

Tour: Ramapo Valley Road

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Of Suburban News

Logistics

Starting point: Hendrick Van Allen house at the corner of Ramapo Valley Road and Franklin Avenue.

Ending point: Jacobus Demarest house, 252 Ramapo Valley Road.

Distance covered: about 0.8 miles.

Time required: About 30 minutes.

Pre-amble

Many of the historical homes that are included on this self-guided tour are privately owned and not open to the public, but can be admired from afar. The status of home ownership is noted in the accompanying "talking points." Please respect property owners' privacy and do not trespass.

Talking points

■ Gen. George Washington was a guest of the borough July 14-15, 1777, in the Van Allen house at Ramapo Valley Road and Franklin Avenue. He came to stay at the house while on the march during the Revolutionary War from Morristown to Smith's Clove, N.Y. The structure also quartered the Bergen County Court House from 1778-'79.

■ On the Franklin Avenue side of the property is the more visible Stream house, originally known as the Vygeberg Farm Office Building. In 1902, it served as an office building for the dairy farm opera-

tions of Edward Day Page. Page was an Oakland councilman and served as mayor from 1909-1911. After Page's death, his widow allowed the town to use the first floor as a library. The Oakland and Bergen County historical societies are currently working on preserving the Stream house and are seeking volunteers to work on Saturdays and Sundays.

Directions: Walk along Ramapo Valley Road toward the center of town. (Caution: As you walk under Route 287 overpass, walking path is in the street.)

■ The railroad tracks you are crossing were part of the New Jersey Midland Railroad, laid in 1869, and helped to establish the center

of town along Ramapo Valley Road.

Continue walking straight toward Oak Street.

■ At 341 Ramapo Valley Road is Ponds Reformed Church. The church was originally a log cabin built in 1710 on what was then Oakland Avenue. In 1740, it was replaced by a hexagonal structure and in 1829, by a stone structure. During the 19th century, Ponds Church served as the center of government, education, politics and recreation for the town (the name of the town at the time was The Ponds).

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CHRIS PETERS/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Gen. George Washington stayed overnight at the Van Allen house in 1777.

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Make a right on Oak Street and a left onto Municipal Plaza.

■ The structure of the Oakland Public Library was modeled after the stone structure of the 1829 renovated Ponds Church and built in 1936. The building, prior to becoming the library, served as the seat of town government, a community center, Sunday school, and civil defense center. In 1962, the library moved from the Yawpo firehouse to its current location. On May 24, 2002, the library began renovating the building, and in 2006, the new children's wing was opened.

Walk through the parking lot and turn left, following exit for car traffic.

■ This is a good place to take a seat and rest in the shade. There are benches on the right next to the Board of Education offices.

Turn right back onto Ramapo Valley Road.

■ On your right, you'll pass the Police Department headquarters and Lawlor Drive, which leads to the Senior Center, Municipal Court and borough's recreation complex.

Proceed to 213 Ramapo Valley Road.

■ The home at this address is known as the Demarest house. The Demarest family was one of the Dutch families that helped settle the area of Franklin Township (now Franklin Lakes and Oakland). This house is privately owned and included in listings of the Bergen County Historical Society.

Continue to corner of Dogwood Drive.

■ The Jacobus Demarest House, at 252 Ramapo Valley Road, was built around 1789 and was originally a farmhouse. Jacobus Demarest lived there while serving in the Revolutionary War. The house remained in the Demarest family for 194 years. If you walk around the house, you'll see some of the original stone walls and a small shed in the back that may have once been part of the farm. This house is privately owned and included in listings of the Bergen County Historical Society.