

# Historical Walk through Montagu



1. No 24 Bath Street (1860) – The Montagu Tourism Information Office, was originally built as two semi-detached houses and the one part used to serve as the Magistrates Court. It was nearly demolished in 1982, when Mrs. Esther Hofmeyr went into action and obtained legal authorization to prevent the demolition. One can see lovely fanlights above the front as well as interior double-doors.
2. No 20 Bath Street (1854) – This T-plan, thatched Cape Dutch house, has four lovely Florid gables and is one of the two central gabled homesteads in Bath Street. The house has an exceptionally pretty front door with fanlight above and was restored with much care.
3. St. Mildred's, the small Anglican church (completed in 1871) – is one of many churches across the country designed by Sophy Gray, wife of Robert Gray, the first Anglican Bishop of Cape Town. She was never trained as an architect, but she had boundless enthusiasm and a thorough knowledge of the English rural church architectural style.
4. No 9 Rose Street (1911) – This imposing, stately Edwardian villa housed the Dutch Reformed Church parsonage. It was designed by John Parker and built for Dr. DF Malan, - then Parson, but who later became Prime Minister of South Africa. The house has a central passage (30 metres long) with 15 rooms. A lovely workers' cottage is on the premises close to the river.
5. No 17 Long Street (1859) – is a rectangular, thatched house with a square and pedimented front gable and simple fishtail end gables. The facade has bays separated by pilasters. One can see a beautiful double door and three attractive fan lights. The house next door was previously an outbuilding (cellar) of 17 Long Street
6. No 26 Long Street (1865) – is a good example of an unadorned, 5-bay, Cape Georgian double storey dwelling of the 1860's. Uncommonly, the doors and windows are not symmetrically placed on the façade.
7. No 32 Long Street (c 1860) – is a typically thatched roof L-shaped house with straight end gables and an adjoining cellar. An outside staircase in front leads over the cellar's doors to the loft. The flat roofed annex is typical of the many rural houses that were enlarged at the time.
8. No 25 Long Street (1853) – 'Joubert House', is the oldest surviving residence in town. The outbuilding was supposedly the first prison in Montagu. By 1970 the building was so run down that the municipality declared it to be uninhabitable. During 1981 the Montagu Museum bought, restored and transformed it into a house-museum in 1983. The kitchen floor is laid out with genuine peach pips and there is a large assortment of herbs in the back garden.

*As you proceed down Long Street and get to the Long- and Church Street crossing, you will observe four different architectural styles of our historical buildings in Montagu.*

9. No 33 Long Street – 'Bonheur' is a lovely Victorian town house with a high-pitched roof and cast-iron embellishments ("broekielace") over the veranda. Connoisseurs estimate that the front door is more than 50 years older than the house.
10. No 40 Long Street (1892) – A five-bay, double-storey Cape Georgian house with a richly decorated parapet and pilasters on the ground floor. Alexander Floris Kriel who used it as a "tuishuis" (town house), built this stately residence.

11. No 42 Long Street – Although this may not be one of our proclaimed buildings, it is of historical significance as it is a typical example of a British Colonial style town house that is prevalent throughout the Karoo region.
12. No 44 Long Street – is one of the smallholdings that provides Long Street with much of its historic agricultural character. The property reaches down to Kingna River. In 1984 the owner discovered a photograph in Cape Town archives indicating that the house initially had a half-hipped roof gable. He had the house restored, including the new gable, unique to Montagu.
13. No 46 Long Street (1860) – A rectangular, thatched house with straight end gables and timber stairs. now housing a restaurant and B&B. The building has some beautiful chimneys and end gables. Only one of the four oaks that used to be in front of this building remains of the once oak-lined Long Street. This property is still popularly referred to as the "4 Oaks"
14. KVV Building: (1930's) Montagu also has a number of fine industrial buildings, such as the Kooperatiewe Wynbouersvereniging (KWW) buildings on two corners of Long and Kohler Streets. While not formally protected to date, these large complexes contribute to the character of the town and are evidence of its agricultural and distilling history.
15. The Mission Church (1907) - 41 Long Street, on the right today houses the Montagu Museum, where the history of the town is depicted by the way of photographs, documents, furniture and consumer articles. The organ, pulpit and copper baptismal font are all original features dating back to the turn of the last century.
16. No 35 Long Street (1860) – rectangular, thatched house, with square and pedimented front gable and fish-tail end-gables. This house, once owned by artist Francois Krige, was sensitively restored by the architect Revel Fox

