

# Historic Highlights of Morris Township

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# Welcome to Morris County

The Morris County Board of Chosen Freeholders and the Morris County Heritage Commission invite you to discover the towns and villages of Morris County.

Until the late seventeenth century, Lenape Indians were the only inhabitants of these hills and spacious valleys. Dutch and English settlements began around 1685. The distinctive Dutch stone farmhouses of Pequannock and the

clapboard East Jersey cottages of the English settlement at Whippany represent the earliest architecture in Morris County.

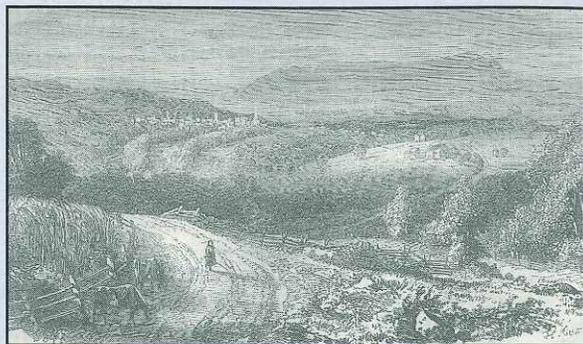
Morristown became the military capital of the Revolution when Washington's army encamped nearby in the early months of 1777 and again for the winter of 1779-80. Morris

County's iron mines provided ore for local furnaces, which produced shot and cannon for the Continental troops. The newly built mansion of Jacob Ford Jr. became Washington's headquarters.

The opening of the Morris Turnpike in 1804, the Morris Canal in 1831, and the Morris and Essex Railroad in 1837 ushered in a century of growth for the rural, sparsely settled county. Early architecture changed slowly, but by the 1850s, Gothic Revival, Italianate, and other Romantic styles had become popular. In the late nineteenth century, the now familiar front-gabled workers' houses abounded in industrial towns such as Boonton and Dover.

In the 1890s wealthy New Yorkers flocked to Morris County, bringing lifestyles of the Gilded Age. Working farms became estates, and elegant mansions changed the landscape around Morristown. By the 1920s middle-class buyers found summer homes in new lake communities in the county's wooded hills. Change came slowly until the postwar boom of the 1940s and the construction of interstate highways in the 1960s and 70s, which brought accelerated corporate and residential development.

In recent years the thriving county has led the metropolitan area in growth and prosperity. Respite and recreation are provided by New Jersey's largest county park system. By supporting the preservation of open space, farmland, and historic sites, residents help to protect the character of Morris County's historic communities, where the past lives on.



View from Spring Valley, Morris Township, 1855

# Morris Township

Formed in 1740, Morris Township covers 15.8 square miles and has a population of about 21,500. This community of neighborhoods enjoys abundant open space where its landscape of rolling hills, streams, and woodland is preserved. The township surrounds the town of Morristown, which was part of the township until their final separation in 1895. Both communities have shared a school district since 1971.

Morris Township's early English-speaking inhabitants were Presbyterians whose families had come from Long Island and Connecticut several decades earlier. They worshiped in Morristown, the center of activity then as now.

During the winter of 1777, when Washington first headquartered in Morristown, township residents endured much hardship. A smallpox epidemic infected civilians and soldiers alike, killing many and leaving others disfigured. Soldiers foraged the countryside, creating a food shortage. Two years later, during the coldest winter of the eighteenth century, the Continental Army again occupied the area.

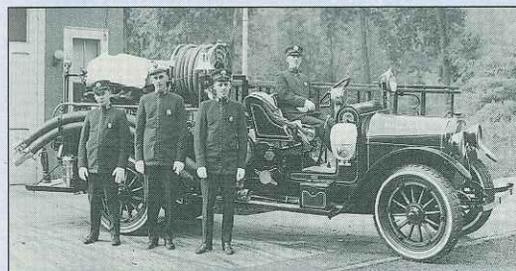
Most residents were small farmers and their suppliers. As early as 1768 a bloomery forge operated along Lake Valley Road. During the Revolution Colonel Jacob Ford operated the only gunpowder mill in New Jersey, not far from Washington's Headquarters. Joshua Guerin's blacksmith shop, located within today's Morristown National Historical Park, served the Continental Army. In 1787 and 1788, businessman Walter Mould and New Jersey Supreme Court Justice John Cleves Symmes ran a mint that manufactured horsehead pennies using copper mined on Symmes's property near the corner of Sussex Avenue and Kahdena Road.

In addition to Morristown, Morris Township included until 1806 the area presently in the Chathams, Madison, and Florham Park, and until 1867, Harding and Long Hill townships. Despite local industries such as a paper mill and a brick works, Morris Township remained largely agricultural in the nineteenth century.

