Discover: Montgomery Place Scavenger Hunt

Name:
Date:
Montgomery Place is located just off Route 9G, three miles north of the Kingston-Rhinecliff Bridge in Annandale-on-Hudson, in northern Dutchess County.

For GPS use: 25 Gardener Way, Red Hook, NY
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Introduction:

There is a long history behind the landscape of Montgomery Place. This history begins in 1802 with Janet Montgomery, widow of General Richard Montgomery, and her purchase of over 200 acres of land on the Hudson River.

Mrs. Montgomery purchased this riverfront land with the intention of creating a new estate called Château Montgomery, which she planned to model in the French style. Developed by Mrs. Montgomery and her nephew, the estate would be passed down through the family over generations.

One characteristic that persisted through generations of Montgomery and Livingston families was an admiration for and commitment to planting and design on the property. Each successive generation ‘improved’ upon the land and its appearance. Because of this many design styles and tastes can be seen throughout the property. These differences show not only changing styles, but evolving social, political, and economic ideals.

Some of the most evident landscaping was done in the mid-1800’s under the direction of Louise Davezac Livingston, her daughter Cora, and Cora’s husband, Thomas Barton. At this time the ‘romantic’ era was in full swing and this style is still quite visible in the landscape today.
Begin your scavenger hunt by crossing through the visitor center and onto the gravel path leading towards the house. The white dotted lines on the map (pp. 2&3) show the paths you will be asked to take.

As you walk the path towards the house make sure to look around and think about your surroundings. What do you see? Be specific.

Soon you will see a building to your left. Find the sign titled “Coach House.” Read it carefully.

1. What was the coach house used for? How did its use evolve over time?

2. Who designed the coach house and why was the design important?

Continue along the path (now old driveway) towards the house. Notice your surroundings.

How do you feel in this space?
You will come to another sign on your right titled “Arboretum.” Read it carefully.

1. What is an arboretum?

2. Who began the arboretum at Montgomery Place and why?

Walk around the lawn. Find a tree that you haven’t seen before. Describe the tree, draw it, or make a leaf rubbing.
3. What did having an arboretum, or having imported species of trees, say about the Livingston/Barton family? What could you relate this to today?

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4. What is an allée?

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Return to the path and continue walking towards the house. Notice the remnants of the allée.

1. What do you think the purpose of this landscape feature is?

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You will come upon the house soon. Look at the architecture and think about its relationship to the landscape. How does it relate to the outdoors? How does it contrast with nature?

What is your first impression of the mansion?

There are two signs in the lawn in front of the house. Read the one titled “Montgomery Place Mansion”.

1. Who designed the additions to the house?

2. According to the sign, how did additions to the house symbolize a change in American ideals? What are your thoughts on this?

3. How are today’s values reflected in landscapes and architecture being built in your neighborhood or community? Give an example.
1. Who was Frederick Catherwood?

2. Who was Andrew Jackson Downing and what was his role at Montgomery Place?

3. What are some of the uses that the lawn in front of the house has served over the years? How would you use it if you lived here?
Go out into the lawn and find the former location of the conservatory. Where is it? How can you tell it’s the right spot?

Now continue around to the back porch of the mansion. Think about your surroundings.

Describe or draw what you see when looking out from the back porch.
Next, read the sign titled “View of the Hudson and Catskills.”

1. According to the sign, why was America’s relationship with nature shaped differently than Europe’s?

2. How does this view of the Hudson and the Catskills reflect the romantic idea of landscape gardening? How do you feel about the view?

3. Many experts say there is a contradiction in the ‘romantic’ idea of landscape gardening. What do you think they mean?

4. Do you think this romantic ideal can be found or applied to modern landscapes? Why or why not?
Now it’s time to see the ‘wild’ part of the property. Walk back across the lawn to the trail on the map (pp. 2&3) labeled with this symbol. Continue down the highlighted path towards the pond.

Find the tree labeled “European Purple Beech;” How old do you think it is? Why?

As you walk down the path, keep in mind that most of this ‘wild’ landscape was actually carefully planned and managed.

Can you see any differences between this forest landscape and one which was not planned? If so, explain.

Follow the sign to “The Lake.” When you come to the lake, read the sign labeled “Lake and Bath House.”
Now walk back up the path you came down. When you reach the fork, follow the second path. This will lead you to the Sawkill Falls. At the bottom of the falls read the sign labeled “The Sawkill.”

1. Who was Robert Donaldson, and why did he and Mrs. Livingston vow to never develop the Sawkill River ravine?

2. What did the joint purchase of the Sawkill represent?
3. Write a description of or draw a picture of the Sawkill Cataracts (falls) showing the romantic idea of landscape gardening.
1. How was the Sawkill used as a productive landscape feature?

2. Of all three gardens, which do you like the most and why?

Now continue back uphill on the trail to the right, following the sign which points to ‘Mansion.’ Next, find the flower gardens near the south end of the mansion. They are labeled on the map (pp. 2&3) and there are also signs to direct you. Walk through the Rough, Ellipse, and Formal Gardens. Take time to look around.

1. How do the Ellipse or the “green garden” and the formal gardens differ from other parts of Montgomery Place’s landscape?
Now you have seen a good portion of the Montgomery Place Estate. Why do you think this property and landscape, and others like it, are preserved?
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What was your favorite part about the property?
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Conclusion:

Today Montgomery Place serves as one of the Hudson Valley’s prime examples of historic preservation as well as a wonderful example of romantic landscape gardening. The preserved mansion and grounds provide us with a window into another time period, showing us how people of a certain class lived, how they thought, and sometimes why they thought and acted in these ways. This helps us to better understand how we got where we are in today’s world.

Montgomery Place provides people a beautiful place to come and walk, relax, and just enjoy the outdoors. It seems that even now Louise Livingston’s wish to keep the property’s beauty protected from development and destruction lives on.
SKETCHES: