Robisons celebrate home's 150th

BY KEN COIN

Amid all the pandemonium that often accompanies the holiday season, Norm and Mary Robison found time to observe a special birthday by graciously hosting a warm holiday/birthday open house in honor of their old home's 150th birthday. Anyone who's ever lived in an old house knows both the challenge and satisfaction that it can offer. There are times when you appreciate the service it does for you and, at other times, an old house can demand significant attention. The Robisons have experienced both in the 31 years that they've enjoyed and cared for this historic structure.

The majority of land which now comprises the Lake Geneva subdivision was originally homestead by Franklin and Jerusha Oliver. Both having died in the early 1840's, very little has been recorded of them. It is known that they built their log cabin closer to the river than the current home and Franklin, at a very early date, built a flour mill along the east bank of the river. The site didn't pan out as he expected and it is recorded and for lack of constant power, the mill was abandoned. Another early record of the Olivers is of their deeding to the township of DeWitt, a plot of land for a public cemetery. The first on the area, this cemetery, later named the Goodrich Cemetery was located on the northern edge of their property and on the east side of Schavey Road. It was actively used for nearly forty years but was ultimately abandoned and removed to the current DeWitt Cemetery (but that's another story..).

DBR photo by Lou Monticello

Norm and Mary Robison's home at 1300 Schavey turned 150 years old last year. The home sports an "Upright and Wing" designed and is referred to as a "Greek temple in the wilderness."

Charles Scott, the youngest (and least known) son of DeWitt's founder, came with his parents to the Indian Village of Wabwahnahseepee in 1833 at the age of 13. Although no photographs or personal descriptions of him have come down to the present, he's not a complete mystery. For reasons unknown, he sort of took over his father's business dealings in 1843 and managed a sizable investment. It was he who suddenly acquired ownership of all the undeveloped property in the village of DeWitt as well as several pieces of prime real estate in the business center. It was also he who caused his father fits of apoplexy by selling his father's cherished "Clinton House" hotel, literally out from underneath his father.

In 1843, he married Julia Terry. Little too is known of her origins but I suspect her family were merchants who lived here for a brief period. Soon after their marriage they purchased the Oliver estate and (according to their granddaughter) built a log house near the abandoned mill near the spring. It was in 1846 that Charles sold the Clinton House and by the following year had finished the construction of the current Robison home.

At the time of it's construction, Charles and Julia's new home was an architectural marvel to the residents of DeWitt. It had no rival. The floor plan was the newest creation - "Upright and Wing", opposed to the common rectangle of the period and the two-story portion had significant here. Three of the daughters, interestingly, married three brothers; the Webb boys from a nearby farm. This farm remained their home together until 1861 when Charles died at the young age of 41. Julia continued the farm operation for several years before turning it over to the second generation. In later years she lived in the village with her daughters and outlived her husband by 45 years. She died in 1906.

A Greek temple in the wilderness, it was constructed to make a statement. A century and a half later, it still makes a statement of beauty, sophistication and local heritage.

Ken Coin is a resident of DeWitt and the area's primary historian.

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Charles and Julia had four daughters that they raised

itage.

Ken Coin is a resident of DeWitt and the area's primary historian.

Historian takes a closer look at DeWitt Maroon Band

BY KEN COIN

To those of you who noticed the absence of my articles from this paper over the past several months; my only explanation; what started out as just a short holiday break just got way out of hand. Too many pans on the stove. So, for those of you who badgered me into getting back at it, thanks for setting me straight.

I pulled this photograph from the library's collection to illustrate an article I worked up on music and its evolution within DeWitt's history. Being a great hand at changing horses in midstream, the more I studied the picture the more I thought it might be interesting to just informally dissect it to illustrate the importance of many old images.

The photograph is, as the caption reads, the DeWitt Maroon Band. This band, not to be confused with the DeWitt Concert Band, was a very active group in its day. The two bands were actually basically the same; pretty much same members and the same leader, Henry Webb. (I think they dropped the "Maroon" business when rival bands from other towns began dubbing them "The DeWitt Moron Band"). They were a horn band, standard for the period, made up of local men with an interest in music.

The DeWitt Maroon Band at a political rally in Grand Ledge. Among the band members identified: Henry Webb, director (front & center with the baton), George Pike to his left and George Mann and Adam Rupp to his right. George Moots is standing on the far right, George Myers in the far rear (with the tall horn) and Charles Webb standing directly behind Henry Webb. The tall man with the bowler hat in the center is Galusha Pennell, a notable state political leader of the period (with strong family ties to DeWitt). Ca. 1896, courtesy of the DeWitt Public Library.

It was noted on the back of this photograph many

nell are sporting small springs of cedar in their hat bands and lapels (which has some political conviction symbolism lost to me).

The scene on the street that day must have been of great importance. The second-floor windows are filled with on-lookers and the roof (seen clearer in the origi-

[illegible] also has its share of "squatters"

say. Unfortunately, I only came away with a terrific headache and not much of a clue as to what the ribbon says.

Another puzzle to me is the dandy in the light-colored suit, dead center. The stump of a cigar wedged into the corner of his mouth and stack of papers held up in his left hand, he seems ready to make some sort of oration.

Ken Coin is a resident of DeWitt and the area's primary historian.

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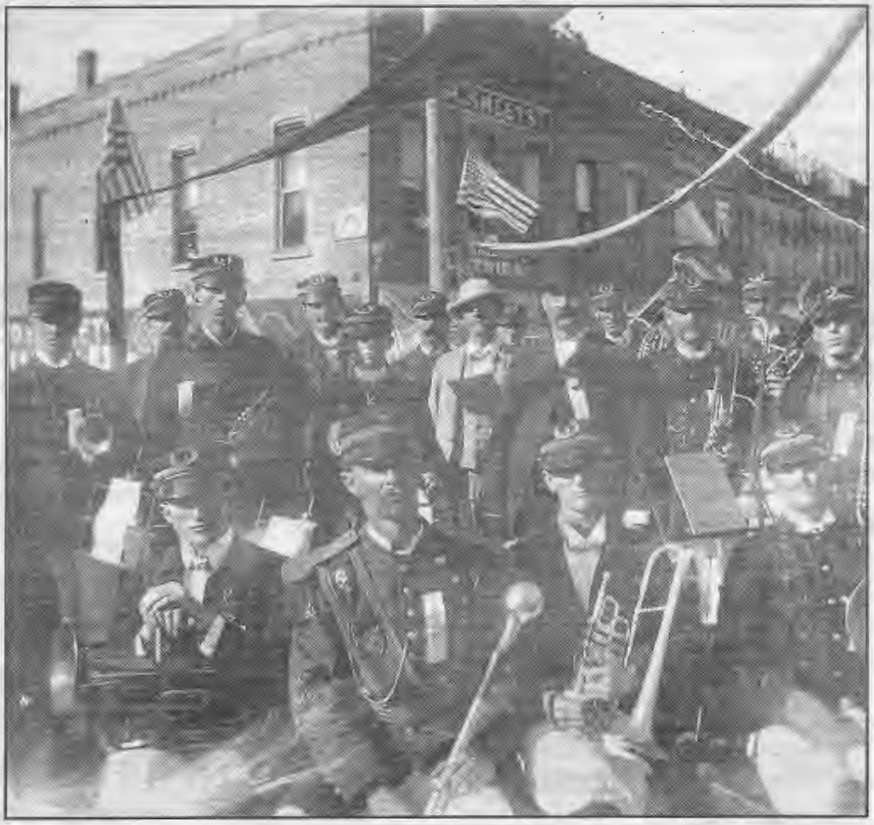

The DeWitt Maroon Band at a political rally in Grand Ledge. Among the band members identified: Henry Webb, director (front & center with the baton), George Pike to his left and George Mann and Adam Rupp to his right. George Moots is standing on the far right, George Myers in the far rear (with the tall horn) and Charles Webb standing directly behind Henry Webb. The tall man with the bowler hat in the center is Galusha Pennell, a notable state political leader of the period (with strong family ties to DeWitt). Ca. 1896, courtesy of the DeWitt Public Library.

