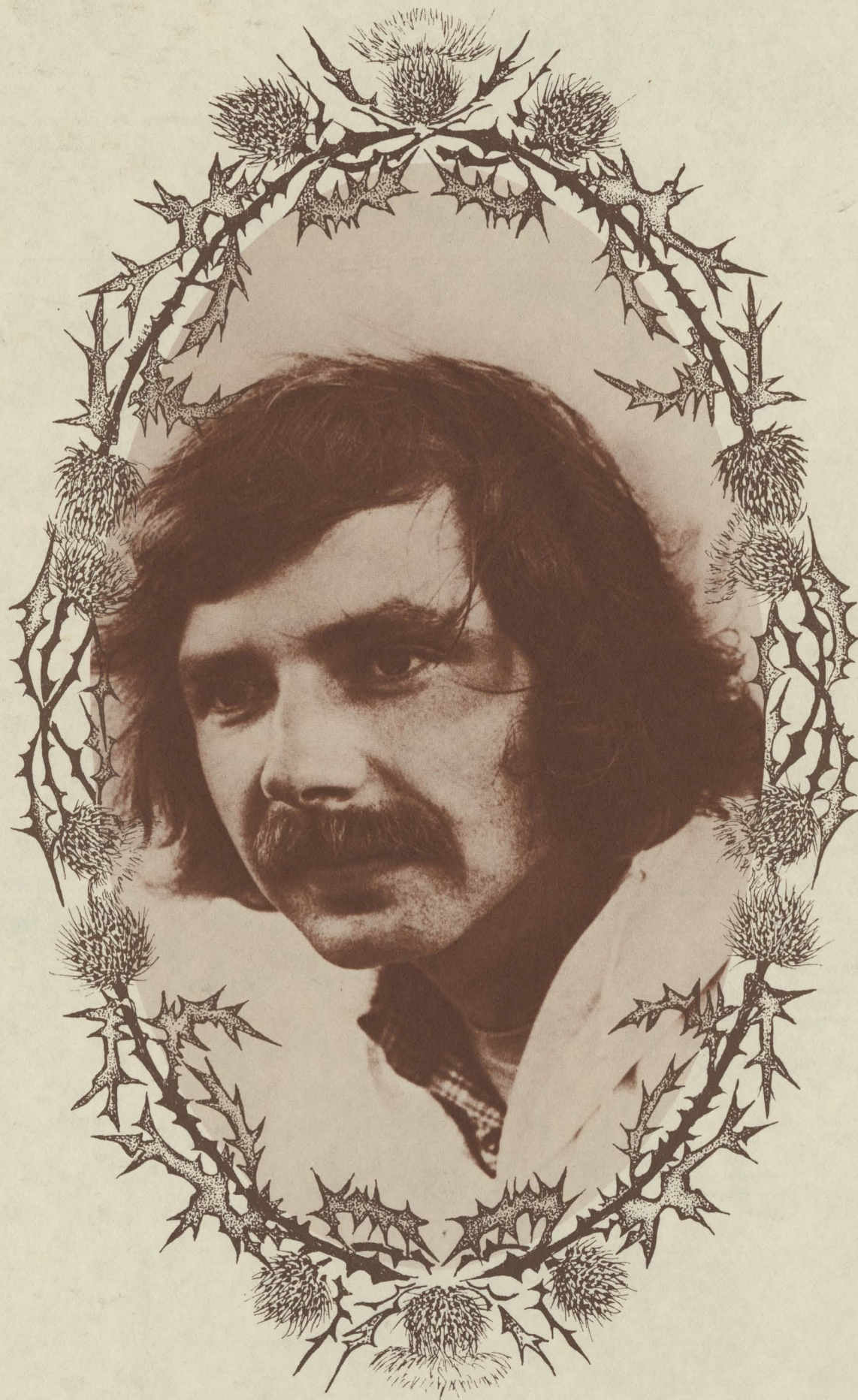


IN A PLACE CALLED CHENANGO

FOLKWAYS RECORDS FTS 32360



Fred Gee

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In A Place Called Chenango

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Phoenix, Arizona

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All songs © 1981 by Fred Gee

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IN A PLACE CALLED CHENANGO

CHENANGO COUNTY is a beautiful and peaceful land set like a green jewel among the hills and rivers of Central New York. Farms and forests cover the landscape in a harmonic blend that suggests a true balance between human and natural elements. Like a mythical land it has sparked the imagination and lives of those who have shared its secrets.

