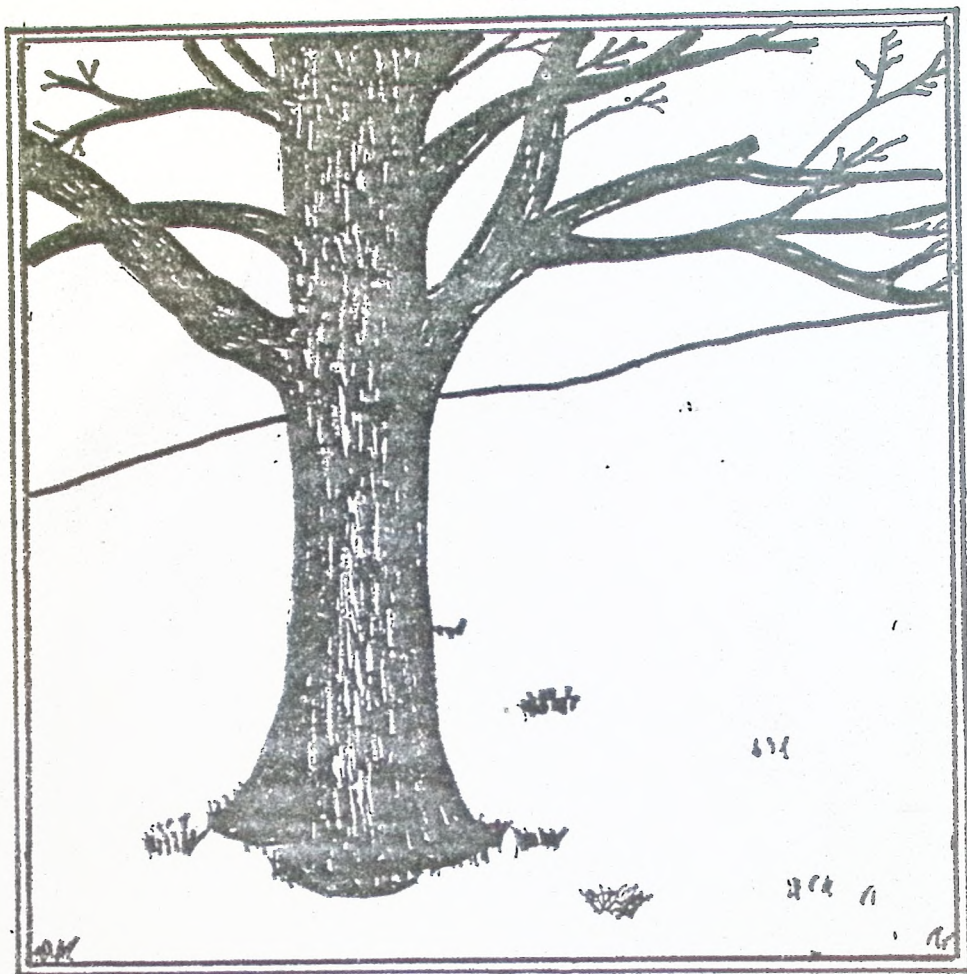


OLD



TOTOKET

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Edited By

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We gratefully acknowledge the references for the sketch of the history of Branford and North Branford from the following publications, books and sources of historical information:

A. Magazine for the Home, Edited and published by Elijah C. Baldwin in 1884.

New Haven and Eastern New Haven County, Published by Everett G. Hill, Volume 1 in 1918.

Days of Old Remembered, Published by the Congregational Church of Northford in 1876 by A. C. Pierce.

Connecticut Tercentenary Celebration at North Branford, July, 1935.

And most of all to our greatly admired new friends and historians who gave so generously of their time and knowledge:

Carrie Doody of North Branford

Samuel Beach of Branford

This booklet is dedicated to:
Our family, Toni Ann and Vinny Casanova Jr.
and
The Connecticut Friends of Hospice

Soon after Theophilus Eaton, Governor of the New Haven colony, made his first purchase of land from the Mattabeseck Indians, he decided to negotiate for more land. On December 21, 1638, on behalf of the colony of New Haven, he bought a second tract of land which is now the towns of Branford and North Branford, including the Northford area. This tract of land was called Totoket, from an Indian word "toket". This name, which means "at the tidal river", comes from the fact that the river sets up for several miles from the shore and the tide rises approximately three miles up. The deeds were signed by Montowese and Sawscunck, a chief and his follower; the signature of Montowese was a bow and arrow, and that of Sawscunck was a hatchet. The Indians continued to reside on the land, according to the terms of the deed, and were allowed to hunt, fish and cut timber.

On September 3, 1640 the "General Court" at New Haven made a grant of "Totoket" to Samuel Eaton, brother of Theophilus Eaton, upon the condition of his procuring a number of his associates from England to settle here. Samuel Eaton failed to fulfill his contract, and neither he or his promised settlers, ever returned from England. In 1643, "Totoket" was granted to William Swain from Wethersfield, upon the condition of their assuming the expenses incurred, amounting to about seventy dollars. The Wethersfield group referred to it as land fit for a plantation. This land measured forty five square miles. Some of this land had previously been used by some Dutch explorers who were prospecting within the mouth of the river and had made plans to set up a trading post. However, this venture was never carried out and they also failed to take advantage of this bountiful land.

The local Indians welcomed the settlers because they were constantly being attacked by the Mohegan Indians and knew that the settlers would aid them against the raids. They became quite compatible neighbors and prospered together.

Along with the Dutch, there were two earlier white settlers, whose status is of interest. In 1644 the newcomers found Thomas Mulliner and Thomas Whitway on their newly acquired settlement. The former was something of an adventurer, being described as "a restless and independent spirit." He had made his purchase from the Indians, and settled near the sea and naturally regarded the later arrivals somewhat as usurpers. They never got along with Mulliner, but when he died in 1690 they made a bargain with his wife and son to trade their land at what had come to be known as "Mulliner's Neck" for a tract of some 200 acres in the Northford section of the town. Thomas Whitway made no undue trouble for the newcomers because his place was in Foxon, just far enough to gain some protection and far enough not to infringe on the lives and ideals of the emigrants.

