

THISTLE



Vol. X, No. 1

January 1986

MEMORIES OF THE MORRIS CANAL

Wednesday, March 19, 1986 8:00 p.m.
Millburn Public Library

Memories of the Morris Canal will be the subject of a joint meeting of the Millburn-Short Hills Historical Society and the Friends of the Library on March 19th. Our speaker will be Mr. John O'Toole of Sucasunna who is Director of the Canal Museum at Waterloo Village and a charter member of the Canal Society of New Jersey.

The Morris Canal opened in 1831 and was 102 miles in length, running from Phillipsburg on the Delaware River to Jersey City on the Hudson. Morristown financier James Macculloch conceived the idea of the waterway to transport iron ore and coal from Pennsylvania to the industrial cities of New Jersey. The mountain climbing waterway was a dramatic concept at the time and an engineering marvel with its 23 inclined planes and 34 locks. Competition from the railroads eventually put the canal out of business; it was dismantled by the State in 1924. Raymond Boulevard in Newark now follows a section of the canal's course and Lake Hopatcong was the canal's main reservoir.

The spirit of the canal lives on in the Canal Society of New Jersey formed in 1969. Mr. O'Toole will bring artifacts and replicas to the meeting, and the Friends of the Library will provide refreshments. Mark your calendar now for a fascinating look at New Jersey's past.

Searching for the Wolfe Family

Former Short Hills resident and historian Thomas J. Collins has contacted the society to ask for information on the family of Ian Wolfe. Mr. Wolfe lived in Short Hills in the 1930's and had two daughters: Moira and Dandra. He was an actor who appeared first in New York plays, then moved to California to appear in motion pictures. According to Mr. Collins, Mr. Wolfe also appeared in Mutiny on the Bounty and The Barretts of Wimpole Street. Readers with any information about the Wolfe family are asked to contact Mr. Collins through society president Valerie Bleier at 376-7048 or by writing to him in care of the Millburn-Short Hills Historical Society, PO Box 243, Short Hills, NJ 07078.



**Millburn-
Short Hills
Historical Society**

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VALUABLE DONATIONS TO THE ARCHIVES - Mr. and Mrs. Everett J. Stockman of Parkview Road recently gave the Society newspapers and memorabilia relating to Millburn and the surrounding area. For example, a 1937 map of the Township provides detailed information of a sociological nature and was apparently done as a part of a research project of the Department of Educational Sociology at New York University. The types of residential units, the kinds of businesses, the location of recreational facilities, and the concentration of ethnic groups on certain streets are specifically designated on the map which was prepared under the direction of the Millburn Recreation Department.

Copies of the Sentinel of Freedom, a Newark newspaper, from the early 19th century are of special interest. The Stockman family had saved newspapers dated 6 October 1812, 4 October 1814 and 10 October 1815 because each one had a reference to an ancestor, and it is intriguing to consider the care and significance given these papers by several generations of Stockmans.

For Society members the journals will serve as valuable resource material on social, political and economic aspects of early American society. The issue of 4 October 1814, for example, contains several articles relating to the War of 1812. There is an account of the British shelling of Fort McHenry in Baltimore harbor and a letter from a witness to the battle between American and British naval forces on Lake Champlain, both of which occurred the previous month. It is in the published orders of Major Peter Kean to the Essex Brigade, a militia unit, that we discovered a bit of local history.

Major Kean, on orders from a superior officer, stated that "the following plan has been adopted for the purpose of spreading an alarm in case of a threatened attack (from the British).

Field pieces are to be stationed at Elizabeth Town, Newark, Springfield, Caldwell and Paterson, under the direction of the commanding officer in each district.

On an alarm being given at or near any one of these points, the officer commanding will cause three guns to be fired in rapid succession

For the purpose of spreading an alarm by night, beacons will be erected at the following places:

- One on the Short Hills above Springfield;
- One near the toll gate, back of Cranetown;
- One at Caldwell; and

One at Weazel Mountain - which are to be lighted as soon as the guns at any one point shall have been heard."

These orders are dated 24 September 1814, just at the time the American fortunes in the war were at the lowest ebb. With control of the sea the British fleet had blockaded our coast, stopped our commerce, burned Washington and attempted to take Baltimore. The British could pretty much land where they wanted, and New Jerseyans were taking precautions just in case.

We have long known that "the short hills" served as lookout and beacon points during the War for Independence. Bonfires burned on Beacon Hill at what is now the Summit/Short Hills line at the time of the battle of Springfield in 1780. Thirty-four years later the same system of warning against invasion was used, but this time there was no battle. The tide of war had turned in our favor with the American victory at Lake Champlain, and the British defeat of Napoleon removed another major cause of conflict between the United States and Great Britain. Militarily, the War of 1812 was a minor event. The British never penetrated more than a few miles into our country and, with the exception of Washington, never held one of our cities for even a day, but the citizens of Essex County had no way of knowing the beacon fires would not be needed. It is satisfying to know from reading the Sentinel of Freedom that they were prepared.

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WALKING TOUR MAP - A project whose worth we have long recognized is now in the works. The completed map will outline routes and provide architectural and historical notes to enhance your enjoyment of what you see.



Graphic by Will Bradley (1868-1962)
 American designer and former resident of Short Hills

HISTORIC PHOTOGRAPHS - In the files at Town Hall we recently found pictures of the freight station which stood where the Rescue Squad building is today. If you have any old photographs of our town, let us know so that we can have a print and a negative made for our growing collection. Historic photographs from the Society's collection are regularly on display on the second floor of Town Hall. Others are made available for publication in newspapers, periodicals, calendars and to researchers. Help us to preserve for future generations these valuable views of our community.

CAN YOU HELP US? - Volunteers are urgently needed to aid in the following ongoing activities of the Society:

- Membership - maintaining records and overseeing the printing of the Handbook
- Archives - assisting in indexing archival materials
- Item Indexing - reading and indexing back issues of The Item
- Oral History - interviewing long time or famous residents
- Slide Shows - presenting the four Society slide shows to schools and organizations

In each case volunteers will be given training to effectively handle the task. Volunteer by sending in the form below.

 I would like to participate in the following activities of the Millburn-Short Hills Historical Society

- | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Membership | <input type="checkbox"/> Oral History |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Archives | <input type="checkbox"/> Slide Shows |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Item Indexing | |

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

PHONE _____

Editor: Owen Lampe 376-8827

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