

The Totoket Historical Society, Inc

North Branford Congregational Church
United Church of Christ

By
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NORTH BRANFORD CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
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The North Branford Congregational Church, United Church of Christ is the first child of the Branford Congregational Church. Quoting from "A History of the First Church and Society of Branford, Connecticut" 1644-1919. "The whole area of 'Branford, North Branford, and Northford was known as Totokett - 'place of the tidal river'."

"Dated in the year 1646, for the better protection against Indians, and to keep the cattle from straying, it was voted to build a five mile fence, enclosing the town. The fence was to be of logs, four feet and two inches high, and was to be completed by May first, of the following year. At the same time Francis Linsley was appointed 'heard of cows and heifers,' it being his duty to take all of the cattle of the community out to pasture each morning and to collect them and bring them 'back each evening."

The laws of the Totokett of those days were drawn from the Old Testament and the interpretation of the code was a literal one. Justice was not often touched with mercy, and punishments for offences were severe and certain. Like other New England communities Branford was equipped with pillory and stock and whipping post. These implements of justice were doubtless located, at first, close to the Meeting House; later being removed to 'Whipping Post Hill' an eminence which stood on the present site of the Baptist Church. Judging that the Mosaic law dealt inadequately with certain problems of their time, the settlers supplemented 'It with much added legislation of their own Restrictions as to conduct on the Sabbath, regulations regarding clothing, and careful supervision of the stranger within the gates, received special attention. June 24, 1650, a curfew law was passed providing that 'If any man or woman, young or old, shall be taken by the watch abroad in the night after ten of the clock, and cannot give a sufficient reason therefore to the watch of their being abroad shall for every such fault pay 12 pence or other condine punishment .s the court shall require'."

Quoting from "A Semi-Centennial Discourse delivered July 7, 1858 by the Rev. Timothy P. Gillett A.M. Pastor of the Branford Church"

"In church policy they were Congregationalists, holding the doctrine of parity, or of one order in the ministry, and that all ministers are of equal official rank; and that each parochial church is an ecclesiastical body complete in itself, with power to elect its own pastor. And deacons - to decide on the proper qualifications of those who offer themselves for admission to membership with them, and to receive, to discipline and exclude, as the majority shall judge to be agreeable to the laws of Christ, and only head, law-giver and king of the church. They further held to the propriety of asking advice from other churches, reserving the right to follow or reject such advice according to their judgement of expediency. In common with other colonists of that age, they acted on the scheme of carrying the gospel and its Ordinances, education and its advantages, with them and having the church, the minister and the school with their settlement."

From this background, our church sprouted and grew. The Branford Annals,- report "for quite a number of years, the 'North Farmers,' as they were called, came to Meeting at Branford, and were under the ministration of Mr. Russell. As there were no roads and no carriages, the journey was slow and difficult on foot or horseback, along the poorly made paths, through forest and swamps. They carried their food and weapons as they went. It took them all day, Before 1717, they began to feel a hardship. The people there had become so numerous that they began to ask for a minister to be with them. In 1717 the town votes liberty to the people of 'Sibbie's Hill' to have a minister for four months. This hill is just north of the present center of North Branford. Its name comes from an Indian sachem, who lived there, near a spring of the same name, and had authority over the Indians in the vicinity. Daniel Page, one of the first white settlers lived near the summit of this hill. He was one of the deacons of the new church that was soon formed"

"September 6, 1717, the town appointed a committee to fix 'bounds for a new society in the northern portion of the town. They run the bounds 'by 'Rose's Meadow', 'Rattle Snake Rock;' 'Sawmill', 'Long Hill' and 'Cedar Swamp'." All were not satisfied with the first bounds, so they were changed once or twice. They had their minister longer and longer each year until on September 27, 1722, they wished to have him permanently settled. The town therefore voted to set up another society, purchase a minister's lot, build a meeting-house . etc. Not much progress was made for a year. December 30, 1723, the 'North Farms' come with their request again and asked for changes of bounds. It was voted that if they will sit down contented with their former bounds, then the town will go equal shares with them in 'building and perfecting a meeting-house, with those same bounds, of forty feet in length and thirty feet in breadth. Matters concerning the new church progressed slowly. May 12, 1724, the town voted 'that the whole town would, as one, in respect that they are numerous'."

