

The Foster-Armstrong House is located at 320 River Road, at the edge of the Old Mine Road, in Montague, N.J. Today the road is known as River Road or SC521. It connects the three states of New Jersey, New York and Pennsylvania. The house is located a half mile north from the Milford/Montague Bridge, along the Delaware River. The two story wood-framed section of the house was built around 1790 by Julius Foster, a millwright and farmer from Long Island, New York. His brother and he came to the area to establish a place to set up a variety of businesses near the intersection of a major east-west route into Pennsylvania and the north south route along the Old Mine Road. James Armstrong married Julius's daughter, Mary, in 1812 and they built the one and a half story stone addition to the south side of the house. James, Mary and their family occupied the house with her parents. James assisted Julius in running numerous businesses from the family homestead. They ran a tavern in the house, a ferry to Pennsylvania from behind the house, a general store in an adjacent building located next to the house, a blacksmith shop, a post office, saw and grist mills down the road with the Abram Shimer family, along with an extensive farm. From 1798 – 1814, Julius Foster as an innkeeper provided a “Public House” in this house that he and his family lived in, as is on file with the State of New Jersey. The house was occupied by descendants of the Armstrong family until mid-1970 when the house was bought by the federal government as part of the Tock Island Project.

Julius Foster was undoubtedly familiar with traditional Dutch construction techniques, and many of those details were incorporated into the fine home he erected. Many of those details have survived over the years. The two-story framed section of the house is notable for its gambrel roof and the flared, or “Dutch kick” eaves. Its entrance doorway is handsomely detailed with a seven-panel “Dutch” door, and a typically Federal period transom window with gracefully curved divisions, all flanked by fluted pilasters. The house consists of 8 rooms, 4 downstairs and 4 upstairs, each with their own door, located with a center hall on both floors. The gable end chimneys served four corner fireplaces, each adorned with a different mantel design. The four fireplaces on the first floor are twice as big as the four smaller fireplaces on the second floor. The floorboards, the wood paneling going up the side of the main stairway, and many of the door and window frames woodwork are original to the house. Most of the hardware from the inside doors are original to the house. At the north end of the house can be seen the exposed brick backs of the first floor fireplaces, a detail common to the area. There is post and beam construction visible in the third floor attic with original hand-hewn beams. Julius Foster’s initials, “JF” are still visible on some of the wood beams.

At the south end of the house in the added stone section is a large cooking fireplace, flanked by a “beehive” oven which protrudes to the outside of the building. The cooking fireplace also has its original metal ironwork as well as the metal door for the beehive oven. Both the fireplace and oven have survived the years in tack and both are a wonderful teaching tool for visitors.

In 1983 the house was externally stabilized by the National Park Service. Today the Foster-Armstrong House is operated as a museum by the Montague Association for the Restoration of Community History, M.A.R.C.H, Montague’s local historical society, under a long-term lease from the National Park Service. The historical society has had a lease with the National Park Service for the Foster-Armstrong House since 1994. M.A.R.C.H is responsible for maintaining the building for basic repairs, as well as providing times for it to be opened to the public for tours. It can be visited on Sunday afternoons throughout the summer, three holiday weekends between Thanksgiving and Christmas, at other times for special events, and is always opened for special tours. The historical society also maintains a second historic building for the National Park Service, the Nelden-Roberts Stonehouse, circa 1820, on Route 206 in Montague.

The Foster-Armstrong House is listed both on the State Historic Register of New Jersey and was added to the National Register for Historic Sites in 1979 for architecture engineering.