

DeWitt-- Yesterday and Today

By Faye Hanson

Another DeWitt landmark is up for sale.

The DeWitt Community Church on the corner of N. Bridge and Jefferson has been a house of worship for 121 years. The Baptist congregation was organized in 1840 but meetings were held in homes and the school until September of 1851, when the congregation moved to build a church. On April 3, 1852 a site on the northeast side of the public square was purchased and \$500.00 was pledged for a building. An edifice 35 by 50 feet was completed at a cost of \$13,000.00 and was dedicated on December 14, 1853.

The building was remodeled in 1921 and a community church was formed on May 15, 1929. In 1947 the church was moved back 25 feet and a porch added.

Because of a growing membership and a lack of parking space, the congregation has purchased property on Webb Road and have a new structure almost ready for occupancy, and the old structure is on the block. Only time can tell what is to be the fate of this building that has been a house of worship and the scene of scores of weddings, christenings and funerals for over one hundred years.

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How many people in the DeWitt area remember when the school paper was called "DEWITT DAZE"? In 1948 the editor was Marilyn Staub Coin (now DeWitt City Treasurer) and her assistant was Joan Miller Kowalk.

Typists were the late Dorothy Hill Lankford, Janet Lankford Schulz and Greta Perry Bond, now a teacher in California. Machine operators were Floyd Fowler (now city maintenance man) and Jake

Kirchen. Barbara Ann Hicks Kirchen was artist and Mrs. Down was advisor.

The only school building at that time was the Fuerstenau Building on Washington Street which encompassed all grades K through 12, twenty five years later we have a system with five buildings. Enrollment in kindergarten and first grade in 1948 was 57, today it is 255. Today the school paper is called ZAP.

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This is the north side of Main Street looking toward the light. The building on the left has been used as a residence, library, telephone office, and is at present the home of the Family Barbershop. The next building at various times has housed Wood's Undertaking Parlor, a restaurant and bakery, U.S. Post Office, library and a beauty shop. It was torn down in 1968.

The next was Harry Moon's Grocery, it burned with the next two buildings in 1930. Next to Moon's is Smiley's Variety Store and Lietzke's Grocery. Across the corner is M. E. Towne's Grocery and Dry Goods Store, the building now houses the Shingle Shack.

This photograph was taken early in this century and was given to the library by the late Helen Dills Stampfly, daughter of DeWitt pioneers.

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THE COMING OF THE TELEPHONE TO DEWITT, probably between 1910 and 1915. This shows farmers bringing loads of poles into town.

Picture taken on DeWitt's main corner looking north, showing G. A. Williams General Store which burned in the great fire of 1930. The Methodist Church which was erected in 1895 and burned from an overheated furnace in 1927. Next is the Grange Hall which was used by this farmers' fraternal organization from 1875 to 1966 and is now an upholsterer's shop.

Notice the unpaved streets.

Picture donated to the DeWitt Public Library by the late Mr. and Mrs. Robert Morris.