2020 Virtual Tour of L.M. Montgomery Sites on PEI

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Watch or read—video and text below—this virtual tour of L.M. Montgomery sites on Prince Edward Island!

> 2020 Virtual Tour of L.M. Montgomery's PEI. 2020. Video by Carolyn Strom Collins and Bernadeta Milewski with Heidi Haering. Some photos in the video have all rights reserved (see video credits).

Tour leader: Carolyn Strom Collins

It’s too bad we couldn’t be together on the bus this year for a tour of some of the sites on Prince Edward Island that are of significance to L.M. Montgomery, but thanks to Bernadeta Milewski, we can see them through photographs and video footage. Bernadeta and I worked together to present this “virtual” tour as closely as possible to actually being on the bus. The following is an overview of the tour —I suggest you read through it first to get an idea of what we will “visit” on the tour and then tune in to the video. There will be narration as well as captions on the video to remind you of what we are seeing.

Our route from UPEI will be west on Highway 2 to Hunter River (“Bright River” in the *Anne* books); Hazel Grove; Kensington; north to Park Corner; east to French River,

Spring Brook, New London, Stanley Bridge ("Carmody" in the *Anne* books), and Cavendish ("Avonlea" in the *Anne* books). We will then return to UPEI via New Glasgow.

There are a few sites that we can show on our virtual tour that we could not have seen on the actual tour: the original Cape Tryon lighthouse that was the model for Captain Jim's lighthouse in *Anne's House of Dreams*; Cape Tryon as it looks today with a modern lighthouse (c. 1960s); some highlights in "Avonlea Village," which is a recreation of an 1800s village that includes the Long River Church where Montgomery worshipped (near Park Corner) and the Belmont School where she taught for a year; the Bideford Manse where she boarded while teaching in the Bideford School; the Lower Bedeque School where she taught and the Leard house where she boarded and met Herman Leard, the love of her life.

I will be commenting on some of the sites along our route that pertain to Montgomery. The first thing is the **campus of the University of Prince Edward Island**. Attendees to the L.M. Montgomery Institute International Conference often see just a few of the buildings, such as the dorms, the dining hall, Robertson Library, and McDougall Hall where the presentations are held. But the campus is much larger and worth a look.

The campus is a combination of nineteenth-century buildings that surround the main quad and much newer buildings, athletic facilities, etc. Montgomery did not attend college here—she attended Prince of Wales College, which was in downtown Charlottetown. PWC merged with St. Dunstan's University in 1969 to become UPEI.

Leaving the outskirts of Charlottetown, we travel on Highway 2 west toward Kensington (about 48 km/30 miles). This highway is a main thoroughfare across the island and largely follows the railroad that used to stretch across the entire island. (Now the original railroad bed is known as the Confederation Trail and is used for biking and walking.) Montgomery would have taken the train often, and she had many of her characters take it: "Anne Shirley" travelled this route when she first arrived in PEI from Nova Scotia—she left from the depot in Charlottetown and travelled to "Bright River," which was actually **Hunter River**, a journey of about 22 km/15 miles. The **"Bright River" depot** was on the left side of the highway near

the main intersection; the building was moved years ago from Hunter River to Marco Polo Land, a large campground in Cavendish, and is still there today, having been once a gift shop and now a residence.

Along the way we will see early summer **wildflowers**—such as lupins, wild roses, and buttercups—dairy farms, and **fields** planted with potatoes, grain, canola, and hay. You may also catch a glimpse of a few "heritage roads," unpaved red-dirt roads cut in the early years of PEI's settlement and still used today.

A few miles from Hunter River, we will pass through **Hazel Grove**. One of the few remaining **stone houses**, such as the one Miss Lavendar Lewis in *Anne of Avonlea* lived in, will be on the left side of the highway. This house was built in 1851 for the Bagnall family and has been restored in recent years. The stone is island red sandstone; many sandstone blocks from some of the stone houses that have been torn down can be found all over the island, used as steps, garden walls, monuments, and foundations of newer houses.