The first minister was Reverend John Sherman, he was succeeded by Reverend Abraham Pierson from Long Island, who lived in the area of the Totoket Hotel. Worship was never remitted and they had continual preaching. In 1686 Reverend Samuel Russell began to serve them and continued the rest of his life, dying in 1731. Before Reverend Russell there had really been no special church organization. The town or it's proprietors employed the minister. During Reverend Russell's early ministry he used the old meeting house which stood in the present Branford graveyard as the house of worship. Attendance at church and attendance at the town meetings was required of the men. Only church members were allowed to become voters. Both morning and afternoon sermons were preached at that time, so it was an all day responsibility. To make sure the town was governed by all the voters, a strict rule was adopted. Any elector

who was absent from a meeting was fined two shillings and six pence; if he were tardy he was fined one pence.

Around the early seventeen hundreds the North Farms section had increased its population, and a petition was sent by the settlers from the now North Branford area to the Branford Church asking for permission to build a meeting house at the present North Branford center. This was refused at first, but it was finally agreed upon and the Congregational Church was built and dedicated in 1725, within a few feet of its present location. Reverend Samuel Russell offered prayers at the erection of the frame. The first minister was Reverend Jonathan Merrick, who served the people for forty-three years. Reverend Merrick was succeeded by the Reverend Samuel Eells, who was ordained in 1795. He was the minister during the Revolutionary War, and when the call came from General Washington for men, he was in the middle of a sermon. He stopped, gave the announcement and asked for volunteers. After the sermon he met the volunteers in the field by the church, and formed a company which he led during the war.

Sermons were from two to four hours long. There were no fires in the church during the winter, the only building with heat was the Sabbath-day house, which was a small building next to the church. The churchgoers ate lunch and warmed up only to attend another sermon in the afternoon. Samuel Eells was an abolitionist, he deplored the practice of slavery. He preached sermons against the custom, and, as a result, most of the slaves in North Farms were given their freedom. This was before slavery was abolished in Connecticut. Reverend Eells never got the recognition he deserved in our history, as he was not only a dedicated minister and an abolitionist, but a Captain in the Army and led our men in active duty.

By 1800 Branford had a population of 2,156 persons, the town at that time still included what is now North Branford. Branford had progressed quite

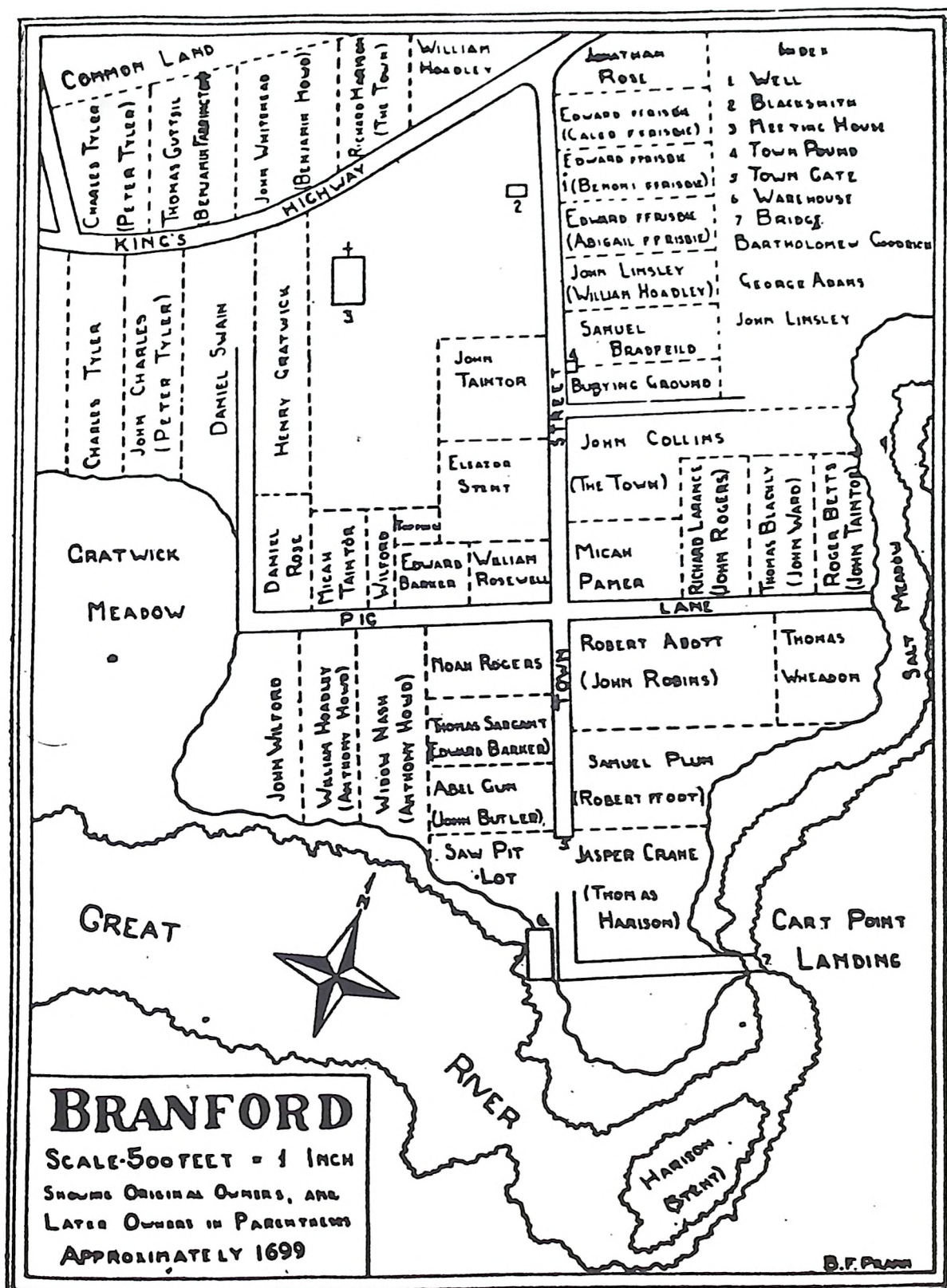
well in its past century and the town began to thrive. The principle inhabitants were farmers, and a considerable amount of seamen who were employed by the merchants from New Haven. The oyster supply was rapidly being exhausted and as early as the eighteen hundreds, the town voted to regulate the harvesting of them only from October to April.