Before the coming of the 'white man' Chenango was sacred hunting grounds for the Tuscarora Indians. The abundance that the land provided then is still a gift enjoyed by those who have made Chenango their home.

The first 'white men' to venture into the county were the nameless band of traders and scouts straggling through the then western wilderness to barter with the Indians and the missionaries who carried the Christian religion into the villages of our country's original inhabitants.

The treaty of Fort Stanwix in 1784 was the major turning point in the actual development of the area as a place for adventurous settlers to live.

Following the American Revolution there was an influx of settlers, mostly from the New England states and Eastern New York. Many were Revolutionary War Veterans. The main attractions to the area were fertile farmlands, swift streams and a good climate for growing crops. This made the county develop rapidly. Chenango has become, through the years, one of New York State's leading agricultural counties. The chief agricultural product is dairying.

The growth of the county was directly related to improvements in transportation. The first settlers came by horse and wagon. By the early 1800's, stage coach routes crisscrossed the area but it wasn't until 1833 when the Chenango canal was completed as a link from Binghamton to the Erie canal near Utica that the area was able to gain access to outside markets. In November 1869, the ground breaking for the first railroad in the area took place and soon thereafter, by 1872, turntables, bridges and many more miles of track were carved into the County. The

value of the railroad was immeasurable. Its speed and hauling capabilities shut down the canal in 1878 and opened up even more business helping towns to grow and industry to flourish.

In 1816, Gladding, the county's oldest factory was founded in South Otselic. About 1840 David Maydole began manufacturing the world renowned Maydole hammers in Norwich. The pre-civil war Lyon Iron Works was the forerunner of the home factory of the Raymond Corporation which today manufactures fork-lift trucks and other material handling equipment. Norwich was at one time the division home of the booming New York, Ontario, Western Railway Co. when the steam locomotive was adding growth and color to the national picture. In 1885 an itinerant minister, Rev. L. F. Moore, made a three dollar loan with Oscar G. Bell, a local pharmacist, and started what became the Norwich Pharmacal Co. which later prospered with Dr. Jeffrey's spectacular ointment still marketed the world over as Ungentine. The Gaines Dog Food Company was founded in 1927 by Clarence F. Gaines in Sherburne. These are but a few of the many industries that helped build Chenango County commerce.

Many prominent people who have made significant contributions to the world have been inspired by the beauty of Chenango. Gail Borden, born in Norwich, was the first to condense milk while living in Texas in 1856. He was a pioneer in preserving foods. His invention changed the country from little cheese factories covering the countryside to condensing milk processing plants. Jedediah Strong Smith, who was a mountain man in the early 1800's, was the first to blaze the Oregon Trail. He was born in 1799 in what was the town of Jericho now known as Bainbridge. Joseph Smith and Brigham Young lived in Chenango County as youths. Smith lived in the Bainbridge area and Young in the Smyrna area. Both were major leaders in the Mormon religious movement.