KENSINGTON

In **Kensington** where we make a brief stop at the train station. It was built in 1905, replacing a two-storey frame structure. That early station was moved up the hill about a block away and is now a residence. Montgomery would have been familiar with both stations and departed from them to go to Belmont, Bideford, St. Eleanor's, and Summerside.

We depart Kensington, heading north for Park Corner, the home of many of Montgomery's relatives. As we drive over the crest of one of the Irishtown hills, we will have our first view of the **Gulf of St. Lawrence**, a sight that thrilled Montgomery as she approached the north shore from Kensington.

PARK CORNER

In **Park Corner**, we will stop first at **“Silver Bush,”** now the **Anne of Green Gables Museum.** This property has been in the Campbell family since the late 1700s and has been a museum dedicated to Montgomery for many years; it was the setting for her *Pat* books—*Pat of Silver Bush* and *Mistress Pat*. This was the home of Montgomery’s Campbell cousins Stella and Frederica (Frede) who were among her dearest friends. Today the Museum is owned by George Campbell, and tours are supervised by his sister Pamela.

The house, with its original furnishings, is full of Montgomery memorabilia, including the **bookcase with glass doors** that inspired the one in *Anne of Green Gables* in which Anne’s imaginary friend Katy Maurice “lived.” The **front parlour** was the setting for Montgomery’s wedding to Ewan Macdonald, 5 July 1911. You are free to view the rooms downstairs and upstairs, read the placards, and study the dozens of photographs. Montgomery’s **“crazy quilt”** that she worked on as a teenager is on display as well as items recovered from the Blue Chest as described in *The Story Girl* . Even the old screw in the wall that Montgomery mentions in her journals is still there. A walk on the “Whispering Lane”—from the *Pat* books—is a reminder of Montgomery’s “Lover’s Lane” in Cavendish, which we will visit later. There is also the possibility of a **carriage ride** around the property with “Matthew” driving the horse.

As we leave “Silver Bush,” we will cross **The Lake of Shining Waters**. Now, you may be wondering why this lake is located at Park Corner rather than Cavendish (known in the *Anne of Green Gables* books as “Avonlea”). Montgomery wrote that this was indeed the lake she had in mind, and as an author, she could re-arrange the geography to suit her purposes. There was once a wooden bridge on pilings instead of the modern causeway—the very bridge that Anne had to cling to until Gilbert rescued her.

On the left side of the road is **the home of Montgomery’s beloved grandfather Donald Montgomery**; this house is considered the inspiration for “**Ingleside**” in the later *Anne* books. It was built in about 1879 and replaced a smaller house that

was right beside it. That earlier home was where Montgomery's father, Hugh John, was born, along with his sisters and brothers. Grandfather Montgomery was one of the Island's first senators, appointed by Sir John A. Macdonald when the Island joined Confederation in 1873, and he served until he died in 1893. Today the home is a beautiful inn, owned by one of Montgomery's cousins, Paul Montgomery. It was a museum before that, from 1993 to 2015, where visitors could see "The Rosebud Tea Set" from *Anne of Green Gables*, the china dog "Magog" with green spots from *Anne of the Island*, and other artifacts used by the Montgomery family. Maud Montgomery stayed here many times when visiting Park Corner.

At the top of the hill is the turn-off for the **Cape Road** that runs close to Cape Tryon, the site of "Captain Jim's" lighthouse in *Anne's House of Dreams* and later *Anne* books, including *Rilla of Ingleside*. This road leads to the western shore of New London Harbour, "Four Winds" in the *Anne* books. That sand-shore was the location of Anne's "House of Dreams" as well as *Jane of Lantern Hill*. I hope you can visit these sites on your own someday.

FRENCH RIVER AND SPRING BROOK

Next, we will pass through **French River**, the inspiration for "Glen St. Mary" in the *Anne* books. It is a major harbour for fishing boats and is much photographed because of its colourful and beautiful setting.