In 1810 there were 280 houses, 220 legal voters, \$54,739 of assessed property, one smelting furnace, one carding machine, three fulling machines, four grain mills, two small distilleries, six stores, four Congregational Churches and two Episcopal Churches, two libraries and six vessels from 40 to 60 tons each. Most of the people of this era still had a very rough existence, although there was some industry and a more modern form of economics, most households were entirely selfsufficient. They raised their own foodstuffs, cattle, hogs and poultry. Curing, canning and salting the food needed for the coming winters.

The first attempt to separate North Farms was made in 1819, but this appeal was denied. That same year the turnpike from Middletwon to New Haven was built and that went through the Northford area, and in 1825 the Essex Turnpike was built, that road went from Essex to New Haven through North Branford. With these new roads the North Farms area was more accessible and the population in that area grew.

In Hartford, the General Assembly of the State of Connecticut had a meeting on May 4, 1831. A petition was on file to the State Legislature to divide the town of Branford into two distinct towns. Branford in the southern section and North Branford in the northern section. Favorable action was taken and the town of North Branford became incorporated. A meeting was called in June of 1831 at the Congregational Meeting house in North Branford to organize a new town. The officers elected were town clerk, three selectman, town treasurer, and four constables.

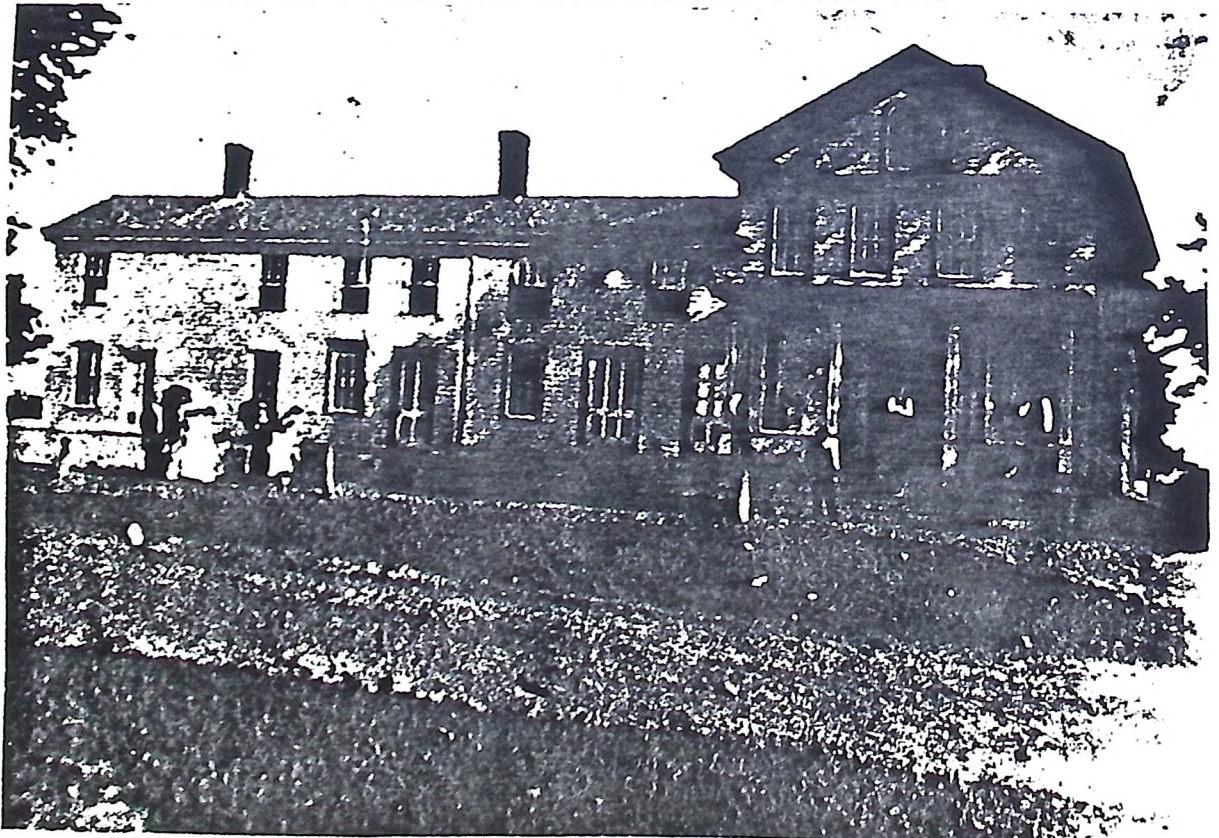
So goes the story of Totoket and of our forefathers who formed our towns and gave them the firm foundations that we love and enjoy today.



PECKHAM PHARMACISTS & JEWELER'S



BRANFORD'S FIRST DRUG STORE-ROBINSON & FOOTE-1885



The Ark - 1879



Photo - Courtesy of Branford Historical Soc.

In 1879, an old schooner ran aground in a storm on Morris Rock. It was pulled ashore and rebuilt into the Ark Restaurant. The hull of the schooner was visible at the lower section of the building. The Ark was located at the foot of Linden Avenue in Indian Neck.

Delavan Hotel



Photo - Courtesy of Branford Historical Soc.

It looks like a beautiful summer day back in 1910. Unlike a scene of today, no one seems to be in any rush. The store at the right of the Hosley Block housed Prann's Grocery Store on the West side and George Stannard's Hardware on the East. The other stores could not be identified. The upper part of the building was the old Delavan's Hotel.

PRANN AND STANNARD



Courtesy of the Branford Historical Society

This is an interior view of the Prann Grocery Store and the Stannard Hardware. Mr. Prann is the fellow behind the counter in the white shirt, Mr. Stannard is to his left. The patrons are unknown.