These sample illustrations should only serve to deepen the hidden powers of Chenango. Does Chenango simply mean 'pleasant river flowing through the land of the bull thistle' or is there not also some undefined

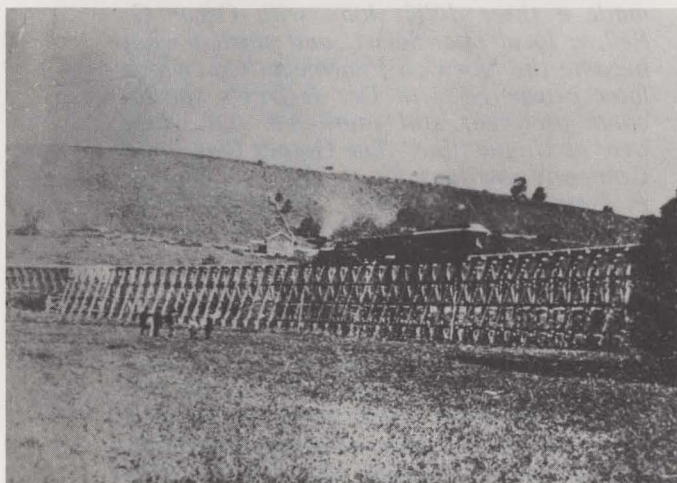
commonality that binds together those who have shared the deep secrets of Chenango?

Such questions can only be approached through an understanding of history and through a deep appreciation of the unique beauty of Chenango.

This record has been produced to give present and future generations of Chenango County residents a living history of their home, a land of peace and prosperity.



The Stage House Hotel and Bar in Oxford.



The Rainbow Tressel over the Otselic Valley.

ABOUT THE FOLK SONGS OF CHENANGO COUNTY

When I moved to Chenango County in 1978 I was surprised to find that there were no folk songs about the area. In January of 1979 I approached the director of the County Arts Council with a list of projects that I felt worth pursuing. Included in the list was the idea of writing historical folk songs about Chenango County. I was directed to make a specific proposal to the County Historical Society concerning this project. They were

enthusiastic about sponsoring such an endeavor and an application for funding was submitted to the New York State Council of the Arts. When the project was funded it was heralded by David Bromberg of the Council as one of the most unique and exciting historical proposals ever considered.

My work on the project was greatly facilitated by an advisory committee that included Chenango County historian, Mae Smith, Jon Schoonmaker from the County Planning Board and several members of the County Historical Society. This group not only brainstormed for song ideas but was most helpful in directing me to the necessary resources. As a result work on the project went smoothly and by the spring of 1981 the songs were completed.



Harvest season at a Hops Farm.

NOTES: Fred Gee

PHOTOS COURTESY OF:

The Chenango County Historical Society

The Town of Oxford Historical Society

Richard Reit

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SIDE A BAND 1

IN A PLACE CALLED CHENANGO

IN A PLACE CALLED CHENANGO is a historical overview that tells of the birth of Chenango from an ocean and the impact of the 'hunters', 'settlers', 'builders', and 'workers' who found their way to this 'heavenly' land.

First there was night and then there was day
And there in the light the ocean did sway
But time worked its course transformed all the earth
A beautiful place Chenango at birth

Chorus:

In a place called Chenango where bull thistles grow
A place called Chenango where swift rivers flow
And the valleys and hillsides are blessed by the sun
Where the deer and the wild turkey run

Then came the hunters for something to eat
With prayers to the land for the bountiful feast
'Chenango remain as you always have been,
A land full of plenty, a land of sweet rain'

Then came the settlers with all kinds of plans
To make the best home of this heavenly land
Inspired as they were by the need to survive
They carved out their farms from the wooded hillsides

Chorus:

Then came the builders with all kinds of tools
They dug a canal, they built a new school
They put in a railway, they helped raise a store
They built all the factories, they hope to build more

Then came the workers to fill out the lot
Sometimes they're employed and sometimes they're not
But life prospers well with so much to do
And they work on the farms and for industry too

Chorus:

Guitar: Fred Gee
Guitar (12 string): Gerry De La Torre
Bass: Mike Resse
Fiddle: Ron Rutowski
Mandolin: Joel Kitts

SIDE A BAND 2

TELL US MORE

TELL US MORE is a story about Burr Bradley, a friendly and talkative stage coach driver, who won the hearts of everyone he met along the Catskill Turnpike.

