

GENERAL INFORMATION

Main Street Ledgewood (formerly Drakesville) traces the old Morris Turnpike, New Jersey's first toll road, chartered in 1800 and open for traffic in 1805. The turnpike followed a branch of the Lenape Minisink Trail across the NJ Highlands terrain through Roxbury Township. The historic mountain-climbing Morris Canal, which, like the Minisink Trail, linked the Delaware River to the Atlantic, crossed the turnpike in Drakesville.

The village grew around this intersection and served local farmers, miners, iron makers and canal boat operators. The Ledgewood Historic District, including Main Street, Canal Street and a portion of Emmans Road, is listed on the National Register of Historic Places together with the Silas Riggs House, the King Store, the King House and the remaining Morris Canal features. The three buildings, which comprise Drakesville Historic Park, all have close connections to the canal and all are operated as local history museums.

Excavation of the Morris Canal commenced in 1825, probably on the nearby Riggs property near Lock 1 East and what is now Riggs Park. The canal climbed hills and followed ridges across the highlands, relying on an innovative system of 23 water-powered inclined planes, two of which were located in Ledgewood. Plane 2 East, a subject of ongoing preservation efforts, Ledgewood Basin and the site of Plane 3 East, which emptied into King's Basin, are all within walking distance.

The Township of Roxbury purchased the King Store and House with Green Acres funding in 1984 and Roxbury Rotary Club began rehabilitation of the King Store in 1989. Rotary

completed work on the exterior and first floor of the Store in early 2000 and then began work on the King House. In June of that year the Roxbury Historic Trust was incorporated to maintain and manage the King Store and King House Museums and their collections.

On-going preservation of the King buildings and site has been funded by the NJ Historic Trust, NJ Historical Commission (a division of the Dept. of State), the Morris County Historic Preservation Trust, the Morris County Heritage Commission, Roxbury Township Open Space, the Roxbury Rotary Club and individual donors.



King Store and Residence 1905 with wagon scale visible at left of store

The Museums are open on the 2nd Sunday of each month from April to December from 1 to 4 P.M. as well as Celebrate Preservation on the 3rd Sunday in May, Living History Day in October and the Saltbox Christmas Soup Supper on the first Friday evening in December. Visitors are also welcome to call for an appointment.

visit facebook: *Museums at Drakesville*
and www.roxburynewjersey.com

Silas Riggs Saltbox House

Historic preservation in Roxbury Township began in 1963 when the Silas Riggs house, slated for demolition, was donated to the newly-formed Roxbury Township Historical Society and moved to its present location on a small lot provided by Miss Louise King, Silas Riggs' great-granddaughter. The Historical Society has since restored the one and one-half story dwelling and operates it as a museum exemplifying late 18th Century country life.

The exact age of the house is not known but it could date from the late 1700s or early 1800s.

The 1973 National Register nomination, prepared by Architect John Dodd, states that the one-story lean-to addition at the rear of the building was added in the late 19th century, covering the red-painted siding of the original exterior wall and creating the "salt box" form.

The hand-hewn timber-frame construction with mortise-and-tenon joints, split wood shingles and interior details, like split lathe under plaster walls, typify local rural construction from the colonial period through the early 1800s. The Dutch-influenced H-frame construction and 2nd floor knee wall greatly increase useable space in the loft compared to single story structures.

The centrally located kitchen fireplace includes a brick bake oven at the front of the hearth, a style in use starting in the 1760s. The fireplace is still regularly used to demonstrate hearth cooking.

Silas Riggs, a tanner by trade arrived in Roxbury Township with his wife Harriet Rose in 1805 and became a successful entrepreneur, first operating his tannery and later contracted to excavate the first section of the Morris Canal on his property nearby. He subsequently operated three canal boats. Entrepreneurship ran in the

family and Silas' son Albert became a successful businessman and prominent citizen.

The King Store

The King Store, an impressive two and one-half story rubble stone structure, was opened in 1827 by Absalom Woodruff and Obadiah Crane. The walls were originally stuccoed with white lime-based mortar. Shutters and doors were green. The Woodruff family operated the Store until 1835. Subsequently, Albert Riggs, son of Silas Riggs, operated it as a general store serving the local community and the Canal. He acquired the building in 1847. For many years Albert also served as the Postmaster.

Theodore King married Emma Louise, daughter of Albert Riggs, and took over the Store in 1873. They lived on the second floor of the building until 1878, when they moved in to their new residence across the lawn. Their daughter Louise was born in 1881. Albert Riggs died in 1882 leaving a substantial estate, including the store, to Emma Louise.

In 1885 the Dover newspaper, *Iron Era*, reported on the renovation of the "old stone store building at Drakesville." The exterior assumed Greek Revival style with a cream and brown trim color scheme and was "re-jacketed" with what was apparently an early use of portland cement-based stucco, scored and painted to resemble cut stone. The interior was given a cream and maroon color scheme.

Mr. King was a keen businessman and by 1900 the Store was reported to be taking in \$100 per day. The Kings acquired large holdings of real estate surrounding the lower part of Lake Hopatcong and extending down to Port Morris, and also operated the Lake Hopatcong Steamship Company and the King Grocery Store and Mountain Ice House in Landing, NJ. See www.landingnewjersey.com.

Theodore died in 1928 and in 1929 his daughter Louise locked the building with the merchandise intact. It remained locked until Louise's death in 1975. A year later the King Store was opened for a church fundraiser and a comprehensive series of photographs was made by photographer Russ Wack and his daughter Beth. The King heirs removed most of the store's contents but many items were later returned to contribute to the restoration project.

The museum occupies the first floor of the building and presents an interpretation of a turn-of-the-century General Store complete with shopkeeper and period merchandise. Postcards and other items are available for purchase.

The King Store features a diverse collection of weighing machines including the original grocers scale seen in the Russ Wack photos and a replacement of the five-ton wagon scale seen in the foreground to the left of the store porch in the 1905 picture of the store and house.

King House

By 1887 the King House shows up in Robinson's Atlas of Morris County. A vernacular frame house to start, this home has several additions with Italianate and Queen Ann influenced detailing. The first of these is likely the front turret followed, circa 1900, by Theodore King's circular office connecting the front and side porches.

The exact sequence of the back additions is unknown but they include the dining room, rear kitchen, screened porch, and upstairs rooms. A dumb waiter connects the kitchen and basement.

Of special interest is a unique, 1936 oil on canvas, four wall, pastoral mural decorating the King House dining room, and signed by English artist, James Marland, a resident of Budd Lake.

The partially rehabilitated first floor features two exhibit rooms and period interpretations of the kitchen, dining room and parlor.



Township of Roxbury

DRAKESVILLE HISTORIC PARK



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