-THE GRAND ARMY OF THE REPUBLIC-



Courtesy of the Branford Historical Society

The Civil War Veterans are assembled in front of the Congregational Church after the dedication of Branford's handsome Soldiers' Monument, erected on the Green in 1885. It was provided through the efforts of the Mason Rogers Post of the Grand Army of the Republic, which raised a fund of \$5,000 for the purpose. It memorializes the soldiers who have fought for Branford in former wars.

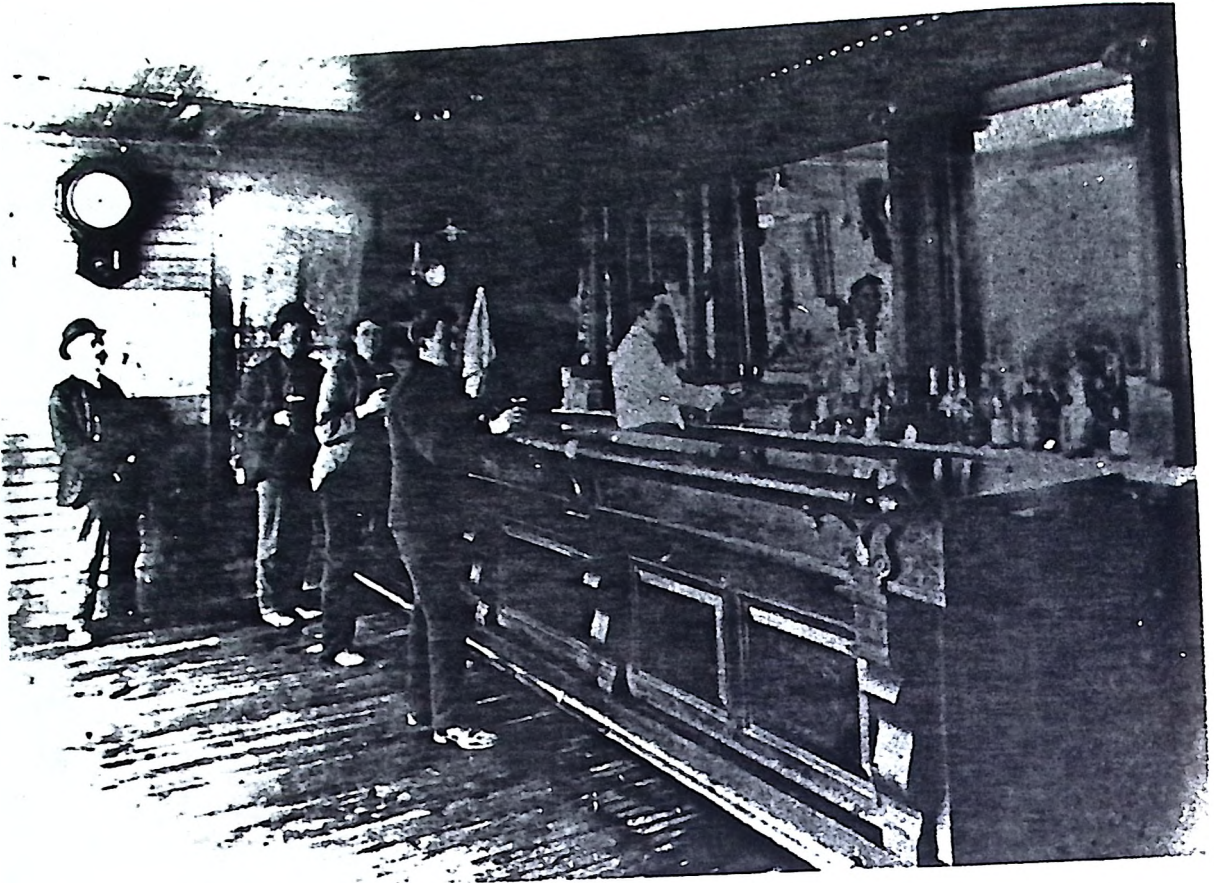
-TOTOKET HOTEL 1910-



Photo - Courtesy of Branford Historical Soc.

The Totoket Hotel was located in the center of Branford. It was built by Ezekiel Hays in 1755. The first owner of the hotel has brought a sense of pride to the people of Branford. Ezekiel Hays and his wife, the former Rebecca Russell were the grandparents of Rutherford Birchard Hayes, the 19th President of the United States. Rebecca Russell Hays was the daughter of John Russell, who was the eldest son of the Reverend Samuel Russell, Branford's earliest pastorate.

Connelly's Saloon



Courtesy of Branford Historical Society

This scene was a familiar site back in 1910. Here you can see the "boys" spending a friendly Saturday afternoon, enjoying the hospitality of Connelly's Saloon. This is now the location of Garfield's Restaurant at the corner of Main and Russell Streets.