*Turn right into Church Street. While only 2 of the buildings in the street are proclaimed, just about each of the homes - from Long Street up to Bath Street – are our best preserved buildings in a stretch and worthy of being register buildings in their own right.*

17. 'Mimosa Lodge' – started as a simple, single story farmhouse with a thatched roof and was later converted into a double storey hotel. During its history, it served as a school boarding house, old age home, brothel – all summarised in “lodging”. After extensive renovations and stripping the floors of carpeting, today even the wooden staircase creaks as it did in the olden days. Today it is an hotel with a restaurant.
18. “Eerste Pos” is opposite (literally translated “First Mail”), Esther Hofmeyr's home for many years. She came to Montagu in 1941 as a young teacher and stayed at Mimosa Lodge. Much of the appearance of Montagu and mainly Long Street can largely be attributed to her efforts and dedication. Over the years, she persuaded, in her enthusiastic manner, the owners of many houses to restore and not to demolish nor to modernise their homes. It now houses a Brewery.
19. No. 30 Bath Street (1856), on the left corner is the second of the two properties with a central gable in Bath Street. The roof construction of this building is unique in that the thatched roof spans 2 rooms deep (without any central support) from street to back of the house instead of the single-room span as in the case of the buildings of its kind. The small building next door (No 28 Bath Street), used to be the outbuilding to No 30 and served many purposes; police station with trap door, library, post office, accountants' offices, restaurant and art gallery.
20. The Dutch Reformed Church (constructed 1858 - 1862 by Joseph Barry for an amount of £4,300) It is a Neo-Gothic cross-shaped building designed by George Burkett. The eastern and western galleries - designed by John Parker - was added in 1906. It used to be painted in the traditional white colour, but after complaints by residents that the reflection of the bright sunlight off the white walls virtually blinded one, it was decided to use the colour presently seen here, i.e. a creamy yellow.

*Many visitors ask the question; “We notice that most of your Dutch style buildings are all painted white and the woodwork a dark green. Why is that?” ... Traditionally, whitewash (a watery limewash) was applied to the walls. This allowed the walls to 'breathe' and dry out properly after rains. The white also helped to reflect the harsh sunlight off the walls during the heat of the summer months, keeping the interiors cool. Legend has it that the simple reason why everything (from oxwagon wheels, furniture, to the woodwork on the old homesteads) were painted green – what we now refer to as “Monument Green” – was that it literally was the first, and only, paint available at the time! Whatever the reason, it resulted in the now trademark characteristic of what we popularly refer to as the “Cape Dutch Style”.*

21. 42A and 44 Bath Street (1899) The very ornate, green gabled building directly next to Standard Bank, used to house the ABC Bank (African Banking Corp.) and Bank Manager's house in the early years. It is a late-Victorian building with Dutch Renaissance revival gables, projecting off-centre portico and fine cast-iron verandahs. It currently houses a restaurant.
22. The Montagu Country Hotel (1875) is a fine example of the Art Deco Style and was the first hotel in town. In 1880, it became the centre of controversy when the President of the Transvaal, Paul Kruger, visited Montagu with a large entourage, including General Piet Joubert. The Montagu inhabitants awaited the event with keen anticipation. At the last moment the owner of the hotel, who did not agree with Kruger's politics, decided not to go ahead with the planned grand and sumptuous reception in his hotel. The local woman-folk jointly went ahead and held the reception in the Joubert House in Long Street.
23. 21 Piet Retief Street is an elegant and beautiful example of a late Victorian house. Typical of the style are the many decorative gables, “broekielace” (metal tracery) around the stoep and quoined corners.
24. 3 Piet Retief Street Library and Municipal Building (1893). In 1893, the Church Council decided to apportion a part of the church square to the trustees of the school governing council. In 1910 the school building was enlarged, hence this date on the central gable. The town council bought the building in 1975 and renovated it to become municipal offices. During the work on this building, a flask was uncovered containing the following: a document under the heading, 'Deo Gloria' and the names of the VIP's attending the laying of the cornerstone in 1883, 5 coins, a 'Ons Land' newspaper of Tuesday, 9th May 1892 (price:2 pence), and a 'Cape Times' dated 10th May 1892. The council still has these items in safe keeping.

We trust you have enjoyed this walk with us! If you still have time to spare, you may want to continue down Mill Street to Montagu West, which is known for its typical Karoo Cottages.