



DeWitt Church Has Been House of Worship for 115 Years

After 115 Years of Worship, DeWitt Church Still Grows

By FAYE HANSON
State Journal Special Writer

DEWITT — The large white frame building at the corner of Jefferson and Bridge Streets, which gives DeWitt a touch of New England, has been a house of worship for 115 years.

Not only is the architecture of the DeWitt Community Church typical of the New England countryside, but in bygone years the rules of the congregation were almost as strict as those of the Puritans.

The church was built to serve the local Baptists, but in later years became interdenominational.

The congregation was organized in 1840, but there were no funds in the new settlement to build a church. Meetings were held in homes or in the school. Then on Sept. 1, 1851, the congregation moved to build a church. Early records show the following action: "resolved that in our judgment it is time to move forward and build a meet-

ing and dedication. The church prospered and grew to 160 members, and then went into a decline. On March 22, 1884, the church was reorganized under

the New Hampshire articles of faith.

The discipline would hardly be tolerated today. The early records tell of a committee whose purpose was to call on members once a month to inquire into their spiritual well being and to investigate any report of anyone doing anything unbecoming to a Christian.

There is a record of one couple being removed from the church rolls for the un-Christian act of quarreling.

REMODELED IN 1921

The building was remodeled and rededicated in 1921. A basement was added at that time. Complete records of the remodeling were lost in the DeWitt fire of 1929. The Rev. G. S. Northrup was pastor at the time of the fire.

When the Methodist Church burned in the spring of 1928 their congregation was invited to worship in the church.

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SITE BOUGHT

On April 3, 1852, the present site on the north side of the public square was purchased from David Sturgis and \$500 was pledged for a building. The contract was let to David Olin and the edifice, 35 by 50 feet, was completed at a cost of \$13,000. The church was dedicated on Dec. 14, 1853.

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A federated church was formed, but lasted only a year. When the organization was dissolved a community church was incorporated on May 15, 1929.

In 1947 the church was moved back 25 feet, a new porch was added and the colonial touch given on the lines. New Sunday school rooms, a dining room, kitchen and new heating plant added while the Rev. LaVern Breit was pastor.

After 115 years serving the town, the church, now under the leadership of the Rev. Daniel Kalin *continues in service*.





BUILDING FUNDS NEEDED—DeWitt's Memorial Building is being enlarged, and the exterior work has been completed, but additional funds are needed to complete the project. The building houses the library and is a community meeting center. (State Journal Photo)

DeWitt Memorial Building Project Needs Donations

By FAYE HANSON

State Journal Special Writer

DEWITT — The Memorial Building is DeWitt community's unfinished business.

Since its beginning prior to World War II, the Memorial Building has been a community project, built and maintained by donations and volunteer labor.

With an expansion program under way, the building committee is again seeking contributions to complete the project.

A two-story addition will provide new quarters for the li-

brary and a center for social and club meetings. The shell has been finished and the roof completed, but funds are exhausted.

TICKETS FOR BLOCKS

The building committee, asking for donations to complete the addition, is selling tickets for concrete blocks. As a part of the campaign, the committee will award a trip to Hawaii for two of the contributors.

The current fund raising plan is a continuation of the efforts that started prior to World War

II when Mr. and Mrs. William Rogerson offered two lots across from the present junior high school on Washington Street for a library site.

The library, located over the old fire station, was started by the DeWitt Civic Club in 1934. Need for new quarters was evident, and the land was donated, providing the Civic Club could raise money for the building.

The war halted building plans, but after the fighting ended the project was continued with the additional need for a community meeting place. A memorial to the men and women of the community who had served their nation was proposed.

Mrs. Earl Pierson, assistant librarian, issued a call on Oct. 16, 1945, for two representatives of every organization in DeWitt Township to discuss the project. L. J. Griswold presided at this meeting which launched the Memorial Building.

Mrs. Howard Walker, librarian, explained the idea of the Civic Club, and Mrs. P. J. Carris told of the need of a recreation room for young people of the community.

\$1,000 PLEDGED

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MID Michigan NEWS

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The residents formed a non-profit organization to build and maintain the structure and named their group the Memorial Association.

An ox-roast was held in the fall of 1946 and it has become an annual event to provide funds for the building. Jack Lenne- man and Don Reed were principal chefs and became known as the "barbecue kings" of Central Michigan. In later years, Eugene Coin and Norman Savage took over cooking duties.

The original building incorporators were: L. J. Griswold, J. B. Vincent, Leo Spayde, Leon Blizzard, Mildred Carris, Hazel Norris, Mr. and Mrs. William Rogerson and Verne Walker.

They appointed the following board members: Herbert Hardtke, Merle Walker, Donald Reed, Carl Peterson, Evelyn Curren, Allen Foy, Herbert Fizzell, James Brill and Russell Sibley.

The building was opened for partial use at the 1947 ox roast and was dedicated at the annual event in 1948.

A bronze plaque placed in the lobby by DeWitt Blue Star Mothers reads: "Lovingly dedicated to the men and women who served in all branches of military services and to those who gave their lives for their country — Vincent Paul Lerg, Lewis S. Phillips Jr., Don Ingalls, Francis Richmond, Russell R. Ribby, Earl Benson and Richard Pike."

NO COMPENSATION

The Memorial Board works without compensation to keep the building equipped and ready for banquets, receptions, meetings and parties and as a headquarters for the Boy Scouts and other organizations. Present members are: Earl Coryell, Ronald Mulf, Joseph Hennigan, Armour Knight, Dale Farhat, Jim Decatur, Ed Tudor, Lloyd Ballard and Robert Taylor.

The building has grown in popularity and as the town grew the structure needed to be expanded. The library now is crowded and will be moved into the present meeting rooms. The new section, when completed, will have additional space for dances and meetings, but now is listed among the community's unfinished business.