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It was noted on the back of this photograph many years ago that the location was St. Johns. Not true. The store in the imposing brick store in the background is that of George Sheets, a long-time clothier of Grand Ledge. An old joke was that the DeWitt band, so eager to play, once booked two gigs back to back. They played at a pro-gold convention in St. Johns then raced the devil to get to Grand Ledge in time to play for a pro-silver rally. Although rather non-committal in their group politics, some members (on the right) and Galusha Pennell are sporting small springs of cedar in their hat bands and lapels (which has some political conviction symbolism lost to me).

The scene on the street that day must have been of great importance. The second-floor windows are filled with on-lookers and the roof (seen clearer in the original photograph) even has its share of "squatters". (Question: Did Populist [pro-silver] party leader and presidential candidate William Jennings Bryan make a whistle-stop visit to Grand Ledge in August of 1896 when he campaigned in Lansing?).

Most of the band members are wearing a ribbon pinned to their chests. I nearly popped a retina trying to read what they say. Unfortunately, I headache and not much says.

Another puzzle to m ored suit, dead center. T the corner of his mouth his left hand, he seems tion.

Ken Coin is a reside mary historian.

The DeWitt Masonic Band (with their goat) ca. 1910. Courtesy of the DeWitt Public

Music has long-standing history in DeWitt

BY KEN COIN

Music, as a cultural factor, has always been a part of DeWitt's social make-up. The first reference to it in the histories of the community stem from an incident in 1837 when the four-year-old settlement celebrated Independence Day at the homestead of William Webb. Mr. Webb, having at the time the closest thing in the county to a wooden floor, treated his guests to live music that they might enjoy a bit of dancing. His "live music" (the best he could procure) was himself. He whistled for hours (I might guess he held out as long as his whistle stayed wet) while the pioneer couples danced, and danced and danced...

Musical instruments made their way to DeWitt within a few years of Mr. Webb's enthusiastic attempt. It was recorded that the settlers who met for the Independence Day celebration in 1843 were entertained with martial music by George and Joseph Cook.

As early as 1844, cotillions, assemblies or balls (the three terms were often interchangeable) had same in the capital. They even managed to play at a nighttime assembly on the lawn of the White House for President Lincoln.

The marching band remained a mainstay in DeWitt for over 40 years following the war. The name DeWitt Cornet Band remained in use up to the 20th century. Whether the name followed a contiguous group or whether it was a simple name that worked well for several different organizations throughout the years, remains unknown. It is probably telling, however, that the later leader of the DeWitt Cornet Band was Henry Webb (Frank Webb's nephew and a grandson of the 1837 whistler). Other brass bands of the period include: The DeWitt Maroon Band, DeWitt German Band and the DeWitt Masonic Band. There were undoubtedly others whose names have been lost.

Towards the turn of the century, widespread popular music flowing from Tin Pan Alley brought a renewed zest to the dance floors of DeWitt. Quickly, the old-times bands could no longer rely on old favorites and dance standards. The public was clamoring for the newest snappy songs.

By the early 1900's, the rural Grange halls continued to echo the old sounds of the dance callers and the familiar stains of "country" dance music (and would continue to do so for many more decades). DeWitt hotels, on the other hand, more often promoted the latest dances; Cake Walks, Two-Steps, Marches, Glides and that ~~vulgar~~ new dance from Brazil - the Tango. Significantly, these new dances were partnered or couple dances. The old-style group dances; Reels, Quadrilles, Promenades, etc., which symbolically unified the community for generations, were quickly passing away. Sadly, at the same time, the need for live local music quickly became obscured by the introduction of phonograph, radio and easy accessibility to Lansing area dance halls.

Ken Coin is a resident of DeWitt and the area's primary historian.

The DeWitt Masonic Band (with their goat) ca. 1910. Courtesy of the DeWitt Public

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As early as 1844, cotillions, assemblies or balls (the three terms were often interchangeable) had become a standard event on the social calendars of the pioneers. Held at either the Clinton House or at the DeWitt Hotel these drew a large attendance of dancers. Music usually consisted of small stringed ensembles who played favorite old tunes transported from the settlers' former New England homes, supplemented occasionally by a new polka, waltz or schottische.

While long-forgotten dance bands remained a standard feature of the social scene for many decades, it was the local brass or marching bands that drew in the publicity. In 1864, the DeWitt Cornet Band, led by Frank Webb (the whistler's son) enlisted as a group into the 27th Michigan Infantry. With perfect timing they arrived in Washington, DC in time to help the city celebrate Grant's victory and virtually the end of the war. They didn't see much of the war but had a grand time just the same in the capital. They even managed to play at a nighttime assembly on the lawn of the White House for President Lincoln.

The marching band remained a mainstay in DeWitt for over 40 years following the war. The name DeWitt Cornet Band remained in use up to the 20th century. Whether the name followed a contiguous group or whether it was a simple name that worked well for several different organizations throughout the years, remains unknown. It is probably telling, however, that the later leader of the DeWitt Cornet Band was Henry Webb (Frank Webb's nephew and a grandson of the 1837 whistler). Other brass bands of the period include: The DeWitt Maroon Band, DeWitt German Band and the DeWitt Masonic Band. There were undoubtedly others whose names have been lost.

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The class of 1929

DeWitt Class of 1929. Back row (l. to r.) Joyce Cary, Marie Tolksdorf, Ethel Burke, Cornelia Norton, Ardis Livermore and Goldie Stoy. Middle row:L-R Iva Peltier, Lucille Yanz, Jean McKinney (sporting a fabulous "spit curl"!) Dorothy Stewart, Beatrice Moon and Lois Schoals. Front row, L-R: Charles "Don " Brainerd, Victor Ward, Erwin Klienert (Principal), Carl Grinold and Clifford Loesch. Courtesy of Thelma Grinold.

Some words from DeWitt Class of 1929

In 1929, DeWitt schools still topped out at 10th grade. Many of these graduates had to continue on through "high school" in Lansing or St. Johns.

Accompanying this class picture are some remarks made by the graduates which were published in their school newspaper, *The Looking Glass.*

"Words cannot express my feeling." Don Brainerd.

"I regret that during my past two years of high school I haven't been taught some of my subjects in the way they ought to have been, for instance, that we are not furnished with an up-to-date laboratory by which science and biology can be explained better." Carl Grinold.

"I am sorry to think that I am leaving this school so I can't be in any more plays or programs." Marie Tolksdorf.

