

# Town has seen its share of torrential weather storms

New Englanders are used to snow, ice, the occasional hurricane and the wind and flooding associated with coastal storms. Summer usually brings a thunderstorm or two that warrants a conversation with your neighbor the next day. Branford has also had some strange weather during its history.

Tornados are rare in Connecticut but have occurred especially in the northern sections of the state. On Oct. 8, 1797 a tornado hit on a Sunday evening between 6 and 7 o'clock with heavy rain and thunder. The steeple blew off the meeting house in East Haven and did considerable damage to the roof when it fell. The roof of the meeting house in Branford also blew off along with all of the windows on the west side of the building. Seven houses were destroyed. During August 1920, a tornado passed through North Branford and Guilford destroying two houses. More recently we can recall the violent storm of July 1989 that did heavy

damage to the trees at Lake Saltonstall.

The summer of 1816 was very cold with snow in June, an ice storm on July 4 and frost in August. January through April that year was very warm. A terrible salt storm occurred on Sept. 3, 1821 when a southeast gale blew salt and sand many miles inland caking windows with a hard crust that was very hard to remove. This salt storm ruined many crops and nearly all of the cherry trees at Cherry Hill.



PICTURES OF THE PAST

Jane Peterson Bouley

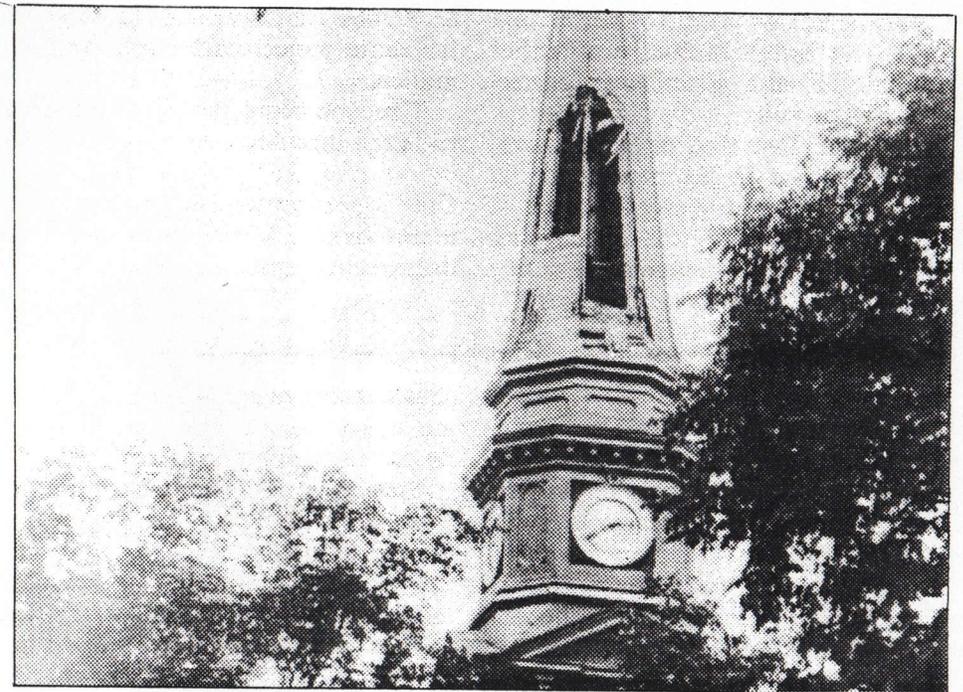
At the turn of this century old times recalled a summer thunderstorm in 1872 that began at 4 a.m. and lasted several hours. Hail the size of walnuts tore off roof shingles. On June 30, 1906 lightning struck the steeple of the Congregational Church on the Branford Green sending large chunks of it to the ground, leaving a glaring hole.

John Morton, the proprietor of Peckham's Drug Store across the street, was also an avid photographer and ran across the Green to take a picture of the damage. He produced a photo postcard

that was widely distributed throughout town and is still available today at postcard shows. Fortunately, no one was injured and the steeple was

repaired as closely as possible to the original.

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



*The Congregational Church steeple was struck by lightning June 30, 1906, causing severe damage. Photo courtesy of Jane Bouley, town historian.*