

HISTORY OF

# MONTGOMERY HOUSE

WARRIOR RUN AREA PUBLIC LIBRARY

Located in McEwensville, Pennsylvania



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We have Vallery Barnwell to thank for this very complete history of the Montgomery House Warrior Run Area Public Library located in McEwensville. She has given many untold number of hours of her time for many months working on this project. We also thank all others who have contributed in any way to this effort. Many prior articles and letters dating from the Library's inception have been combined with more recent material to bring it all up to date.

The two Montgomery sisters had a dream and they took steps for its fulfillment by generously bequeathing their home to McEwensville for worthwhile community purposes.

Their devoted niece, Mrs. Helen Cook, fully embraced their dream. She worked closely with many interested local persons, and this group finally decided on a library. Since then the property has been enlarged several times, making it an even more valuable asset for the entire area, including all of the area communities and their school systems. And an adjacent parking lot has been paved.

One of the earliest persons to support this library idea was Mrs. Elizabeth Wagner Sigel, and active McEwensville resident for more than 40 years. She also was a life-long friend of the Montgomery sisters, all have grown up together in Watsontown. She and Mrs. Cook also formed a warm friendship.

To honor the memory of the Ms Jane and Margaret Montgomery, Mrs. Helen Cook and our Aunt Betty Sigel, her following nieces and nephews from four current generations of the Wagner family have enthusiastically contributed the funds for the printing of this book:



**Left to Right: Helen Cook,  
Bernice Pike, Elizabeth Sigel**

Nancy Wagner Foresman & Family  
Frances Thompson Reschovsky & Family  
Robert E. Kear & son David Wagner Kear  
Jane Hastings Thompson  
William F. Kear & Family  
Patricia (Patty) Wagner  
Carolyn Thompson Patton & Family

*Submitted by Jane Hastings Thompson  
May, 2003*

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Located in McEwensville, Pennsylvania



This cottage library, located in an ordinary ranch house structure on Church Street, first opened its doors on June 12, 1967.

The name Montgomery comes from a well established and prominent family in the McEwensville region. The community facility was called the Montgomery House Library in honor of the Montgomery sisters, Jane and Margaret, who willed the building that houses the library to McEwensville in 1965. The sisters were the last of the Montgomery family surviving in this area.

The Montgomerys, who came to the McEwensville region in the 1700's can trace their family lineage back to the Norman conquest of England in 1066. The family came to America in 1737 when Robert and Sarah Montgomery emigrated from County Armagh, Ireland with their family, settling in Paxtang, Dauphin County. Their son, John was the great-great-grandfather of Jane and Margaret. After a short time, the family moved from Dauphin County to Paradise Valley, near Turbotville.

In 1758, John Montgomery was commissioned captain of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, Pennsylvania Regiment. On November 12, 1761, in Lancaster, he married the former Christiana Foster. They had a family of four sons and three daughters. On March 30, 1774, John bought a parcel of land measuring 636 acres for 500 British pounds from William and Esther Patterson. The land was in what is now part of Lewis Township. Montgomery built his homestead at the strong spring located on his land which forms the headwaters of the Muddy Run Creek. The homestead consisted of a small dwelling surrounded by a stockade. On July 28, 1779, the sounds of battle disturbed the rural peace of summer enjoyed by the Montgomery family.

Only four miles away, 100 British soldiers under the leadership of Captain John McDonald, with support from 100 Indians under the Seneca leader Hiokoto, were massacring the settlers at Fort Freeland (which was located on what is now the Warrior Run High School property) in one of the region's most notable historic events.

Hearing the sounds of gunfire, John Montgomery sent two of his sons to ride on horseback up over the hill to see what was causing the commotion. When his sons returned with an account of the battle, and that Fort Freeland had fallen to the British and Indians, Montgomery fled south with his family, warning neighbors on the way about the British and Indians. The family escaped to Fort Augusta, presently Sunbury, and then moved on to the general area of what is now Harrisburg.

In 1783, after the Americans and the British made peace, the Montgomerys returned to their homestead. They found Indians had burned down all the buildings. British Captain William Rice, with 40 German mercenaries hired by the British in the fall of 1779 to fight in the American Revolution, had built a neat two-story fort over the spring. The family made alterations to the structure and moved in to their new home. Their descendants remained at the homestead for generations. The remains of Fort Montgomery, also known as Fort Rice, can still be found at the headwaters of the Muddy Run Creek.

One of John's sons, David, married the former Agnes Shaw, and they in turn had a son whom they named William. William married Jane Caldwell, Jane's grandmother for whom she was named. In the mid 1800's their son Robert married May W. Lowrie of Derry Township, Montour County; the couple had six children: William, Helen, Lowrie, Jane (Jennie), Fannie, and Margaret (Marge).



**Jane Caldwell Montgomery**

Jane was born November 15, 1870, near Turbotville. She was baptized in the Warrior Run Presbyterian Church (now called Historic Warrior Run Church), and maintained her membership there until her death. She attended Milton High School, graduating with the class of 1889. She also attended Hollidaysburg Seminary for Girls, and later studied institutional management at Columbia University in New York. Her studies led to her employment by the Hackettstown

Junior College in New Jersey, where she remained for many years, making many contacts and friends.

Her sister Margaret was born September 9, 1876, on the Montgomery farm and lived there practically all her life. Like Jane, she was baptized at the Historic Warrior Run Presbyterian Church and maintained her affiliation with the church all her life. Margaret attended Bucknell University, Lewisburg, Pennsylvania.

The sisters resided together after Jane's retirement staying either at the home near McEwensville or St. Petersburg, Florida.



**Margaret Montgomery, center, and two unidentified friends.**