiful granit shaft and stands on the Church

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<sup>14</sup> Although North Branford's monument was indeed one of the first to recognize its sons it was not the first. It was erected in 1866. Two other Connecticut towns, Berlin and Bristol, also claim the earliest monument. An internet search reveals that several towns in other states built memorials as early as 1863.

Green in North Branford Center. It lists the names of those who served in the war and the seven who gave their lives in this service, all young men between the ages of twenty to twenty-seven.

Each Town in Connecticut was called upon to furnish money to help pay for the war. In 1864 North Branford's Grand List was \$533,867.00 and based on this sum had to pay into the war fund \$15,402.50. This amount was used for the payment of Volunteers, substitutes and the support of soldier families. Individuals who did not care to go to war paid out in bounties for substitutes the sum of \$4,800 and for commutation the sum of \$1.800. Local residents provided a great deal of voluntary relief for soldiers in the hospitals and on the field but no record of those funds was compiled.

## **Chapter IV**

### **20<sup>th</sup> Century**

The census of 1900 showed that North Branford's population has declined to 825 residents.. Agriculture had become the chief occupation of those who remained in the community.

The industries of the former era had been replaced by four blacksmith shops, two in North Branford and two in Northford. Lee F. Revere a wheelwright by trade had opened a shop in the Brick Factory on Middletown Turnpike. In addition to shoeing oxen and horsed he made and repaired parts for wagons and farm machinery. Harry S. Bennett conducted a blacksmith shop at the intersection of Route 22 and Middletown Turnpike. Louis Doolittle and Walter Baldwin had blacksmith shops in North Branford Center.

The rebuilding of the Middletown Turnpike in 1925 and the construction of Clintonville Road in 1931 provided a convenient means of transportation to Northford. People charmed by the rural character of the village bought up many of the abandoned homes and restored many of the old houses to their former beauty.

### **Government**

North Branford has operated under the Town Meeting form of Government since the Town was organized in 1831 with a Board of Selectmen as the governing body. The Republican Party was in power for one hundred and thirty two years and the business of the community was conducted in an economical and thrifty manner, so much so, that those who were seeking new homes came here to live. The Town Officers were dedicated to their duties and the voters were happy to return them to office each election.

R. Earle Beers who served as Town Clerk of thirty one years and as Town Treasurer for thirty two years was highly respected at home and abroad. Ruth Beers Arnold succeeded him and has given the Town the same devotion to duty.

Charles Leonard was elected Tax Collector in 1931 and remained in office for thirty two years. During this time he held the record in the State of Connecticut for collecting the highest percentage of taxes.

Continued service in office of these officials provided a continuity to the Town's Government which would have been lost with election changes.

In 1931 the Board of Finance was instituted and Ellsworth B. Foote was elected chairman and served until 1963. This Board proved most valuable in regulating the growth of the Town.

Law and order was kept in the Town by the Constabulary, the oldest law

enforcement agency in the world. These men responded to call when needed and their position in the community was respected. Culprits were tried before a Justice Court over which a local citizen presided as Judge until when the Circuit Courts were established by a vote of the Connecticut Legislature.

Yearly elections were held in North Branford until 1941 when the General Assembly approved bi-annual elections and the bill was signed by Governor Robert A. Hurley in June of that year. In October 1941 all Town Officials were elected for a two year term. In 1960 the population of North Branford had increased and two representatives were elected to the General Assembly.

The growth of the Town brought many changes. The election of 1963 saw the first Democratic victory in the Town's history and all offices were filled with men and women of this political faith with the exception of Town Clerk. Mrs. Arnold was returned to office.

Town officials had their offices in their homes where they the records until 1961 when the Center School in North Branford was remodeled into an Administration Building and by 1963 all Town Officials had their offices here and all Town records were housed here.

## Schools

School districts were set apart in North Branford shortly after the Revolutionary War. There were seven districts in the Town, three in the first Society and four in the second society.

The buildings were one room structures and all grades and subjects were taught by one teacher. The early schools had seats built around the wall and the pupils sat with their backs to the teacher, whose desk and chair was on a raised platform at one end of the room. Heat was provided by an "air tight stove" in the center of the room. This burned chunks of wood.

About 1850 new schools were built. These had seats fastened firmly to the floor which faced the teacher. The seats were graduated in size, the smaller ones in front, the larger ones toward the back. These schools were still heated by stoves and in the winter an older boy was often appointed to come to school an hour early to start the fire and warm up the building.

