

Captain John Spencer and the Jenny Lind

In the mid-1800s shipping was an important industry in Branford and many boats were docked in Branford's waters. One of these was the "Jenny Lind" named for the famous Swedish opera singer. The Jenny Lind was one of a fleet of schooners that sailed the Atlantic coast and traded its goods up the Hudson River to Albany and so far south as the West Indies. The owner and captain of this 50-foot, two-masted schooner was John Spencer.

While still a young man, John Spencer took to the sea. As captain of the Jenny Lind he often sailed his schooner to Albany, New York or to Long Island with a cargo of potatoes to sell and would bring home a load of coal for

the Malleable Iron Fittings Company. He also carried iron, clay, oil, grain, eggs and poultry.

In the summer of 1894, at the age of 68, Captain Spencer retired from sailing and docked the Jenny Lind at Hobart's Bridge near his grain store in the Toole Block on Main Street. Captain Spencer and his wife, Nancy Griffing celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary May 11, 1909 and he died Oct. 25 of that year at the age of 83.

The Jenny Lind remained docked in the Branford River and was a favorite place for the local children to play. Eventually storms, the tides and treasure seekers took the ship, but for many years the hull could be seen at



PICTURES OF THE PAST

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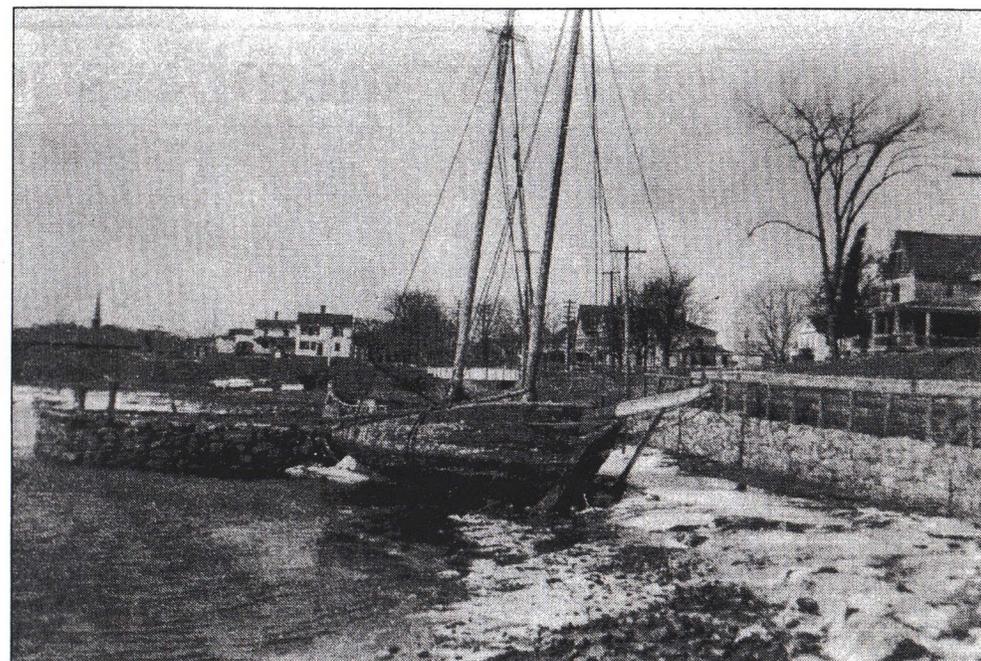


Photo by Valdemar Hammer
Courtesy of the Branford Historical Society

The schooner "Jenny Lind" docked at Hobart's Bridge on Montowese Street

the bottom of the river. Today, only a few ribs of the ship be seen.

The figurehead from the Jenny Lind, measuring about 12 inches

high, is on display at the Branford Historical Society.

Editor's note: Jane Peterson Bouley is the historian for the town of Branford.