The Branford Town meeting records contain several actions by the town in response to petitions of the "farmer inhabitants at Sibbes Hill"; and the "northern farmers" re settling another minister and setting up another Society in "ye northern farms. We find the first entry in the town records of Branford respecting what is called "the North Ecclesiastical Society" on the 27th of September in 1722 When a parsonage lot was purchased by the town for the use of this society. Definite reference to the location of the church is made in the record of the Branford town meeting of May 12, 1724 which refers to: "the place by Samuel Harrison', on ye knoll on ye west side of ye river between ye pathes". This building was to be 45 by 35 feet. Later in 1725 there appears to have been some trouble between the North Farmers and those in the South part of the town as to the 'building of the new' house. A committee was finally appointed by the General Assembly to adjust matters if possible, and in October 1725 this body ordered that Branford help pay for the new meeting house voted in town meeting for the North Farmers in 1724. So the parish in the north part of the

town was separated from the south, and collectors were appointed in each section to collect the tax for the support of each minister and the people on the south side of the bounds established were to pay their tax for the support of the old and those on the north side to the support of the new minister. Before this time both ministers were supported by the whole town.

In the Branford town meeting of March 3, 1726 "Voted that ye North Society should have liberty of a burying yard in ye highway near their meeting house where they shall think most convenient". It would seem the 'most convenient' spot to be the area just east of the meeting house, for when the stones were taken up in 1848 to be placed in a safer position, the oldest stone was one that recorded the death of Isaac Bartholomew in 1727.

The question of building a meeting house having been settled, the site finally chosen was a few feet south of the present church. The edifice was not finished until 1732. Quoting from the 'Reverend Frank Countryman's history of the church- "An interesting statement regarding the building of the new church is that Rev. Samuel Russell of the old church went up from Branford and offered prayer at the erection of the frame of the new edifice. An accident occurred at that time which might have been very serious. A heavy upright beam fell from its position into the midst of the people. Fortunately no one was struck or injured by the falling timber. God thus seems to have watched over the church from its very beginning. The people now in 1727 had a church building in an unfinished condition but a church in which to meet and a minister to preach to them and some sort of an organization."

What was the kind of building first erected in this parish as a meeting House? It was plain and unpretentious both within and without. It had doors on the east, west and south sides with circular steps made of stone leading up to the threshold. One of these stones have been preserved and may be seen cemented into the front west foundation of the present day church, "It reads-

"North Branford Congregational Church. This stone was the door-step of the first meeting-house, built in 1725, rebuilt in 1831, burned February 9, 1908, rebuilt 1908" The windows were many and the panes of glass diamond shaped. It possessed little architectural beauty to captivate the public eye. It stood firm and solid, a fitting type of the Puritan character. Within, the floor was a step below the sills. The galleries were high and shut in. They extended around three sides of the church. The pulpit was also like most of the pulpits of the day, high and lofty. The minister was thus perched above his congregation and separated from them. A sounding board, a roof-shaped structure hung above the pulpit and in later years we are told it became the abode of bats who were never molested because of the difficulty of cleaning the accumulated filth and dust of the years. Occasionally a bat would get loose and become a cause of discomfort to the congregation. Imagine the sensation of alarm occasioned by this event especially to the ladies. The pews were box like affairs, Those occupied by the deacons were near the pulpit. In the earliest days men and women did not sit together although this custom was afterwards altered as is evidenced by the statement of a vote on the church records. The minister in those olden times was a man of authority, power and influence. In many cases his word was law. His office was highly revered and the utmost respect accorded him. I am indebted to 'Reverend Countryman's historic sermon for the above description.

The early record of the church up to 1769 are lost and so we are somewhat uncertain as to the date of Mr. Merrick's ordination over the church. A quote from Yale Biographies and annals 1701-1745 by Dexter, page 315 tells us- "Jonathan Merrick(or Merick as he himself wrote it), son of John and Mary (Day) Myrick and grandson of Thomas and Elizabeth (Tilley) Merrick was born in Springfield, Massachusetts, August 13, 1700. He. studied theology, and soon after permission was given by The General Assembly, in October 1727, to

the inhabitants of the north (or 2nd) parish in Branford, now the town of North Branford, Connecticut, to embody themselves into a church, he was ordained the first pastor of the church thus gathered." A footnote tells us "the inscription on his tombstone states that he died in the 43d year of his ministry, which would place his ordination in 1729 or 1730; perhaps, however, the close of his active ministry (in 1769) is intended." "His active ministry ceased in 1769, in consequence of a stroke of paralysis, which had incapacitated him; and a colleague was ordained on March 29th of that year. He died in North Branford, June 27, 1772 at the age of 72. He left an estate valued at 3365 pounds. He is reputed to have been a man of much decision and energy; besides his pastoral work he managed an extensive farm. He was a fellow of Yale college from June 1763 to September 1769. In the theological divisions of the times he was identified with the 'Old Light' party. "He married, March 28, 1731-2, Jerusha Minor, of Stonington, Connecticut who survived him, with several children." They lived in a house framed at the expence of the town at the time a frame was made for the first meeting-house. The house was erected on a spot, I believe, near our present fire -house.

