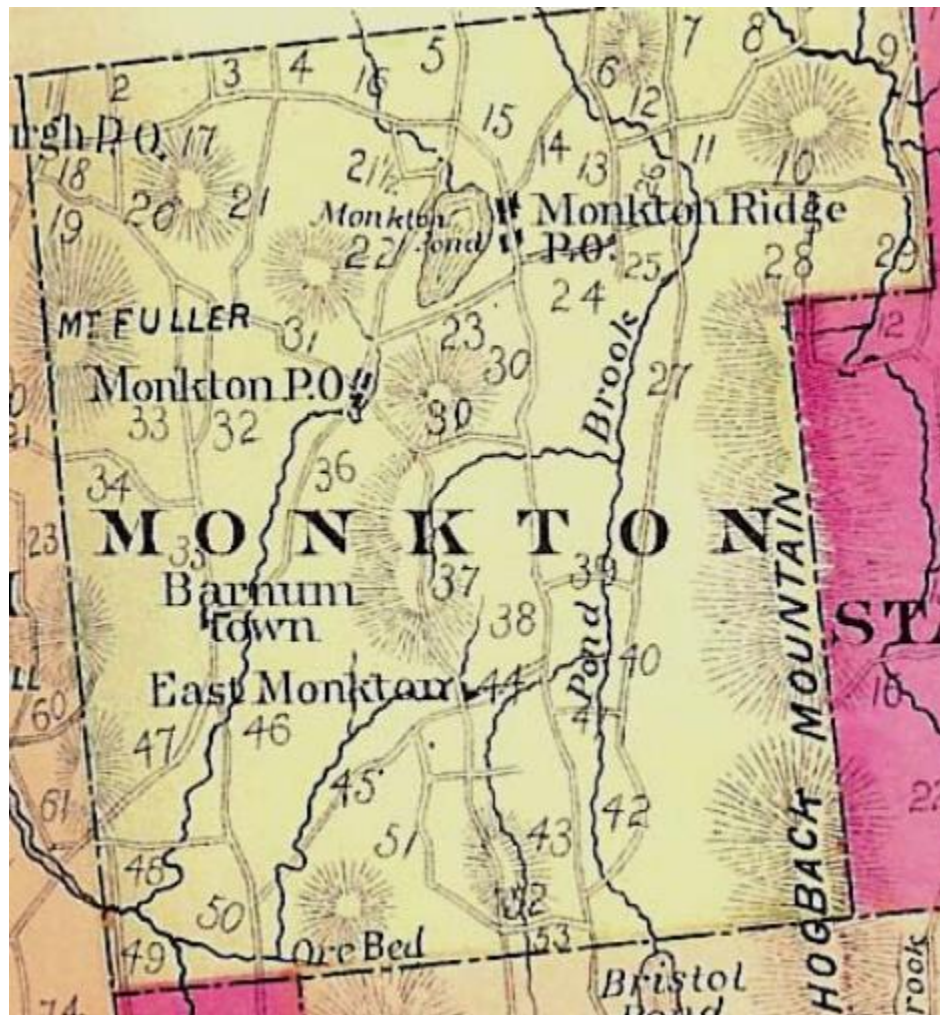


Monkton Ridge History Tour

Monkton Ridge



Map from *Gazetteer and Business Directory of Addison County, Vt.*, for 1881-82 compiled by Hamilton Child (Syracuse, New York: the Journal Office, 1882)

Monkton, Vermont History Tours

Monkton Ridge Tour

Candace Layn Polzella, Lauren Parren
and Cindy Walcott

on behalf of the
Monkton Museum and Historical Society
June 2022



Photo of Cedar Lake, also known as Monkton Pond
Courtesy Monkton Museum & Historical Society

Land Acknowledgement/Precontact Past

While much of Monkton's pre-colonial history has been lost, we know that the indigenous people who inhabited this land were part of the western Abenaki Nation. Here, they hunted, fished, sugared, farmed, foraged, and raised families. We acknowledge the native protectors of these beautiful fields, woods, and waters and the task of present-day farmers, hunters, and homeowners to nurture this land for future generations.¹

