

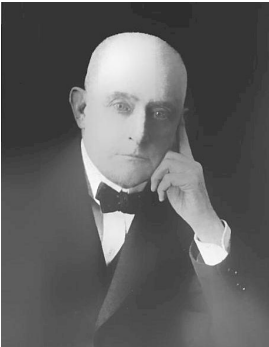
History

William Fearn Patton was a third generation Danvillian. After the Civil War, W.F. joined his father and brother in a bank known as Wm. S. Patton, Sons, and Co., and became very prosperous.



W.F. married Sallie Ann Fuller in 1881, daughter of a prominent tobacconist. He and Sallie had two sons — W.F. Jr. and Albert Fuller Patton. Construction of their home began in 1887, and was completed in 1890. For unknown reasons, the Patton family lived in the house for only two years before moving in with Mrs. Patton's mother on South Main Street. Sadly, Sallie passed from typhoid fever in July 1894. Their son, W.F. Patton Jr. became an engineer for Westinghouse while Albert Fuller Patton joined the family business.

Next to occupy the house was Oliver Witcher Dudley in 1892. He was a tobacco buyer for several Danville firms, including Pemberton and Penn. He became president of this firm on the death of the founder. Later, he organized O.W. Dudley Leaf Tobacco Buyers on Lynn Street.



Dudley married Lucie Howard Estes in 1894, the same year he acquired the house from Patton including all of the furniture and remaining personal property for \$19,145. The Dudleys substantially enlarged and remodeled the house, creating the front sitting porch, adding eight rooms, inlaid hardwood flooring,

central heating, and Renaissance Revival decoration. Mrs. Dudley also gardened extensively, adding a tiled pond to the rear yard.

The Dudleys raised their two sons here — Oliver Witcher Dudley Jr. and Howard Estes Dudley. The house remained in the family for 60 years, though later converted to apartments by the widow Dudley.

Following Mrs. Dudley's death in 1954, the house was maintained as apartments by a series of owners until 1965. At that time, 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 organization known as the "Committee of 900" was successful in preserving the house. The main floor was then occupied by decorator Robert I. Harper (at right) for his shop and studio.



By 1971, the first floor studio was occupied by musician Mary Brockwell. As a result, older Danvillians remember visiting the house 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 other floors remaining as apartments. Again, many Danvillians remember the house as the source of their braces.



The Liepe family purchased this Danville landmark in late 2003, and began its restoration as a single family residence. As with any historic home, rehabilitation and maintenance continue to this day.

Patton House c. 1903



1887 Dimmock Design



W.F. Patton House 926 Main Street Danville, VA



Paul Liepe Family, Stewards

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Architecture

No expense was spared in the construction of this Richardsonian Free Style mansion, with a tax appraisal value of \$10,000 on completion.

Built of contrasting materials, textures, and shapes, the lower facade is of expensive rusticated greenstone – a rock which underlies granite in some quarries. The balance of the main floor and the upper floors are of smooth brickwork with the smallest possible amounts of mortar.

The rounded corners of two bay projections contrast with the rough cut stone. The ogee curve of the dome contrasts with the squareness of the entrance porch. The slate roof is topped by almost whimsical decoration reminiscent of a Viking ship.

The stone and terra cotta latticework of the porch roof balustrade continues a belt course around the facade. That course is interrupted by several panels of patterned terra cotta.

Twenty-two exterior windows on the main and second floors include original stained glass transoms repeating a Southern Magnolia theme.

At one time, the exterior also included an elaborate side porte-cochere and cresting above its side projections. A carriage house stood at the rear of the street-to-street lot.

The architect is believed to be Marion J. Dimmock of Richmond. While the attribution to Dimmock is uncertain, he published a strikingly similar design for a row house in 1887, explaining the narrow “town house” compactness of the design. (Dimmock also designed Danville’s Opera House at about the same time.)

Following its many and varied divisions into apartments and offices, the interior has been returned to twenty-four rooms with fourteen fireplaces on four levels. There are nearly 8,000 square feet in all.