We wonder how the people and minister kept warm in cold weather during those long Sabbath services; for the church had no chimney and the only heat was provided by the family foot-stove. At noon they repaired to their Sabbath day houses near the church to absorb heat from the wood fire and eat their lunch, then return to the church for the afternoon preaching. "They must have been hardy man and women who were trained to endurance.

The Reverend Timothy P. Gillett, in his 'semi-centennial Discourse' delivered July 7, 1858 says-"The Sabbath Day Houses - of early times, and even of our own recollections. These were little buildings put up on the skirts of the public green, and in some instances, as was the case here, hard by the house of God, single or double, and designed to accommodate one or more families.

Sometimes a kind of patriarchate, and the whole family circle of two or three generations spent the intermission of the Lord's day in them. Here the provisions were deposited in the morning; in the winter season a good fire made, -- the light refreshment eaten at noon, -- and then the Bible, or some approved sermon book, produced and read; or perhaps the doctrine and principles of the morning discourse discussed. Possibly some one of less serious mood might talk with his neighbor of worldly matters or the news of the day, but these family gatherings, in those small, unpainted, unpretending houses, were far in accordance with the idea of remembering the Sabbath day to keep it holy than some of the gatherings of the present day--"

The Reverend Merrick's last Public act was to preside as moderator at a church meeting held February 23, 1769, to appoint a day for the ordination of the Reverend Samuel Eels, his successor. He died June 27, 1772 and was laid to rest among the people he had served so long long, in the old cemetery which had been laid out about the old church according to the custom of those days.

At the time of the Reverend Eels ordination in 1769, the number of church members was 77. The life of Reverend Samuel Eels is told in a separate article.

In 1789 during Reverend Eels ministry, a committee was appointed to "dignify the pews". The congregation was seated according to their dignity or rank" (or to the ability to pay for a pew) it would seem, which the above committee determined. The seats or "slips" as they were called, sold at \$4.00 to \$20.00 "to be paid on the day of sale or give their notes payable on the 1st of September, with interest after they became due". This practice continued until on November 27, 1908 when it was voted, "the seats in the new church to be free for one year from the first of January 1909". At the end of the year "free seats" were unanimously favored and no further mention is made of seat rental. We therefore know the seats in the present church were never rented.

The Reverend Eels died April 1808 and was buried near his predecessor in office, in the old burying ground. The number received into the church during his ministry was 104.

An interesting item appears in the Ecclesiastical Society minutes:

April 1804 voted

“to appoint a committee to procure a place to set the pound on and to make provision for removing the sabbath-day houses that stand on the burying ground. " Committee appointed-

May 1804 voted

"Whereas the society has agreed with Mr. Jonathan and William Russell and Timothy Harrison and Timothy Harrison Jr. to remove their sabbathday houses and horse houses -- in order to accommodate the society in fencing the burying ground -- the society warranting to said Russel and Harrison's an equal quantity of ground to what they now occupy with their houses and sheds to be by them peaceably possessed for said purpose the society to be at the expence of moving said buildings and putting them in good repair as they were before their being removed except the rebuilding of the chimney in the Russel house. The Russel and Harrisons agreeing to assist in the business the same as the other individuals in the society."

June 1804 voted

"To rent the burying yards to the pasture of sheep only"

Again from the society records, "At a meeting of an ecclesiastical council regularly convened on the 28th of February 1809 at the house of Nathan Harrison in North Branford for the purpose of setting apart Mr. Charles Atwater to the work of the gospel ministry in that place."

A day was set apart for fasting and prayer, as was the custom before ordination. On March 1st, 1809 Reverend Charles Atwater was ordained here. "Conditions of settlement". "To receive annually \$450 until I am no longer able to perform the duties of a gospel minister. The people are to contribute

toward my being supplied with wood, signed Charles Atwater". The minutes note a day set aside each fall for cutting the minister's wood. The library in the center of North Branford is named for this Reverend Atwater, a gift from his heirs.