Vermont State Archeologist Jess Robinson says that archeological finds in Monkton suggest that people lived here as long ago as about 12,000 years. The Abenaki and their ancestors were the stewards of the hills and valleys. Over one hundred precontact Native archaeological sites have been identified in Monkton to date, indicating intense use of the local lands and the resources they provided. The oldest archaeological sites date to the earliest human entrants into the region, known as Paleoindians, about 12,000 years ago. Other sites confirm a consistent Indigenous presence from that early date until after European contact. While there are notable clusters of sites near Cedar Lake (Monkton Pond) and Winona Lake (Bristol Pond), sites are also common throughout the valley floors and in the hills. Outcrops of quartzite provided stone for making tools. Overall, Monkton appears to have been a desirable, active locale for Natives groups throughout the precontact past.²

Early Settlement by People of European Origins

The town of Monkton was chartered by New Hampshire in 1762. The earliest settlers of European descent arrived in Monkton around 1774. The settlement was short-lived, as several settlers were captured by British soldiers and their Native American allies and taken as prisoners to Canada during the American Revolution. After the end of the war, some families returned to their farms, and others joined them. By 1786, the town was sufficiently populated to warrant formal organization of a town government.

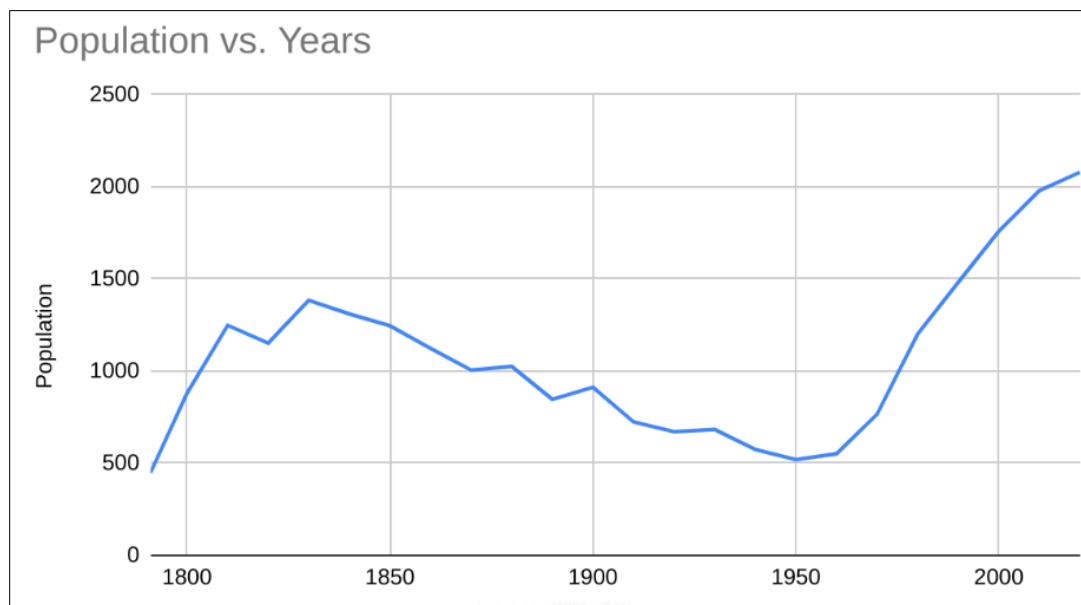
The town of Monkton is composed of four hamlets: Barnumtown in the southwest, Monkton Boro to the west, Monkton Ridge on the crest in the northern part of town, and East Monkton in the southeast.

