

Spanning the Gap

A Ride Down Old Mine Road

Part V: Rt. 560/Dingmans Bridge to Montague NJ

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(These following directions pick up from Rt. 560 in New Jersey, just west of the bridge at Dingmans Ferry.)

Continue on Old Mine Road across Rt. 560. At 0.8 miles you will see the Fisher (Mettler) Cemetery on the left. Early European settlers and Revolutionary War Soldiers are buried here in this area known as Rocky Knob. If you wish to stop, pull off to the left on the grass just past the cemetery. Otherwise, continue 1.1 miles more, bearing left at a "Y", to the two-story stucco-covered house on the left.



ALONZO DEPUE HOUSE

Built 1780 and early 19th century

The landscape here is not what it was in agricultural times. As with other Old Mine Road sites, there would have been open fields, a clear view west to the river, and several farm outbuildings. The siting of the house directly on the road is typical, however.

This house was constructed in two phases. Note the beehive oven on the left side of the house, built into the side of a large cooking fireplace which used residual heat to cook bread. Also note the two front doors.

The last private owner of this home was Alonzo Depue, a public officer of Sandyston, a teacher, a farmer, and the keeper of a weather station here for the U.S. Weather Bureau for 48 years. A plaque commemorates his accomplishments.

Continue 0.7 miles on Old Mine Road to the sign for Namanock Recreation Site. The road in is rough, and there is nothing of



Alonzo Depue House on Old Mine Road.



The same location today. A plaque now commemorates DePue's accomplishments.

the era left to see, but this was the site of Fort Namanock in the French and Indian War. (1754-1763) (Forts in this time and era were little more than a sturdy stone house with a palisade around it.) At 0.3 miles more on Old Mine Road, to the left over the field you can see Conashaugh Ridge across the river in Pennsylvania. Continue 0.7 miles more to a two-story white frame house on the left.

ANSON JOHNSON HOUSE

Built 1842.
Private residence

Jeremiah Gumaer, a French Huguenot, built this house, and sold the property to his son-in-law, Anson Jaeger, in 1881. Jaeger had served as a private in the Civil War. The house remained in the family until 1904, and in 1927 it was sold to Albert Johnson, whose son, Anson, gave the house its current name.

The distinguishing features of this house are its fine "surround" of the front door and the stucco finish on two sides. The stucco finish may have been applied in lieu of replacing deteriorating clapboard.

Continue 0.5 miles farther north, bear left at the Y-intersection with Jager Road on the right, and turn left onto a dirt drive with a stop sign for exiting traffic. Continue 0.1 miles on this dirt road to an early stone house on the left. You will need to pull into the driveway to see the house. Watch out for muddy terrain under your tires.



Anson Johnson House. (NPS Photo by Ken Sandri)



Inside the entrance of Anson Johnson House. (NPS Photo by Ken Sandri)

WILLIAM ENNES HOUSE

Built 1751
(Not visible from Old Mine Road).
Private Residence

Having passed Namanock and the site of a 1750s fort, we are now in an area steeped in early Dutch and English settlement. Ennes House and the Westbrook-Bell House (*below*) were two of perhaps a dozen homesteads in Minisink, a community established along Old Mine Road in the first half of the 18th century by people of Dutch descent from what is now New York State.

William Ennes came from Esopus (near Kingston) and served as a road surveyor and teacher. His early



Ennes House (NPS Photo by Ken Sandri)

stone house evokes the settlements of the Hudson River Valley. Note the steep roof with little or no eave overhang, and the arch over the windows. In rural areas coursed stone was used instead of brick, often with frame weatherboard on the gable ends above the eaves, as seen here and in the Westbrook Bell House (*below*).

Continue 0.5 miles farther on Old Mine Road to the marker for Westbrook Bell House on the left at a dirt drive. Turn carefully into the drive, watching for the drop-off from the paved road.



Arch (old doorway) and stone courses (layers) on Ennes House (NPS Photo by Ken Sandri)

WESTBROOK BELL HOUSE

(Not visible from Old Mine Road)

Built by Johannis Westbrook, another early settler, this is the oldest structure in the recreation area. Westbrook came to the area with his brothers Cornelius and Anthony and all were active in the community, Johannis giving land for the church, cemetery and school. Nine generations of the Westbrook family lived on this farm before its purchase by the United States Government.

Note the strong Dutch Colonial style characteristics and the similarities with the neighboring Ennes House (*above*).

Continue 0.2 miles farther to a 1 and 1/2 story frame house on the left, next to the road.



