

## NELDEN-ROBERTS STONEHOUSE

The Nelden-Roberts Stonehouse is located on 501 Route 206 in Montague, N.J. M.A.R.C.H. signed a special use permit with the National Park Service in 1981 to allow our historical society to use this unique house. The house/building has been on the N.J. State Register since 1978.

This two-story stone house is dated to circa 1820. George Nelden had come to Montague from Pennsylvania about that time and had acquired the farm across the road. John D. Everitt had a teaching contract in 1827 and 1828 that read that he was hired to teach a 3 month English day school "at the stone schoolhouse near George Nelden's". It appears the building was used as a school until around 1865 when a larger one-room schoolhouse was built down the road in the Brick House Village. Then this house became primarily a residence and house.

The schoolhouse was then partitioned into smaller spaces for use as a home. The original structure probably had fewer windows and the first floor was most likely one large room. There are two large rooms on the second floor. It appears that the front door is probably in its original location. The plastered fireplace in the schoolroom is original and most likely provided the main source of heat both for the school and for the residence. Inside the fireplace are 2 warming shelves. The mantle and side cupboard were added later.

It is believed that when the Reformed Church was being rebuilt in 1899, this structure was used for church services.

The random width floorboards throughout the house are original. The windows are a 9 pane over 6 pane pattern, which was common to that time period. The house does not, and did not, have running water or an indoor toilet. There was, and still is, only an outhouse in the rear of the house. The drinking water had to be brought over from the farmhouse across the way. The hand pump in the back of the house is relatively new.

This house was acquired by the Federal Government from the Roberts family in the 1970's, when the property was being bought for the Tocks Island Dam Project.

The residents of the house were mostly tenants to the main farm across the way. One early resident was Marm Brink, who lived here about 1920. Locals recall her having worn long skirts and an apron. She was also recalled for smoking a pipe, something she tried to hide - as no respectable woman of her day was apt to smoke! One day as the owner of the Brick House Hotel expectantly came walking up the road, Marm Brink was busy smoking. On noticing her neighbor approaching, she quickly stuck the lit pipe into her apron pocket. Shortly thereafter, smoke began pouring out of her pocket and the apron caught fire. This event was related to us by Mrs. Herman's son, who had also visited Marm Brink with his mother that day.

Another resident was Lena Conklin. Her 1950's photo is displayed on the mantle. When she lived here, she often boarded hunters during hunting season to make extra money. She was best known for her pie-backing skills.

A painter from Bergen County, N.J. also lived here in the later 1950's. He loved to use this site to come way and paint on the weekends. People driving by on the road would see his works leaning again the exterior of the house.