By 1882, each of the hamlets had grown in population and had established services and businesses to support the needs of its residents. The hamlet of Monkton Boro, located in the central part of town, had a store, schoolhouse, and twenty-five dwellings. In Monkton Ridge in

the northern part of the town, there was a store, a schoolhouse, and fifteen dwellings. The hamlet of Barnumtown, in the western part of the town, had about a dozen houses and the hamlet of East Monkton, located a little south of the center of town, had a church, schoolhouse, a blacksmith shop, and about a dozen or so scattered houses.³

Population Trends in Monkton

In the early decades of the 1800s, Monkton's population grew rapidly. From about 1840 until 1950, Monkton's population declined. Since that time, as farming decreased and commuting to Burlington, Middlebury and other population centers became feasible, the population has increased rather dramatically.⁴



Addison County Census Records: Monkton
Vermont Historical Society

Trends in Monkton mirror those in the state. The year 1836 was record-breaking for out-migration from Vermont. Many factors drove this migration: depleted land and forests, increase in crop pests, much improved transportation to the states and territories to the west, including canals. Lastly, "sheep fever" hit Vermont, causing many small farms to be bought by large sheep farmers. Many of these small farmers moved west. Vermont became almost completely deforested during this period of intense sheep farming. Can you imagine what our landscape looked like at that time?

The Green Mountaineer, a newspaper published in Windsor, VT warned: "Beware of 'western fever' and above all, sell not our farms to your rich neighbors for sheep pastures."⁵


Monkton Ridge History Tour

Because of the rich history in our town, the Monkton Museum and Historical Society is creating tours of each of the four hamlets in our village, starting with Monkton Ridge.


This first tour of Monkton Ridge is designed to help you make connections between our past and present.

Our first stop provides a backdrop against which we consider changes over time. To the west we see the distant Adirondacks and Cedar Lake just below the hill where you stand. This gorgeous view is what the land might have looked like centuries ago. Situated between the Green Mountains of Vermont and the Adirondack Mountains of New York, the land is crisscrossed by a network of streams and rivers. Now called the Lewis Creek watershed, it is rich in natural resources, and has been a place to make a living locally while also providing access to the wider world.

Knowing that a building was built in 1810 may be interesting, but what makes it fascinating are the stories of the people who lived at each location. We encourage you to add your own insights to this tour and will provide information about ways to share your knowledge at the end of each tour.

	Description	
1	Monkton Town Hall & Russell Memorial Library	

Our first stop is our new town hall and library. It was built in 2021 after long consideration by the voters in our town, replacing buildings that no longer met the needs of the town, specifically the 1859 Town Hall (Stop #21) and the former Russell Memorial Library (Stop #16).

	Description	
2	Monkton Friends Methodist Church	

Generations of people have worshiped in this characteristically simple Quaker Church. Monkton Ridge was settled as one of Addison County's few Quaker communities in 1798. Joseph Hoag served as the first leader of the Friends community. Their first meeting house was built in the northwest part of town.

The meeting house at the present Monkton Ridge site was built in 1878 at a cost of \$1,200. It held 250 people. The church was dedicated in 1879.⁶ In 1958, a kitchen, dining room and Sunday school room were added.⁷

In 1945 the Methodists and Society of Friends voted to share a Methodist minister from Hinesburg.⁸ The church building continued to be owned by the New York Annual Meeting (Friends) until 2019 when it was purchased by the Monkton Ridge Church Association.⁹

In 1957, the Burritt family donated a stained-glass window in memory of Reginald and Steven Burritt. It was created by Guido Nincheri (1885-1973) of Montreal, Canada. Born in Italy, he studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Florence. His work is in over 200 churches throughout Canada and New England.¹⁰

Today, this meeting house remains an important location for life's big events such as weddings and funerals, and other community events such as holiday bazaars and spring plant sales. The church also hosts the Free Little Pantry.

