

Lock Works town's largest employer at one time

In 1809, Orrin D. Squire bought land on Main Street east of the Green at the foot of the hill for his blacksmith shop.

Lorin D. Hosley and Daniel Nichols joined him in manufacturing Franklin stoves. In 1852, Levi Parsons, Lyman Squire and William Kirkham established a lock business at the site when the stove business failed and called it the Squire and Parsons Manufacturing Co.

Thomas Kennedy, a lock-maker from New York, purchased the company in 1862 and brought with him skilled labor. He used modern equipment for making locks, much of it his own invention. He incorporated the Branford Lock Works in 1865 and was president of the company until his death in 1880. The business flourished under Kennedy's management. The plant was expanded on 5 acres, was the town's largest employer of 500 people, and produced 500 dozen items per day. The factory consumed 5 tons of iron, brass, and nickel daily. Many of Branford's Irish families came to Branford to work at the Lock Shop.

The Branford Lock Works made many types of door and window hardware from



PICTURES OF THE PAST

Jane Bouley

a simple ceramic knob to very ornate locks. Many homes built in Branford in the late 20th century were equipped with fixtures from the Lock Works, but the products were also sold nationwide. There were two separate operations for making knobs and locks, each housed in separate buildings. The knob shop was located where Svea Avenue is today and was destroyed by fire in 1899.

The lock factory was located in a large building at Main and Ivy streets and two rear buildings housed the iron and brass foundries.

In 1894, the Branford Lock Works was purchased by Yale and Towne Co. A strike in 1910 forced the plant to close and the operation was moved to Stamford. The complex was bought by the Rosenthal family in the 1920s and became known as the Rosenthal Block. The main building burned in 1979, but two small buildings associated with the Branford Lock Works remain on the site today. The complex today is called Lock Works Square.

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

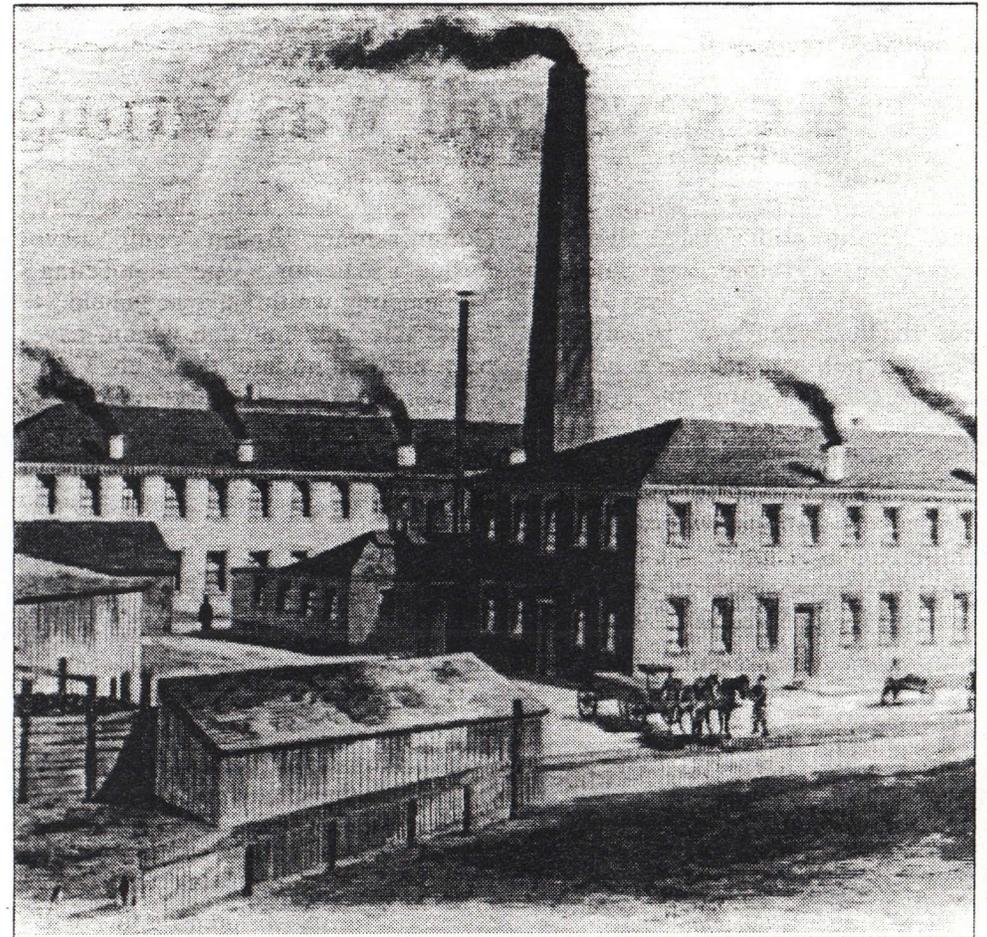


Photo courtesy of Branford Historical Society

A view of the Branford Lock Works from a 1869 catalogue.