PAWSON PARK

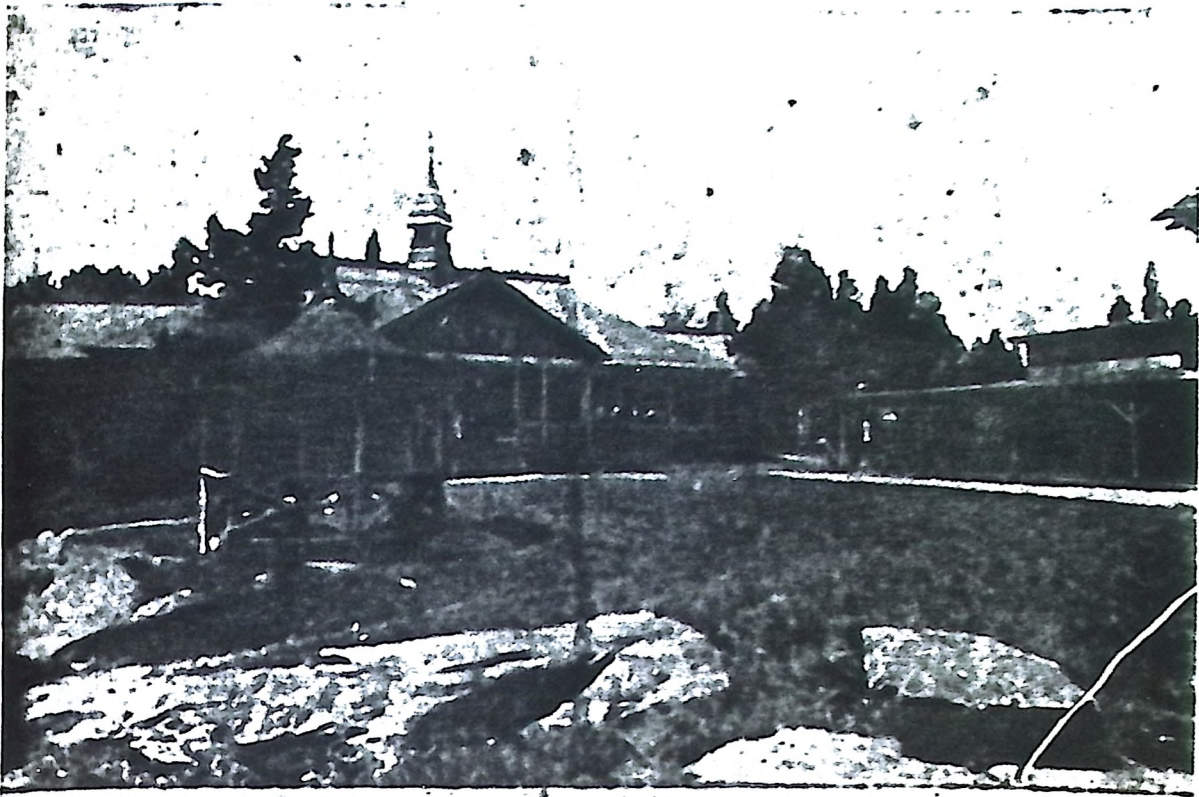


Photo-Courtesy of Branford Historical Soc.

In 1666, Samuel Beach secured a parcel of land known as the "Neck" and later as Pawson Park with a ninety-nine year lease with certain restrictions concerning the use of liquors on the premises. It became a famous resort in the later years and visitors swarmed in for a days outing and bathing. The buildings in the rear are the skating rink and dance pavilion.

-MAIN STREET 1900-

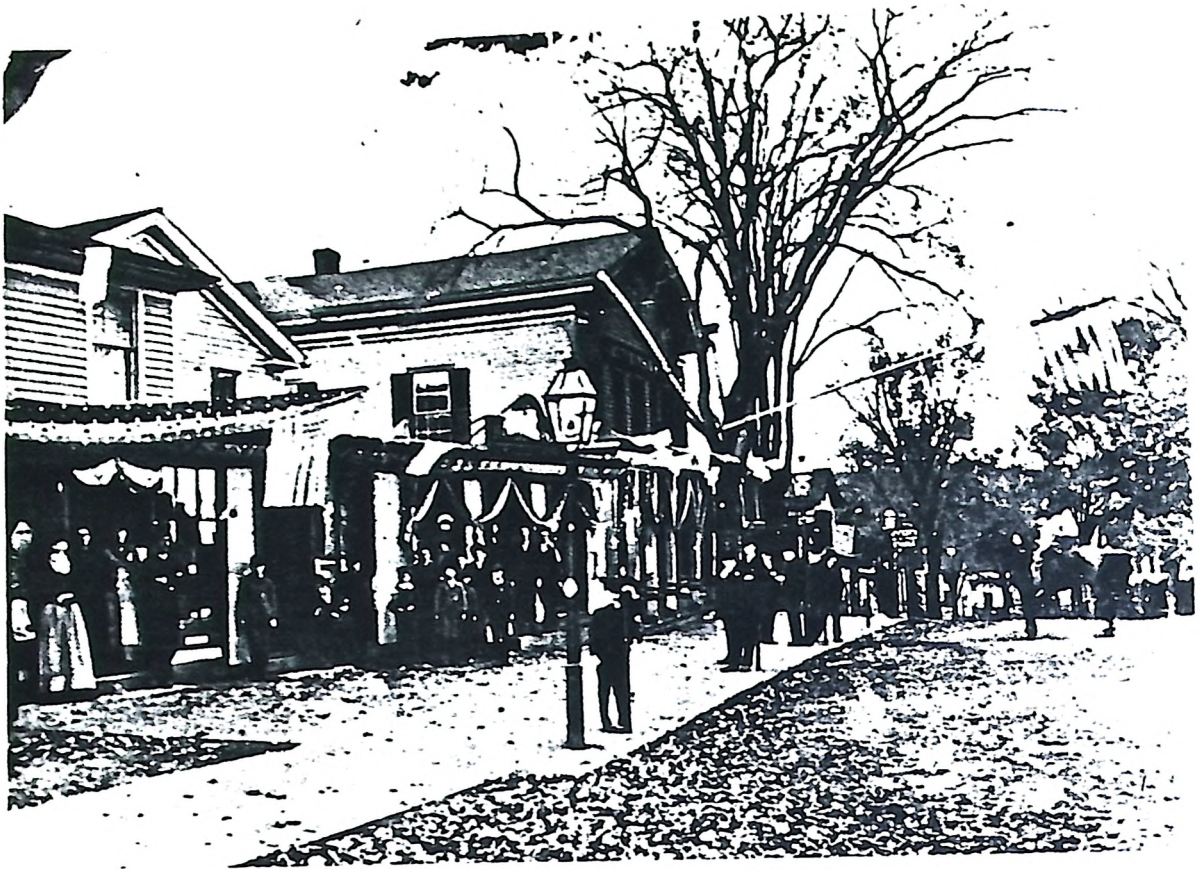
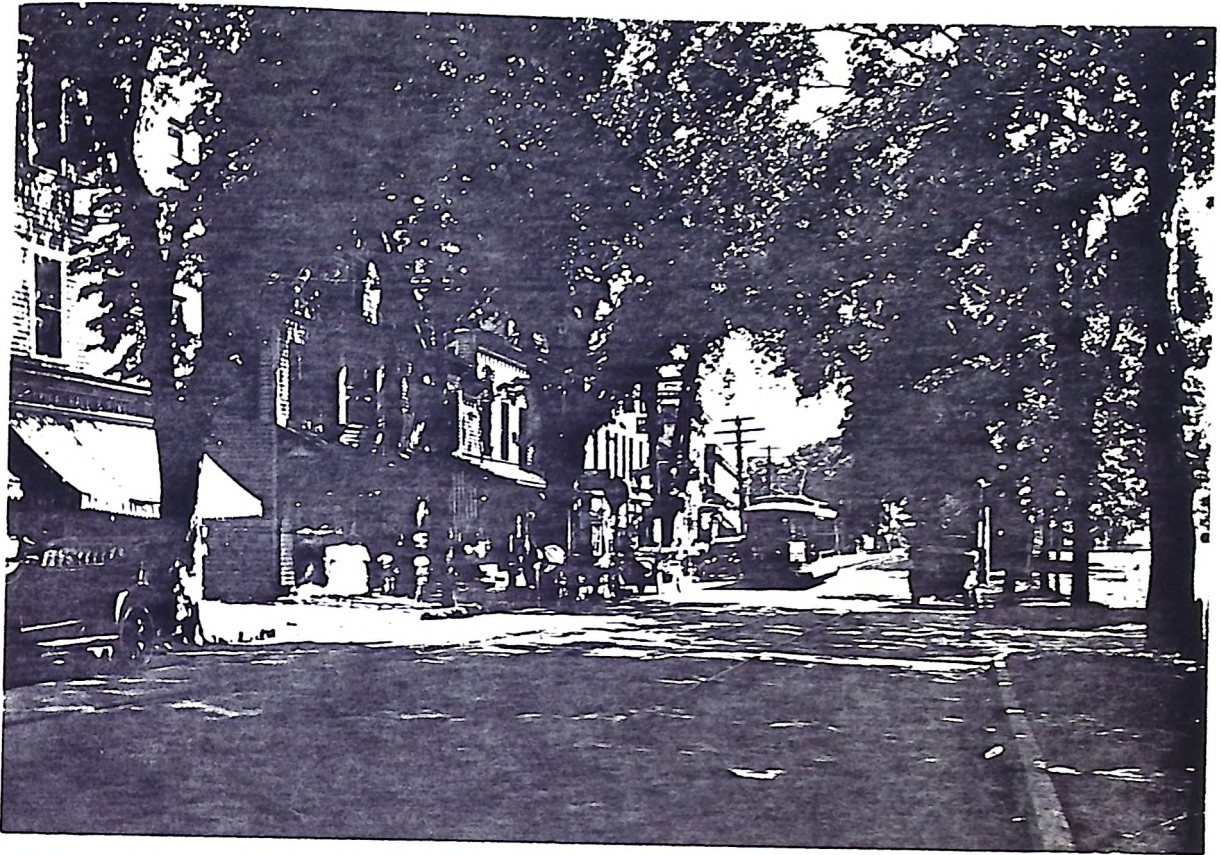


