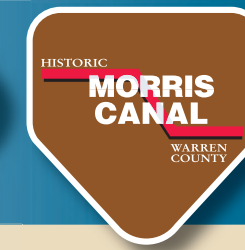


MORRIS CANAL GREENWAY



RELIGION ON THE CANAL

Imagine being completely immersed in the water of the Morris Canal basin as part of the baptism rite. Ten persons were baptized on February 18, 1894 when a hole was cut in the ice of the canal basin near the Port Murray Baptist Church.

Boatmen, often accompanied by their wives and children, worked long hours transporting cargo along the canal. Sunday was a day of rest and the boats didn't operate. Stores were closed. Families went to church or visited with others. Religion provided a social aspect to the hard everyday activities; caring for mules, cutting and laying stone walls, repairing the canal with pick and shovel.

Many boats would tie up for the weekend at Port Delaware. Reverend Williston would preach and hand out cards containing Bible verses to the children. Revival services and camp meeting were popular events along the canal. An annual Colored Folk Camp Meeting was held the first Saturday in July in a grove of trees along the canal near Washington, New Jersey.



Baptist Church, Port Murray, New Jersey, erected in 1842. Former boatmen are now at rest in the church cemetery overlooking the old canal basin.

From 1897 until 1923, Reverend Francis S. Williston was a missionary on the Morris Canal between Phillipsburg and Washington, New Jersey.



*A winter baptism in the Morris Canal at Port Murray in 1894.
Sketch by Kenneth Knauer.*



The McCrea Memorial United Methodist Church was built along Main Street in Port Murray. The bustling village was first a port on the Morris Canal and later a stop on the railroad. In this picture the canal can be seen behind the church.