The school day began at 9 A.M. and continued to 4 P.M. with an hour for lunch at noon. Each child brought his lunch in a "lunch pail" and supplied his own milk. There was no transportation and many a boy and girl walked from one to

three miles each way to and from school. Day light saving was unheard of and often the pupils returned home after dark.

The first record of the Board of Education is dated October 14 1856 and was known as the Board of School Visitors. The Board was organized with Rev. George I. Wood of North Branford as Moderator and Rev. A.C. Pierce of Northford as clerk. These gentlemen were elected to serve for three years. Carlos Smith and Whitney Elliot were elected for a term of two years and Charles Foote and Egbert Bishop for a term of one year. It was voted to hold examinations of teachers before a full Board at a time to be specified.

The Board voted Mr. Wood and Rev. Mr. Pierson to be school visitors. They were to visit all schools "in company" during the winter term but" each in his respective parish during the summer term.

It was further voted: "As a condition to the receiving of public money a suitable outhouse should be provided near the school building and that the seats be so constructed as to offer support for the back and feet of the scholars."

A vote was passed "that early in the approaching season of our schools it is expedient that a public meeting be held in each of the societies with a view to promoting, if possible, a deeper interest in the subject of common school education and especially in our own schools."

Reference is made to "public money" in the charter of the Board of School Visitors but the first account of such money was February 1863 when the Board received the first enumeration of pupils sent to the State. Pupils in age from 4 to 16 numbers 256 with 116 in the first society and 140 in the second society.

March 11, 1863 the Board of Selectmen and the Board of School Visitors met to apportion schools funds to the various districts. The State Fund was \$307.20. Other funds were Town Deposits Fund, \$164.92, Tow Tax Fund, \$161.94; local fund in first society, \$18.27 and the local fund in second society \$15.34 making a total of \$667.67 to run the schools.

By vote of the meeting the Town Deposit Fund and the Town Tax Fund were divided between the two societies upon the Grand List. In the first society one half of the Town Deposit Fund was divided among the scholars on a per capita basis and the other half together with the Tax Fund equally among the districts.

In the second society one half of the Town Deposit Fund was divided equally among the districts and the other half with the Town Tax Fund on a per capita basis among the scholars.

Although not stated it would appear that the State Fund was divided among the districts on a per capita basis for it was voted: "that each society should make

up the amount of thirty five dollars to any district receiving less as their portion of the State Fund."

The pastors of the Congregational Churches or a member of the Board of Deacons continued to be active members of the Board of School Visitors until 1911. The Board selected all books and subjects to be taught in the schools. The school year varied from 24 to 32 weeks. Teachers were paid once a month at the rate of \$1 per day.

There were no secondary schools in North Branford but pupils wishing to continue their education were often taught by the pastors of the Church. LoAmmi Hoadley conducted a private school in his home on The Old Post Road in Northford in the early 1830s. Pupils of all ages attended this school. William Brookes opened the Brookes Academy in Northford in 1850. This was a finishing school where many advanced subjects were taught. Those wishing to enter college could prepare here.

North Branford became a State Supervised Town in 1911 and D.C. Allen was appointed the first supervisor. Plans were discussed at this time to consolidate the one room schools into two schools, one at each end of North Branford. Several years passed before this plan was adopted.

A three room school was built in North Branford Center in 1921 and in 1924 the William Douglas School, a four room structure was erected in Northford. Teachers were required to have a Normal School education or its equivalent.

W.S. Dakin, State supervisor in 1929 reported: "pupils of the local schools are most ambitious to attend High School. The number from this town is unusually high for its size. The pupils' scholastic standing is so high that they are admitted to high school without examinations."

During the winter of 1931 and 1932 an Adult Education class was held in the William Douglas School. Many foreign born residents of the town attended these classes to prepare for citizenship. The classes were discontinued because of lack of funds.

Following the consolidation of the one room schools transportation was furnished to those pupils living a mile or more from school.

The Jerome Harrison built in 1929 provided room for all the pupils of North Branford Center and the pupils were transported here. In 1958 an addition of eight rooms was added to this school and two rooms were added to the William Douglas School. In 1955 a bond of \$370,000 had been obtained to build a Junior High School.

The North Branford School Building Committee meeting in 1957 proposed a



14 or 16 room school at Cedar Lakes, and a ten room addition to the Junior High School both to be ready by the Fall of 1958 and a 12 room school in Northford by 1959. The committee further recommended a Senior High School by 1964.