"We have had an enjoyable time together and now that we must part, I will say good bye. Hope we will meet again sometime." Goldie Stoy.

"Here's hoping!" Jean McKinney.

"Cheri D.H.S.! You are responsible for my two years start, and what a whale of a difference these two years make! But as Shakespeare said, 'You ain't seen nothin' yet!' Stand aside, I'm on my way!" Ardis Livermore.

"Tweet! Tweet! Ol' timers, I now feel equal to a teacher of M.S.C." Iva Peltier.

"My suggestion as I am leaving this school is to have baseball as a required subject giving two whole credits for it." Victor Ward.

"I only regret that this, the largest graduating class of DeWitt, must be broken up when attending other schools." Beatrice Moon.

"I wish the author of our history book had died when he was young." Cornelia Norton.

A "negative" look at DeWitt

By KEN COIN

Quite recently, Charlene (Schafey) Schaar made a very nice gift to the library. Actually, it didn't appear all that impressive at first (no offense); just a cigar box full of old negatives. Most of the negatives were typical of the "doings" of the average DeWitt family in the 1920's and 30's; vacations, family gatherings, long forgotten special occasions, etc. But there was also a small tattered envelope of negatives on which her parents had long ago scrawled "DeWitt".

The very next day I rushed these to the library's photographer and about a week later I had the pleasure of viewing some extraordinary scenes. Foremost were four pictures taken a day or two after the 1930 fire which destroyed a large portion of uptown DeWitt. The others? Well, I don't want to spoil the surprise. We'll get to those in a few weeks.

For those of you who don't know, DeWitt was plagued by a series of fires between 1927 to 1936. The first was the Methodist Church in 1927, followed by the business section in 1930; Rosevale Packing company in 1931 and the schoolhouse in 1936. As to the details of the business section fire; we'll review that in my next article.

The photo of the remains of the Clinton House, just so you can get your bearings, would have been taken as if you were walking out the door of Sam's Kitchen, looking across Bridge street towards Hovey's Garage. The sign leaning against the massive stone wall is a mystery to me. It reads "H.G. Christman, Lansing Company Builders, Lansing, Mich." I'm fairly certain it was placed there as a joke of some sort, but the punch line is beyond me. Perhaps some readers will recall the incident. Of special interest to me, though perhaps not visible to you, are the two large chimney bases which were still partially standing in the center of the rubble. They lend support to my theory that the ancient hotel, built between 1839 and 1841, was originally heated by a series of fireplaces.

The northwest corner of Bridge and Main where three stores were completely lost and the post office (in the background) severely damaged.

The vantage point of the second photograph is as if you were standing on the northwest corner if what is now Henderson Family Jewelers. The old post office building, in the background, was actually the fourth building west of the intersection on the north side of Main Street. Through badly scarred and looking as if it had given up the ghost, the building was somewhat repaired and (though never looking much better) continued to stand until it was torn down 30-some years later. It even saw service as one of the early homes to the library shortly after it was repaired.

The stone foundation of the Clinton House ("Joe's Tavern") at the southwest corner of Main and Bridge.

Although the theme of this article seems to be the DeWitt fire of 1930, the real purpose is more to give you a little education that the photographic history of our community is not always in the old pictures that we cherish. Old negatives are all too often an overlooked resource which are unfortunately discarded. In fact, in many cases the negatives have been able to weather the years in better condition than the fragile paper photographs. And the library will be more than happy to make good use of them. Remember this the next time you contemplate tossing out your stash of negatives. I'll be more than happy to sort through your folks' trip to Mackinaw City in 1930 in the hopes of finding a few more pieces of DeWitt's past.

A special thanks to Charlene for her generosity. And as a personal (and inside) joke-Gee, I'm glad I found them before you did!

Next time: We couldn't pin this one on Mrs. O'Leary's cow. So what did happen.

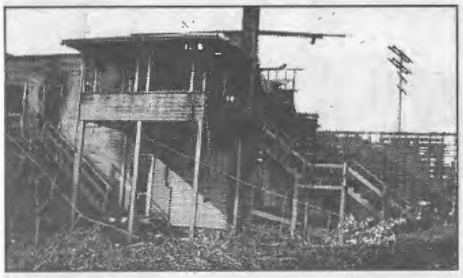
"There wasn't any town left!"

DeWitt Bath Review
17 May 1998 p12A

By KEN COIN

DeWitt, in 1930, was a throwback to its pioneer past; a business district practically unchanged for 70 odd years. Her old wooden structures had escaped the catastrophic fires that often plagued so many other area towns. Aside from the recent Methodist Church fire and a few scattered house and barn fires, there was barely a person alive who could remember the blaze in the 1860's that had succeeded in destroying only one store building on Main street. In short, DeWitt's business district was prime kindling.

In the 1930's DeWitt residents still operated pretty much under the rule of thumb "go to bed with the cows, wake up with the chickens" and midnight was considered the middle of the night. So, while the village slept on the night of October 21, a fire of "unknown origins" began to build momentum in the historic old Clinton House hotel on the southwest corner of Bridge and Main. At 11:45 p.m., when Ralph Woodruff, returning home from Lansing, crested the hill on Webb Road at Prairie Creek, he noticed smoke rising from the village off to the northwest. By the time his auto got uptown, flames had begun their work on the old inn.



The burnt-out remains of Melvin Brooks' Drug Store at the southeast corner of Bridge and Main. The vantage-point of this view would be as if you were standing on east Main (in front of what is now DeWitt Auto Supply) looking west towards what is now the back side of the DeWitt Hardware. Brooks' store faced onto main street (on the right in this picture-almost totally destroyed) whereas its replacement, the hardware building, faces Bridge Street.

Again, a special thanks to Charlene (Shafley) Schaar for bringing these photographs to light.

Probably the first to take notice was the hotel's sole occupant, "Blind Pete" Abramson. His shouts for help had awakened Don Brainard who, with Woodruff's help, managed to rescue Abramson. Don Reed, who lived across Bridge Street, was also roused by the shouts. He set about to running from building to building, house to house, banging on doors and shouting the alarm. Woodruff ran to the town hall and began ringing the bell, then hopped back in his auto and drove the slumbering streets, honking his horn and, likewise, shouting the news.

The town quickly rallied, but for all their efforts, there was little that they could do. The shear size of the old landmark was overwhelming and the heat from resulting blaze quickly had its neighbors to the west engulfed. It was almost as if the hotel, which predated all the other structures and had always surpassed them in importance, was determined to take the lot of them down with her.

An unlucky breeze from the southwest soon had the flames rolling over the street, tickling the structures on the north side of Main and depositing embers and sparks on the roofs and porches. Within hours, many of these too were in flames and before too much longer, the fire had also jumped Bridge Street and was beginning to get the best of that corner.

Attempts to save anything during the furry of the fire proved nearly futile. Early on, Pete Abramson's pool tables from his billiards room in the hotel were hastily moved across Main Street to "safety". They were later destroyed when those buildings erupted. Little, if anything was saved form Spayde's meat market, or Halterman's barbershop west of the hotel and, likewise, from Moon's, Smiley's or Lietzke's stores on the north side of Main. Melvin Brooks did manage to remove the heavy safe from his store. The post office was successfully emptied but, ironically, that building was spared.