In May 1820 the children and youth gathered in the meeting house at the intermission for Sunday-school instruction. Before that time instruction had been confined to the teaching of the Assembly's Catechism and the Lord's Prayer in the public schools on Saturday of each week. The children came together and sat in those old pews which have been likened to sheep pens, so high a twelve-year-old boy could not see over them. The school, if you could call it such, opened with prayer by one of the deacons, the lessons were chapters or parts of chapters of the New Testament, and psalms. Verses were committed to memory and recited to the teacher, who made such explanations and comments as they thought best. It was later organized with officers and a librarian. All who joined the Sunday-school Society paid 12½ cents which was used to buy library books. The school continued through the warm months, and when it closed in October those who could present a certificate of good character had the privilege of drawing books from the library during the winter months. Children between the ages of four and eighteen comprised the school.

The Reverend Charles Atwater died in February 1825 and was buried near his predecessors in office. Thus the first three pastors sleep side by side in this place. The head stones of the first three pastors of the church were moved across the street from the church with the others at the time of the grading of the Chapel. They may be seen to the back and east of the cemetery in the center of town. The Reverend Jonathan Merrick's stone is red sand-stone. Along side this stone is the head stone of Reverend Samuel Eels and back to it is the white marble stone of Reverend Charles Atwater.

Many of the old head stones are to be seen in this area. The backs and tops are rough and hand-hued in appearance. The inscriptions are interesting and numerous.

In 1826, the number of people in North Branford village was 525 constituting about 100 families." It was during Reverend Atwater's ministry the Episcopal Church was organized.

In the winter of 1829, the church voted to build a new meeting house. The New church was to be 50 feet long, 36 feet wide with a 22 foot steeple. It was to be located 6 feet north of the old one. The money was raised by subscription and the contract of \$2500 was awarded to Mr. Volney Pierce. On March 7, 1830, the people began cutting timber and making preparation to build. The east part of the old meeting house was turned into a joiners shop the seats being taken up. May 26 the digging commenced for a basement and no spirits were brought on to the grounds. Prayers were offered and in four and one half days the frame was raised. Deacon Palmer recorded in his diary the following: "During these days of danger no accident has happened, The business has gone on regular and without noise and tumult. No ardent spirits brought on or furnished on the occasion. February 27, 1831, the people meet in the old church for the last time. February 28th the old building was pulled down. The timbers were found to be very rotten. When the rubbish was cleaned away a stump was found almost perfect after remaining under the floor for a century

The people were beginning to seek comfort, for the new meeting house had a basement and chimney. From the Ecclesiastical Society records between 1833 and 1847 we find the following -- "that the meeting house be warmed by placing Stoves in the basement, provided the money can be raised to 'buy stoves, wood, etc. 'by subscription.'" "That the society committee be directed to place a stove in the meeting house and that the house be insured at \$2,000 -- on as reasonable terms possible--" "At a special meeting of the first Congregational Society of North Branford held for the purpose of making arrangements for more effectively warming the meeting house." "That the society be authorized to take down the two chimneys and to place one in the center on the house in their stead." "That said committee be authorized to purchase a coal stove

and the necessary pipe and to place it under the gallery.” “That said committee be directed to take up one of the slips for this purpose.”

The church basement was gradually made useable, and was rented to the town for town meetings and graduation exercises, as well as used by the church for suppers and socials.

On January 17, 1838 the Reverend John Baldwin was installed as pastor of the church, Up to this time the ministers had lived in houses owned by themselves but now it was proposed to purchase a convenient and lot for the use of the pastor. The proposal was to raise the sum of \$1,200 by subscription "by dividing said sum into forty-eight shares of \$25 each to be expended by said subscription; or by their committee for the above purpose and when so expended to be used for the above specified object. All transfer of stock were to be determined by a majority of two-thirds of the stockholders present at a legally warned meeting each share being entitled to one vote the property being held as 'tenants in common'. It was understood that the present pastor, Rev. John Baldwin, should have a right to purchase said property in part or whole at first cost or on such other terms as he and said subscribers should agree. It does not appear that Mr. Baldwin ever bought the place although his name is on the list of subscribers. He took two shares. March 30, 1838, the Parsonage property consisting of two acres of land and the buildings thereon was deed to Samuel Russell, Albert Harrison, and Luther Chidsey, committee of the Parsonage Association by Jasper and Betsy Monroe. The same property was deeded by the Parsonage Association to the first Congregational Society of North Branford, June 16, 1845. This was a big rambling house with the clapboards nailed onto the stud, no central heating and limited amount of wiring and plumbing. Most of the land had been sold off during the lean years of the church. Times had changed and most families were living in small compact homes, for this reason and the above mentioned drawbacks to the old parsonage it was decided by a majority vote to sell the parsonage and

build a new one in 1952. The property on Notch Hill Road was a gift of the Loeber family and proved a central and convenient home for the ministers of the 1950s and the 1960s. Times changed again and in 1971 the minister wanted a larger house, more privacy to cope with the demands of our times. So we have reverted back to the old ways of our forefather, our minister now owns his own home, a house of his choice in a location of his choice ,