3	Description	
	Dwelling	


This is a modern house built in 1957¹¹ The one-story home was built by Roderick and Carmelita Burritt, long time active community members. "Carmie" served as Town Clerk for 37 years (1973-2010) and Rod held many town offices over the years.¹²



Carmie Burritt unlocking the Town Hall door
 Courtesy of the Monkton Museum & Historical Society

4	Description	
	Dwelling	

This is a modern home built in 1976¹³

5	Description	
	Dwelling	

This property, built around 1880, was owned by George F. Skiff. Mr. Skiff also owned other properties in the immediate vicinity. He was a Civil War soldier, served as doorkeeper at the state legislature and was an auctioneer.¹⁴ He died in 1883 at the age of 47 and is buried in the Monkton Ridge Cemetery.¹⁵

6	Description	
	Dwelling and barn	

The house in the "Y" at the end of the Ridge, built in the early nineteenth century, now houses a law office and a real estate office. The house was built by Robinson Mumford, who came to Monkton from Bennington, VT in 1791. He was a justice of the peace and a leading member of the Baptist church for many years. His granddaughter Annis Mumford, wife of Ira Day, later occupied the house for many years. Their daughter ran a nearby business as a dressmaker.

In 1881, an elm tree stood on the property said to be "105 years old, has a circumference of twenty-three feet, and shades an area of nearly a quarter of an acre."¹⁶

By 1910, Dr. Arnold A. Denton owned this property and had his medical offices there. A local resident said that when her father died, Dr. Denton brought her a pet rabbit, that she named "Doc."¹⁷ This house was the second site of the Monkton Free Library.

In 1913, Roy Nash bought the property with plans to fit up the north side for a storeroom, for which it had been formerly used. His father, J. E. Nash, would have his wheelwright shop beside it.¹⁸ Here he would make and repair wheels for nearby residents.

7	Description	
	Dwelling	

This house was built in the late 1800s. In 1897, Mrs. Guy Tobey sold her house and lot to the Friends Church for a parsonage.¹⁹



Friend's Parsonage, undated photo
 Courtesy: Monkton Museum & Historical Society


This house was also the first location of the Monkton Free Library²⁰. In March 1913, Monkton was one of nine towns and villages in Vermont that voted to establish a public library. By September 1913, the library had opened its doors. The library was first housed in the parsonage but soon moved to the home of Dr. A. A. Denton (Stop #6). By 1914, the library had moved to the town hall (Stop #21).⁴⁶

The house is now privately owned.

8	Description	
	Dwelling and barn	

This was the home of Antoine and Sorrell Carpenter. It was built about 1830. Antoine opened his first blacksmith shop in 1876¹⁷ and ran it intermittently²¹ until 1903 when a spark from the blacksmith shop started a fire, damaging the house and barn. The extent of the damage is unclear.²² There was also a wheelwright shop in this vicinity.²³ It may have been on this property or at Stop # 6, across the road.

This house has been significantly altered over time.²⁴

9	Description	
	Dwelling and barn	

The house was built around 1830 and has since been modified multiple times. We believe that this was the home of Dr. Philip C. Ballou for many years. Dr. Ballou, born in 1806 was the son of Stephen Ballou, who settled in Monkton in 1803, establishing a tanning and shoemaking business in another part of town.

Dr. Ballou studied medicine with Dr. Horatio Smith of New Haven before establishing his practice in Monkton. He served Monkton as a doctor for over 40 years.²⁵ He was also the first postmaster in Monkton Ridge, holding the office from 1869 until he died in 1884. Fred Skiff succeeded him, and then Arthur Bidwell.²⁶

The adjacent barn to the south has been home to several commercial enterprises. The garage was the site of a vehicle repair shop owned by Lester Dean in the 1920s. In the 1960s Clifton (Pudgy) and Barbara Bennett had a vehicle repair shop and store here. The store sold chips, soda, candy, and boasted a jukebox, slate pool table, and pinball machine. It was a social gathering place for local adults and teens.²⁷

This house has been extensively renovated by the current owners since they bought it in 1985. A recent renovation focused on the front porch where they re-built windows using re-claimed glass from the house and other locations. If you look closely at the windows, you can see the characteristic patterns of the “wavy glass”, characteristic of the manufacturing methods of glass produced between the 1700s and early 1900s.²⁸



