

Montague Township 4th Grade Bus Tour
June 4, 2015

“Indians, the American Revolutionary War, and the Civil War”

From the Montague School Driveway, make a right onto Rt 206 North, towards the Milford Bridge.

On your left where you see the baseball field is the beginning of the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area. This is a very large park that is on both sides of the Delaware River in both New Jersey and in Pennsylvania. Montague is the northern most part of the park on the New Jersey side. Most of the property along the river from this ball field, past the Montague/Milford Bridge, almost all the way to Port Jervis, is part of the National Park Service. This Park includes the Nelden-Roberts Stonehouse, the Minisink Reformed Church, the Foster-Armstrong House, and the Grange.

Continue right along Rt 206 North, do not turn onto Clove Road. After passing Clove Road, look for driveway on the right for the Nelden-Roberts Stonehouse. Pull right into the driveway and turn the bus around so that the children can enter the front of the building. The ground is solid under all the grass area, so you can turn and park wherever you want to. If you back into the back area, the students can see the water pump and outhouse from inside the bus.

We're going to be stopping now at the Nelden-Roberts Stonehouse, where two members of MARCH, the Montague Historical Society, are going to be giving us a tour of the first and second floor of one of the original schoolhouses in Montague. There is a schoolroom set up on the first floor, and an Indian artifact display and schoolmasters bedroom on the second floor. This building was built in 1820 as a schoolhouse by George Nelden, the man who lived across the street so that his children could go to school. Mr. Roberts then bought the farm and he rented out this building. That's how it got its current name of the Nelden-Roberts Stonehouse. Behind the building is an herb garden, an original outhouse that was used before there were bathrooms, and an outside well for water with a hand-pump before there was indoor plumbing for the house. Half of you will go upstairs for a tour, and the other half will start downstairs for the tour. Then you will switch so that everyone will see both the first and second floors. When you get back onto the bus, take a look at the empty farmhouse and fields on the other side of the road where the farm used to be.

Continue on Rt 206 North, but turn right onto River Road. As you turn right, you should be able to slow down and stop for a few minutes by the Brick House Village Historic Marker or park in the lot across from Rubin Hill Road.

Before we get to the Montague/Milford Bridge, on your left you will see The Old Mine Road. Old Mine Road is often called the oldest road in the United States because it was built in the 1600's to connect Kingston, New York to the Pahaquarry Mines that is south of what is now called Sandyston going towards Dingmans Ferry and the Delaware Water Gap. It was known as Minisink Village. This part of the road in Montague Township was part of an old Indian trail that connected Minisink Island to both Milford, PA and Montague, NJ. Lenape Indians would walk this trail south each summer to go clamming on the Jersey shore beaches. They would also trade with other Lenape tribes going north into New York each year. You saw

some Indian artifacts on the second floor of the Nelden-Roberts House, and you will see many more in two rooms at the Foster-Armstrong House. Colonial troops also marched along this road during the American Revolution as they traveled from New York, through New Jersey, into Pennsylvania. Although General George Washington never rode along this road, it was visited by the famous Mohawk Indian chief, Joseph Brant, General Horatio Gates, and also Count Pulaski.

Also on your left before the Bridge, you will see a stone marker that is placed on the site where the Brick House Hotel used to be. It sort of looks like a grave stone marker like you would see in a cemetery. On your right, you will see a large blue historic marker sign that tells us about this area. The Brick House Hotel was built in 1700's, and was the first stagecoach stop and hotel in Sussex County. Even Lenape Indians traded at this hotel! A little hamlet or town grew up around the hotel and was called Brick House Village. Some early New Jersey maps have this name on their maps before the township of Montague was formed in 1759. This part of Montague is considered the original Village of Montague. Besides a hotel, there was a blacksmith shop, a schoolhouse, a general store with a post office, a ferry, many residential houses, a cemetery and two churches. All the buildings were either knocked down or moved to another piece of property when the current Montague/Milford Bridge was built in 1953.

