

Industry here gave way to some interesting inventions

Branford industries contributed many innovations to their fields.

The Branford Lock Works, started by Thomas Kennedy in 1862, held many patents for lock and window hardware. Many BLW products are still being used in homes today and are prized among lock collectors.

Thorvald Hammer (1825-1901) of the Malleable Iron Fittings Co. invented the tapping or threading machine which was used for pipe fittings.

MIF built tapping machines and leased them to other companies. His son, Alfred Hammer (1858-1935) established the first chemical control and research laboratory in the country at MIF in 1875. He vastly improved the use of iron during processing and shared his findings with others in the industry.

Thomas Doolittle (1839-1921) owned Thimble Farms in Pine Orchard and was a pioneer in the telephone industry.

He was the first vice president of AT&T and designed the first telephone switchboard ever manufactured. He also adapted the use of hard drawn copper wire for



PICTURES OF THE PAST

Jane Peterson Bouley

underground cable. The first transcontinental telephone call was made in 1915 from San Francisco to his home in Pine Orchard.

Several local men were active in the early years of motorboat engines. Edwin Baldwin (1886-1964) had a shop on the Indian Neck Avenue bridge and built boat engines. Claus Johnson (1861-1955) of Short Beach was an early builder and racer of motorboats, winning many prizes.

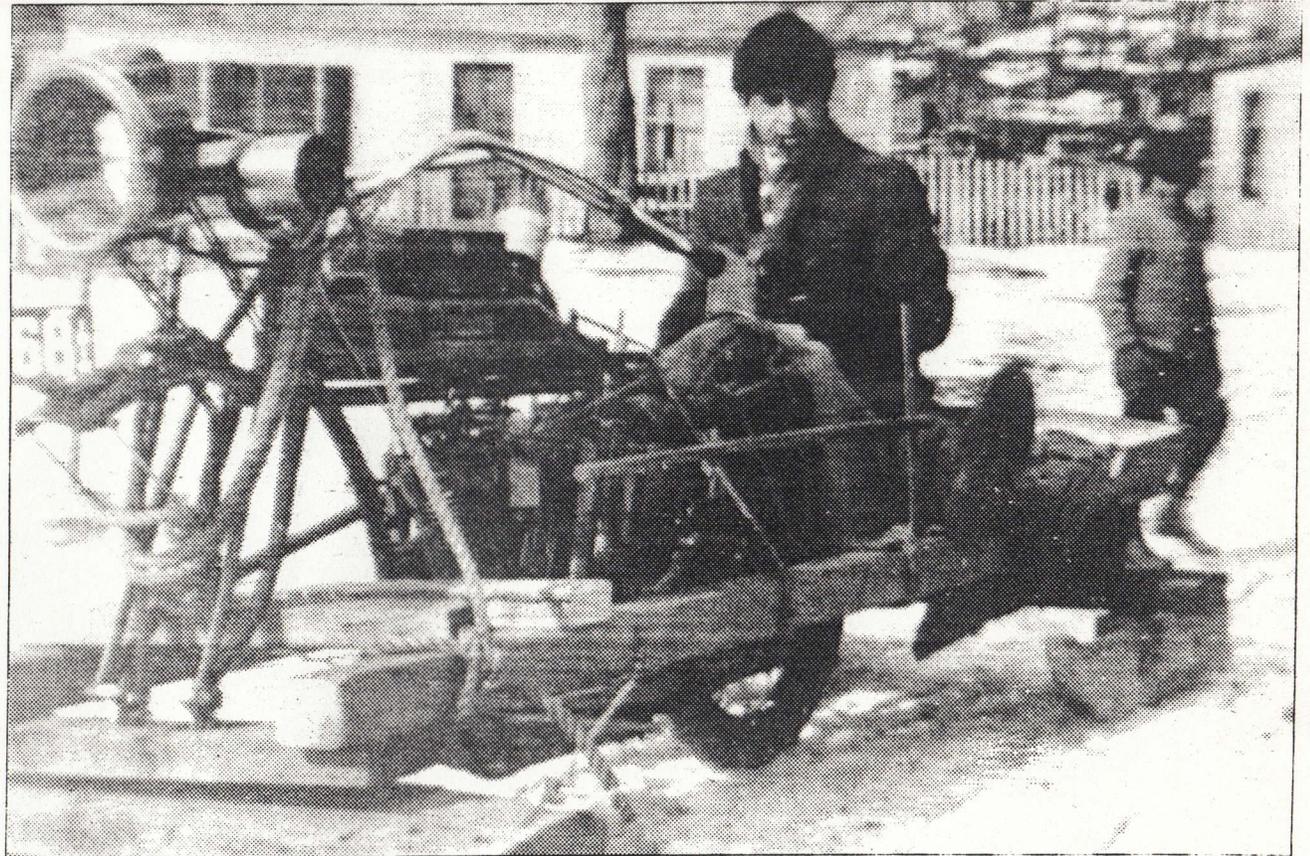


Photo courtesy of Jeanette Bradley Marsted

Earl Bradley sits in his "Motor Bob," a motorcycle with skis he built in 1917. The house stood in North Harbor Street and burned to the ground in 1933.

Earl Bradley (1886-1964) had a garage on Bradley Street where he repaired automobiles and probably built Branford's first tow truck. He was an avid boatman and with Claus Johnson built a 35 mph engine out of a Curtis airplane motor. Much to the delight of the local children, he created various motorized winter apparatus, such as a motorcycle with skis.

Branford's foremost inventor was John Donnelly (1853-1937). He was a blacksmith and held many patents at the turn of the century, such as a lineman climber for utility poles, Christmas tree holder, can opener, hacksaw, screw driver, cotton hook and hedge clippers.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Jane Peterson Bouley is town historian for the town of Branford.