

Basketball Branford style

Organized athletics began in Branford in the 1890s producing basketball, baseball and football teams.

There were several private men's sports clubs, such as the "Hustlers," who met in the large brick building which still stands on Bradley Street. The Armory sponsored the Battery A teams, M.P. Rice teams, The Laurels and Hustlers, Townie baseball and established and coached women's basketball in the 1920s. Bob Kelly died in 1931.

By the 1920s, it was acceptable for women to ride a bicycle or play tennis. Bob Kelly established a girl's high school basketball team called "The Heartbreakers," which posted many wins.

Uniforms were rare and the teams played in any building or on any field they could find. Despite substantial organization, Branford produced a number of fine athletes that went on to play semi-pro football and professional baseball. It would be two decades before Branford High School athletics were established and supported by the town.

Perhaps the father of Branford athletics was Robert Stephen "Bob" Kelly, who at the age of 14, was 6-feet 2-inches and weighed 186 pounds. He was a member of the 1907-8 Battery A



PICTURES OF THE PAST
Jane Peterson Bouley

There was a complaint made to the State Board of Education concerning women playing basketball with this response: "The State Board of Education disapproves of interscholastic athletics for girls. The game of basketball is suitable only for senior high school girls if it is played according to the official rules for girls and is free from unnecessary competition."

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

champion basketball team and was considered one of the finest football players in the state. He later coached the Battery A teams, M.P. Rice teams, The Laurels and Hustlers, Townie baseball and established and coached women's basketball in the 1920s. Bob Kelly died in 1931.

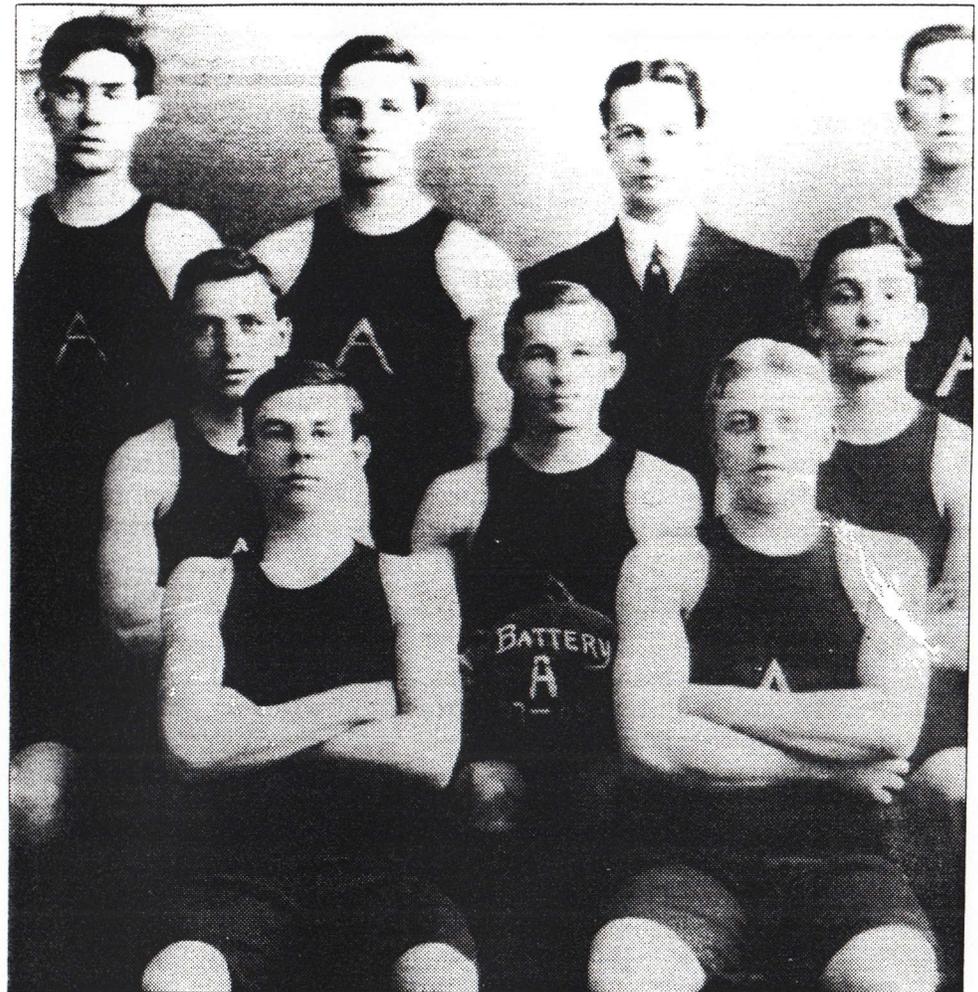


Photo courtesy Branford Historical Society
The Battery A 1907-8 champion basketball team. Top row left to right, are Bob Kelly, Jack Hanniford, Ed Reynolds, Earl Bradley; middle row are Al Jourdan, Irving Baldwin, and George Fisher; bottom row, Joe Corcoran and Leonard Anderson.