

Ballroom Script

Welcome to the house built by William Fearn Patton.

Over the last 117 years, this structure has had many uses. It began as one of the finest Victorian dwellings in Danville. It endured a conversion to five apartments – sometimes with a motorcycle gang in residence. It survived imminent demolition. And it has seen commercial use as a decorator's studio, a music studio, and an orthodontist's office. Today, you will see its return to use as a home, much as it appeared 117 years ago.

The Patton family was well known in Danville. William Fearn's father operated a local bank known as William S. Patton, Sons, and Company. At one time, the family also owned a large tract of land just east of here – centered at the intersection of Jefferson Avenue and Patton Street.

Our Patton was a third generation Danvillian who, like his father, became immensely wealthy as a banker. W.F. married Sallie Ann Fuller in 1881. She was the daughter of a prominent local tobacconist.

Construction of this house for W.F. and Sallie was completed in 1890 with an assessed value on the tax roles of \$10,000. Sadly, the couple lived here for only four years before Sallie died of typhoid fever in July of 1894. After her death, W.F. removed himself and their two young sons to the home of his mother-in-law on South Main Street, never to return. He sold the property – including all of the furniture, tableware, and remaining personal property – to tobacconist Oliver Witcher Dudley for \$19,145.

The Dudley family lived here for 60 years. The house underwent major renovations twice by the Dudleys – first around 1915 when they enlarged the home from 16 to 24 rooms, and added four fireplaces to the ten already here. They also added central steam heat, making the coal-burning fireplaces unnecessary. It was the widow Dudley who converted the house to apartments around 1935, though she remained in residence until her death in 1954.

The room in which we are standing is still the only residential ballroom in the City of Danville. However, it did not look at all this way just four years ago. During the Dudley's

first renovations, this room was divided in two, creating men's and lady's parlors. The side bay behind me was divided by a wall, resulting in two small, awkward spaces in front of the windows where the piano now stands. Columns and arches completed the transformation to a Renaissance Revival style. One of the columns has been kept as a reminder of this era, and can be seen behind the Christmas tree today.

Later renovations by commercial users further divided this room into three spaces, totally obscuring the original design.

The pocket doors behind you were removed in the first renovation in favor of French doors – more stylish at the time. While the pocket doors were broken during their removal, they remained in storage in the crawl space below us for 90-some years. They were restored and re-hung by employees of their original maker – the Danville Lumber and Millwork Company – in 2005.

The original Victorian wall-to-wall carpet was also removed. Of course, we are blessed by the installation of this beautiful inlaid parquet flooring that will soon reach its 100th birthday.

The over-mantels were also removed at that time and stored in the carriage house that once stood at the rear of the home. The over-mantel that you see today was moved to Winston-Salem for possible use there in the 1970s. It was discovered and returned to its original place by the present owners just last year. It carries its maker's mark and date – the John A Moore Company, Baltimore, 1890. We are very fortunate to have it back in Danville.

The 1913 Kranich and Bach grand piano is a favorite of the present owners. Even though manufactured in New York, these pianos are somewhat rare because so many were shipped overseas. Europeans preferred the rich, mellow tones.

Let me point out the stained glass in the transom windows. There are 22 of these original windows in the home, all in a Southern Magnolia theme.

Are there any questions before I ask you to step back into the entry hall through the rear doors?

Entry Hall Script

Like the ballroom, this room also changed substantially through the years. Just four years ago, there were two rooms, a narrow hallway, and a powder room in this space.

If you will look to the front, you will see another over-mantel awaiting restoration. This piece was found in the crawl space along with the pocket doors, and returned to its original location.

The chandelier is believed to be original to the Dining Room, though it has hung in this location for at least 30 years. It has been converted from gas to electricity. A previous owner tells us that it once had a large pink globe at its center.

Please direct your attention now to the baseboard next to the table, where you will see a round brass fixture. Can anyone tell me what this was for?

It was a service outlet for a pneumatic cleaning system – a forerunner of today’s central vacuums. Installed during the 1915 renovation, copper tubes ran from a bellows in the basement to three locations in the house. Only a few of these systems were sold in extremely expensive homes. And they really only removed light dust – a far cry from what we have today.

Now if you turn you will attention toward the staircase:

This free standing staircase was completely hidden by the 1935 apartment conversion. Its balustrade removed and replaced by a dividing wall. Upstairs tenants reached their apartments through a doorway from the front porch to this enclosed stairway. The first few steps that you see here stood outside on the porch for seventy years. Much work remains to restore this staircase to its original grand style.

The opening that allows you to see up the stairwell had been closed. It had been covered to expand the second floor landing for apartment tenants. Returning the stairwell to its original open configuration has provided the space for a small elevator. While the elevator mechanism is entirely new, the 1895 cab was rescued from a commercial building in Williamsport, Pennsylvania, and reconfigured to fit here.