Continue north along River Road. Pull into the Minisink Cemetery parking lot. If possible, turn around in the lot so that the students can first see the cemetery and then park for a few minutes.

The Minisink Dutch Reformed Church was founded in 1737. When people went to church then, they spoke Dutch, not English in church. That first building burned down in 1898, and that's when the church you see now was built. The Montague Reformed Church Cemetery is next to the church. It has headstones that date back to 1824. In addition to this cemetery, there are at least 6 other family burying grounds located throughout Montague. Across the street you will see a white house. That house was the original Brick House Village School. The little red building next used to be a gas station in the 1930's.

Turn left out of the church parking lot, and continue north. Pull into the parking lot of the Foster-Armstrong House. You can park right at the end of the walkway so that the children can get right out.

Next we are stopping at the Foster-Armstrong House. The tall white part of this house was built in 1790 by Julius Foster and the tan stone addition where you're going into was an addition in 1820 by his son-in-law James Armstrong. It was built as an inn for both land and river travelers. There was a ferry behind it, and a farm across the street. Inside you are going to see a bee-hive oven, Indian artifacts that were found right here in Montague, a barn exhibit, old clocks, a Dutch door, and a tavern room display on the first floor. On the second floor, you will go into a military room with uniforms from many wars, a Victorian bedroom with a rope bed, a room filled with covered bridges, and a quilt room. You will split into two groups again, with one group going upstairs, and the second group starting your tour on the first floor. Someone from the historical society will meet us now on the porch to introduce us to this building.

Turn left out of the parking lot and continue north along River Road. You might be able to slow down and pull over for a few minutes by the intersection of Millville Rd. If you can't, park in the Grange parking lot for the narrative to be read.

This empty building on your left is known as the DeRemer House. It was called the Job House before the Revolutionary War, but the original house had burned down after an Indian attack. Next time you come down this road from the other direction, or perhaps you might quickly see it now, there are some stone foundations down in the gully. These were the foundations of a saw mill that was owned by Mr. Foster and Mr. Shimer. You are now at the beginning of the Millville Historic District. This historic district goes from the Delaware River, up along the Millville Rd to Clove Road by the Montague Veterinary Hospital. This area is called a hamlet because it was like a little town within Montague during the Revolutionary War. There were two grist mills here, a fort to protect the people from Indians, a school, a blacksmith shop, a store and another river ferry. It also includes the Grange, where we are going to next.

On the left, you will see the white Shimer House. The building on the right used to be its carriage house. Some people say that there used to be a tunnel that connected these two houses which was used for the Underground Railroad. These buildings were here during the American Revolutionary War. Captain Abraham Shimer lived in this house. In 1777, Chief Joseph Brandt raided the Shimer House in the early morning. Before Captain Shimer could dress, the Indians entered his room. Shimer seized his gun and loaded it. The Indians ran away! Then the Captain with 5 or 6 of his slaves chased the Indians towards the Delaware River, where they jumped in and swam to the other side.

A descendant of this captain was another captain, but in the Civil War, was Captain Cornelius Shimer. He belonged to the 15th Regiment in New Jersey. You might have seen his wooden grave marker in the military room at the Foster-Armstrong House. He was killed during the battle of Spottsylvania, Virginia. He had been buried there, but later his grandfather had the captians' remains moved up to Laurel Grove Cemetery in Port Jervis. So two captains from two different American wars lived right here in the Millville Historic District!

The stone marker on the corner on your right is the original marker for the Historic District. If you have gone up this road, you know that it is very winding and narrow. The one land bridge goes over the stream that starts up on Clove Rd that goes all the way to the Delaware River.

Turn left and pull into the Grange parking lot. Park on the left of the building by the ramped door.

(While the students are still on the bus, please continue reading here.)

We are parking right by the new blue Millville Historic District sign. This has the same words as the sign we will see later on Clove Road.

