

THE AGE OF TRANSITION : 1776 to 1876

During the century which elapsed between the close of the colonial period and the dawn of what may be called modern Limes, Shoreham was quietly changing from forestlands to an agricultural area. The wood-choppers first directed their attention to the fine timber trees. When that supply was exhausted, their axes fell upon second-grade trees, reducing them to cordwood. Farms were established. Orchards were set out. Roads were built. In 1840, the main line of the Long Island Railroad was opened beyond Yaphank as far as Manorville. Four years later, in 1844, that line was completed to Greenport. The reason behind this enterprise is of interest because it had a bearing, albeit somewhat remote, on the origin of Shoreham.

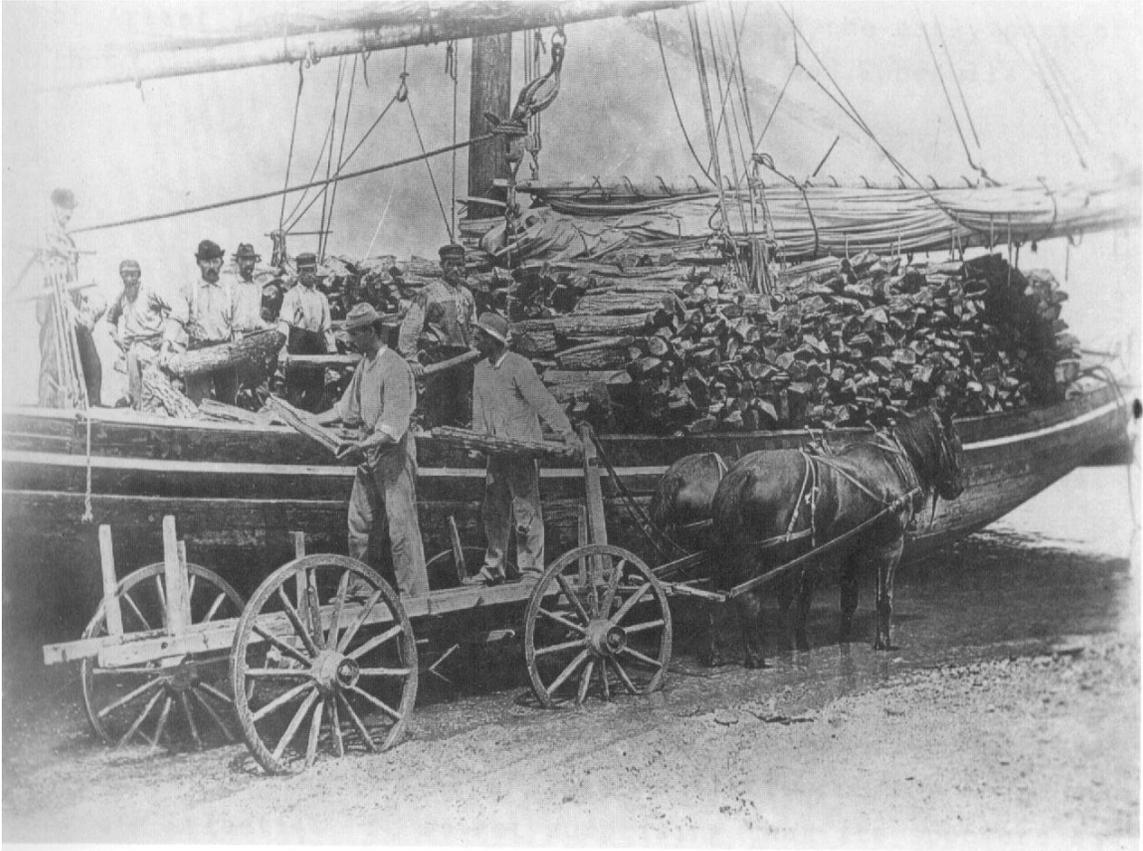
The first practical steam locomotive to operate in the United States had been imported from England in 1829. It

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immediately caught the eye of those interested in the transportation of passengers and goods, and the possibility of developing a railway from New York to Boston was carefully explored. However, the rocky ridges running north and south along the Connecticut shore were felt to pose a problem for roadbed construction, which could not be dealt with in terms of the economics and technology of the times. 'the flat and unchallenging nature of Long Island afforded an alternative: run a line down the middle of the Island to Greenport, whence a short sail would bring the traveller and his goods to New London or Providence for further rail transport to Boston.

That line never realized its original objective, but it did serve as the prime mover of goods, agricultural products and other produce required by or generated by the area. in so doing, it stimulated the growth of the Island to such a degree that the North Shore Branch was eventually opened.

Prior to 1876, the sailing vessel was the prime mover of Long Island's passengers and goods. Scheduled passages were offered between Setauket and New York; sailing vessels were beached at Shoreham to land general cargo and depart with timber and cordwood. A few families settled along North Country Road and Woodville Road. In the early 1800s, a schoolhouse was opened on Woodville Road. Although no trace of it survives, legend has it that it stood close to the northwest corner of Woodville and Fitzgerald roads. It is a matter of record that in 1818 there were twenty-six children in attendance. Primitive roads - trails might be a more appropriate term - fanned out to the east, south and west from Woodville Road to serve the needs of the woodcutters, whose huts and cabins dotted the landscape. Two of those roads, Randall and Ridge, still survive. A third, for the most part abandoned and forgotten, was known as Curran's or Corwin's Road, and cut through the pine



THE "EMMA SOUTHARD" LOADING CORDWOOD

This scene, recorded about 1880 in the closing days of the 11 woodchopper era", shows the typical beaching of a vessel engaged in the cordwood industry. While this scene was probably recorded in Miller Place, it is equally illustrative of what went on at Shoreham's beach. Through the 1920's, when the shoreline was still eroding rapidly, it was common to find old anchors and ships' ironware along the beach between high and low tide lines.