Let me tell you all a story of the bumpy
Catskill 'pike
And a driver named Burr Bradley he was really
quite a sight
You would know that he was coming by the
sounding of the horn
And you knew he would be leaving by the
coming of the morn

Chorus:

Tell us more Burr Bradley tell us more
Could you please tell us one story more
Could you tell it to us slow we don't want
you to go
Could you please tell us one story more

He would sit down in the Stage House bar
to tell his many tales
Of the news that he had gathered all day long
It's said he didn't sleep that much 'cause
every time he tried
He would hear someone a singing this old song

Chorus:

He would visit everyone he could to find out
how they were
In the country everybody knew his name
And they would flock around him make him
stop for just a while
And the words they spoke they always seemed
the same

Chorus:

It was a very mournful time the night that
he was killed
He broke his neck while falling from his stage
I've never heard a chorus since so moving or
so loud
This is simply what the chorus had to say

Chorus:

Guitar: Fred Gee
Guitar (lead): Peter McLaughlin
Bass: Roger Smith
Banjo: Frank Dederer
Mandolin: Tom Rozum

SIDE A BAND 3

WEST HILL QUARRY BLUES

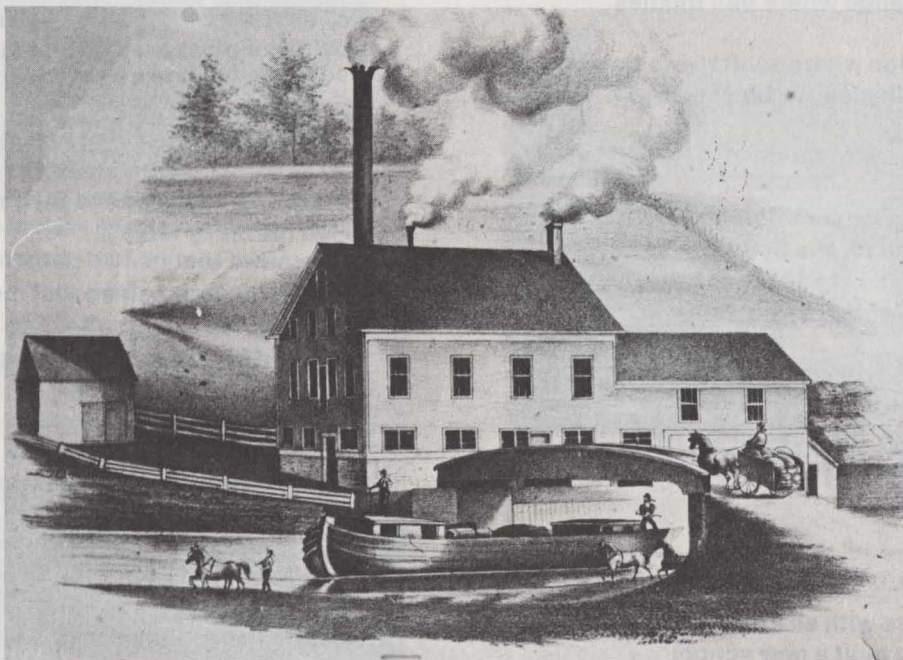
The pains and feelings of strenuous work in the stone quarry on the west side of Norwich are expressed in the WEST HILL QUARRY BLUES.

I work all day long in the West Hill Quarry
Breakin' my back for so little pay
Someday if I'm lucky I might quit this job
But right now I'll just have to stay
I'll have to stay, I'll have to stay
I'm breakin' my back but I'll just have to stay

Hey Mr. Conroy oh can't you see
What your business is doing to me
This hard life wears upon my bones
Can't you hear my whole body moans
My body moans my body moans
I work for your business but my whole body
moans

I'm gonna ride that cable railway
I'm gonna ride that rail I know
I'll say goodbye to all my brothers
You'll have to carry me when I go
When I go when I go
I'm gonna ride that rail when I go

Guitar: Fred Gee
Harmonica: Gerry De La Torre
Percussion: Gerry De La Torre



The Chenango Canal in Earlville.