The rubble of the brick and stone foundation of the Clinton House at the southwest corner of Bridge and Main. Aside from the large building it supported, this deep cellar was used in the 1840's and 50's as a boot and shoe factory.

By dawn, the fire had played out and the detestation was awesome. Three of the main four corners of DeWitt, eight stores in all, were reduced to little more than smoking, rubble-filled cellars. The old New England charm which the pioneers had transplanted in the wilds of Michigan was gone.

I think Thelma (Hawk) Grinold, who was a little girl at the time and lived east of town near Round Lake Road and U.S. 27, summed it up best when she recently told me, "We had just moved to DeWitt that week. We didn't know anything had happened. We walked into town to school that morning, but there wasn't any town left!"

Ken Coin is a resident of DeWitt and the area's primary historian.

Search for roots brings Julia (Terry) Scott home to DeWitt

By KEN COIN

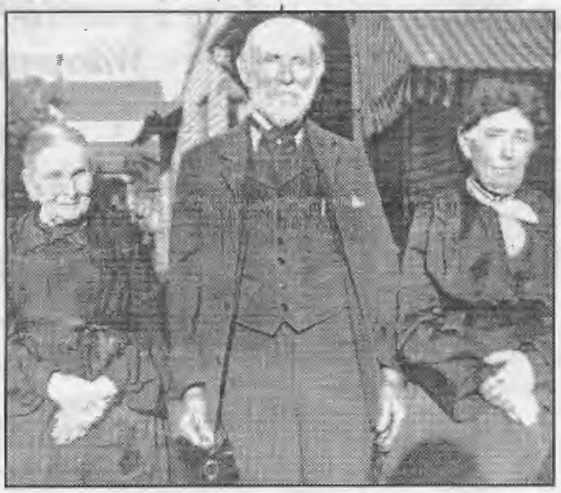
She outlived them all. Yet, after her death in 1906, she was all but forgotten in the annals of DeWitt's pioneer history. Julia Terry, the young girl who married into DeWitt's founding family in 1841 as the wife of Charles Scott, lived to see DeWitt transform itself from a small clearing in the wilderness to a "bedroom community" of Lansing.

It was a pleasant chain of events that brought this old photograph of Julia and her siblings back home to DeWitt. James Baxter, an avid genealogist of Hartford, began the task awhile back of researching his wife Joan's family. The couple took a trip to DeWitt with Joan's mother, Ferrol (Webb) Worthington. Ferrol had lived in DeWitt as a child and wanted to show the Baxters some of their old family homes.

Stopping at the DeWitt Public Library so see if there was any information on their ancestors, they were flabbergasted to find oodles and oodles of data and photographs. This eventually led to an exchange of information and pictures between them and myself; one of the prizes for the library being a copy of the only known photograph of Joan Baxter's great-great grandmother, Julia (Terry) Scott.

Julia A. Terry was born in Albion, New York, November 18, 1818. She came to Michigan with her parents when she was a young lady and settled with them at Captain Scott's new village of DeWitt. Early township records show a license for a "victualing house" (restaurant) granted to Asher and Francis Terry for several years in the early 1840's. That Julia was connected with these early Terrys is a given but whether these two were husband and wife or brothers remains uncertain. The Terrys did not remain in DeWitt very long. They were gone before 1850 (destination unknown) but Julia had made a home for herself and remained.

In 1841, she married Charles Scott (quite a catch in a small pond) the youngest son of Captain David and Eunice (Forbes) Scott. At the time of their marriage, Charles had become his father's principle business agent. Much of the real estate which would eventually become the city of DeWitt was placed in young Charles' control along with



The Terry's (l. to r.) Julie (Terry) Scott, a member of DeWitt's founding family with her surviving siblings, Bartle Terry, Cynthia (Terry) Bedell. Location unknown, ca. 1900. Courtesy of James and Joan (Worthington) Baxter.

years of wedded life for Charles and Julia centered around the busy activity of promoting the development of DeWitt but in 1846, after Charles sold the tavern (much to his father's disgust) the couple focused its attention and energies to a large farm they had purchased southwest of DeWitt.

Their first home on their farm was a small log cabin located near the site of Franklin Oliver's abandoned saw mill on the Looking Glass River (near what is now the corner of Waxwing and Sandhill). Soon after, they began construction of the marvelous Greek Revival style house that is now the home of Norm and Mary Robison on Schavey. It was here that the couples four daughters were born: Celia (married Hiram Alexander), Eunice Eliza (married Edward Webb), Ottie (married Frank Webb) and Nellie (married Byron Webb). In case you noticed, yes, three of the sisters married three Webb brothers.

After the death of her husband in 1861 at the young age of 41. Julia, like many women of her generation, worked hard to continue the operation of a large and successful farm. Eventually, with advancing age and capable hands of a second generation, she sold the farm to her daughter and son-in-law, Edward and Eunice Webb.

One by one, the others of her family passed away until at a ripe old age she alone was the survivor of that generation of Scotts who created DeWitt. The stories and insight into pioneer times that she could

outlived all but one of her own children. Her final years were spent in DeWitt at the home of her only surviving daughter Eunice. On February 1, 1906, Julia fell from the porch and died a week later as a result of her injuries. With little fanfare she was given a brief obituary and buried in a unmarked grave in the DeWitt cemetery beside her husband and his parents.

Ken Coin is a DeWitt resident and the are's primary historian.

DeWitt's Captain David Scott- Local hero or distant cad?

Ken Coin

For well over one hundred years, DeWitt historians have held firm to the patent answers about our town founder's past. "Captain David Scott was born in Litchfield, Conn., on November 1, 1779. Orphaned at a young age he set out for himself..., blah, blah, blah."

Generations of his descendants have tried in vain to follow his trail back through his young adult life in LeRoy, N.Y. and beyond. The most the best of them was able to come up with was merely a few years ago when one stumbled upon the family history of his wife, Eunice Forbes (discovering that the name was actually Fobes). Now, nearly 150 years after his death, the power of the Internet has perhaps brought the past of Captain David Scott to our doorstep.

I've received many inquiries over the years from persons researching their own Scott family genealogy. In each case there has been no connection and I wasn't at all surprised last week when Wayne Summers of the library board passed along an inquiry he had received via the Internet from Barbara Hammond of Missouri who not only claimed to be a descendant of Captain Scott, but a member of the "legitimate" line.

I was hooked. After a tennis match of e-mail with her, I'm of the conclusion that she and Mark Twain are both correct. She, for being a legitimate descendant; Mark Twain for his observation about the truth being harder than fiction.

I was told to check the "Genealogy of the Cowles Families in America", published in 1929. It lists one Anna Cowles, daughter of Asa and Mary (Davis) Cowles, born 1783 in Bethlehem, Ct., married one David Scott at Watertown, Ct., who died in 1814 "with fits". They had one child, a daughter, Emeline Scott, born 1801.