As we drive through **Spring Brook**, you will see a little church on the right. It is known as the **Geddie Memorial Church**, built in 1836 and named for one of PEI's early ministers, the Rev. John Geddie. Its graveyard is the final resting place for many Montgomerys and Campbells, including Frederica Campbell, Montgomery's dearest friend and cousin who died in the Spanish flu epidemic in 1919 (now more commonly referred to as the "1918 Influenza pandemic").

We will skirt the shores of **New London Harbour ("Four Winds Harbour")** on the left as we make our way to New London.

NEW LONDON

We will now make a stop at **L.M. Montgomery's Birthplace** in New London, known in Montgomery's day as "Clifton."

In the tiny **parlour**, you will see a replica of **Montgomery's wedding dress and veil** (The original is too fragile to display and is held in the Confederation Centre in Charlottetown.) There are some of Montgomery's story-and-poem **scrapbooks** on display in the dining room. Upstairs is **the bedroom where Montgomery was born** on 30 November 1874. Incidentally, the parking lot next door is the site where Hugh John Montgomery's store once stood.

STANLEY BRIDGE ["CARMODY"]

From New London and the Birthplace, we will head to **Stanley Bridge**, known as **"Carmody"** in the *Anne* books. Montgomery's future husband, Ewan Macdonald, boarded here when she lived in Cavendish, and her cousin Frederica Campbell taught school here.

CAVENDISH ["AVONLEA"]

As we make our way to Cavendish, you can see the eastern shore of New London Harbour (aka "Four Winds" Harbour) and then the Gulf of St. Lawrence on your left. We will pass through Hope River and Bay View. Montgomery knew this route well, travelling by horse and buggy or even walking the six miles or so to Stanley Bridge on occasion.

Approaching **Cavendish**, you may be surprised, even shocked, to see the many shops, campgrounds, restaurants, golf courses, and other establishments along the way. This is due to the beach's being such a draw for summer visitors. It is one of the finest beaches in the world. The water is surprisingly warm for being this far north because the Gulf Stream brings warm waters from the southern Atlantic. Montgomery enjoyed the beach and occasionally "bathed" in the ocean. The sand dunes to the west and the red cliffs to the east were an inspiring sight to her. She

could also see the Cape Tryon light from here, which intrigued her, giving her a glimpse, she said, “of fairylands forlorn.”

On the right, you will see a re-created version of “Avonlea” called **“Avonlea Village.”** The developers brought houses, schools, and churches from various locations on PEI, including the one-room school from Belmont where Montgomery taught in 1896–97 and the Long River Church near Park Corner that Montgomery attended when she visited that area.

Green Gables (Green Gables Heritage Place), the centrepiece of the National Park, is our next stop. You will be able to browse in the new Visitors’ Centre, which has some wonderful displays featuring Montgomery’s life of as well as material about *Anne of Green Gables*. You will want to visit the house itself and see the **parlour with its horsehair sofa and chairs**; the **sitting room** where Anne studied her lessons while Matthew nodded over the *Farmer’s Advocate*; **Matthew’s room**; the large **kitchen** complete with a **Waterloo stove** and **two pantries** (you will notice the cellar door in the floor of the first pantry). Upstairs are five bedrooms: **Anne’s room, the spare room, Marilla’s room**, and the **west gable room** are in the main wing. All are furnished as described in *Anne of Green Gables*. Over the kitchen is the hired man’s room, not part of the house when Anne “lived” here—it was added on later, about 1917. Descending the back staircase, you will come to the utility “porch” on the back of the house and exit from there.

To the left you will notice a small triangular structure that many visitors ask about—it is the **well cover** for “the deepest well in Avonlea.” This covering kept leaves and animals from getting into the well and also served as cool storage for milk, butter, eggs, and cheese.

Green Gables itself was enlarged over the years; it began with the one-storey kitchen wing in about 1830; later the main wing with parlour and bedrooms was added. Finally, the roof over the kitchen was raised to accommodate the hired-man’s room.

There are **two trails** you might want to experience: the **Haunted Wood** can be reached from the front lawn and down the hill to the brook; **Lover's Lane**, Montgomery's favourite place to walk and think when she lived in Cavendish, begins at the back of the house.