The West Hill Quarry overlooking Norwich.

SIDE A BAND 4

LASHWAY'S LAMENT

Longing for things to be like they used to be
LASHWAY'S LAMENT is a song about farming
fifty years ago in the hills of Coventryville
and how things have changed.

In 1924 I come from the hills of Chateaugay
To start a farm in Coventryville Ted Lashway
is my name
My brother come to do the same and so did
others too
Still others went on further to the work at
E. J. Shoe

I started out with twenty cows I worked hard
night and day
And I was more than satisfied with what seemed
little pay
I worked the fields with will of steel and Maude
the old bay mare
We cut the hay and hauled it away we really
were a pair

Chorus:

Oh why can't things be like they used to be
Why can't things be the same
Why can't things be like they used to be
It really is a shame

I worked with Victor Sackett hauling mine props
to the road
I never had to drive old Maude who handled
such a load
She'd even back up when she snag and
figure out the key
She wouldn't miss six inches in aligning all
the trees

At night we go a sleighing to some friends
for dance and song
We'd raise our voices in merriment as we all
rode along
And how we loved the rollicking of the fiddle
and guitar
And the many hours of laughter underneath
the brilliant stars

Chorus:

It's been now more than fifty years it's hard to
think it's true
The government said their way was best they
told you what to do
I got so fed up with their rules I couldn't
enjoy my days
So I changed my occupation and a number of
other ways

Had I a farm I couldn't survive with Maude
the old bay mare
I'd need a great big tractor and a couple more
just for spares

I couldn't enjoy on twenty times more per
hundred weight I'm sure
The beauty of the countryside and water
that is pure

Chorus:

Guitar: Fred Gee
Bass: Roger Smith
Fiddle: Tom Rozum and Ron Rutowski
Mandolin: Tom Rozum

SIDE A BAND 5

ALL ALONG THE OLD CHENANGO

ALL ALONG THE OLD CHENANGO is a song
to the Indian spirit 'Chenango' who dwells in the
peaceful land of the bull thistle where the
gentle river flows.

When I first came across your lands while
looking for some game
You gave to me the best I'd ever known
You shared with me the peaceful world
encompassed by your arms
Oh Chenango may your waters always flow

Chorus:

All along the old Chenango life is peaceful
as a dream
And the gentle current helps us move along
All along the old Chenango weaving through
the countryside
Oh Chenango you're the place I do belong

I settled in your restful hills to learn your
endless tales
You told me stories I could not believe
But the years have gone by quickly and you've
taught me many ways
Oh Chenango may your spirit always be

Chorus:

I will come to you forever as a stranger and
a friend
For you showed to me the beauty of your
soul
You have given me great happiness to know
you very well
Oh Chenango may your flowers always grow

Chorus:

Guitar: Fred Gee
Guitar (12 string): Kevin Walsh
Bass: Gerry De La Torre
Fiddle: Ron Rutowski
Flute: Mary Jo Meier
Background Vocals: Kristin Hamilton and
Gerry De La Torre

SIDE B BAND 1

WE'RE THE CREW OF THE WHIRLWIND

WE'RE THE CREW OF THE WHIRLWIND is a rowdy drinking song that captures the vitality and humor of the old Chenango Canal days.

