



IN 1799 THERE WERE 17 sawmills in Branford, North Branford and Northford, each with a tax assessment of \$5 per year. Illustration from Rural Occupations in Early 18th Century England.

Pictures of the Past

Look back proves interesting

Town Taxes Are Nothing New!

The recent mailing of town tax assessments provides an interesting comparison to the Town of Branford 1799 tax assessment. Several documents concerning these early tax rates were recently donated to the Branford Historical Society.

The 1799 assessment included the First, Second and Third societies which were the present day towns of Branford, North Branford and Northford, the latter two then being part of Branford. The men in town were grouped by occupations and each taxed depending upon the prosperity of the business. Second to farming, shoemaking was by far the most common trade in Branford and included 27 men all taxed at \$17 per year. Blacksmiths, joiners, carpenters, coopers, tailors and clothiers were also taxed at that rate.

The seven gristmills in town appear to have been thriving in 1799 and were taxed between \$36 and \$65; however, sawmills were only assessed at \$5. Tavern keepers numbering 10 were assessed at

\$50 and merchants at \$84. Charles Butler was the most successful merchant in Branford with an assessment of \$140. William Gould, Orchard Gould, Jared Foot, Heman P. Brooks and Reuben Linsley were the area's physicians and were taxed at \$34 per year. The only attorney at law in the three societies was Joel T. Benedict with by far the highest assessment of \$167.

Farmers were taxed separately and each man was taxed according to his age and the amount of land he owned, both pasture and meadow. Livestock was also taxed depending upon the type and age of the animal. Families owning luxury items such as carriages, clocks, watches and silver were also taxed. In 1799 there were 21 carriages, 53 watches and 20 clocks in Branford.

The assessors (called listers) for the 1799 Town of Branford Tax Assessment were Caleb Finch, Bille Evarts and Pitman Pond. Total town assessment was \$62,993.17.

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