By the 1870s the Township's pastoral landscape drew the attention of wealthy industrialists who amassed land by purchasing small family farms. Skilled workers and craftsmen arrived. Some worked on estates; others served a growing middle class. They lived in neighborhoods such as Hillside, southwest of Morristown. An African-

American community had formed in Collinsville by 1912.

The Great Depression and increased taxes ended the era of large estates. Some, like Charles Gillespie's Tower Hill (Villa Walsh Academy) and Luther Kountze's Delbarton, were sold to religious orders. Others survived the Depression and years later were adapted for commercial use or razed for developments.

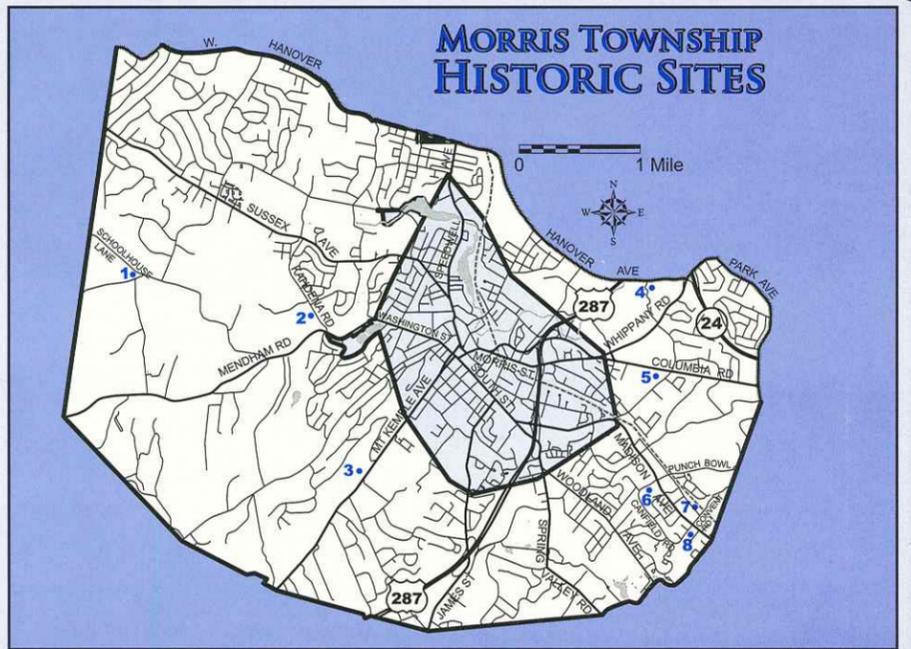


Hillside Hose Company No. 1, 1924

The advent of Route 287 in the late 1960s brought corporate office buildings and more residents. Though development accelerated, the presence of Morristown National Historical Park, four county parks established here between 1957 and 1979, and local parks ensured the preservation of open land. Along its winding roads and in its older neighborhoods, evidence of Morris Township's rural past can still be seen today.

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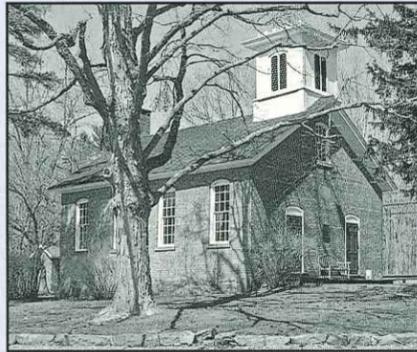
From Washington Valley to Convent Station, Morris Township has historic places scattered throughout the municipality. Of the eight sites listed here, all except Convent Station are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Please respect the privacy of homeowners.



## 1 WASHINGTON VALLEY HISTORIC DISTRICT

*Washington Valley Road*

In Washington Valley, eighteenth and nineteenth century farmhouses harmonize with the natural environment to create a landscape that evokes the township's agricultural past. A focal point in this picturesque valley is the 1869 Washington Valley School, built on the site of a brick school erected in 1813. Between thirty and forty children attended classes here until 1913, and some attended Sunday school in the building from 1875 to 1937. For 150 years local residents have used the school as a community meeting place.



## 2 FOSTERFIELDS

*Mendham and Kahdena roads*

General Joseph Warren Revere (1812-1880) built this exuberant Gothic Revival house, "The Willows," in 1854. A grandson of Paul Revere, the general served in both American and Mexican armies. He painted the trompe l'oeil murals in the dining room, which were preserved by the next owner, Charles Foster, a New York broker, and his daughter Caroline, who ran the farm after her father's death. A few years before she died at the age of 102, Caroline Foster donated the property to the Morris County Park Commission, which maintains it as a museum and living historical farm.