We work on the good barge 'Whirlwind' we're
the toughest crew around
We visit every alehouse in every single town
Up and down the old Chenango we move along
with ease
Cause we'll cuff and wetten any man at anytime
we please

Chorus:

A weel a way hey we're the crew of the
'Whirlwind'
A weel a way hey we will come again
A weel a way hey when the clock strikes ten
We'll toast to the fine establishment that dared
to let us in

We'd just set out from Binghamton with some
Lackawanna coal
When the cook she let a terrible shout 'there's a
dead rat in the bowl'
But we all laughed till we hit the floor and the lines
all pulled away
And the 'hoggies' had a terrible time a roundin up
the stray

Chorus:

Just before we reached the akkerduct at the
southern end of Greene
Captain Stever's 'Lillie' passed us by and a sweet
young girl was seen
We turned our heads and whistled loud 'low
bridge' we did not hear
And we all were swept right overboard and the
captain he lost his ear

Chorus:

We passed by Brisben that fine day when a new
boat was released
The crew was new and a bit green too and their
braggin would not cease
So we decided there and then to end their foolish
pride
And we whipped them with the wet towlines until
they really cried

Chorus:

The collector at the Oxford toll said 'what is down
inside?'
We told him of the tons of coal and the captain's
'pretty bride'
He said 'that's fine but just the same I'd rather
have a look'
He was found upon the kitchen floor a rolling with
the cook

Chorus:

By the time we got to 'Noridge' we were in a
terrible race
The 'Meteor' was gainin fast and we dare not
lose our place
We reached the locks together no decision had
been made
So we beat on them for many hours and won the
right of way

Chorus:

We hurried on the Sherburne town in just three
hours flat
We'd been moving well with a great big swell
and we were proud of that
But there stood an inspector with a fine we'd
gone too fast
So we went down to the local bar forgot about the
past

Chorus:

As we were leaving Earlville the off mule he got
lame
But we drove him on to Hamilton it's the captain
who's to blame
The mule he died that very night it was sad to see
him go
But we drank some rye we had set aside our
spirits seemed to grow

Chorus:

Now the days of the canawleers is past we have
gone our separate ways
The captain he married the merry cook and the
hoggy's gone west they say
And all that's left of the crew is me to share
with you this tale
Just give me a flask of some whiskey rye and a
quart of the very best ale

Chorus:

Guitar: Fred Gee
Bass: Mike Reese
Tuba: Rick Felix
Pennywhistles: Rick Felix
Bell: Gerry De La Torre
Background Vocals: Rick Felix, Fred Gee and
Gerry De La Torre

SIDE B BAND 2

GONNA SAVE THIS PLACE

GONNA SAVE THIS PLACE is a song that helped unify local opposition to the State government's 1981 plans to possibly site a large hazardous waste treatment facility in Chenango County.

It's daybreak o'er these fair Chenango hills
Our land is threatened by the chance of a
chemical spill
Seeping from a site that they're trying to sell
as safe
And if we don't act now nobody's gonna save this
place

For the people up in Smithville are upset by the
fact
That their favorite fishing holes might someday
turn black
And the flowing Genegantslet that was once so
very clear
Could soon turn to poison they fear

It's daybreak o'er these fair Chenango hills
Our air is threatened by the clouds from a toxic
waste mill
Coming from a smokestack that they're saying
is completely safe
And if we don't act now nobody's gonna save
this place

For the folks in Beaver Meadow and in South
Otselic Town
Are hoping for deliverance from the plan that is
around
They say that it's as safe as anything that can be
So why build it in the country

It's daybreak o'er these fair Chenango hills
Just ask Flacke and Carey if they'd live near their
toxic waste mill
Our water air and soil are more important than
political face
And if we don't act now nobody's gonna save this
place

And the rest of us here in this quiet peaceful land
There really is a problem and it's one to
understand
Will we let our Chenango be destroyed by toxic
waste
NO!! we're gonna save this place

Guitar: Fred Gee and Gerry De La Torre
Bass: Mike Reese
Dobro: Gerry De La Torre
Fiddle: Ron Rutowski

SIDE B BAND 3

BUTTER AND CHEESE EXPRESS

This song tells some humorous stories about the old rail line from Norwich to Cortland which was known as the BUTTER AND CHEESE EXPRESS.

