

History of the Colony of New Haven, before and after the Union with Connecticut, Branford section
Edward R. Lambert, 1838

Branford is situated on Long Island Sound, seven miles east of New Haven. The purchase was made of the Indians by New Haven people, in December, 1638. The Indian name of the place was Totoket. In the year 1640, the general court at New Haven made a grant of it to Mr. Samuel Eaton, brother of Governor Eaton, on condition of procuring some of his friends in England to emigrate and make a settlement upon it. He soon after took ship at Boston, and returned to England for his settlers; but being desired to take the pastoral charge of the church at Duckingfield, in the parish at Stockfort, in Cheshire, and accepting the invitation, he never returned.* Mr. Eaton thus failing to perform the conditions of the grant, New Haven, in 1644, made sale of it to Mr. William Swain and others, of Wethersfield. The settlers of Wethersfield removed from Massachusetts without their pastor, and having no settled minister they fell into unhappy contentions and animosities. These continued a number of years, and had the effect of scattering the inhabitants and the formation of new settlements and churches in other places. It was to accommodate a party of these seceders from Wethersfield, that Mr. Swain made the purchase. New Haven granted them the lands in question on condition of the company repaying the charges which New Haven had been at for their purchase, which was between £12 and £13, and their joining the colony in all the fundamental articles of government, settled in October, 1643. This they readily consented to, and the settlement of the town was immediately commenced. Mr. Abraham Pierson, with a part of his church and congregation from South Hampton, on Long Island, removed and united with the people of Wethersfield in the settlement of the town. A regular church was soon formed, and Mr. Pierson was unanimously chosen pastor. He had been a minister in Yorkshire, in England, and emigrated in 1639. For a time he preached in Lynn, Mass. Some of the English emigrants, who had made a stand at that place, having agreed to make a settlement on Long Island, on a tract of land which they had purchased of the natives, with the consent of the earl of Stirling, who had a grant of the island, they agreed with Mr. Pierson to accompany them as their minister. He organized a church among them, and they entered into a civil combination, or covenant, for the support of order and good government, before they removed to the island. In Dec., 1640, they went on to the island and commenced the settlement of South Hampton. Shortly after the settlement of the town, the inhabitants found it necessary for their security to form a connection with some one of the New England colonies, and it appears they were divided in opinion relative to the one they should join. Mr. Pierson and a part of his church wished to unite with New Haven, because all public officers, as well as the right of suffrage, were restricted to the church. But the majority preferring more civil liberty, chose to unite with Connecticut, where all orderly persons might be freemen, and, in 1644, joined that colony. In consequence of this, Mr. Pierson and a portion of the people removed and settled in combination with New Haven.

The plantation thus commenced at Totoket was named Branford, after a town of that name in England. Mr. Swain was chosen a magistrate of the colony, as he had previously been of Connecticut. The plantation progressed rapidly in improvement until the union of the colonies of Connecticut and New Haven. With this proposed union, Mr. Pierson and his people were much displeased. Mr. Pierson and Mr. Davenport appear to have used all their influence to prevent it. They, with many of the inhabitants of the colony, were more rigid concerning the terms of church communion than the ministers and people of Connecticut generally were. Many of the churches of Connecticut were in favor of the propositions of the general council of Cambridge, in 1662, relative

to the baptism of children whose parents were not in full communion. The ministers and churches of New Haven were opposed to them. This, with the opinion that all government should be in the church, were important arguments against the union. Upon the consummation of the union, Mr. Pierson and his people not becoming reconciled, and being reprimanded for their perverseness, they determined to leave the plantation.

Accordingly, in May, 1666, a purchase was made by a committee appointed for the purpose, on the Passaic River, in New Jersey, and the settlement immediately commenced. To that place Mr. Pierson with his church and congregation removed, and the settlers from the other towns united with them. They called the town Newark, as is supposed after the town where Mr. Pierson was ordained in England. Here they had an opportunity to form their “fundamental articles of government” according to their own views, by restricting the right of free suffrage to church members for which *important* privilege many of them had twice removed. Accommodations being provided for Mr. Pierson, he removed with his family the last of September, 1667. The town and church records of Branford were removed to Newark, and after the town had been settled 23 years it was left desolate. For 20 years afterwards there was no church in the town, but people from various parts of the colony gradually moved into it, and purchased the lands of the first planters, so that in about twenty years it became re-settled. In 1685 it was reinvested with town privileges.

The patent of Branford was granted by the governor and company on the 16th of February, 1685, to Mr. William Roswell, Edward Barker, Ens. Thomas Harrison, William Maltby, William Hoadley, Lieut. Elizur Stint, Samuel Pond,** John Frizby, and John Tayntor. Signed by Robert Treat, governor of Connecticut.

The township is about seven miles in length from east to west, and four in breadth. The surface is uneven, being composed of hills and valleys. The soil is good, but rather too cold. There is no considerable river in the town; the largest stream discharges its waters into the harbor, which is small but convenient, admitting vessels from 40 to 50 tons. There is a cluster of small islands belonging to the town, called Thimble Islands, and another cluster called Indian Isles.

In the center of the town is a large open area of irregular form, on which stands the public buildings, consisting of a Congregational church, an Episcopal church, academy, and town-house.

NORTH BRANFORD, incorporated in 1831, was previously the upper part of Branford. It was formed of the societies of North Branford and Northford. A range of mountains from southwest to northeast pass through the center of the township. The face of the town is generally hilly, but the soil is strong and fertile. The inhabitants are mostly farmers. There are five churches in the town, three Congregational and two Episcopal. The center of North Branford society, the southern division of the town, is five miles northerly from Branford church, and nine from New Haven. Mr. John Merrick was the first minister of the parish; he was ordained in 1727.

* He died at Denton, in the parish of Manchester, Lancashire, England, Jan. 9, 1664, and was buried in the chapel.

** He was ancestor of the Pond family, of Milford.