

## **Oreanaug Park**

A combination of several pieces of land put together over the course of several years by Susan Shove, with the help of William Cothren, Oreanaug Park is now an area of over 60 acres for passive recreation. The name Oreanaug comes from the Pootatuck, the Native American tribe which resided in this area before being settled by colonists from Stratford, CT in the 1670s, meaning "sunny place." It was Mrs. Shove's hope that the park, land which had been passed from one generation of the Minor family to the next and began as only eleven acres, would be second to none in the State for natural beauty. Woodbury resident and historian William Cothren wrote the following of Oreanaug in his History of Ancient Woodbury (1859):

"Oreanaug is the Indian name of the beautiful trap rock cliffs, which bound the village on the east. The front cliff has been recently purchased and improved by the writer as a mountain park. Oak, maple, hickory, chestnut and cedar trees are scattered over the mountain-top, and in the beautiful ravine beyond, while the crest is covered by a beautiful grove of pine trees, in the midst of which a tower thirty feet in height, has been erected, from which views of six surrounding towns may be obtained. It has been named the Oreanaug Park. Here one can always catch a delightful breeze, and enjoy a beautiful panoramic view of the village, valley and meandering river below, which the whispering pines above his head soothe the perturbed, wearied and overworked mind. The beautiful evergreens suggest thoughts of peace, and the beatitude of the eternal rest on high."

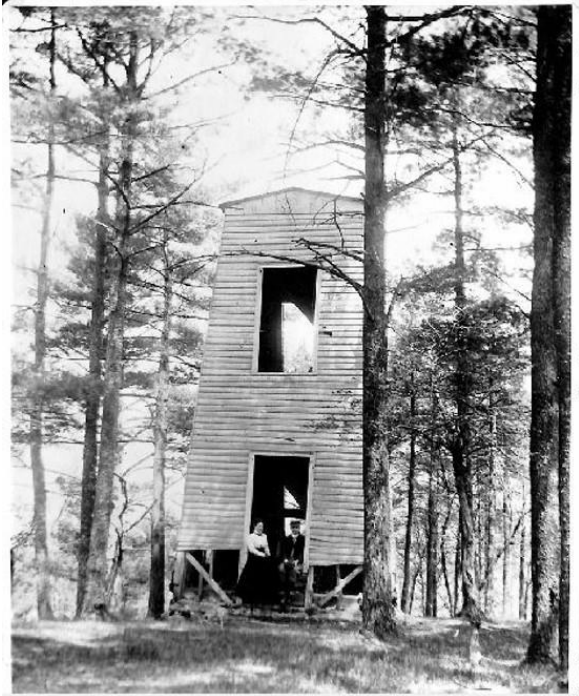
At the time of writing the above, William Cothren owned the house located at 235 Main Street South, Woodbury, as well as the property behind it on which the original observation tower had been built. The tower to which Cothren referred, however, is no longer standing. A portion of Cothren's property was combined with others to become part of the park. The property now known as Oreanaug Park was officially presented by Mrs. Shove to the Town for use as a park in 1892.

Today several hiking trails wind through the hilly park as well as a rock-climbing area for experienced climbers. The park can be accessed from two locations, both leading to the hiking trails and an observation tower from which up to six surrounding towns can be seen. The first access area can be found adjoining the Town Office Building complex through a meadow, located behind the Senior Community Center. The second entrance, located on Park Road, passes Webb's Pond (formerly known as Silver Lake) and leads through two pillars, also the idea of Mrs. Shove, each consisting of stones from every state in the Union, to the main trail. A secondary trail beginning from the main trail leads to Bethel Rock, the first meeting place of the Woodbury settlers upon their arrival in the 1670s. Oreanaug Park is now owned by the Town of Woodbury and is open from dawn to dusk year-round. For more information concerning rules and regulations the Parks and Recreation department can be contacted.

## **Oreanaug Observation Tower**

This prominent lookout point was commissioned to be built by Mrs. Susan Shove. Construction began in 1898 and was completed in 1901. Another observation tower once resided in Oreanaug, built on property, which later became a portion of the park, owned at the time by William Cothren. With the generous help of subscriptions from several other townspeople as well as former residents, the total amount of \$1,064 was raised by 1900 to pay for its construction. It resides approximately 260 feet above Main Street and 520 feet above sea level. According to the blueprints for the tower, it stands at a height of 67' 4" from its base to the eaves of the roof. A flag staff was to be placed atop at a height of 13', which would make the total height 80' 4" from base to tip. The planned flag staff was replaced, however, by a weather vane. The tower was constructed when there was relatively little growth in Oreanaug Park to block the panoramic view of at least six surrounding towns, yet more than one hundred years later when there is significant growth, the tower can be seen from almost any point throughout the Town.

JM



William Cothren's Observation Tower

Built on property referred to as his "mountain land." The tower was built for Cothren by Charley A. Somers at a cost of \$250.00 and was constructed of wood and anchored to the rock by iron rods. It provided a view of six surrounding towns.



Orenaug Park Observation Tower

The current observation tower stands approximately 260' above Main Street and 520' above sea level. The tower itself stands 67'4" from base to roof. Begun in 1898 and completed in 1901 at a cost of \$1,064, funds were raised with the help of subscriptions from Woodbury residents.

H. FORD AINEN

THE TOWER - ORENAUG PARK  
WOODBURY, CONN.