On the second floor, an owner's suite has been completed. These rooms occupy space added by the Dudley's renovations, and can be reached from the servant's staircase. Four additional bedrooms, including the original Victorian guest room and original master bedroom, are awaiting restoration. These rooms carry the same fine mouldings, fireplaces, tiles, and stained glass as those on the first floor, along with original 1890s hardwood flooring. Perhaps they will be included in a future tour.

The third floor is used for the present owners' home-based business. The most interesting feature is a secret room about three feet by ten feet in dimension. It is reached by crawling through an elaborate fireplace that was never connected to a chimney. There are many theories about how this room was used – from hiding the family silver to hiding Mr. Dudley's liquor during prohibition.

Please continue your tour through the gallery and into one of the new rooms added by the Dudleys.

Morning Room Script

Welcome to the new part of the W.F. Patton house added by the Dudley family around 1915. This would have served as the Dudley's morning room.

Several hundred hours have been invested in removing layers of white, pink, and blue paint from the paneling. It will soon be stained and sealed. The present narrow windows and plywood blanks are being replaced with full-size windows appropriate to the period. When completed, it will serve its present owners as a billiards room. The room behind me, once the Dudley's rear porch, will become a winter garden.

We are very fortunate that this house remains here today. Following Mrs. Dudley's death in 1954, it was maintained as apartments by a series of owners, and its condition deteriorated. In 1965, an attempt was made to raze the house in favor of a modern apartment building to be placed on its street-to-street lot.

This proposed demolition was not favored in the community. An ad-hoc organization known as the "Committee of 900" was successful in preserving the house. It was the first house rescued in Danville's ongoing preservation movement more than 40 years ago.

The house was then purchased by local decorator Robert I. Harper for his shop and studio. Later, the first floor studio and apartment was occupied by musician Mary Brockwell. Many older Danvillians remember visiting here for their music lessons.

In 1978, the house was purchased by Dr. and Mrs. Wilford Cocke. The Cockes adapted the first floor for use in his orthodontics practice, with the upstairs remaining as apartments. The current owners, Paul and Marjory Liepe, purchased the house from the Cockes on the doctor's retirement.

I have two pictures here for you to look at. On your left is a design published by well-known Richmond architect Marion J. Dimmock in 1887. This row-house is strikingly similar in design to this house – shown in a 1907 photo on your right. The use of massive stone walls and arches is clear in both pictures – typical of Captain Dimmock and of world-renown architect Henry Hobson Richardson. This is why the house is described as Richardsonian

Free Style. While we are not certain that this is a Dimmock design, he did designed Danville's Opera House at that time.

I also have a scrap of wallpaper known to be original to the house. The Victorians were very fond of busy patterns. Similar papers would likely have been used through the house.

Next you'll be passing to the dining room through the butler's pantry. There were no remnants from the original pantry, so the present design is based on similar rooms in other homes.

The butler's pantry is divided from the kitchen by a wall that is four bricks thick. This reduced the danger of fire spreading from the attached kitchen the rest of the house, and helped to keep the family cool in the summer. Only the small pass-through is original. The doorway to the kitchen was added later – perhaps when the cook stove was replaced by a gas appliance or when retaining staff became infeasible.

While you are welcome to peak into the kitchen as you pass, everything there is new.

Dining Room Script

Many dining rooms in today's homes go unused. For Victorians, the dining room was the center of social entertainment. It was here that guests were treated to the very best the household had to offer. This included food, drink, furnishings, décor, and the lavish attention of servants.

This dining room's elegance is clearly visible. The stained glass window displaying an enchanting vineyard theme is nearly eight feet wide. Although its maker has not been identified, experts believe its from the mid west. Members of the local Hackworth family tell of their great grandfather hauling this window here from the Danville train station with his wagon and team.

The fireplace tiles are by the Trent Tile Company of Trenton, New Jersey – the finest maker of the time. The tiles were deigned by famous artisan William Wood Gallimore, and are quite valuable. The large horizontal tile shows a shepherd making music for his sheep, while the vertical tiles show a shepherd with his staff and a shepherdess with her lamb. The over-mantel is original to the house, returned here in 2007 from the Forrest Hills area of the city.

The oak wainscoting was originally three panels high. Unfortunately, the upper row of panels was removed and discarded around 1970.

The huge pocket door is a reproduction, modeled on the originals in the ballroom. This door weighs about 350 pounds and required five men to slide it onto its tracks.

Please take your time to look around this room. Then, as you exit, please note the pictures of an elaborate Victorian porte-cochere. You will be leaving the house through its side entrance, where this porte-cochere once protected the family and their guests from the weather. We do not know whether it succumbed to the elements or was removed to allow the passage of that new-fangled invention, the automobile.

Thank you very much for joining us today at the W.F. Patton house. I have a few copies of a brochure about the house for those who would like one. And I'll be happy to take any question you may have.