

Sketch of Branford, Connecticut.

Many of the descendants have expressed a wish to know something about Branford of the early days, and the following sketch, taken from an essay written by Miss Olive Hall pond of Branford, gives us a very good idea of the Branford our early ancestors knew.

“At first, the chief occupation was farming, but the people soon found the land was not remarkable for its fertility. Branford harbor was then much deeper than it is at the present time, and furnished excellent facilities for ships engaging in trade with the West Indies. Consequently, merchandise from foreign ports was brought to Branford and was then carried over the hills to New Haven, which at the time did not have a good harbor.

Trading necessitated the building of ships. Vessels suitable to transport merchandise to all parts of the world were built where the swimming pool at Mill Plain is now located,’ etc.

“It is interesting to picture the town as we find it in the year 1700” 9ten years prior to the death of William Maltby.)
“The green was then, as now, the center of the town. Large rocks, boulders, and tall grass completely covered it.

There was but one church, which stood where the town hall does today. This was called the new meeting house, the first having been built on the site of the cemetery and surrounded by a high stockade, as a protection from hostile Indians.

Scattered around the green were the "Sabbath Day Houses." They were used by families who came from a long distance. They afforded the people places to rest and warm themselves during the noon hour, for the church services there lasted nearly all day.

Two other conspicuous structures on the green were the blacksmith shop and the whipping post. The shop stood in the hollow back of the church, the whipping post and public stocks on the hill where the Baptist church now stands.

There were but few public highways, the chief of which led from New Haven through the town of Branford to Guilford. Mantowese street, named from the Indians, ran as now from the center to the river. Here it turned, following the present course of the railroad, thence back to the green. A street upon which the minister and several officials of the town lived, led from Montowese street, east to the river, somewhat similar to Averill avenue. This was called "Pig Lane."

The first post-office with public store combined, stood on the site of the Lock works. This hollow formed the principal business section of Branford.

The kindergarten, grammar and high school combined, consisted of one building, the academy, which now stands, the only remaining relic of former days.

It is most amusing to notice some of the customs and restrictions of that time. Chief among these were the church laws. Sunday morning a drum was beaten to call the members to church. Every person who did not attend, arrive on time, and stay until the service was over, was heavily fined. Besides this

a man was hired to go among the congregation, during the service and prevent them from going to sleep. This he accomplished by means of a long pole. Any weary mortal who chanced to close his eyes for a moment's rest would receive a vigorous poke of the pole, with a command to wake up and listen to the words of the Gospel.

On this day the green was transformed into a lively scene. The farmers and their entire families drove into town in their large open wagons; one man coming all the way from Northford, regularly attended with his wife and 26 children.

Another law of special importance, the fines for the violation of which would make Branford of today very wealthy, if the law were enforced, was what was known in England as the curfew law. This stated that the streets must be vacated, fires banked and every man in his home at 10 o'clock."

The above interesting sketch of Miss Pond's gives one a very good idea of the town of Branford in the early days—the town as it was when the home of our emigrant ancestor, William Maltby.