The school needs have been accomplished to date. Burton C. Curtiss was appointed Superintendent in 1956 and under his guidance the scholastic standing of former years is still maintained.

### **Libraries**

The Northford North Branford League of Women Voters<sup>15</sup> moved the remaining "Little Red School House" in Northford to its present location on the Old Post Road in 1928. They restored the building and opened a public library for the townspeople in 1933. The Library continued to operate under the League until 1936 when a Board of Library Directors was elected and took over the management Mrs. Daniel Doody, librarian in 1939 used her car as a "bookmobile" and distributed books to the residents of North Branford Center until 1942.

The corner stone of the Atwater Library was laid October 5 1942 on property used in Colonial times as the training grounds for the local militia. The building was dedicated in May 1943 with Governor George Baldwin of Connecticut giving the dedicatory address. This building was the gift of James C. Atwater of New York as a memorial to his father, Rev. Charles Atwater who was pastor of the North Branford Congregational Church from 1809 to 1825. The first floor reading room is furnished with antiques from the Atwater estate.

The Edward Smith Library was built at the intersection of the Old Post Road and the Clintonville Road and opened to the public in 1956. This was a gift from Dr. Clara Smith given in memory of her father who had lived all his life in Northford and had contributed to the welfare of the community. At this time the "Little Red School House" was discontinued as a Library and became the property of the Northford Congregational Church. It is one of three "red school houses" in Connecticut and is of historical interest to visitors who come to Town.

### **Public Health Nursing Association.**

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<sup>15</sup> According to the original New Haven register article of October 9, 1927 It was the New haven County League of Women Voters who arranged the renovation and moving of "The Little Red School House." This article entitled "Famous Old Schoolhouse To Be Restored" can be read on our website, [www.totokethistoricalsociety.org](http://www.totokethistoricalsociety.org) Copies are also available in both Town Libraries.

George L. Ford was appointed Health officer of North Branford November 1 1893. His primary duty was the inspection of milk which was being sold by the local farmers. Dr. C.W. Gaylord was appointed in 1896 and his duties were increased to include inspection of the schools. In 1923 Miss Margaret Raffley was appointed school nurse on a part time basis.

As the Town grew in population there was a definite need for a Public Health Nursing Association. This was organized in 1945 under the direction of Mrs. Paul Porter who was elected President. Representatives from the churches, civic organizations and social groups made up a Board of twenty one Directors and Dr. Sterling P. Taylor was appointed Health Officers and Mrs. Freida Anderson, school nurse.

The services of the Association increased and soon home nursing care, school nursing and Well Child Conferences for pre school children became the program. This enlarged to include polio clinics. For both children and adults, and the Association cooperated with the T.B. Association of New Haven in giving chest X-rays and took charge of the sale of T.B. Stamps. All schools were visited and a nurse was on call at all times.

The Association stocked supplies and made available to the residents of the Town hospital beds, wheel chairs, crutches and walkers.

### **St. Augustine's Parish**

For many years the residents of North Branford of Catholic Faith attended services in surrounding communities. The roads were often impassable during the winter months and because of no transportation other than walking this proved a great hardship. Once a year Mass was celebrated in the Fanning home on Middletown turnpike.

During the first week in February 1920 a meeting was held in the home of Mrs. Edward Foote at which plans were discussed to have weekly Mass in North Branford. The first Mass was said in the home of James Walsh on February 29, 1920. From this beginning the Parish of St. Augustine has grown into the largest church in North Branford.

Land was purchased from Charles Todd on Route 139 and the first church was built and dedicated by Bishop Nilon of Hartford, Sunday May 3, 1925. Father Thomas J. Murray of Branford celebrated the Solemn Mass and Father John

Fogarty, Pastor of Guilford preached the dedicatory sermon.

The Parish had expanded by 1941 to 35 families in North Branford and 65 families in Northford. Bishop McAuliffe named Father John J. McCarthy as first pastor of the parish. For a time the people of Northford held Mass in the Northford Community House and later in the Northford Congregational Church until the building of St. Monica Chapel.

