

Spanning the Gap

Foster Armstrong House



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Spanning the Gap
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The historical runner-up to Van Campen Inn is Foster Armstrong House, located at the northeast corner of the park on Old Mine Road in Montague, NJ, about 1/2 mile north of the Milford-Montague (Rt. 206) bridge.

The two-story wood-framed section of the house was built in the 1790s by Julius Foster, a millwright from Long Island NY. It was an impressive addition to an

existing smaller house, which was possibly built by the Westbrooks, early settlers of the Minisink area. The smaller house then served as a kitchen "wing" for the new structure.

James B. Armstrong moved to Montague from Frankford, about 20 miles to the south, marrying Foster's daughter Mary about 1812. Probably around this time, the earlier kitchen "wing" was removed to make way for the building of a new stucco stone kitchen.

Foster and Armstrong together owned such diversified businesses as a ferry across the Delaware, a tavern located within the house, a general store, a blacksmith shop, a cider press, and a distillery. Armstrong was a shoemaker and also

(Left) The front door and the transom of Foster Armstrong House in December 2002. M.A.R.C.H. hosts old-fashioned holiday weekends at the house each year.



Foster Armstrong House, looking south along Old Mine Road (Route 521).



Porches looking north at Foster Armstrong House.

served as the local postmaster, while Foster operated a saw mill and a grist mill.

The two-story framed section of Foster Armstrong House is notable for its *gambrel* roof and flared, or "Dutch kick", eaves. Its entrance doorway is handsomely detailed with a seven-paneled "Dutch" door, and a typically Federal period transom with gracefully curved divisions, all flanked by fluted pilasters. The gable end chimneys served four corner fireplaces, each adorned with a different mantel design.

At the right (north) end of the house may be seen the exposed brick backs of the first floor fireplaces, a detail common to the area. At the left (south) end of Armstrong's kitchen wing -- possibly the tavern area -- is a large cooking fireplace, flanked by a "beehive" oven which protrudes to the outside of the building.

In 1983 the house was externally stabilized by the National Park Service. Today Foster Armstrong House is operated by *Montague Association for the Restoration of Community History* (M.A.R.C.H.) and may be visited on Sundays in summer and at other times for special events.



The Dutch-style "kick" in the roof line, looking north.



The "beehive" oven.