



Bard College: The Montgomery Place Campus



Mansion Tours

Beginning June 4 on Saturdays through September 3. Tour hours: 10:30 a.m., 11:45 a.m., 1 p.m., and 2 p.m. No reservations required. \$10 per person. Montgomery Place grounds are open from dawn to dusk year-round.

About Bard College

Bard College is a four-year residential college of the liberal arts and sciences with a 155-year history of academic excellence. With the addition of the Montgomery Place estate, Bard's campus consists of nearly 1,000 park-like acres in the Hudson River Valley. The College offers bachelor of arts degrees with nearly 50 academic programs in four divisions—Arts; Languages and Literature; Science, Mathematics, and Computing; and Social Studies—and Interdivisional Programs and Concentrations. Bard also bestows several dual degrees, including a B.A./B.S. in economics and finance, and at the Bard College Conservatory of Music, where students earn a bachelor's degree in music and a B.A. in another field in the liberal arts or sciences. Bard's distinguished faculty includes winners of MacArthur Fellowships, National Science Foundation grants, Guggenheim Fellowships, Grammy Awards, French Legion of Honor awards, and Pulitzer Prizes, among others.

Over the past 35 years, Bard has broadened its scope beyond undergraduate academics. The College operates 12 graduate programs and has expanded to encompass a network of regional, national, and global partnerships—including dual-degree programs in four international locations; the Bard Prison Initiative, which grants college degrees to New York State inmates; and Bard High School Early Colleges, where students earn a high school diploma and an A.A. degree in four years. Bard's philosophy sets a standard for both scholarly achievement and engagement in civic and global affairs on campus, while also taking the College's mission to the wider world. The undergraduate college in Annandale-on-Hudson, New York, has an enrollment of more than 1,900 and a student-to-faculty ratio of 10:1.

Bard
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The mansion house's Montgomery Room



The gardens at Montgomery Place

MONTGOMERY PLACE: A DESIGNATED NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK AND SIGNIFICANT REPOSITORY OF HUDSON VALLEY HISTORY

An American Treasure

Montgomery Place, a 380-acre estate adjacent to the main Bard College campus and overlooking the Hudson River, is a designated National Historic Landmark set amid rolling lawns, woodlands, and gardens, against the spectacular backdrop of the Catskill Mountains. Renowned architects, landscape designers, and horticulturists worked to create an elegant and inspiring country estate consisting of a mansion, farm, orchards, farmhouse, and other smaller buildings. The Montgomery Place estate was owned by members of the Livingston family from 1802 until the 1980s.

The History

Originally, the land was occupied by Native Americans who used it for hunting and harvesting wild foods. During the 18th century, European settlers farmed the area and harnessed the power of the Sawkill Creek for gristmills and sawmills. In 1802, 58-year-old Janet Livingston Montgomery, widow of Revolutionary War hero Gen. Richard Montgomery, purchased the land to create a fashionable country house. In 1804–5, she built a federal-style mansion on the property. Janet's true passion was for plants and botany, and she established and ran a commercial nursery for fruit trees, shrubs, berries, and seeds. When she died in 1828, her brother Edward and his wife, Louise,

inherited the property. After Edward's death a few years later, Louise, daughter Cora, and son-in-law Thomas Barton transformed portions of the estate from a working farm into a showplace. Renowned architect Andrew Jackson Davis redesigned the house, adding new wings and porticos in classic revival style to suit prevailing Romantic sensibilities. Landscape designer Andrew Jackson Downing created plans for elaborate flower gardens, several walking paths, rustic benches, and an arboretum. (Both Davis and Downing were also involved in the original design and layout of the Blithewood estate, now part of the main Bard College campus.)

In the 1920s, Violetta and John Ross Delafield (a Livingston descendent) inherited the estate. Violetta, a botanist, created multiple gardens, continuing the legacy of Cora, Louise, and Janet. In 1986, Livingston heir John Dennis Delafield transferred the estate to Historic Hudson Valley in whose hands it remained until 2016, when Bard College acquired the property and a new chapter began.

The Landscape

The property's basic layout and contours have remained constant throughout most of the estate's existence. Apart from formal gardens and manicured lawns, 45 acres of farmland and 235 acres of woodlands stretch from the Hudson River to the front of the property on River Road. Much of the property's original 19th-century design remains, as well as gardens, water features, and trails from the early 20th century. Exceptional vistas include the Hudson River and Catskill Mountains, the rushing waters of the Sawkill's lower falls, and the 80-acre South Woods forest. Montgomery Place's orchards and agricultural land are another vital component of the site's heritage and appeal.



The coach house

The Architecture

Montgomery Place has incorporated numerous styles of architecture over the years. The original federal-style mansion was built by Janet Livingston Montgomery with help from her nephews, William Jones and Lewis Livingston, who employed local laborers, stonemasons, and carpenters, including slaves owned by the family. The end result was a stucco-clad, rectangular, neoclassical structure. In 1841, Louise and Cora, the next generation, discussed the transformation of the mansion with the architect Andrew Jackson Davis, marking the start of a program of design and construction that would span 30 years. The mansion is considered Davis's finest neoclassical country house, significant for both its design excellence and its rarity. Other Davis-designed buildings on the property include the coach house, farmhouse, and Alpine-style Swiss cottage. Davis's original cottage drawings are in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

In 1839, Louise and Cora commissioned architect Frederick Catherwood to design an opulent wood and glass conservatory. Andrew Jackson Downing designed formal garden beds and manicured paths to surround the gothic revival-style conservatory, framed by a forest to the north and an allée of locust trees to the south. From its construction in 1840 until its destruction circa 1880, the conservatory was the most commanding structure on the Montgomery Place landscape aside from the mansion. In 1935, Violetta Delafield designed the first "wayside stand" for a garden club display and as a way to encourage local farmers to sell their produce and make roadsides more attractive. Eventually, it became a farm stand which still exists today, selling the estate's apples and other fruit.



Westward view of the grounds

Montgomery Place Today

Montgomery Place illustrates Americans' changing relationship with nature and landscape over time. As the attitudes of the people who lived and worked there shifted, the estate changed from productive landscape to ornamental showcase to recreational retreat. Today, the Montgomery Place setting functions as a microcosm of American landscape history, from the early wilderness to its latest reincarnation as part of the integrated campus of Bard College. Bard is committed to conserving Montgomery Place's significant historic and cultural assets as well as preserving its landscape and maintaining its public access and farm.

For Your Safety and Enjoyment

Please help us maintain the beauty of these grounds by carrying out whatever you bring in. Trash bins are located only at the Visitors Center.

Please do not disturb or collect plants, animals, or rocks.

When walking the trails, please remain on the paths to assist with erosion control and reduce incidents of Lyme disease.

The Sawkill Trail and South Woods Trail have uneven terrain and are occasionally steep and muddy. The West Lawn Trail features sloping terrain.

Pets are not allowed on the property.