Second, I was told to check the "Publications of the Genealogical Society of Pennsylvania", March, 1925. In that issue, this well respected publication printed the family history contents of a Scott family bible owned by the late Mrs. Thomas H. Fenton of Philadelphia. Among the dozens of colonial era records for this New England family of Scotts was the following entry: David Scott, son of Woolsey Scott, married Miss Anne Cole, only child of Asa Cole, at Watertown, when he was 18 years of age. The had one child, a daughter named Emeline. David Scott afterwards emigrated and settled in Genesee County, N.Y. and from there to Ann Harbour (sic) and from there to DeWitt, Clinton County, on the Looking Glass River.

To recap-on the one authority we have a David Scott who married Anne Cowles at Watertown, Ct., but died ("with fits" no less) in 1814 leaving his wife and one young daughter Emeline. The other, a family bible, tells us that David Scott married Anna Cole at Watertown about 1798, had a daughter Emeline and went on to become the settler here at DeWitt. Someone obviously has their facts scrambled.

At the point the issue could remain a long-standing debate between historians of the Cowles and Scott families. But Barbara Hammond has an ace in the hole. Her family is still in possession of a letter, nearly 200 years old, written from LeRoy, N.Y. in 1817 by David Scott to his estranged daughter Emeline. Though lengthy, and riddled with holes and phonetic spelling, the letter is an obvious attempt by David Scott to reconcile himself with a grown daughter he had abandoned at a very young age.

Dear Daughter

I for the second time set myself down to address to you as attending parent. All tho you and I have not had as much acquaintance with each other as parents and guardians generally have I think that I have as much affection for you as any parent ought to have had...

...you oughten be very hard on her (her mother) for she is the one alone that raised you from the cradle. I have no claim on you. But I have so much affection for you that I want that you should have a home where you would en Joy yourself.

...I think it is your duty to be attached to hir more than to any other one for I no that it is generally more natural for children to be attached to their mother than their Father and you undoutedly must bee for you no but very little about a father. But still I think it would be better for you to live here than to live there.

Towards the end of the letter he discusses plans of coming to Connecticut to visit, urges her to come live with him, expounds on how well he's doing financially and eventually gets down to business; discussing ways of supplementing the family income of Emeline's mother and step-father. He ends with compliments to Emeline's mother and Mr. Hawley (her step-father?) and conveys to Emeline that his family all send her their love.

Although this is a huge breakthrough for the research on the Scott family, it actually opens unlimited avenues for further study. The Scott family Bible mentioned above outlines three generations of the Captain's ancestry. And what of the daughter Emeline? Did she end up living with Captain Scott's family in New York?

I have often commented, verbally and in this column, that for all their accomplishments here at DeWitt, the Scott family passed along very little in the form of family genealogy. As I am frequently reminded, "They probably had their reasons."

Ken Coin is a resident of DeWitt and the area's primary historian.

DeWitt High School Class of '48-What they lacked in numbers they made up for in ambition.

Class of 1948 opens its' door

In 1948, DeWitt High School graduated a class of 17 seniors. For a school district which was already over 100 years old, this was considered "progress". Three years after the end of WWII these graduates were faced a new era. Harry Truman was in the White House, replacing FDR (the only president they could remember) and the Marshall Plan was in full swing.

The girls of the class of '48 are looking to meet boys as sophisticated as Perry Como. The boys however, just want to meet a girl like Jane Russell. For home-front news, we need look no further than a special edition of the high school newspaper-a special edition dated April 1, 1948:

Have you noticed Joan Pike and Ernie Bonds' new Boogie step? The other night when theay were practicing, Joan tossed Ernie over her shoulder so far he hit the light screens.

Robert Wick and Joan Miller have announced their engagement. Their honeymoon will be a trip to Mars on Robert's latest invention, the "Sky Rocket".

Bill Powers has been taking a different girl out

"Molly"(Wilcox) Ruble, Donald Babcock, Marilyn (Brownlee) Hiatt, Ardath (Dick) Wilcox, Willard Reed, Eugene Coin, Robert Wick, Joan (Pike) Garver, Dale Haviland, Herbert Ritter and Cynthia (Weber) Vincent (who, if anyone knows of her whereabouts, please contact Bill Reed).

Following a tradition they started 10 years ago for their 40th class reunion, the class of '48 is going whole hog by extending [illegible] of DeWitt High from the classes of 1939 (DeWitt's first 12th grade class) through 1950. The gathering will be held Sunday afternoon, August 30th at Prairie Creek Banquet Center. "We just want everyone to come and have a good time!" says Bill Reed, one of the organizers of the event.

Ken Coin is a resident of DeWitt and the area's primary historian.

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Robert Wick and Joan Miller have announced their engagement. Their honeymoon will be a trip to Mars on Robert's latest invention, the "Sky Rocket".

Bill Powers has been taking a different girl out every night since he got his new Olds convertible.

Willard Reed and Joyce Thompson have broken up. Willard is now going with Joyce's sister Shirley.

The DeWitt School wishes to announce to the tax payers that the new desks installed last fall do not have any deliberate scratches on them as yet.

Mr. Fuerstenau announces that Eugene Coin will be class Valedictorian and we all express our deepest sympathy to Joyce Thompson who is unable to graduate this year because of the lack of credits but hope to see her make it next year with the class of '49.

DeWitt defeated the Tigers in their first practice game of the season. Dale Haviland, Harold Kelly were batters for DeWitt.

Of the 17 graduates, fourteen are alive and well: Melvin Brownlee, Joyce (Thompson) Reed, William Powers, Marilyn

DeWitt High from the classes of 1939 (DeWitt's first 12th grade class) through 1950. The gathering will be held Sunday afternoon, August 30th at Prairie Creek Banquet Center. "We just want everyone to come and have a good time!" says Bill Reed, one of the organizers of the event.

Ken Coin is a resident of DeWitt and the area's primary historian.

The Grand Champion pen of r
was purchased for $28 a pound by

The Reserve Champion pen of rabbits, owned by Monica Frechen, was purchased for $16 a pound by ReMax - Benson/Mullaney.

4-H Fair

DeWitt Library opens Woodruff Local History Room

By KEN COIN

An outstanding feature of the new DeWitt Public Library is the Woodruff Local History Room which was officially opened as part of the library's dedication ceremony Aug. 23. The room is the result of a generous gift from former DeWitt resident Norma Jean Woodruff, now of Traverse City, who celebrated her 90th birthday this past June. It will house the library's collection of local research materials and act as a gallery of sorts for continually changing displays of local artifacts and photographs.

Some of the furnishings used in the room are artifacts in their own right. There is an antique table and bookcase which was (appropriately enough) made by pioneer cabinetmakers Riley and Addison Woodruff for the DeWitt Township Hall in 1854. The six antique plank-bottom chairs which researchers will use were originally from the DeWitt Grange Hall. Currently on display is a quilt made by the ladies of the DeWitt Methodist Church in 1925-26 as a fund raiser. Hundreds of DeWitt residents paid 10 cents each for their names to be embroidered on fabric squares. When completed it was auctioned off with Paul Shafley winning the bid at $50. It is currently on loan to the library by his granddaughter, Charlene (Shafley) Schaar.

The library has had a long standing tradition of collecting photographs, books, genealogies and other documents relating to our community's past. The collection is not focused simply on the city or township of DeWitt but, rather, that area which has historically identified itself with "DeWitt" and includes much of Riley, Olive and Watertown townships. Place names such as DeWitt, East DeWitt, Alward Lake, Valley Farms, Wacousta, Olive Center, South Olive, North Riley, South Riley, Merle Beach, Sperry's Corners and Ingersoll Station are all included in the library's local history collection. Some of the basics of this collection include:

Published atlases and histories of Clinton County, dating from 1880 to 1915.