Our next stop will be the **Site of L.M. Montgomery's Cavendish Home** where Montgomery lived with her maternal grandparents after her mother died. On the way we will see the **Cavendish Cemetery** on the right—Montgomery, her mother, grandparents, husband Ewan Macdonald, and other relatives are buried here. Across the road is the new **L.M. Montgomery Park** with its lovely bronze statue of the author represented at the age when she wrote *Anne of Green Gables.* The large yellow house just north of the intersection was the model for **"Rachel Lynde's" house** and is now an inn. It was moved from its original location across the road to its present site some years ago. The **church** Montgomery attended is on the right just before the turn into the lane that leads to the Macneill Homestead.

The present **Cavendish Post Office** is a duplicate of the Macneill home; outgoing mail is now stamped "Green Gables." A small museum with post office furnishings and equipment from the 1800s is open to visitors.

In the **Macneill Homestead Bookstore**, you will hear an introduction to the property and see artifacts from the shipwrecked *Marco Polo* that Montgomery wrote about in her teen years, some of her letters, and other memorabilia. Next to the bookstore is **the kitchen wing of the Macneill home**, which was recently moved back to the property after many years as Father Francis Bolger's writing studio in Stanley Bridge; this was the Cavendish Post Office in Montgomery's day and **the room in which Montgomery wrote much of *Anne of Green Gables* and other books, plus many stories and poems**.

A walk down the path leads to **the site of the original Macneill home**. Although the house is no longer here, the remarkable **stone foundation and cellar** give us an idea of how early PEI homes were built. It is a lovely, quiet spot, and at least one of the **old apple trees** from the time Montgomery lived here is still standing. (Many trees on the property were blown down when Hurricane Dorian mercilessly battered

the north shore of PEI in the fall of 2019.) **Placards** have been placed at various points with quotations from Montgomery's journals that tell of her love for this home. The **old red lane** leading over to the Haunted Wood and Green Gables is still here.

After leaving the Macneill homestead, our tour group would have enjoyed dinner at a restaurant in Cavendish and then left for our trip back to UPEI, going south to New Glasgow and then east toward Charlottetown.

OTHER SITES

Other sites we would have liked to visit are too far for us to get to on this trip—most notably, the schools Montgomery taught in at Belmont, Bideford, and Lower Bedeque. The Belmont School was moved to Avonlea Village. The Bideford school is no longer standing, but the parsonage, where Montgomery boarded as a teacher in 1894–95, is a lovely museum with furnishings from that era. The school in Lower Bedeque and the Leard house where she boarded are no longer open to the public, but they can be viewed from the road. The original Montgomery family home at Malpeque, known as "New Moon," is now a private residence.

There are many other sites that Montgomery knew and loved scattered all over Prince Edward Island, and you can spend some happy hours discovering them through her journals and books and then finding them on a future visit. Heidi Haering has created an "interactive map of PEI" on which she points out a number of these sites; it can be found on the L.M. Montgomery Institute website.

Thank you for going along on this Virtual Tour of L.M. Montgomery Sites on PEI. I hope you can visit them in person soon!

If you have questions about some of the sites, you may contact me at clsc123@gmail.com.

About the Author: Carolyn Strom Collins is the author of several books and many articles on L.M. Montgomery, as well as companion books on *Little Women*,

The Secret Garden, and Laura Ingalls Wilder's “Little House” books. Her latest books are *Anne of Green Gables: The Original Manuscript and After Many Years: Twenty-one “Long-Lost” Stories* by L.M. Montgomery. She compiled and edited *An Annotated Bibliography of L.M. Montgomery's Stories and Poems*, updating considerably the 1986 bibliography. She is the founder of the L.M. Montgomery Literary Society, co-editor of its e-newsletter, *The Shining Scroll*, the founder of the Friends of the L.M. Montgomery Institute, and is on the editorial board of the *Journal of L.M. Montgomery Studies*.

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