The house was renovated at least three times by the Dudleys – first about 1910 to expand the front porch and add rear sleeping porches. In 1917, the Dudleys added central heating, a central vacuum, enclosed the sleeping porches, and changed the Victorian décor to Renaissance Revival. In 1939/40, the house was converted to apartments.

Main Floor

Visitors enter through a traditional vestibule into a double-square entrance hall with side projection for the stairwell. Once divided into three rooms, this long hall and the views beyond contrast with the house’s small exterior appearance, emphasizing the massive size of the dwelling. The entrance hall boasts original converted gasoliers and sconces, fireplace tiles, and an overmantel once removed.

The hall’s side projection with its free-standing staircase and view to the upper floors was completely hidden during the apartment conversion. The original balustrade was destroyed, and the ceiling floored over to expand the second floor landing.

That projection was reopened, the carved newel post returned to its original location, and the balustrade recreated in the requisite quarter-sawn oak. This reopening also provided space for an elevator mechanism, new in 2005. The 1895 elevator car was rescued from a commercial building in Williamsport, Pennsylvania, and reconfigured to fit here.

The hall provides immediate entry to the grand ballroom. Once carved into men’s and lady’s parlors (dividing the side bay), and lat-

Interior Features, Renovations, and Restoration

er into offices, architectural evidence suggests the ballroom is now in its original configuration. That evidence also shows cut-pile carpeting as the original floor covering – likely by Wilton – replaced by a thin inlaid hardwood.

The pocket doors which presently grace the ballroom entrance were found in grave disrepair in a crawl space. They were restored by employees of their likely original maker – the Danville Lumber and Manufacturing Company, which also provided the mansion’s decorative mouldings.

The ballroom’s overmantels are plaster on wood manufactured in Baltimore. Both were removed in 1917 and stored in the then-exiting carriage house until the 1970s. The rear overmantel moved to Winston-Salem for possible use there, and returned to the Patton House in 2006 – 89 years after its removal. The large front overmantel somehow moved to an auction house in Tuscaloosa in 2020 and returned to the house in July 2021.

An elegant dining room includes a large interior stained glass window displaying an enchanting vineyard theme. The pocket door is a reproduction, modeled on the originals in the ballroom. The fireplace tiles of shepherds were designed by William Wood Gallimore for the Trent Tile Company of Trenton, NJ – the finest maker of the time. The overmantel is also original, returned here in 2007 from the Forest Hills area of the city.

Behind the dining room, the butler’s pantry and cook’s kitchen have been returned to an appropriate cabinetry, but with modern appliances. The kitchen, once a single story, was separated from the main house by a wall that is four bricks thick, reducing the risk of fire. The doorway from the main house to the kitchen is “new.” Originally, a pass through from the kitchen to the butler’s pantry was

used for food service while separating the classes of house servants.

Also connected to the butler’s pantry is a fully paneled drawing room with an adjacent winter garden room. These rooms, added by the Dudleys, were restored in 2014. The drawing room now features a tessellated ceiling so popular in the early 1900s.

Second Floor

On the second floor, an owner’s suite now occupies space added or enclosed by the Dudleys’ renovations, and can also be reached via the rear servant’s staircase. This suite includes a sitting room, bedroom, dressing room, and marble bath.

Restoration of the family sitting area and three additional bedrooms was completed in 2009. The original Victorian guest room now serves as the home’s billiards room. These rooms carry the same fine mouldings and stained glass as on the first floor, along with original 1890s mantels and oak flooring.

Third Floor

The third floor garret includes a guest suite once occupied by Mrs. Dudley’s mother. Its most interesting feature is a secret room approximately three feet by ten feet in dimension. The curious must crawl to enter, as the room is hidden behind the elaborate fire back of a non-working fireplace. Theories abound as to its cause or use – from hiding the family silver to keeping Mr. Dudley’s liquor during prohibition. Additional rooms serve as the present owners’ offices, studio, and storage.

Ground Floor

The mansion also includes a ground-floor “English Garden” apartment once used as servants’ quarters. Two included fireplaces are of brick, demonstrating their original utilitarian purpose.