

A WINDOW OF TIME

While perusing the Chenango American of April 6, 1876, looking for an advertisement of the dog-powered treadmill that the Lyon Iron Works sent to the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition, I came across a very interesting obituary. 19th century obituaries are often written in such flowery language extolling the virtues of the deceased that they are enjoyable to read. This was no exception and the longer I read, I realized that this particular obituary was written in the short window of time when four avenues of transportation were active in the town of Greene: the Chenango River, the Chenango Canal, the railroad and the road that is now Route 12.

The obituary is of Whiting Cornish, who died at 93 at the residence of his daughter, Mrs. Eli Augustus Trowbridge. The Trowbridges lived about a mile and a half north of Greene, on the east side of Route 12, in the brick house on a knoll where Jim and Doris Barton now live. The Trowbridges had three children. Their son Frank ran the Trowbridge Hotel on the corner of Jackson and North Canal street and was a great friend of James Hobart Moore, one of the Moore brothers who funded the Moore Memorial Library. In his will, J.H. Moore left Frank Trowbridge \$10,000, a great sum in 1916.

The obituary is several paragraphs long before this one captured my thoughts: 'For near 20 years he made his home with Mr. and Mrs. Trowbridge; and his empty arm chair in the corner by the window commanding a view of the road, the river, the canal and railroad, makes a sad change to those who had so long taken a pleasure in answering every wish of "grandpa"'.

There are only a few years that all four transportation modes were being used simultaneously. The D.L. & W. railroad began in 1870 and by 1876 the Chenango Canal had lost \$6,000,000 and most merchants were using the railroad to ship out their products. In 1877 the Chenango Canal was abolished by the state House Committee on Canals. The river was used much more than today for recreation and movement of goods. The road was used extensively in the 1870s and now is our main means of transportation, with air transport a second.

The railroad may be at its end soon. After the June flood of this year damaged the rail bed, the New York Susquehanna & Western rail service from Chenango Forks to Sherburne has been abandoned and it is not known when it is to be repaired.

On the cover of Mildred English Cochrane Folsom's book *Echoes of the Past*, she has a photo of the four means of transportation. She states inside that it probably is a composite of the four and I think she's right. In Greene, the only place that all four are that close is on the Stillwater Road and where they are close, the railroad is by the road and the towpath is by the river. To the north of Greene, they are never as close; the railroad is quite far away. If anyone knows where the photo on the cover was taken, please contact me.

What will be the future? Will passenger trains ever be active again in upstate New York? Will Route 12 be a super highway? Will the river ever be used again as a popular recreation and

transportation lane? Will there be new forms of transportation? Perhaps. Only the canal seems to be lost forever. When you drive along its route, try to look for it and imagine what it was like. I do.