Photo- Courtesy of Branford Historical Soc.

"Everyone loves a parade". The youngsters are all lined up in front of Hutchison's General Store eagerly awaiting the "Memorial Day Parade", back in 1900. The picture was taken on Main Street facing East. To the right you can see the lower part of Main Street where the Post Office is now located.

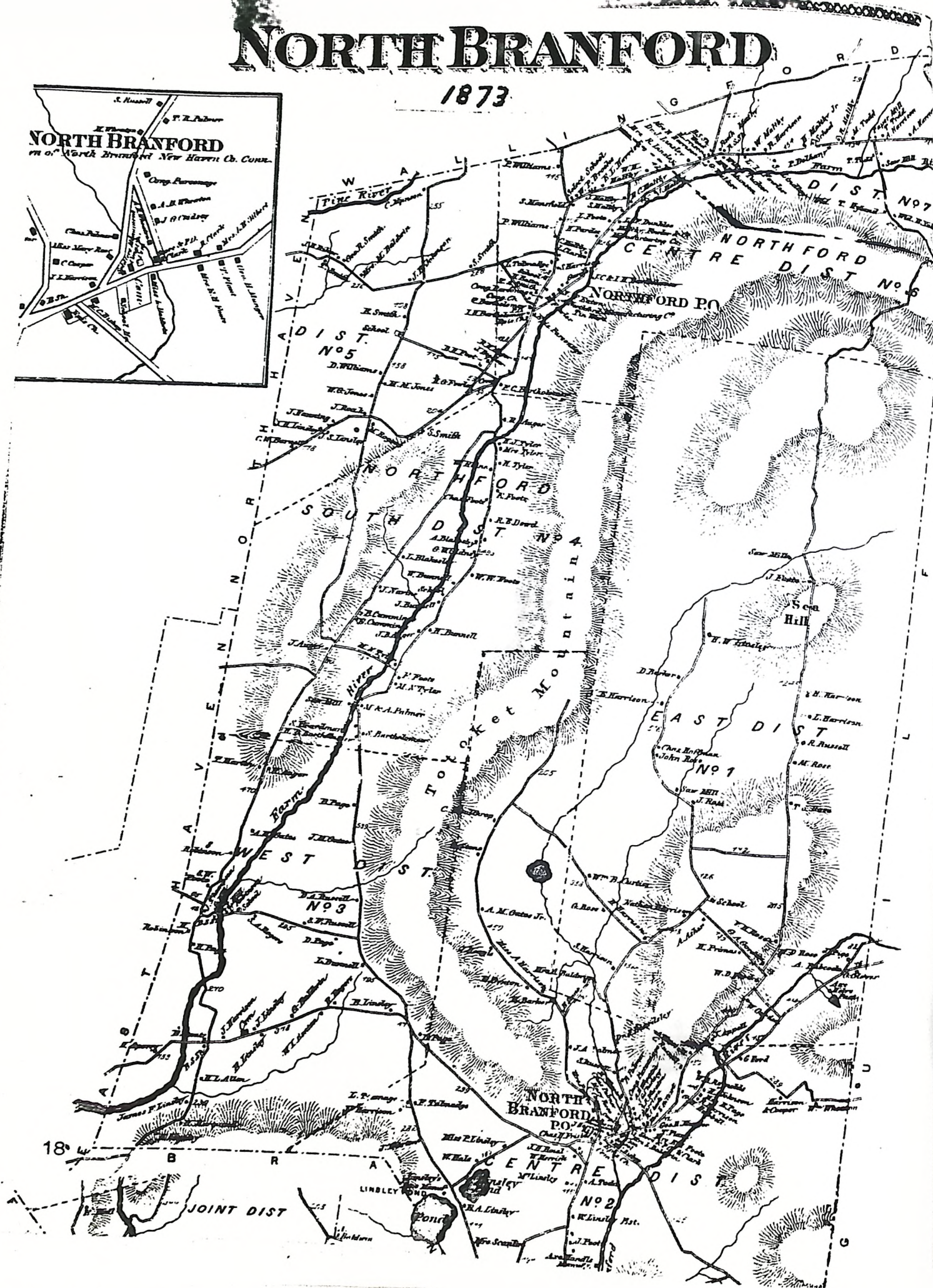
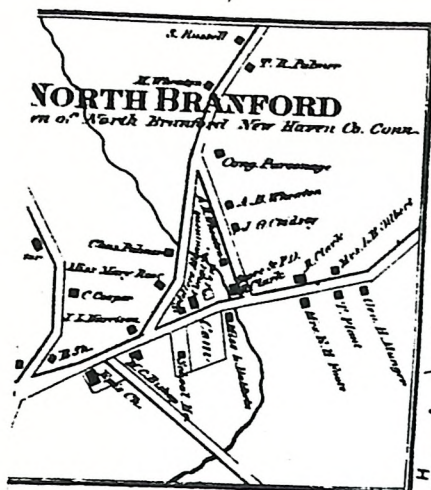
MAIN STREET