By 1960 St. Augustine Parish had grown to such an extent that a new church was needed. Mrs. Daniel Doody gave the parish 13.77 acres on which to build the new church. Ground was broken in April 1961 and the church was dedicated August 11, 1962. It is a most impressive structure standing atop a low foothill "its cross gleaming in the sunlight, it symbolizes the Church by Jesus Christ upon a Rock," and will meet the needs of the rapidly growing community. Rev. William J. Reilly was administrator of the Parish during the building of the church and Rev. William J. Monaghan was pastor assisted by Rev. Robert J. Lord.

### Centennial Observation

The year 1931 marked the one hundredth anniversary of North Branford becoming a town. The Northford Village Improvement Association sponsored a celebration to commemorate this event.

Invitation were sent to former residents of the community and to many whose forefathers had lived in Northford. Three thousand guests attended the affair coming from as far away as Seattle Washington. Every family in the village took part in the Celebration.

The program featured a parade in the morning, a pageant in the afternoon and a dance at night. During the noon hour the Ladies Aid of the Northford Congregational Church served over six hundred guests.

The pageant, written and directed by A. Laretta Plumley, featured the story of Northford. Many taking part were direct descendants of those men and women who had settled here in the seventeenth century. The pageant was presented out of doors north of the Congregational Church. Music was furnished by the New Haven Institute of Music.

When Connecticut celebrated its Tercentenary in 1935 North Branford took an active part. Mrs. Daniel Doody wrote and directed a pageant featuring North Branford History and the Northford Centennial Pageant was repeated. Both districts took part in the Branford Celebration. The pageant presented there "A

Parade of an Age Through Branford Town," written and directed by Miss Plumley was voted the best historical pageant presented that year in the State. Residents of North Branford played an active part in making this a success.

## **World Wars I and II**

The young men of the twentieth century in North Branford were as brave and patriotic as their forefathers and when they were called to service in 1917 twenty three enlisted. All returned safely at the end of the War.

The Second World War took seventy six men from this community and nearly all saw overseas duty. During this conflict the following young men lost their lives while in service: Robert B. Hart, George Gardner, Alexander Panko, Michael Panko, Donald Williams and Richard E. Lewis.

Gladys Carlson and Margaret Dabbs, registered nurses enlisted and served abroad.

During the war a Red Cross Branch of the New Haven Red Cross Chapter was established in North Branford with First Aid Stations in North Branford Town Hall and the basement of the Northford Congregational Church.

## **Fire Department**

The only fire protection in North Branford for many years was the "bucket brigade." A group of sixteen men met in the North Branford Town Hall in July 1938 and discussed the need for a Volunteer Fire Department. By August 1938 The North Branford Volunteer Fire Department Company #1 was organized with John J. Hartigan chief and Paul Boyce as Captain.

A Town meeting was held at which time the firemen asked for an appropriation of \$6,000 to purchase a fire engine. Opposition was expressed by "an irate lady taxpayer" who said she would "sue the Town for wasting taxpayers money on a fire engine that would never be needed." The engine was purchased and the first call for help came from the "lady" who might have lost her home if it hadn't been for the newly formed company and their equipment.

For many years the fire engine was housed in Nathan Harrison's Service Garage on North Street. In 1954 a firehouse was built on Route 80. The land was leased from the New Haven Trap Rock Company for a period of fifty years for the

sum of one dollar per year. At the end of this time the fire department may renew the lease at the same rate of rent.

A complete air-horn warning system was installed in 1958 and plectron warning units were placed in some of the firemen's homes. A second truck and a 750 gallon pumper was added to the equipment of the fire company in 1962. The Civil Defense Director has made available to the Department the use of a 2000 gallon tank truck whenever needed.

Following the Congregational Church Parsonage fire in 1944 Paul L. Porter and Edgar Johnson called a meeting of all men in Northford wishing to form a second volunteer fire department in North Branford. Sixty men responded to this call and the Northford Volunteer Fire Department, North Branford, Company #2 was formed. Wilbur Young was appointed Deputy Chief and Robert Newton was elected Captain.

Ernest Whiting donated a plot of land on Middletown Turnpike, south of St. Andrew's Episcopal Church to the Department and it was here that they built their firehouse. Funds for this project were raised by dances, carnivals and subscriptions through the efforts of the firemen. In 1946 the firehouse was completed. At a Town meeting in October 1945 \$6,000 had been voted to the Department to purchase a fire engine. An Auxiliary truck was added in 1952 and in 1963 a new pumper completed the equipment of the Northford Company.