Numerous records of area organizations.

Early church records.

Various records of the DeWitt Public Schools, Allen, Brown and Simmons county schools.

Business records.

Area cemetery records.

Early Clinton County marriage records.

Hundreds of newspaper clippings and obituaries.

Federal census (microfilm) of 1840-1880, 1900-1910 and the Civil War veteran census of 1890.

Also in the works is the purchase of all available microfilmed Clinton County newspapers.

Now that the library is able to adequately house its collection in a modern facility which will be both secure and user friendly, we are making a call to the community to support it with donations of additional material. The following is a general "wish list" of materials we'd like to obtain in the near future:

Vintage telephone directories.

Records of social, religious, civic and fraternal organizations.

DeWitt newspapers: *DeWitt Motor, DeWitt Sentinel, DeWitt Republican, DeWitt Advertizer.*

DeWitt yearbooks.

Senior class pictures (1960 to present).

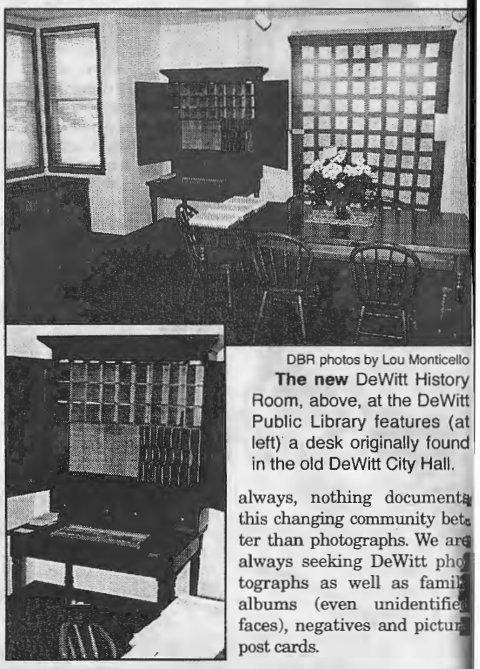
School newspapers.

Country school records.

Pioneer diaries and letters.

Advertising give aways, calendars and trade cards.

Land development promotional literature (yes, even the newer stuff!) And, as always, nothing documents this changing community better than photographs. We are always seeking DeWitt photographs as well as family albums (even unidentified faces), negatives and picture post cards.



DBR photos by Lou Monticello

The new DeWitt History Room, above, at the DeWitt Public Library features (at left) a desk originally found in the old DeWitt City Hall.

Some history on the Hunter-Shafley House

KEN COIN

A frustrating aspect of researching historic buildings in DeWitt is the penchant that residents had a few generations ago for moving structures. Very few of DeWitt's early homes that have survived to the present are in their original location. Picked up, shoved around, cut up, chopped down...it's an old DeWitt custom of making do with what you've got.

The Horatio House, one of early DeWitt's most impressive Greek Revival homes was built about 1855, located at 121 E. Jefferson, facing the Public Square. Much of its history and the story of its early owners remains a mystery. But here's a few clues I've pieced together:

Horatio Hunter and his wife Sophronia, natives of New York state, came to DeWitt about 1855. Horation immediately established himself as a successful merchant in the booming county seat town of DeWitt. It might be easy to assume that his success was evident by the large home he constructed, but I think there's more to the story.

A business partnership of Hunter and Silsbe had established themselves in the very earliest years of the county as peddlers, later establishing a sizable store at Wacousta by 1840. By the time Horatio came to DeWitt in 1855 the family business was already a lucrative concern. It's my hunch that the Hunter and Silsbe families were closely related and that this house was actually home to a larger family unit with Horatio at the head.

The Hunters remained in DeWitt only for a short time. With the business decline caused by the removal of the county seat the Hunter's moved on during the early years of the Civil War. By 1865, the house is listed on the tax rolls under the name of H.D. Cobb and by the late 1860's under the name of Amanda Fouts. Neither of these names seem to have any other connection with DeWitt.

There were other owners throughout the 1870's but at the end of that decade the home was purchased by Henry and Susan Moon. Henry, one of DeWitt's earliest pioneers (in the southern end of the township) had come to the village of DeWitt following his successful adventure to the California gold fields. He had purchased the old DeWitt Hotel in New Albany (101 Webb Dr.) and carried out a large and prosperous farm. But about 1880, he turned his old home over to his son Sylvester and retired "uptown" in the former Hunter house until his death in 1884.

The Horatio Hunter House at 121 E. Jefferson. Although nearly 70 years at the time of this photograph its classic Greek Revival lines remained very evident.

All three photographs ca. 1927, courtesy of Charlene (Shafley) Schaar.

Early in this century it was the home of Paul and Blanche Shafley. At the time of their son Ernest's marriage in 1927, it was decided that the old house was big, but not quite big enough for two generations. The remedy-slice it in half. Ernest and Marguerite got the two-story portion which was pried away, lifted up and moved back to the corner of Madison and Franklin. Paul and Blanche kept the single-story wings which were fitted together and remained at 121 E. Jefferson.

Paul and Blanche Shafley's home at 121 E. Jefferson. The one-story wings from the Hunter house were brought together into a charming little home.

Ernest and Marguerite Shafley's home at 124 E. Madison. Constructed from the two-story portion of the Hunter house with some additions.

Another historic home in DeWitt says "goodbye"

KEN COIN

Thirty years ago it looked like a sure bet that the rambling old brick farm house at 1120 S. DeWitt Road was a goner. Long abandoned, ransacked and vandalized, it was a sure bet that it would soon be razed. But the old house hadn't quite given up. New owners spent considerable time, money and talent into revitalizing the place; a feat many DeWitt residents thought impossible. And for these past many years it has been the home of Norman and Renee Farnum.

The first record I've found for this old farm (the southwest quarter of section 8) bounded by DeWitt and Herbison roads was the ownership of William and Christina Allen in the 1850's. Their home, undoubtedly a log structure, sat near the present house. Although the original farm took up nearly 160 acres, much of the land on the west side was low and swampy (eventually the east side of Lake Geneva). Both died young, Christina in 1860 at age 32 with William following in 1864 at age 36.

I believe that for a time thereafter, Henry Moon owned the property, his farm being directly across the road to the east. A small swatch of land was carved out as a home site for his son Charles (1008 S. DeWitt Rd.) and by 1870, the Allen's old homestead was owned by Jacob and Maria VanAuken.

