



Photo by photo by VanDyke 1921, courtesy of Blackstone Memorial Library

BRANFORD'S CENTER SCHOOL was built after the Civil War and was the high school from 1878 until 1894. It was damaged during the '38 hurricane and torn down in 1940.

Pictures of the Past

Center School was town's first

Center School

Center School, at the corner of Main Street and Harrison Avenue, was built shortly after the Civil War for \$800 as a neighborhood school housing grades one through 12.

The building was two stories with a room on each floor. During the late 1800s there was a nationwide movement to separate the older grades out of the neighborhood schools. In 1878 Center School was greatly enlarged by contractor Richard Bradley and became Branford's first high school. Wings were added to the east and west with a new front entrance to accommodate the six rooms. The first Branford High School class graduated in 1878.

Center School again became a lower grade facility in 1894 when the new high school was built on Laurel Street. By

1897 Center School was overcrowded with many new families moving to Branford and a rear addition was built in 1903. The building was very attractive painted yellow with white trim set off with a steeple. Ella McGrail was the longtime principal at Center School and she retired in 1939 after teaching in Branford for 53 years.

The steeple of Center School blew off during the '38 hurricane and the children were transferred to Laurel Street School. The school remained abandoned until 1940 when it was demolished. The vacant lot was used for public parking for seven years when the property was sold to SNET where they built a new office building still in use today.

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