View of 31 Monkton Ridge Road, circa 1985
Photo courtesy Deborah Chamberlain

10	Description	
	Dwelling and barn	

This cottage style home, built about 1920, is typically known as the Day Homestead.²⁹



Photo of Day Homestead, undated
Courtesy Monkton Museum & Historical Society

11	Description	
	Dwelling	

This is a new house, built in 1982.³⁰


12	Description	
	Dwelling	

This house was built in a style that was very common throughout Addison County during the mid1800s. It has a distinctive row of “dentil-shaped bargeboard” just under the eaves, which is evident in the photo above. The dormer, front porch and back porches are later additions. The house may have been built in two parts, with the original built in the very early 1800s and the later part about 1850.³¹


The property has been the site of a variety of businesses over time, including a store³² and a barber shop³³.

There was also “marble shed” on this site³⁴ where marble was polished to a smooth and shiny state, first with emery and then with felt. Some may have been quarried on Mountain Road in East Monkton.


The shed was later used as a drop off point for milk being shipped to the Shelburne Co-op Creamery before the creamery was built on Monkton Road.³⁵

13	Description	
	Dwelling	

This house was built in 1810 with milled wood, using water power. By contrast, other houses built around the same time in Monkton were made with wooden logs. It was built in the Georgian style, noted for graceful proportions, balance, and symmetry, including a centered front door. The house was owned by Jathlell Peck, a Revolutionary soldier buried in the Monkton Ridge Cemetery (Stop #22).³⁷

14	Description	
	Store	

The corner of Monkton Ridge and State Prison Road has been the site of a store since the 1880s. The original store building burned down in 1912³⁸ and was replaced by the current structure in 1930 by Wesley and Eva Little, who ran the store as an IGA. A new wing was added in 1952.⁴⁰ Since the Littles, the store has been owned by four different families.

15	Description	
	Site of former Monkton Ridge School	


A modern, ranch-style home now occupies this site. It was built in 1979. However, for many years it was the site of the Monkton Ridge School. This school was heated with wood. The job of arriving early to light the fire often fell to an older boy who lived nearby.⁴⁴



Monkton Ridge School House (circa 1923)
 Courtesy of the Monkton Museum & Historical Society

For many years, there were ten school districts in Monkton, each with its own school. By 1870, there were only seven. These schools remained in use for quite some time. As the population of the town diminished, and transportation became available, the town reduced the number of schools to four. The Monkton Ridge School was one of the remaining four schools. It remained in use until 1960 when the new centralized school opened.⁴⁵

There has never been a high school in Monkton. Students from Monkton attended high school in a nearby town. In days past, they often boarded with a local family during the week.

	Description	
16	Former Russell Memorial Library	

In the first part of the 1900s, Harry J. Vancelette had a blacksmith shop at this site. In 1912, Harry converted part of the blacksmith shop to a grocery store.⁴¹ Harry lived near the Monkton Friends' Church (Stop #2) and used to lug a block of ice home every day in a wheelbarrow from a nearby ice house.⁵⁰

The businesses were bought by John Nash and his son Roy in 1913. In October of that year, the building burned to the ground.⁴² The Nashes then purchased Dr. Denton's property (Stop #6) and Roy Nash opened a grocery store there.⁴³

The Russell Memorial library opened in 1971, replacing the town library then located in the Town Hall (Stop #21). Funds for the building were donated by Dr. George A. Russell and his brother Lee Russell oversaw the construction.⁴⁷ Dr. Russell and his office served as the model for Norman Rockwell's 1947 painting "Visiting the Family Doctor"⁴⁸

17	Description	
	Barn and garage	

In the 1970s, an intact garage still stood here, built about 1900.⁵¹ This fallen down structure can still be seen today.

To the north, stood a 1 ½ level barn, built about 1890. It was part of the same property now at Stop #19. It was demolished in the mid-1970s.⁵²

18	Description	
	Stagecoach Inn	

This building was built in the early 1800s. It served as a stagecoach stop, inn, tavern, and later a hotel. Stagecoaches running from Albany, NY to Burlington, VT often stopped here. At that time, the main road went south to Bristol, Vermont, and west to Vergennes, Vermont before turning north to Burlington.⁵⁴ The inn was owned by O. Skiff in the middle of the 19th century.