Chorus:

Can't you hear that whistle blowin' for the
Rainbow Tressle
Milk train's coming by today
It runs down through the valley not very far from
here
Oh the 'Butter and Cheese' is really on its way

Oh the Irishmen who built it were a little short
of temper
When they found out that they couldn't have
their say
There were quite a few abrasions on that
memorable occasion
And the constable he had to run away

Chorus:

You know old Erastus Hogeboom he was in a
great big hurry
He tried to jump the train at Frinkville town
But he missed the moving railing oh you should
have heard the wailing
Those three fingers that he lost were never found

Chorus:

Oh that brakeman R.D. Lewis took a ride he
hadn't planned on
When the woodcar he was riding broke astray
Shootin' down the grade at sixty in DeRuyter
clocked at fifty
R.D. Lewis he was found ten miles away

If you want to go to Cortland don't expect
to go a shoppin'
Plus you'll find that there's no option but to stay
And if you must return tomorrow this should add
to all your sorrows
The Norwich train leaves at the break of day

Chorus:

Guitar: Fred Gee
Guitar (lead): Peter McLaughlin
Bass: Roger Smith
Mandolin: Tom Rozum
Fiddle: Ron Rutowski
Background Vocals: Tom Rozum and Roger
Smith

SIDE B BAND 4

I'LL NEVER FORGET

There's a different verse to I'LL NEVER FORGET for each person who has been touched by the beauty of Chenango. Warren E. Eaton (motorless flight pioneer) and Ruth Benedict (internationally respected social anthropologist) are the subjects of the first recorded verses.

I am a minstrel I sure like to sing
And share my music with pleasure
And it's been a few years since I moved to
this place
To a land full of honey and treasure

Chorus:

And I'll never forget dear Chenango my friend
The source of beginning the ending of end
We've all shared together it matters not when
Or who we happen to be

My name is Warren E. Eaton it's said
Adventure was in my upbringing
I flew in the war but I'd much sooner soar
Far above where the morning dove's singing

Chorus:

My name is Ruth Benedict and I can say
My heart will be here forever
For whenever I study new cultures I know
That my roots can never be severed

Chorus:

And now that these stories must come to an end
The fire must be raised from some embers
We always will strive for the goals in our lives
So the verse about us is remembered

Chorus:

Guitar: Fred Gee and Gerry De La Torre
Bass: Mike Reese
Mandolin: Joel Kitts and Gerry De La Torre
Fiddle: Ron Rutowski

SIDE B BAND 5

PULLING DOWN THE VINES

PULLING DOWN THE VINES is a happy harvest song about the life of the hops pickers at the Coye farm in Smyrna.

We work all day on Coye's hop farm not far from
Smyrna town
There's quite a crew to work this year and still
more to be found
The hops have grown very well there's much that
must be done
And even though we work so hard it always
seems like fun

Chorus:

Pulling down the vines that have grown so tall
Packing full the boxes that the wagons must haul
But the best part of all is what Mrs. Coye bakes
There's five thousand cookies and a hundred
tasty cakes

The vines are pulled down with the poles and
stripped of all their leaves
The speed at which we do our work is something
to be seen
The more we pick the more we get and that
just suits us fine
And we couldn't have a better job than pulling
down the vines

You can be a driver if you want they say it's fun
to do

You can work around the drying house if you
want something new

You can even be a bailer use the very best of
twine

But you'll never find contentment 'til you're
pulling down the vines

Chorus:

We had a barn dance just last night and everyone
was there
The girls had done a real job of fancying up
their hair
The boys were beaming all night long the kids
played all the time
And the band it played a happy reel called
'Pulling Down The Vines'

Chorus:

Guitar: Fred Gee
Guitar (lead): Peter McLaughlin
Bass: Roger Smith
Banjo: Frank Dederer
Fiddle: Tom Rozum
Mandolin: Tom Rozum
Background Vocals: Tom Rozum and Peter
McLaughlin