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The Morris Canal

By William M. Litvany

Travel on the Morris Canal

Sidelights on the history of the Morris Canal reveal that in the late 1840's an excursion packet, the "Maria Colden," pulled by three horses, made daily runs between Newark and Paterson at 50 cents a head.

Morris Canal Packet Service

During the early years of the Morris Canal, passenger or "packet" service was offered between Newark and Paterson. On June 7, 1831, a local newspaper ran this advertisement:

"The splendid Packet Boat 'Emiline,' Eph. Morris, Master, has commenced running from Newark to Paterson. She will leave Newark every morning (Sundays excepted) at half past 7 o'clock, and Paterson every afternoon at 3 o'clock. Fare through, 37½ cents: to Bloomfield, 18¼ cents. The 'Emiline' will also leave Bloomfield on Monday mornings at 5 o'clock and arrive in Newark in time for the steamboat to New York. She will also leave Newark on Saturday evenings, upon arrival of the steamboat from New York.

"The 'Emiline' is a large commodious boat, and every attention will be afforded to passengers. Two inclined planes, one at Newark and the other at Bloomfield, will afford interest to the learned and curious. N.B. Passengers on board the 'Emiline' who intend to dine at Paterson, will be conveyed in a carriage from the boat to the Passaic Hotel, free of any expense; and again returned to the boat in the same manner."

Cooling Rides on Canal

During July, August and September (late 1840's) the Morris Canal company offered "cool summer rides, accompanied

Valiant Blair Smith Stops Woodman's Ax

The facts surrounding the last-minute battle to save David Oakes' cottonwood tree are so well known to almost everyone it seemed needless to tell them again in your historical society newsletter. Nevertheless, we did want to publish something about this fine example of preservation by a valiant young lady, and what better



The Oakes' cottonwood tree, which stands on Oakes Lane on the site of Memorial Park, now under construction. It is 140 years old, 200 feet high and 21 feet in circumference.

way than in the words of the young lady herself. Here is Miss Blair Smith's account of what happened on that October day.

"... and Mr. Oakes' father carried the small tree up from the south in a suitcase", my grandmother told me time and time again. Her love for the tree made me love it, too: the way the leaves rustle before a thunderstorm; the squiggly things that fall from it in the early spring; the bright

yellow of its leaves against the fall sky. I was always conscious of the tree, in an unconscious way. I will never look at that tree again without remembering:

Saturday morning (October 4, 1969). Awakened by a knock at the door and a request to move the family car. Why? Because the cottonwood tree is coming down. Why? To make room for a road and sidewalk. There seemed to be no time to do anything. The saws could be heard. They had already cut two huge branches off. Our neighbor, Mrs. Devincenzo, and my mother were horrified. I told them we had to do something. We had to try to save the tree. They got on the phone but answering services and busy signals were the only initial responses they could get. Then, somehow, my mother got through to Councilman Cetrulo. After hasty explanations he agreed that perhaps the tree should be saved. As Acting-Mayor he said the sawing should be stopped. But the men who were working on the tree said they had a Thousand Dollar contract for the tree and no one but the police could stop them. I stayed under the tree so no more branches would be sawed off. My mother returned to our house and told Cetrulo what the men had said. Cetrulo called the police. They came. The men went home. The tree eventually was saved. As he was leaving, one of the men said to me: "Don't be mad at me, lady. I'm only doing my job." Some job.

—Blair Smith (Miss)

Both *The Independent Press* (Leonard H. McBain, Editor) and the *Newark Evening News* (Richard Bilotti) published articles relating to the saving of the tree. In addition, The Garden State Paper Company, Inc. (manufacturers of newsprint from old newspapers) placed an illustrated advertisement in *The Evening News* congratulating Miss Blair Smith, The Bloomfield Town Council and The Historical Society of Bloomfield.

by a shipment of ice," as just a way to relax when going to town.

Steamboat on Morris Canal

After the Civil War attempts at encouraging the use of steam-driven boats on the Morris Canal were being made. A steamboat excursion was reported made by officials of the Canal company to try a small steam-yacht called the "Gussie." She is a propeller, 50 feet long, 8½ feet broad, draws four feet of water, and is propelled by a 12-horse engine. The small but select party started from the Canal lock at Jersey City, and passed through

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October

Coming out of sleep I opened my eyes
and saw
Undulating Ochre Leaves Sun Fire
Tinged
Outside my Window:
And I remembered them in the May
sunlight
Sea Shimmering Green Gold.

—Howard Vogt