This stagecoach inn was built in two parts, creating the long façade typical of stagecoach inns. There was also a carriage barn to the north of the building, which may have been part of the property, providing shelter for the horses and carriages of travelers.⁵³

The following was published in the Enterprise and Vermonter [Vergennes, VT] on 23 Nov 1853:⁵⁵

Hotel at Monkton Ridge

A hotel has long been much needed at Monkton Ridge. We have often heard complaints from our towns-people, when visiting that region, that there was no convenience for travelers in that section of the country; that they as well as their animals, were often compelled to fast until their return to the city. We are now happy to state for the benefit of the traveling public, that Mr. N. Skiff, has of late fitted up a very genteel and commodious Hotel on the Ridge, and it is now in successful operation, and from our personal acquaintance with this gentleman, we hesitate not to say, that travelers visiting the establishment once, will need no urging for a continuance of their patronage. — Just give friend Skiff a call.

19	Description	
	Dwelling	

According to the Vermont State Register of Monkton, this house was probably built in 1860 for S.E. Fuller, grandson of Josiah Fuller who moved from Bennington to Monkton in 1788.⁵⁶

Harvey and Celia (Sprague) Russell purchased this farm in 1922 and were very engaged in Monkton affairs. Harvey served as chair of the local Republican Party, town auditor, and representative to the state legislature. Celia served as Monkton's librarian from 1924 to 1960, was Sunday School superintendent and kindergarten teacher for 20 years.



Celia Russell at home, near garden overlooking Cedar Lake
Burlington Free Press, 8 Jun 1973

By 1973, the Russells had sold off all but two acres of their land and the barn across the road.⁵⁷ The two-acre property remains in the family to this day.

20	Description	
	Dwelling and shed	

In the early 1900s an antique shop was housed in the shed to the right of the house. The current house was built in 1957.⁵⁸


21	Description	
	1859 Town Hall	

Around 1858, it was recognized that the original town hall in Monkton Boro needed significant repairs and was too small to meet the town's needs.

At a meeting to consider repairs to the original building, some Monkton Ridge folks said that if the residents of Monkton would accept a new Town Hall built at Monkton Ridge, they would pay for the construction so the new building would not cost the town "a red penny." With that understanding, the voters approved the plan.

The town selectmen purchased the land on August 17, 1859. Materials and work were mostly donated except what was paid for by the people along the Ridge.⁵⁹

This building is on the National Register of Historic Places. The building style is Late Greek Revival style. Originally, it had square, louvered cupola. This blew down in the hurricane of 1950.⁶⁰

22	Description	
	Monkton Ridge Cemetery	

The first person buried in the cemetery was 10-year-old Joseph Hardy, who died on August 1, 1800.⁶¹ His father, Silas, was a Revolutionary War soldier who was a blacksmith in Monkton after the war. He also had the job of "hog reve" or hog hayward, ensuring that all hogs were ringed and yoked as required by law.⁶²

Many veterans of war are buried here, including Revolutionary soldiers: Josiah Lawrence,⁶³ Jathlell Peck,⁶⁴ and Joseph Willoughby Sr.⁶⁵

A tall stone in the front of the cemetery is that of Mr. Milton "Ammi" Fuller, who died in 1877 at the age of 77.⁶⁶ The story goes ... One dark night, Ammi was coming home kind of late and possibly not too sober, when he met up with another gent on the road. The other gent asked, "Is that you, Ammi?" And Ammi replied, "Am I Ammi? If I ain't Ammi, who the hell am I?"

The website findagrave.com contains photos and other information about the stones here and other cemeteries in Monkton.

23	Description	
	Dwelling and barn	

This house was built in 1852 in simple Greek revival style, with its gable end facing front. The porch and wing were later additions.⁶⁷ The barn was built about 1890.