Courtesy of the Branford Historical Soc.

The progression of Main Street is quite evident in the new era. The cars have made their way to our newly paved roads, and no one can forget the nostalgia of the old "G" trolley. It meant fun and freedom for the people in town. There is only one horse and buggy in sight to mark the end of an old decade.

1873

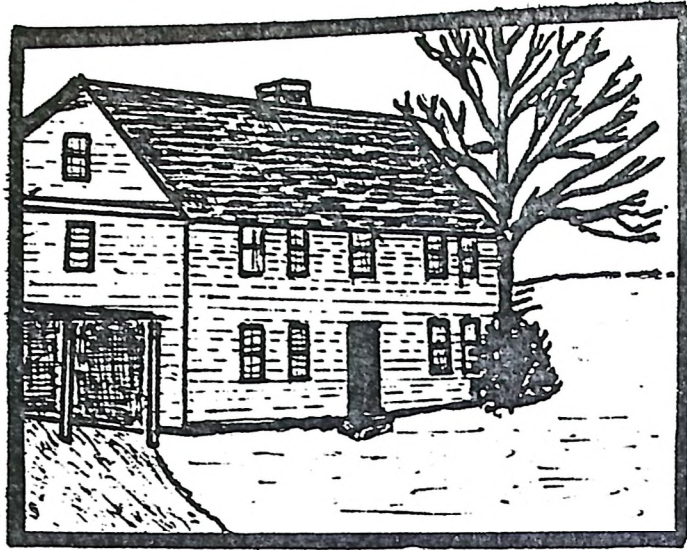


-ROUTE 80 IN 1900-



Photo-Courtesy of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Fowler

This view of Route 80 in North Branford, was taken at the turn of the century by a descendent of Mr. Fowler. To the left of the picture was the original North Branford Green, it is now the site of the Atwater Memorial Library. To the right is the Beer's House which was built by Hazeziel Reynolds, in 1760. The house in the rear is now the Smith Shoppe.



THE DANIEL DOODY HOUSE

On Route 80 is the John Linsley house which is now owned by the Doodys, Mrs. Doody is a direct descendant of the Linsleys. This house is the oldest house, still standing on its original site and still owned by the original family. It is almost completely furnished with genuine antiques that have come down through the generations.

Isaac Linsley, direct descendant of John, was one of its most outstanding occupants who displayed many acts of heroism. Even though slavery was abolished in Connecticut, it was against the law to transport or give refuge to slaves who escaped from the South. Isaac Linsley was responsible for picking up slaves that were smuggled in by boats along the Quinnipiac River. He would pick them up at the river near Grand Avenue, bring them to his house in North Branford, and hide them in the hidden basement at the right hand side of this house. When he felt it was safe to transport them he would then take them to another refuge in Durham. In this manner the slaves were eventually brought to freedom in Canada.



Little Red School House - Northford

On Route 22 in Northford a school house was built in 1805 and is one of the few early red schoolhouses still standing. It was restored and removed by the Historical Society to the center of Northford and is now used as an annex to the library. The desks and backless benches have been preserved.

The budget for the seven schools in North Branford in 1854 was \$188.72, which was raised by taxation. The pupils at that time were all taught in the same room and they ranged in ages from four to fifteen years of age. It was up to the families of these pupils to furnish them with their own books and supplies. Since there were no state supervisors, the town elected two school visitors, one for each end of town. They were usually the clergy from the churches and their job was to observe and manage the schools in their district.

CENTER SCHOOL



Photo-Courtesy of North Branford Historical Soc.

This is the Center School in 1880. The youngsters ranged in age from four to fourteen, and the teacher for the school was Miss Jennie Rose. Unfortunately we do not have the identity of the children. The Center School was located on Route 80 and is now the late Town Hall. This building is now considered "obsolete" and might be demolished. With it will go some of our historical background, and a little of our heritage too. What has happened to our old Yankee thrift?