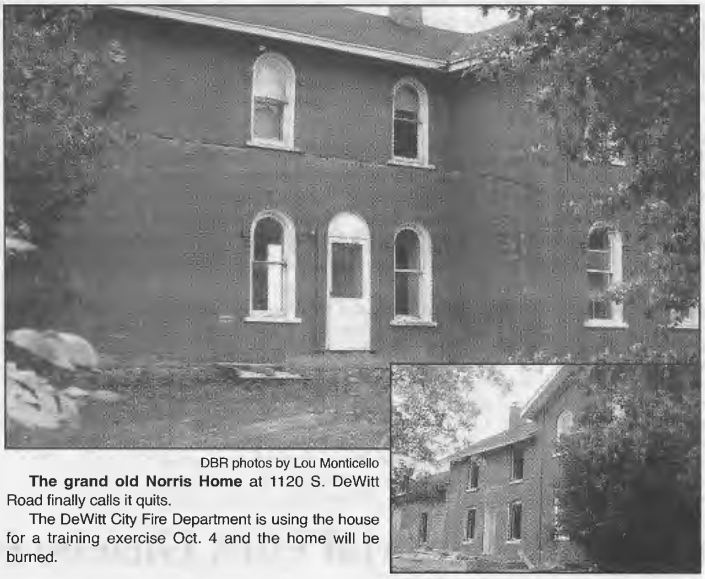
Enter the Norris family, one of the most prolific families in 19th century DeWitt. From Junius, Seneca county, New York, the Norris family began making its appearances here shortly after the Civil War. Aaron and Amanda (Terbush) Norris, the parents of 16 children (8 died young and one died in the Civil War), first settled on the Emery homestead on Round Lake Road where their son Spencer had built a large frame house in 1867 (now my home). Aaron had been both a farmer and innkeeper back in New York. Soon after his arrival in DeWitt, he purchased the Clinton House hotel from Charles Terbush (his brother-in-law?) and operated it for many years.

Sometime after 1873, Aaron and Amanda bought the VanAuken property south of DeWitt and then built the large brick house. Although plain in design, the original charm of the house owed much in its long porches and round-topped windows.

Aaron and Amanda's life in their new home was cut short by Aaron's sudden death in 1881 at the age of 66. By this date, all but one of their children had married and established homes for themselves which left Amanda with a rather large house and farm to care for. In 1885, she was remarried to Jotham Averill and moved to his home just south of the river on Bridge Street.

The farm was afterwards sold to Ferdinand and Armance (Delcommune) Brya who continued a prosperous farm here for many years.

Ken Coin is a resident of DeWitt and the area's primary historian.



DBR photos by Lou Monticello

The grand old Norris Home at 1120 S. DeWitt Road finally calls it quits.

The DeWitt City Fire Department is using the house for a training exercise Oct. 4 and the home will be burned.

The anatomy of a typical old DeWitt house

By KEN COIN

Over the past years, I've used up a lot of type space relating the histories of many of DeWitt's older homes. I've tended to concentrate on who homesteaded the land, who built the houses, and various families who occupied them down through the years. What I've neglected to attempt, is an explanation of the anatomy of a typical old DeWitt house.

Much like more modern home styles (such as Ranch, Cape Cod and the like) there was a limited variety of basic designs for DeWitt homes in the mid-19th century. By far, the most popular and enduring was the "upright and wing". It was a highly adaptable style that was very popular in this area from the 1840's up to the turn of the century. Although popular both in town and in the country, it was especially suited to the demands of a productive farm.

The upright and wing takes its name, obviously, from the fact the house had two basic components: a two-story "upright" with a perpendicular "wing". The wing was most often one story, but many examples can also be found with a two-story wing or, as a compromise, a wing with an attic above that was almost tall enough to support living space.

To fully understand the original lay-out of a upright and wing of the mid-1800's, you must first change your mind-set on the purpose a house served during that period. First and foremost, the house had to supply maximum sleeping quarters. Secondly, it had to house the factory needed to support the family it housed (feeding large numbers of people and all the requirements necessary to provide the food). Ideas such as storage of personal items, privacy, relaxation and comfort were all laughable notions in 19th century DeWitt.

In our tour of this typical house, we'll start in the heart of the house, the room from which all things radiated. People who live in these homes today, inevitably use this room as a dining room. It was the room behind the porch; the room where the wing butted up against the upright. This room, all doors and windows, was equivalent to the family room. Besides the eating table, it contained the cook stove and the most comfortable rocking chairs. This is where the family congregated to eat, to read, to tell stories and to keep warm from the constant heat from the stove.

In front of the central room was the front porch and behind it was either the back porch, the woodshed or, in a larger version of the upright and wing, another wing which housed a kitchen (allowing for a bit of an upscale dining room in the central room). The remainder of the principle wing was usually two tiny rooms. The one facing the front of the house was a very small bedroom which actually served as birthing room, sick room (which most often equated to a "dying room") and guest room for family, friends or the boarding school teacher. The second, even tinier room was a pantry. Often with cleverly compact cupboards, it housed the food and supplies necessary for cooking.

Along the opposite wall of the central room, the wall separating the upright, there was customarily three doors all lined in a row. One of the end doors led into the front parlor. This door was usually opened once a week for cleaning and rarely for anything else besides special company, a wedding, or a funeral. This room housed the family's best possessions: nice furniture, knickknacks and curiosities, family portraits, etc.

The other end door in the central rooms trio of doors, led into a bedroom. Although often small, this bedroom was usually occupied by the parents (or grandparents in a multi-generational family). There was no need for it to be large. A double bed, a chest of drawers and a washstand were all that was required. A luxury option might include a small clothes closet for their modest wardrobe.

Back in the central room, the middle door of the trio opened to a narrow, steep set of stairs. If the upright and wing had only a one story wing, the top of these stairs offered only two options: turn one way into a small bedroom directly over the parent's room or turn the other way into a large bedroom over the parlor. Predominately, these two rooms were apportioned either "girls' room" or "boys' room". The designation depended on which sex outnumbered the other. It would not have been an uncommon sight to see two or three double beds lined up in the larger room.

My own house having the less common two-story wing, the second floor plan had a variation. At the top of the stairs there was the one option of turning into the large over-the-parlor bedroom, or to turn the other way, the room over the parent's bedroom was actually a wide hall which led you to a second large bedroom over the central room (this was a coveted room because of the nearly constant heat source from below). This room too might also serve as extra duty as a pass-though to get to the one or two smaller rooms that were at the end of the wing.

The room(s) at the end of the second floor wing had a much more flexible purpose. They might be used as a nursery, a private room for a teenager, a room for the hired help.. or even a less charming purpose such as trunk storage, grain storage, a drying room for herbs, corn or beans or even a refrigerated room in the winter for keeping perishable food.

(Next installment...we'll take a look at these homes actually constructed in DeWitt.)

The building of a 19th century home

By KEN COIN

DEWITT - As a follow-up to my explanation of typical "upright & wing" homes of 19th century DeWitt I promised to go into more detail about their methods of construction. I'm not a builder so my terminology might be a bit askew. My expertise, such as it is, comes merely from the number of old homes I've seen in the midst of renovation (including my own ill-fated attempts). So, we'll give it a go, starting with the building site and foundation work.

Site planning-

Unquestionably, many factors went into the pioneers' determination of where to build their home. For farm homes however, there were two basic factors which often outweighed all others. The first was high ground and the second was proximity to a water source. In the village, the high ground factor remained important as did the site's relationship to the sun. Believe it or not, the majority of early village homes were built on the north or west sides of the street in order to take full advantage of the natural warmth of the sun.

Site preparation-

Most area building sites were naturally wooded. Shade had little appeal to settlers and most trees within spitting distance of the home site were cut down. The tallest and straightest of the hardwood trees were set aside to be hewn into beams. The rest went to the woodpile and the stumps extracted. A large scoop was rigged up behind a team of oxen or draft horses and grading of the site was begun.

