

Historical Walk through Montagu



- 1. 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. 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 reception in his hotel. The local woman-folk jointly went ahead and held the reception in the Joubert House in Long Street.
- 2. 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 an art gallery called The Vault.
- 3. The Spanish Flu Plaque, Bloem Street**- The 1918 influenza pandemic (the 'Spanish Flu' or 'Great Flu') was unusually deadly. It infected 500 million people around the world and resulted in the deaths of 50 to 100 million, one of the deadliest natural disasters in human history. South Africa was the 5th most affected country, with half a million deaths - 62% of those who died lived in the Cape. Montagu did not escape this deadly pandemic and in memory of the 100's who lost their lives a plaque was erected on the 22nd November 2018, the centenary of this worldwide tragedy.
- 4. 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 - were added in 1906.
- 5. 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.
- 6. No 24 Bath Street (1860)** - Originally built as two semi-detached houses, one part used to serve as the Magistrates Court. It was nearly demolished in 1982, when Mrs. Esther Hofmeyr went into action and prevented the demolition. One can see lovely fanlights above the front as well as interior double-doors.
- 7. 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.
- 8. 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.
- 9. 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 and 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.

10. **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.
11. **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 the cellar of 17 Long Street
12. **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.
13. **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 nursery and a large assortment of herbs in the back garden.
14. **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.
15. **No 33 Long Street** – 'Bonheur' is a lovely Victorian town house with a high-pitched roof and cast-iron embellishments ("broekielace") over the veranda.

Turn left 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.

16. **'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. The premises are still used as a hotel and restaurant.
17. **"Eerste Pos"** is opposite (literally translated "First Mail"), and was 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.

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.

18. **No 35 Long Street** (1860) – a 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. It now houses a collection of Krige's work that are for sale.
19. **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.
20. **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.
21. **The Mission Church** (1907) - 41 Long Street, on the left, today houses the Montagu Museum, where the history of the church and community is depicted. The organ, pulpit and copper baptismal font are all original, dating back to the turn of the last century.
22. **No 46 Long Street** (1860) – A rectangular, thatched house with straight end gables, beautiful chimneys and timber stairs. Previously known as Four Oaks, only one of the four oaks that in front of this building remains of the once oak-lined Long Street.
23. **KWV 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. The one building currently houses the Montagu Cultural and Educational Trust.
24. **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.
25. **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, an '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.
26. **The Montagu Coat of Arms** - In 1968, Montagu's municipal council obtained a grant of arms from the Cape Provincial Administrator: a white and black shield with grapes, head and shoulders of a griffin with three diamonds. The crest is a demi-eagle rising from a mural crown. The ceramic of the coat of arms at the entrance to the municipal offices was the work of the prominent local resident and potter, Inez Kachelhoffer.
27. **11 Mill Street: The Blue House, 'Poesiehoek'** - The house was built circa 1886, in a double story Karoo, Cape Georgian style, with simple unadorned parapet. There is keystone work around the sash windows and doors, and on the corners. During the 1918 Spanish Flu Epidemic it was used as a hospital. Many died in the house, giving rise to the belief that the house was haunted. Later it was used as a brothel by twin sisters, then became a convenience store and now finally a private residence.

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