-THE ROSE HOUSE-

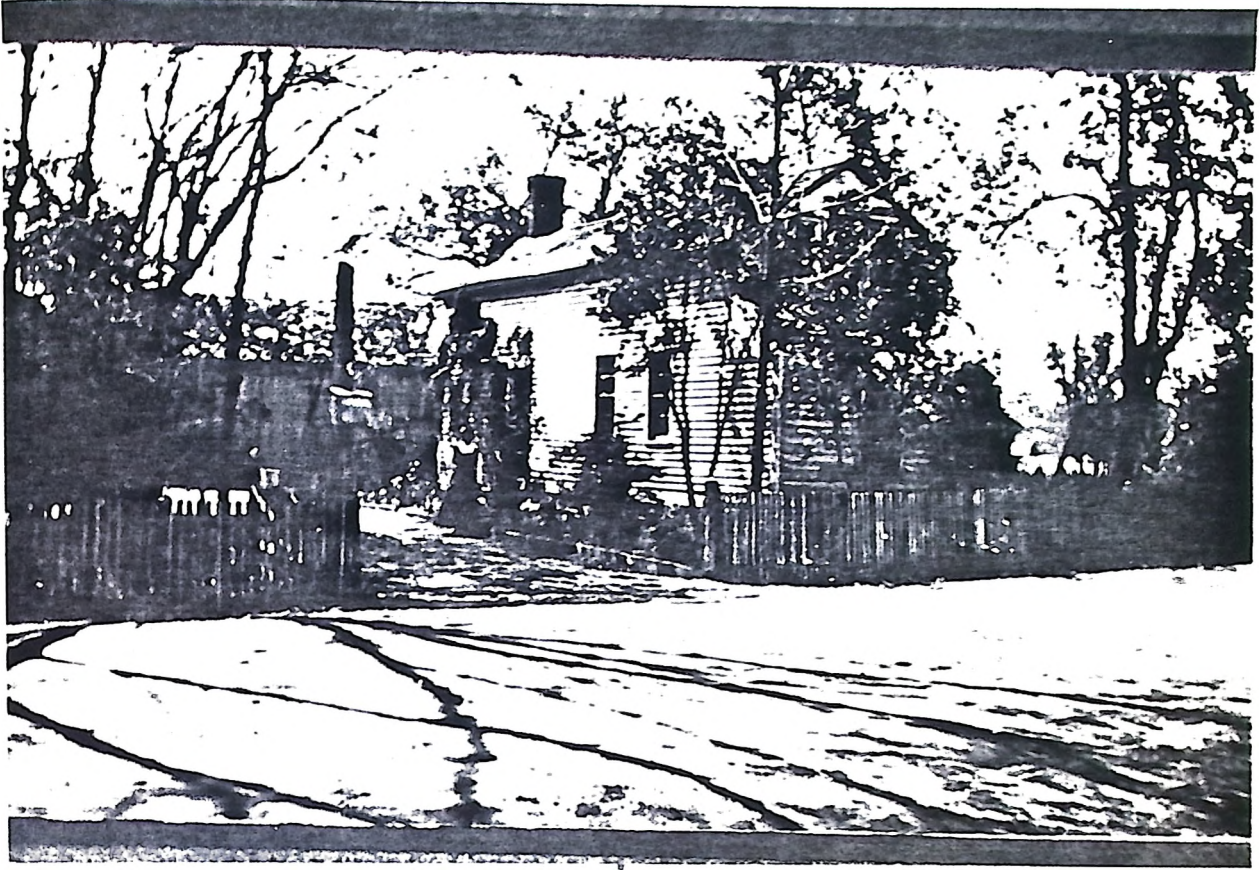


Photo-Courtesy of the North Branford Historical Soc.

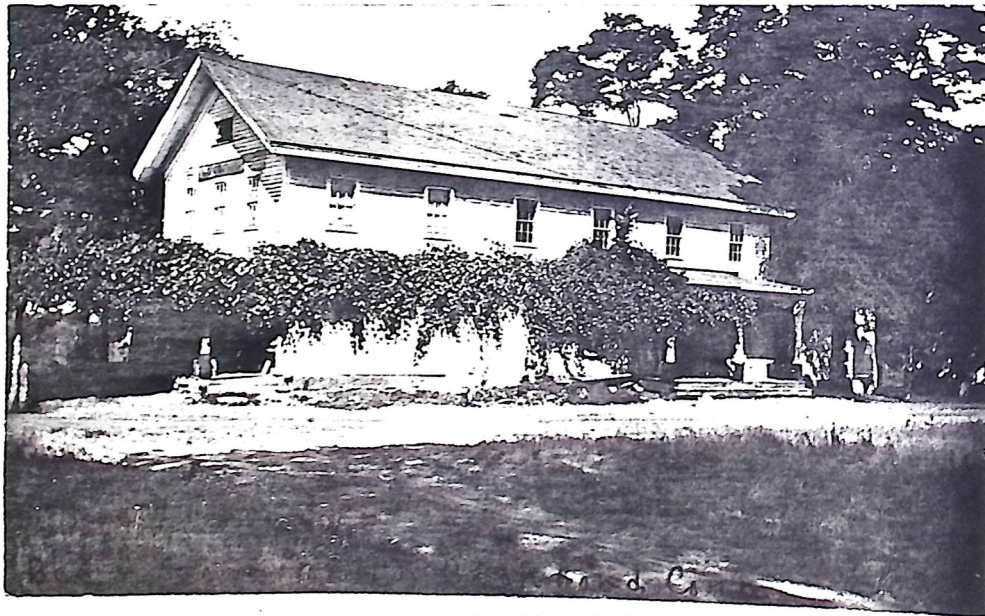
The Rose House was owned and built by the descendents of Jennie Rose, who was the teacher in the Center School photo. The house is located on Route 80, next to the graveyard, and across the street from the North Branford Congregational Church. The photo was taken in 1880.

CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH IN NORTH BRANFORD 1900

The picture below is the Congregational Church facing West on Route 80. This structure was completely destroyed by fire in the early 1900's. The church was later rebuilt within a few feet of it's original site.



Photo-Courtesy of Mrs. Daniel Doody



BEER'S STORE 1900

This store, located on Route 80, housed the General Store in front and the local post office in the rear. The second floor was used for graduation exercises and Saturday night dances. The dances were free to the town folks and all you had to bring was your date and some food and drink. The music was provided by the local talent.

Acknowledgements

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Old Token

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Thankyou for your donation
Corinne and Vince Casanova