Behind the grange you can see the Community Garden. It is fenced in with a large sign in front of it. 300 years ago, all this property used to be Indian hunting and planting fields. Many Indian artifacts had been found in these fields in the past 25 – 50 years. These fields go all the way west to the Delaware River.

There is a cemetery behind the Grange called the Westbrook Family Burying Ground. You can't see this from the bus, but it's behind the trees on the other side of the Grange. You can hike there through the fields.

The Grange was incorporated in 1904. When we get inside, you will learn that it was built for people to learn about farming. Students used the building as a school, and people have always used it as a community center. Please go up the ramp into the door and then turn right into the main room of the Grange. The president of the Grange will show you some special exhibits about what they do there and tell you some stories from adults who went to school there 50 years ago.

Go around the Grange and exit to the left continuing to go north on River Road.

Most of the property we are going to see now along both sides of the road used to be farms. The Wells farm was next to the Grange.

As you heard, students went to school at the Grange before your school on Route 206 was built in 1955. Let me tell you about the one-room school houses that used to be in Montague. In 1902, there were 4 one-room school houses in Montague. Brick House School had 48 students, River School had 27 students, Clove Rd. School had 20, and Church School had 36. That's a total of 131 elementary aged students, like you are! In 1942, there were only 50 students; Brick House had 12, River had 10, Clove had 12 and Church had 16. That's sure different than your total students today at Montague Elementary School!

(This is a good time to read the edited version of the Shimer House Raid if you want.)

On River Road, a little south of the intersection of New Mashipicong Road, Mashipicong Fort was built to protect settlers from the Indians. It was also called Brinks or Fort Shipeconk. Many forts were built along the Delaware River. Some of you might have visited Fort Decker in Port Jervis, another local fort that Joseph Brant raided and burned.

Starting around the time of the Civil War, Montague became a very large farming community where many types of crops were grown and exported. Our township was filled with chicken and dairy farms. Crops and produce were sent north to Port Jervis, New York and south to Branchville and Newton, New Jersey. Strawberries, corn, tomatoes eggs, and all kind of vegetables were raised here and sold.

Oral history is when people tell stories to other people and they don't write it down. One of the stories that some people in Montague talk about is that during the Civil War, soldiers were living in stone sheds along the mountainside on your right hand side, in back of the farm fields. They might have finished their enlistment with the Army, or perhaps there were deserters; who knows? But we do know that many people were needed in the fields for planting and harvesting the crops, so jobs were available for whoever lived in the area. You will still find those stone foundations on the hills if you were hiking there today.

Another oral history story involves slaves. Although no one has found any record of the exact number of slaves living in Montague, there probably were more than we heard about at the Shimer House. Most farmers had slaves to help with the crops, so sometime, someone will probably find out how many slaves were in Montague before the Civil War.

As you can see as we are driving down River Road, there are still many horse farms on both sides of the road. You will also see many fields with crops growing and even some Scotch Highlanders cows if they are out by the red barn today. Many of you might have bought pumpkins from the farm we'll be passing or perhaps eggs and vegetables from the other farm.

Did any of you notice the ferry display in the hallway of the Foster-Armstrong House by the front Dutch door? Although that was a reproduction of the ferry from Dingmans Ferry, PA, over the years, Montague has had many ferries. The Crawford Ferry was located a little north of where the Montague/Milford Bridge is now. Foster had a ferry behind the Foster-Armstrong House. Traveling north on River Road, like we are doing now, the next one was called the Wickham's Ferry and that one also crossed the Delaware River and went to Milford, PA. If you hike along the river by the Montague/Milford Bridge, you might find the original iron hooks from one of these ferries. If you go swimming in the river at the Milford Beach, you can see that is another spot where the ferry connected to the PA side. The Well's Ferry was built before the American Revolution and was used until 1869. It was also called Kittle's Ferry and Detrick's Ferry when different people bought it. A temporary ferry cable-line was used in 1888 for a short time when yet another bridge connecting Montague to Milford was swept down the Delaware River from a flood. Carpenter's Ferry was located very close to Port Jervis and that ferry connected all three states.