The Reverend George Wood, who was a relative of Reverend Atwater, served the church from 1844 to 1850 and again 1855 to 1859. During this time he wrote an excellent early history of our church, that may be found in the Branford Blackstone Library.

In 1870-1 a new pulpit recess was added to the church edifice. In 1876 the Society voted 'that this society grant all persons that belong to this society the privilege of decorating the altar of this church with flowers for the ensuing year'." At a meeting of the church held Sunday, May 8, 1881, it was voted to have one sermon on Sundays instead of two.'

In 1878 the Ladies Sewing Society was formed. This group of industrious and dedicated workers were always to the rescue in times of need, whether it be a supper to serve, a mission need to be met or short finances to be stretched. It was these ladies of the church who instigated the 'building of the 'Ladies Parlor' now known as the Chapel, our oldest building.

From the Society minutes we read:--"Special meeting of the Society held May 15, 1886 for the purpose of considering the matter of building a chapel in connecting with the church," --- "Statement of Mr. G.S. Ford as to the means to build a chapel --- That Mrs. George Rose would give \$1,000 and also that Mrs. Plant would give \$200, beside the ladies had some in the Sewing Society for the Purpose"---- Voted: "that we accept the offer of Mrs. Rose and Mrs. Plant of \$1200 to build a chapel. ---Special meeting June 10, 1886 voted: "That the ladies be authorized to allocate and build a chapel". Ground was broken for the chapel September 1, 1886 and the dedication took place Sunday

evening January 16, 1887. Of course when the idea caught on, it was the men who dug the cellar, and laid the foundation, but it was the women who furnished the workers with a home cooked lunches during the fall of 1886. A special meeting of the Society November 22, 1886 -- " for the purpose of considering the removal of the grave-stones from the east of the church." Voted that we meet Friday, November 25, 1886 for the purpose of removing the stones to the yard across the street and to grade around the Chapel." The total cost of the Chapel above foundation \$1654.49 (discount of \$35.00 from contractor by leaving off the purposed steeple). The above sum does not include cost of work on foundation or digging cellar or laying wall for same. Labor for these purposes was mostly given, It is interesting to note when' all bills were paid the balance on hand was .53¢

In 1893 the whole interior of the church was redecorated and a special metal ceiling was added. Total cost \$642.66.

So we reach the 175th year of the church history. During all this period the church has had thirteen pastors and every one of them received a degree from Yale University. So began the great 175th Anniversary celebration in 1902. The news papers of New Haven carried lengthy write -up; I quote: "At noon a dinner, such as only the North 'Branford ladies can get up, was served in the basement of the church to some 300 guests." The C. A. Harrison house was opened for the display of old items pretaining to the church history and the past. The Rev. Franklin Countryman, who served this church from 1882 to 1906 delivered his now famous church history at this time.

"After this gala celebration, tradgety on February 9, 1908, the church burned to the ground. Thanks to the good old party line; the central operator of Branford alarmed. all who owned telephones in town and men rode standing up in their wagons through the street. yelling, "the church Is on fire". Men began arriving from all directions. A bucket brigade was soon formed to the

river and water was poured over the chapel roof. Blankets hung over the ridge helped hold the misture and by this method the chapel was saved with little damage. The steeple ^{of the church} was the last to go, falling into the road. The bell was entirely melted. The loss was estimated at \$6,000 to \$7,000. The insurance was \$3,500. The services for the present will be held in the chapel. If This account according to the Shore Lin Times of February 13, 1908. Eight days later "a meeting of the citizens of North Branford was held in the chapel"! all expressed a desire to have the church rebuilt and offered help. The church voted on March 5, 1908 to build a new church. Also voted: "that the rules be suspended and the ladies be allowed to vote on the style of church to be built." In the contract for the building of this building an addenda: It is agreed and understood that the said contractolrs will allow said church \$25.00 per thousand for any timber that the said church may see fit to furnish and deliver on the job." It is my understanding that most of the timber used in the building was drawn and delivered by our people thus saving some expense to the church. The corner-stone was laid on Tuesday afternoon June 30, 1908. I quote from. the church records:" A very interesting dedication service was held :in the new church on Good Friday, April 9, 1909. A collection amounting to \$41.11 was to be applied to the organ fund. Complete success, every available place filled with chairs and many standing probably there was over three hundred present. G.L. Ford, clerk ."