The roof of the house blew off in the hurricane of 1950 and was later found at the north end of Monkton Pond.⁶⁸

This house was previously owned by Wesley C. Little⁶⁹ who rebuilt the general store in 1930 (Stop #14).

24	Description	
	Dwelling	

Like the one across the road, this house is built in the Georgian style in 1805, with a “simple five by two bay” structure. That is, it is two rooms deep, with five rooms across. The attached sunporch was added later.⁷⁰

25	Description	
	Currently vacant lot	

We end our tour at this empty lot. This was an active farm before a fire destroyed the barn in 1974. It now serves as a transition from past to present as you make your way back to Monkton’s newest addition, our Town Hall and Library.

Our vibrant past assures us that Monkton will continue to grow and change. We hope that folks who have memories and stories of everyday life in Monkton will share those with us. Just as ‘citizen scientists’ are contributing data and knowledge across many fields of endeavor, so you can become a “citizen historian” to help us preserve Monkton’s past.

One way you can provide input is to visit this link: <https://tinyurl.com/Monktonhistory>

Endnotes

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- ¹⁹ “Hinesburgh,” *Burlington Free Press*, October 7, 1897, 7.
- ²⁰ “Monkton,” *Bristol Herald*, September 25, 1913, 5.
- ²¹ “County Items,” *Bennington Banner*, November 29, 1876, 3.
- ²² “Monkton,” *Middlebury Register*, March 24, 1893, 4; “Monkton,” *Burlington Free Press*, May 16, 1894, 7; “Monkton,” *Bristol Herald*, January 10, 1901, 8.
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- ²⁴ “Monkton,” *Burlington Free Press*, November 18, 1913, 9.²³ “Historic Sites and Structures Survey: Addison County,” *Vermont Division for Historic Preservation*, Monkton Ridge Historic District Survey, File #77-A-152.
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- ⁶⁵“Joseph Willoughby, Sr.,” *Find a Grave*, Accessed June 1, 2022.
www.findagrave.com/memorial/17832052/joseph-willoughby.
- ⁶⁶ Margaret French Sunderland, written correspondence to Gill Coates, February 10, 2006, 6.
- ⁶⁷“Historic Sites and Structures Survey: Addison County,” *Vermont Division for Historic Preservation*, Monkton Ridge Historic District Survey, File #77-A-152.
- ⁶⁸ Margaret French Sunderland, Gill Coates, “Monkton History Tour”, October 5, 2013, 2.
- ⁶⁹ Monkton Land Records, vol 22, p 135, May 16, 1930.
- ⁷⁰“Historic Sites and Structures Survey: Addison County,” *Vermont Division for Historic Preservation*, Monkton Ridge Historic District Survey, File #77-A-152.
- ⁷¹“Monkton Fire Destroys Barn,” *Burlington Free Press*, April 2, 1974, 20.

Monkton Ridge, Vermont History Tour

○ Tour stops
(please respect private property)

- 1) Current Town Hall and Library
- 2) Friends Methodist Church
- 3) Former home of R. & C. Burritt*
- 4) Home built in 1967*
- 5) Former home of Civil War soldier & doorkeeper*
- 6) Former dressmaker, doctor, library, store,
& wheelwright
- 7) Former parsonage & library*
- 8) Former blacksmith shop*
- 9) Former home of Dr. Ballou & store*
- 10) Day homestead*
- 11) Home built in 1982*
- 12) Former store, barber shop, & marble shed*
- 13) Former home of Revolutionary War soldier*
- 14) Store
- 15) Former Monkton Ridge School*
- 16) Former Russell Memorial library
- 17) Former blacksmith & garage
- 18) Former Stagecoach stop, inn, & tavern*
- 19) Former home of H. & C. Russell*
- 20) Former antique shop & home*
- 21) 1859 Town Hall
- 22) Cemetery
- 23) Former home of W.C. Little, shop owner*
- 24) Home built in 1805*
- 25) Site of former farm

*private residence



<https://monktonhistory.org/>



0 0.05 0.1 Miles