Continue driving down River Road until the end.

On your left you will see a one story building that was part of a resort call The Rock View. The Rock View Hotel attracted people from the cities who came to enjoy nature and wanted to eat home grown food. It offered seasonal recreation like golf and skiing, as well as indoor activities like dancing, board games and even a casino. There were many buildings on the property, as well as a golf course, horse stables, and walking paths to hike on. The Pine Cliff Lodge was another lodging that also overlooked the Delaware River. Other large farmhouses along River Road became boarding homes over the summer months because the hotels were full. Many people traveled by train into Port Jervis, and then took a carriage ride south into the resorts and boarding houses in Montague. You will continue to see many farmhouses that are still here as we travel north on River Road into Port Jervis, New York.

Before we get to the end of River Road in Montague Township, you will see on your left the Tri State Bible Camp and Conference Center. This had been another farm called the Pine Cliff Farm. One of the buildings had been an icehouse, where people stored large blocks of ice before we had refrigerators. The large building that is used as the conference center now had originally been built as an inn called the Schneider's Inn or Pine Grove Inn.

At the end of River Road, turn right into Port Jervis. At the light, turn right onto Rt 23 South. You are going to drive past the gas stations, and hopefully go slow enough so the students can hear about this area.

You are now leaving Montague Township and going into Port Jervis, New York. If you used to live in Montague 100 years ago, this is where you had to go to shop, to get the train and to sell your farm produce. They did not have Dunkin Donuts and car dealers then!

Turn right onto East Main St, State Route 6. Turn right at the light onto Route 23 South.

After we drive under Route 84, we will be entering New Jersey and Montague Township again. This used to be another hamlet, or little section of Montague, known first as Tappantown. When Thomas Dutton came in 1884, it was called Duttonville. There was a hotel, a general store, a tavern, some residential houses, a lumber company and sawmill, two gas stations, an ice pond, and ice company. This hamlet disappeared when the Tristate Mall was built in 1968. I'm sure all of you have shopped at the Shop Rite and TJ Max stores. Then the four gas stations, McDonalds and Dairy Queen were built.

If you continued south, straight up Route 23, you will come to High Point State Park. The High Point Monument was built in 1929. The High Point Inn was built there in 1888 where tourists would go to visit. It was called the Kuser Lodge in 1911 when Col. Anthony Kuser bought it. This building was demolished in 1995 because it was falling down. It was located across from the swimming lake that some of you might have gone swimming in. He and his wife donated all their property to the State of New Jersey in 1923. Because of their generosity, we can all enjoy hiking, swimming, and skiing in this park right in Montague!

Turn right onto Clove Road.

We're going to turn right now onto Clove Road, which you will see on your Tappentown/Duttonville map is still part of the Duttonville hamlet. On the right you will see many more fields and barns that were used for farming in Montague.

The Worden Farm was one of the most beautiful farms in Montague. It was also called the Golden Farm because the house had a gold roof. The barns were protected from the road by a stone wall that was white-washed and painted white. The farm buildings were demolished to make way for Fawn Haven Estates development. Now it's called Montague Lake.

On both sides of Clove Rd. was the Nearpass farm. The barn and house are both on your right. Next on your right, you will see a barn that was part of the Reinhardt Farm. It was also a large farm that was also on both sides of Clove Rd. Both farms had milking cows, and they sold the milk in Port Jervis. As you have heard, Montague Township was filled with many, many farms!

You will also see a lime kiln, one on your immediate right. You will see another one in a mile on your left and there is another one is off Deckertown Turnpike. These lime kilns looked like the stone foundations of houses, but they were not for houses at all. Limestone was quarried and then burned in a lime kiln. The residue was called lime. Farmers used lime in their fields, tanneries used it for making leather products, and builders used it to plaster inside walls and between the stones of outside walls.