The basement-

Who came up with the term "Michigan Basement"? Are ours' really so different from those in neighboring states? The sole purpose of the basement or "cellar" was to store food; nothing less, nothing more. The necessary size of the cellar therefore was usually minimal and depended somewhat on the size of the household. As the scoop dug deeper and deeper, the dirt was mounded higher and higher around the perimeter of the hole. Rocks of workable size were set aside for use in the basement's foundation walls while those which were too big to be lifted from the hole were often left in place or cat-walked into the corner of the hole to be used as a base for the foundation.

As the basement was commonly under only a portion of the house and seldom extended to the full perimeter, footings for the remaining outline of the house were dug.

The David Scott House on west Main street, a highly embellished example of a standard upright & wing layout. It foundation, now mostly obscured by landscaping, is a rare example of cobblestone facing. Photo. Ca. 1930, courtesy of the DeWitt Public Library.

Rocks by the wagon-load were retrieved from the adjoining area for the basements walls and remaining foundations. As area rocks had a tendency to be round, it was a task in itself to bust them open to give the masons some flat surfaces to face both the inside and outside of the walls. Very few basements in the area were finished in what we've come to call "random rubble" (basically, piles of unbroken rock). Dressed stone, rocks cut into cubes with some semblance uniformity, would not make their fashionable appearance here until nearer the end of the century. Most DeWitt homes rested on foundations about 14" thick, made of busted rock, pieced together to form an amazingly flat surface. The Scott house (pictured above) has a very rare foundation in that it is faced with baseball-sized cobblestones, a rarity in Michigan.

The floor of the cellar was leveled and stomped, leaving a compacted dirt floor which often, considering the high clay content of area soil, produced an amazingly hard surface. As a finishing touch, the cellar was often fitted with a few small windows set into the rock walls and more than likely, an outside entrance (The kind Dorothy stomped on when the twister was coming).

Next, we'll look at the framing and finishing.

Ken Coin is a resident of DeWitt and the area's primary historian.

Dewitt 29 Nov. 1995 p 11
DeWitt-Bath Review

The framework of an old house

KEN COIN

From the ground up-

The key to a successful house building laid in the sill beam. These beams, often measuring 30 foot or more, were hand-hewn from the hardwood trees, usually cut on site and set aside for that purpose. With axe and adz, the framer chopped away at the formidable logs until they were whittled down, anywhere from 8 to 12 inches square. Lain atop the foundation and dovetailed at the corners, additional cross support beams were morticed in at intervals of maybe every 10 foot.

With the beams in place, it was time to start drilling and notching. The 2 x 8 floor joists were cut so that there was about a 3" long 2" x 2 " projection on each end. The sill beams were notched perhaps every 12 inches to accommodate these joists. In the country, where labor was often cheaper than materials, it was not uncommon well into the second half of the 19th century for 2 x 8 floor joists to be substituted with small logs, shaved on one side with squared ends similarly fitted into the beams. As a rule of thumb, ground floor joists were laid perpendicular to roof rafters. Second floor joists were run parallel to rafters.

Some of DeWitt's earliest homes were built in a method called "post and beam". This construction technique is similar to that used for barn building well into this century, but was pretty much discontinued for residential construction by 1850. In a nutshell, these houses were constructed with 6" x 6" or 8" x 8" beams, both vertical and horizontal. It's my belief that this method remained popular in DeWitt even after the common acceptance of "frame construction," because of the fact that it required a minimal amount of milled lumber. Hence, for larger building projects, it was less costly and, with a limited supply of milled lumber being turned out by DeWitt's sole sawmill, builders didn't have to get on a waiting list for lumber. As there are only a handful of post and beam houses now standing in the DeWitt area, I'll set further discussion of this technique aside and concentrate on the more familiar frame technique.

The outside top of the sill beams, the part facing out, was similarly notched or drilled to receive the wall studs. Some builders used the method of 2 x 2 notches down the outside face of the beam, others drilled 2 x 2 holes set back 2" from the outside. In either case, the studs were usually set at 10" on center into the sill beams (why do you think they called them studs?). As framed by 4 x 4 studs running from sill to roof. Corners were also often set with 4 x 4's.

The frames of early DeWitt homes were predominately made of oak lumber. They sawed what we had and what they had was plenty of oak. Pine was a rarity, and beech, poplar, cherry and maple were marketed for cabinet work. Oak, at that time, was the throw-away wood so the huge, several-hundred-year-old trees were relegated for framing materials. Slab wood, the planks cut from the huge logs by the mill to dress them into a workable square logs, were saved and used for inch-thick roof decking.

The framing material was direct from the saw mill. It was left rough, never planed, and the saw marks are clearly visible. These saw marks often give a clue as to the age of the structure. Circular saw marks mean the lumber was milled after 1855. Straight saw marks (on framing material only!) indicate the lumber was milled by a vertical saw before 1855 (1855 being the approximate year the DeWitt sawmill converted from a vertical to a circular blade). There were portable mills which were used throughout the rural areas but most of these did not make their appearance until the 1880's.

Flooring was generally plain. Tongue and groove plank flooring was the norm. Hardwoods like ask, oak and elm were used in rooms which were not to be carpeted. Softer woods were used in rooms which were to be carpeted. (Yes, wall-to-wall carpeting was a standard feature even in mid-19th century DeWitt.)

Sheathing for the walls seems to have been a matter of preference. Many old homes had no sheathing whatsoever. The builders of my own home seem to have gone overboard. (Pardon the pun.) The exterior of my house was sheathed in inch-thick cedar planks, 12" wide and 15 or more feet long nailed vertically. As if that weren't enough, they also sheathed the interior walls, also with inch-thick cedar planks, laid horizontally.

In some area houses, I've seen where the interior sheathing served also as the finished wall surface, in lieu of plaster. In these cases the interior sheathing was decorative beaded tongue and groove inch-thick planks, similar to, but more substantial that the thin beaded tongue and groove planking used in later years for wainscoting, cheap cabinetry, porch ceilings and wallboard for woodsheds and summer kitchens.

So, we've got the frame up, resting on a solid foundation. Next time we'll

jects, it was less costly and, with a limited supply of milled lumber being turned out by DeWitt's sole sawmill, builders didn't have to get on a waiting list for lumber. As there are only a handful of post and beam houses now standing in the DeWitt area, I'll set further discussion of this technique aside and concentrate on the more familiar frame technique.

The outside top of the sill beams, the part facing out, was similarly notched or drilled to receive the wall studs. Some builders used the method of 2 x 2 notches down the outside face of the beam, others drilled 2 x 2 holes set back 2" from the outside. In either case, the studs were usually set at 10" on center into the sill beams (why do you think they called them studs?). As most houses of the period had a predictable symmetry, window and door openings were often anticipated and sheathed in inch-thick cedar planks, 12" wide and 15 or more feet long nailed vertically. As if that weren't enough, they also sheathed the interior walls, also with inch-thick cedar planks, laid horizontally.

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So, we've got the frame up, resting on a solid foundation. Next time we'll take a look at the finishing touches.

Ken Coin is a resident of DeWitt and the area's primary historian.