## 3 PRUDENTOWN HISTORIC DISTRICT

*Mount Kemble Avenue (Rt. 202), south of Morristown*

Joseph Prudden (1693-1776) settled in this section, known as Mount Kemble, about 1740. Prior to 1769 he operated a pottery manufactory or brickyard here. His descendants carried on until 1857, when Silas Armstrong acquired the business that would survive until 1906. Many buildings in this neighborhood were constructed of local brick. One was the 1810 Mountain School (pictured above), the oldest surviving schoolhouse in the township, attended by local children until 1914. The district is notable for a nineteenth-century African-American community, who had acquired land from the slaveholding Kemble and Doughty families or arrived later to work in the brick factory.



## 4 WHIPPANY FARM (FRELINGHUYSEN ARBORETUM)

*53 East Hanover Avenue*

The Boston architects Arthur Rotch and George Tilden designed this Colonial Revival mansion as a summer home for George Griswold Frelinghuysen and his wife Sara (Ballantine). The house was completed in 1892 and surrounded by a pastoral landscape of sweeping lawns, woods, and gardens. George's daughter Matilda kept the summer home and in 1964 planned its conversion to a public arboretum. She bequeathed the estate in 1969 to the Morris County Park Commission, which occupies the house as its headquarters. The former carriage house contains the Frelinghuysen carriages.



## 5 NORMANDY PARK

*Normandy Parkway*

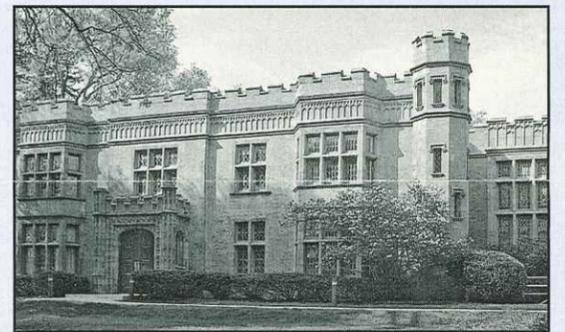
John Dodd Canfield (1845-1910), president of the Morristown Land and Improvement Company, designed and developed Normandy Park, beginning with this 1890 house (pictured here). The original character of the neighborhood, where houses on large lots were set 200 feet back from a tree-lined boulevard illuminated by gaslights, can still be seen. The development attracted affluent people who preferred a neighborhood environment to the isolation of a large estate. Residents included movie magazine publisher and director Eugene V. Brewster, homeopathic medicine magnate Frederick Humphreys, and suffragist Alison Low Turnbull Hopkins.



## 6 ALNWICK HALL

*355 Madison Avenue and Canfield Road*

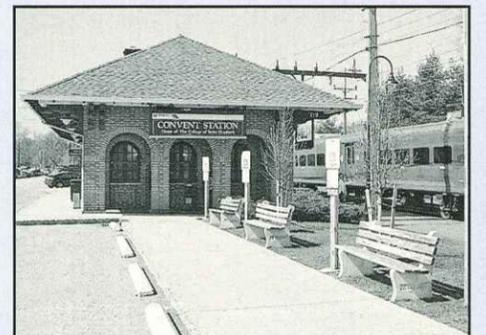
One of many elaborate houses that once stood along the stretch of Madison Avenue known as "Millionaire's Row," this survivor of the Gilded Age was built for Edward P. Meany (1854-1938), New Jersey Judge Advocate General and director of the American Telephone and Telegraph Company, and his wife Rosaline. The Meany's based their 1904 home on the design of Alnwick Castle in Northumberland, England. From 1961 to 1984 the structure served as Saint Mark's Lutheran Church. Today it is a bank and office building known as "The Abbey."



## 7 CONVENT STATION

*Convent Road, off Madison Avenue*

Convent Station originated with the Sisters of Charity, who founded Saint Elizabeth's Academy. Their superior, Mother Mary Xavier Mehegan (1825-1915), successfully petitioned the railroad to make a stop near the Academy in the 1870s. The sisters donated the land and had a wooden stationhouse built in 1876. The stationhouse functioned as a post office until a separate post office, which served "Millionaire's Row" along Madison Avenue, was erected in 1900. In 1913 the railroad constructed the present Renaissance Revival train station. The old post office was replaced with the existing building in 1961.



## 8 GLYNALLEN

*Canfield Road*

Publisher George Marshall Allen (1863-1941), a pioneer in color printing, built this magnificent 1917 mansion, modeling it after the post-medieval manor house at Compton Wynyates in Warwickshire, England. Prominent New York architect Charles I. Berg designed the house. Oak paneling 400 years old, taken out of Compton Wynyates during remodeling, adorns the entrance hall. Other parts of the interior were salvaged from English mansions slated for demolition. From 1952 until the 1990s the well-known mapmaking firm General Drafting Company occupied Glynallen. Today it is a private home.