(If there is time, you can read the inside pages of "the Lime Kilns of Montague")

On your right, you will see the Westfall Farm, a large farm with red barns and a white house that was built in 1775. It survived the American Revolution and in the early 19th century, it became a stop for the Underground Railroad for run-away slaves looking for freedom in the north. In 1940, the property was sold to Charles Mortimer, Sr. who brought in prize-winning dairy cows and Morgan horses. His son Duke Mortimer, who just died this year, also started the Mortimer Dramatic Arts Workshop in one of the barns. Some of your relatives or neighbors might have learned acting with Duke. Now his son, Loren, has the Westfall Winery at the farm, along with Black Angus beef cattle, Christmas trees, and hay.

The Zitone Horse Farm on your right was originally the James Cole Dairy Farm. James Cole was a decorated World War I hero. He moved to Port Jervis and became the mayor of that city in the 1950's. You might have seen some of his medals and photographs in the Military Room of the Foster-Armstrong House.

Next you will see the Montague Fire House on your left and the Montague Township Municipal Building on your right.

How many of you live in High Point Country Club? High Point Country Club used to be called Holiday Lakes. There used to be many large farms before this development was built. Some of the farms included the Grathwohl farm, Degroat, True Farm, and the Van Geisen farm. Holiday Lakes was built around a large lake with both condominiums and houses that surround an especially good golf course. In 1979 the name was changed to Canyon Ridge. In 1982, it was renamed Highpoint Country Club. People still play golf in High Point Country Club and if you happen to live by one of the golf holes, you will probably have people driving by you in golf cars every day.

On your right, is the original Shimer- Everett Farm. Now it is called the Chateau Montague Vineyards. This is the beginning of the Historic Millville District. This house was built during the American Revolutionary War era. It has a bee-hive oven like you saw at the Foster-Armstrong House.

The bus should be able to pull over at the intersection of Clove and Millville Road.

As you get to the intersection before the Montague Veterinary Hospital, on your right, you will see a large blue Millville District Historic Marker sign. This is the other end of the Millville Historic District that you saw when you were parked down by The Grange on River Road. Millville Road on the right and on your left is the Westbrook House, another colonial house from the times of the American Revolution. You might remember seeing the peacocks next to this farmhouse.

Continue driving west on Clove Road.

On the corner of Clove Rd and Ruben Hill Road, on your right, is another house that used to be the original Methodist Church. If you look closely, you will see it does look like a church.

On the corner of Clove Road and Deckertown turnpike on your right used to be a farm where the Ardler family lived. The woman you heard about at the Grange who went to school at the Grange, was born and raised on this farm. Many of the farm tools that you saw at the Foster-Armstrong House came from this farm.

The next house is the McKeeby House on your right on the corner of Clove Road and Deckertown Turnpike. It was built in the 1850's.

The last old house we're going to see is also on your right at the intersection of Clove Road and Rt. 206. It was called the Courtright Farm. Now it is an office for a local attorney.

Turn left onto Route 206 and head back to the Montague School. You did a great job today introducing our children to Montague Township!

You've seen a lot of farms and old houses today on your tour of Montague. If we had gone down Deckertown Turnpike or Birch Tree Road, there are more houses that were built during the American Revolutionary War times. One there is older than the Foster-Armstrong House, and that house has also seen a lot of history.

Your teachers have a booklet titled "Montague's Memories and Mementos" that has many other stories about Montague Township in it. Your library also has the Arcadia book "Montague" that has other photos and information about Montague.

This tour was designed especially for you fourth graders, and we hope you have enjoyed it! Remember, new facts about historical events are always being discovered.

Note: All the information for this tour has been taken from the MARCH newsletters and materials from the MARCH research library files.

Written by Beth Jones, MARCH's curator and librarian. 5-31-15