



Photo courtesy of Branford Historical Society

*THREE FREIGHT CARS and a caboose fell off the Montowese Street railroad bridge into the street Dec. 21, 1911.*

### Pictures of the Past

## Frequent accidents reported for relatively low population

### Train Wreck-1911

At the turn of this century Branford had a population of 6,000 people and it is quite surprising the number of train, trolley, bicycle, automobile and other accidents that occurred in the area. The worst accident during this period was in 1917 when two trolley cars in North Branford collided head-on resulting in 28 deaths and many severe injuries.

There was a rather spectacular train accident at the Montowese Street railroad bridge on Dec. 21, 1911. While backing the train off the main track the engineer did not hear a stop signal and three freight cars and the caboose fell off the 20-foot embankment onto Montowese Street. Another car jumped the track and

was hit by another train on its way westbound to New York. An automobile containing Irwin Linsley and Irving Field of Branford passed under the bridge just seconds before the accident. The train wreck also had the distinction of breaking up the Yale versus Battery A basketball game at Pythian Hall (the old Community House on South Main Street) when the wrecked cars caught fire. Many of the town's firemen were members of the Battery A team and it took all day to clear the wreck. The only person injured was the conductor who sprained his ankle when he jumped from the caboose as it fell off the bridge.

- Jane Bouley