"Ringing over hill and dale, on Holy days,

_ From this steeple I call the people to prayer and praise."

"Given by the Young Peoples Society Christian Endeavor August 26, 1908. It This is the inscription on the 1200 pound bell that hangs in our church steeple.

The organ fund started from the new church dedication offering continued on into 1914 when it had grown to \$500. A second-hand pipe organ was installed and Leon Beckwith of Guilford was asked to play for the dedication. When he

arrived the organ would not work and the organ dedication music was played on the piano. (I'm told a piece of plaster had gotten into one of the pipes and caused the problem.) This was a hand pump organ and a boy sat in the corner and pumped a handle up and down to work the bellows.. For this Service he was paid 25¢ per Sunday. Later an electric motor worked the bellows.

In 1917, Dr. Elizabeth C. Earl gave the clock installed in our spire. The inscription on the clock reads, "This clock is a memorial to Mrs. C.L. Parker who spent the last years of her life in North Branford and who loved the town and the towns people. October 1, 1917." This clock was dedicated at the Sunday service, November 25, 1917. The formal presentation of the gift to the church was made by attorney C.A. Harrison, representing Dr. Earl. The most recent addition to our steeple is the carillonic bells made possible by a gift of one thousand dollars left to the church by the late Mr. Charles Todd, and dedicated May 20, 1951. " It is altogether fitting that this carillon carry the hymn tunes across the town, forever projecting the church Mr. Todd loved so well, into the hearts of the people.

The Ladies Sewing Society organized in 1878, was the only woman's organization in town for many years and was attended by women of all faiths. During World War One they met to do Red Cross work and church work together. The first 'Chicken Pie Supper' was served by them in 1918, along with many other projects to raise funds to help the church and the town and to provide social get-togethers.

For a number of years during World War One period and in the 1920's a minister was hired by the Sunday and the parsonage was rented out (in 1914 for \$10.00 a month and later it went up to \$15.00). These were lean years for the church. We had to sell the 'hay lot' of the parsonage to raise funds to meet expenses. Later, in 1931, we sold the lot to the north of the parsonage, with the understanding we would move the barn off. The men of the church took down the barn and with some hired help built it into a two car garage for the parsonage.

During the depression and World War Two we found the church so difficult to heat that the Building was closed after the Christmas service and opened again for Easter. Regular Sunday services were held in the chapel for the winter. Many good times were enjoyed by all such as local talent shows, three cent suppers (that was 3¢ a dip) and church fairs that made the church the center of our social life as well as our religious life.

The two hundredth anniversary of the church was observed on Sunday, September 21, 1927. Two services were held, one at 10:30 and another at 2:30 o'clock with the reading of the church history. Also in 1921, the cement curbing was put in front of the church and a sidewalk from the curb to the front steps. In October the church and parsonage were wired for electricity.

In July 1935, we, the people of this church took an active part in the Connecticut Tercentenary program. In the celebration in the town on Saturday and by costume and custom of our early history in our church service on Sunday. The deacons wore knee britches with silver buckles, tall hats and carried nodding sticks.

During World War Two the chapel was used as first aid station with these supplies stored there and groups met regularly to make Red Cross dressings. It was during this period the 'Well Child Conference' was started in our building, to serve the mothers of the town and their pre-school children. Later it hosted the 'Homemakers Group' (a womens branch of the farm bureau), also boy scouts, girl scouts and the bloodmobile, just to name a few.

As the town grew the church out-grew its space. We built a new foundation for the chapel and by moving it forward, added a new parish house across the back, joining the chapel and the main church building. This new parish-house was dedicated in June of 1961.

So the church has moved from plain meeting house of 1727, forward in two hundred and fifty years of service, keeping pace with the changes and times.

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A History of the First Church and Society of Branford Connecticut
1644-1919

A Semi-Centennial Discourse delivered July 7, 1858 by the Reverend
Timothy P. Gillett A.M. pastor of the Branford Church

Branford Annals

Ladies Sewing Society secretary records

The church History of 1902 written and delivered by the Reverend
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History of the North Branford Congregational Church 1850
By the Reverend George Wood

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