Westbrook Bell House. (NPS Photo by Ken Sandri)



Layers of stone on Westbrook Bell House. (NPS Photo by Ken Sandri)

BLACK (WESTBROOK) FARM BARN

House built 1850s on a foundation from the 1750s
Barn dates from late 1700s

Originally this property was deeded to Johannis Westbrook in 1725. The Greek-Revival/Italianate 1850s house was constructed on an earlier stone



foundation from around 1750.

The remarkable structure of this farm, however, is not the house but the Dutch-style barn constructed in the late 18th century. It is the only surviving example in the area of this rural style. Note the steep-pitched roof and the doors in the gable-end.

Continue 2.3 miles to the intersection of Rt. 206.

(At 2.1 miles note the old tombstones and the site of the first Minisink Dutch Reformed Church, built in 1737.)

Turn right onto Rt. 206 and continue 0.5 miles to a small stone house on the left. There is room to turn in and to park a car at the front of the house.



*(top)View from the south of Westbrook Barn in 2000. (NPS Photo by Ken Sandri)
(Bottom) View from the north of Westbrook Barn (after refurbishing) in 2008.*

NELDEN-ROBERTS STONEHOUSE

Built approximately 1816-1836

Operated as a museum house by the Montague Association for the Restoration of Community History (M.A.R.C.H.)

The origins of this small house are obscure, although its construction is attributed to George Nelden, who acquired the property in 1816. It is believed that in addition to its use as a home, it served for several decades as a school house. Some claim it also housed a forge, blacksmith shop, and a "gun factory" to serve the residents of the small settlement that once existed here.

The house is open on weekends in summer and for demonstrations and exhibits.

Turn to the right leaving this house and retrace your route about 0.5 miles back to the intersection of Old Mine Road on the left. (As you leave Nelden-Roberts House, note the farmhouse and outbuildings on the left, set back from the road with a long driveway or "allee". This is the 1850s Nelden-Hornbeck-Roberts Farm. The orchard here may have the oldest apple tree on National Park Service land.) Before forest grew back, there were views of the river throughout Montague. At the intersection for the bridge, bear gently to the right (Do not make a sharp right turn.) and follow Rt. 521 north (called River Road here in Montague) 0.4 miles to a white church and cemetery on the left.



Nelden-Roberts Stonehouse. (NPS Photo by Ken Sandri)



Nelden-Hornbeck-Roberts Farmhouse. (NPS Photo by Ken Sandri)

MINISINK DUTCH REFORMED CHURCH

Built 1899, addition built 1959

Dating back to 1737 and an earlier church site passed on Old Mine Road, this is the oldest congregation in the county and the only congregation of this denomination within the recreation area. An earlier church at this location was built in 1827, and tombstones in the cemetery date to 1805.

Turn to the left leaving the church and continue 0.3 miles until you see a large two-story frame house coming up on the left. Pull into the parking field just before the building.



Minisink Dutch Reformed Church in Montague NJ. (NPS Photo by Benjamin Cohen)

FOSTER-ARMSTRONG HOUSE

Built approximately 1790s

Operated as a museum house by the Montague Association for the Restoration of Community History (M.A.R.C.H.)

Noted for its long association with a single prominent local family, this house was begun by Julius Foster. In 1812, James Armstrong married Foster's daughter and the Armstrongs added the stone kitchen wing to the main part of the house built by Foster. The property remained in the family until purchased by the United States Government in the 1970s.

Foster and Armstrong operated a ferry, and the house was also used as a tavern and inn for river travelers. A road trace between the house and ravine leads down to the river. The family ran many other businesses as well, including a store, a sawmill, blacksmith shop, distillery, and cider press. The house thus reflects the standard of living of a prosperous family in the early 19th century.

The house shows strong Dutch/English character. The gambrel roof, the interior chimney with exposed fireplace on the outside wall, and the ending of the gable in a "kick" all reflect Dutch influence.

Foster-Armstrong House is open for tours on summer weekends, for meetings and lectures throughout the year, and in early December for holiday displays and events.



Foster-Armstrong House, the northern end of this tour of Old Mine Road. . (NPS Photo by Ken Sandri)



Foster-Armstrong House, showing the beehive oven in the south wall of the kitchen wing. (NPS Photo by Ken Sandri)

This is the end of tour excerpts for Old Mine Road.

To return to Kittatinny Point and Interstate 80 via Route 209 through Pennsylvania, return south on Rt. 521 (River Road) to the intersection with the Montague/Milford (Rt. 206) Bridge and take the bridge across the Delaware River into Pennsylvania (\$1.00 toll or EZPass westbound). Turn south (left) on Rt. 209. From here it is approximately 33 miles to Interstate 80. For food and gas turn right exiting the bridge and drive 1 mile into Milford PA.