

## Pictures of the Past



Photo by Mason Foote Smith, courtesy of the Branford Historical Society

### *THE SCHOONER "Jenny Lind" docked at Hobart's bridge on Montowese Street about 1895.*

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 as far south as the West Indies. The owner and captain of this 50-foot schooner was John Spencer.

While still a young man, John Spencer took to the sea. As captain of the Jenny Lind he sailed his ship most often to Albany, N.Y., with a cargo of potatoes to sell and would bring home a load of coal for the Malleable Iron Fittings (MIF). 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 home on Montowese Street. To occupy his time he opened a hay and 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 the bottom of the river. Today only at a very low tide can a few ribs of the ship be seen.

(Credit is given to the late C. Perry Prann for his recollecting about the Jenny Lind).

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