In 1954 wives and mothers of the men in Company #1 met and organized the Ladies Auxiliary of the North Branford Volunteer Fire Department Company #1 with Mrs. Charles Leonard as the first president. Their purpose is to assist the firemen financially and incase of an emergency when needed. The Northford ladies Auxiliary was organized in 1964 and are helping in the same way as the members of Company #1.

In 1960 the Nurses Corp of North Branford Volunteer Fire Company #1 was formed. This is made up of registered nurses who devote their time during an emergency wherever they are needed. Like the firemen they are available to call on a twenty four hour basis.

### **New Haven Trap Rock Company**

The New Haven Trap Rock Company was founded in 1914 and began operation of a quarry and crushing plant in Totoket Mountain in North Branford. This is believed to be the largest single face trap rock quarry in the world.

In 1915 the Company built a railroad to Pine Orchard where they developed a harbor and dock terminal to permit the landing of dock scows. This railroad also connected with the shoreline New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad. It was known as the Branford Steam Railroad and operated under the Public Utility Laws of Connecticut. The Company grew rapidly and a great deal of material was shipped by rail and water to Massachusetts and New Jersey.

Bituminous concrete, a mixture of crushed stone and asphalt, was used in the paving of highways and in 1940 the company's first plant for manufacturing this material was erected in North Branford and has since become the largest plant of its size in the east. The mixture is sold under the trade name of Blue Diamond Mix.

A machine Products Division was added to the company in 1950 in North Branford. This had an excellently equipped maintenance machine shop where the replacement parts for the company's machines were manufactured.

The company has provided work for more than one hundred men in the community who have known security of employment from the first and enjoy many benefits including a formal retirement plan.

### **New Haven Water Company**

In 1923 the New Haven Water Company purchased several homes from local residents and made plans to build a reservoir in the Northeast section of the Town. The C.W. Blakeslee Company began the construction of the dam in 1926 and it was completed in 1929<sup>16</sup> and Lake Gaillard was formed. A three mile tunnel was built through Sugar Loaf Mountain and water from Lake Menunkatuck emptied onto Lake Gaillard and the reservoir was full in three years. Other water supplies feeding the Lake are Rose Brook and Crooked Brook in North Branford. A mile long tunnel through Totoket mountain connects with streams in Northford and water is taken from Big and Little Gulf, Round Hill Brook and Farm River.

The Lake is 190 feet above sea level and all the water to New Haven is gravity fed. However pumper stations have been erected at Rabbit Rock for providing water to the residents of North Haven and at Bushy Plains for the residents of Branford. Many residents of North Branford Center are supplied with water from Lake Gaillard.

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<sup>16</sup> Construction of the dam and the dike on the eastern side was completed by November, 1928. See our publication "Construction of the North Branford Dam and the Formation of Lake Gaillard" by Otto E. Schaefer and Theodore Groom, August 2012. Copies are available in both Town Libraries.

When Lake Gaillard is full it holds fifteen and one half billion gallons of water. The average depth of the lake is 45 feet and the depth at the damn is one hundred feet. Lake Gaillard covers 1050 acres and is the largest reservoir to feed New Haven City area.

When the Hammonasset Damn was built in 1957 this was connected by tunnel and pipe lines to Lake Gaillard. When needed ninety eight gallons of water a day<sup>17</sup> can be pumped from this Reservoir into Lake Gaillard always assuring water for New Haven and vicinity.

### **In conclusion – the future**

The rapid growth of the last decade has brought many changes to the Town of North Branford. The fertile fields and the green pasture lands of the village have given way to homes for the “new comers” who have chosen to locate in this community with its modern highways providing them with easy access to their occupations in other Towns. Those of us who have lived here since 1900 and remember when the population of the village was only 825 cannot help but wonder what the future holds, now that North Branford has grown to nearly 10,000 residents.

The gas stations of this era have replaced the blacksmith shops of the early part of the century. The opening of the North Branford Bank, the building of shopping plazas in the four corners of the community are symbols of its growth. The self service markets taking the place of the grocery stores with the delivery man who drove from door to door listing orders for the week on Monday and returning with them on Tuesday indicate the great changes that have taken place in a few years.

The Town Planning Commission composed of men with a vision as shown by the Comprehensive Plan which they have proposed for the development of the Town and the Zoning Commission who will assist in carrying this plan out provide the background for a future of the Town which will continue to be of historical interest to those who live here or to those who come here to live.

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<sup>17</sup> I believe she means “ninety eight million gallons of water a day.”