

The Totoket Historical Society, Inc.

**NOTES ON NORTH BRANFORD,  
NORTHFORD DOCUMENTS**

by

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January 12, 1970

Transcribed and digitized

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2012-068-001

Some original early records, particularly petitions to the General Assembly are only available in the originals in the Connecticut State Library; they are not in Branford, and were not published in the Colonial Records series. Photostats of many of these documents have been obtained and will be placed in the Library for research use.

The Town is the basic unit; also the Established Church (which became the "Congregational" Church). The Church was an organization, not just a building. The Ecclesiastical Society was a corporation, levied taxes and had only male members. The Parish was familial and geographical. The terms "Society" and "Parish" were often used almost interchangeably.

The older towns were frequently unwilling to split because of tax revenue loss. In general the steps to formation of new towns were (but not necessarily in this order):

- 1 - Request for winter preaching
- 2 - Request for local pound
- 3 - Request for local school
- 4 - Request for local train band
- 5 - Request for separate parish or society

#### North Branford-Northford Petitions:

May 7, 1717: first evidence of a desire to split from Branford in a request to the General Assembly for a separate Society by the "Northern Farmers." A Committee appointed to study the matter reported there were not enough people but recommended allowing winter preaching for three years and a tax rebate.

May 12 and June 23, 1724: the Branford Town Meeting voted for two Societies, allowing £150 for a second meetinghouse and a second minister. The meetinghouse was to be sited about where the North Branford Congregational Church now stands. The next Town Meeting refused the appropriation.

May 1725: Assembly again appoints a new Committee to investigate and report.

Oct. 1725: Assembly orders town to lay a special tax next winter and establishes a separate society in northern part of town.

Oct. 10, 1727: North Society gets permission to embody into church estate and ordain a minister. Jonathan Merrick was ordained the first minister and remained in the "Branford North Parish" for forty-two years.

Oct. 1734: a request for winter preaching for the Northford area residents is granted.

May 1743: a group of forty-one men petitioned for a new society in the northwest corner of Branford and including a few people from adjacent farms in Wallingford and Guilford. Guilford disapproved. No progress reported by October 1743

May 1744: a new petition by thirty-odd signers. This was opposed by both Guilford and Wallingford citizens. However, twenty Wallingford people signed to join provided the new meetinghouse would be near the town line at Cooke's Hill. this was rejected by the more southerly petitioners.

Oct. 1744: a new committee of three (Hitchcock, Alling and Hubbard) recommended a new Society to the General Assembly, allowing 100 acres for the parson and 40 acres for a school. The Society would comprise about fifty families. Some still protested being formed with any Wallingford people. The Assembly turned the report down.

May 1, 1745: another petition to the Assembly to reconsider offered by forty signers. May 8, a further petition for change of boundaries.

May 1745: the General Assembly voted to establish the Third Ecclesiastical Society of Branford.

June 24, 1745: twenty-six men formally organize the Society and vote unanimously to name the society Salem and to invite the Wallingford neighbors.

October 1, 1745: The group from Wallingford formally petition for membership in the new parish.

1746: the Assembly set the location of the meetinghouse a little south of where the Northford Congregational Church now is.

May 1750: the Church was formally organized; the Assembly votes that the Third Society of Branford would be called Northford.

1818, with the new Constitution, the terms 'Parish' and "Society" with power to lay taxes were done away with due to the disestablishment of the Congregational Church.

### Separation of North Branford from Branford

April 1799: a petition to the Assembly signed by Joseph Baldwin of North Branford and Elnathan Tyler of Northford requested that North Branford and Northford be joined together and separated from Branford. They believed it would be large enough to function as a separate town, although the entire population of the Town of Branford was only 2,600. The Assembly postponed any action.

May 1831: the Assembly voted for forming a separate town to be called North Branford comprising the old Second and Third Societies, the First Society forming the Town of Branford.