

G O R D O N H A L L

The "JUDGE DEXTER HOUSE" near

Dexter, Michigan

1843 - 1918

1918 - 1951

*Privately Circulated*

EMIL LORCH  
1023 Forest Avenue  
Ann Arbor, Mich.

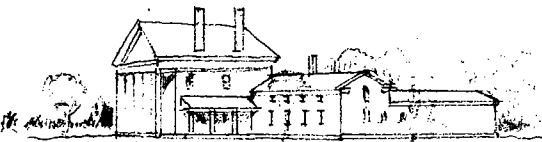
# GORFON HALL

## THE "JUDGE VENTER HOUSE"

KEY TRAIL, MICHIGAN

PLAN AND CHANGES IN  
THE EXTERIOR from  
1860 to 1950

[SEE ACCOMPANYING  
WRITTEN COMMENTS]



From NE; low N. wing with EIT  
in 1860.



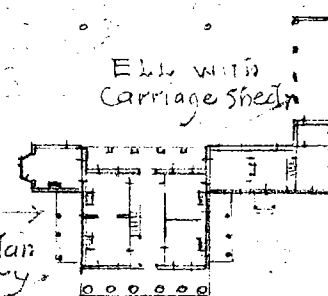
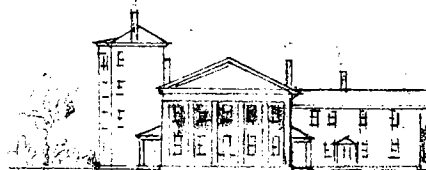
S.E. View 1860, and as recorded  
with low S. wing in 1943



1860 - Rear or W. side; Low S. + N. Wings  
EIT + open Carriage Shed on N. side



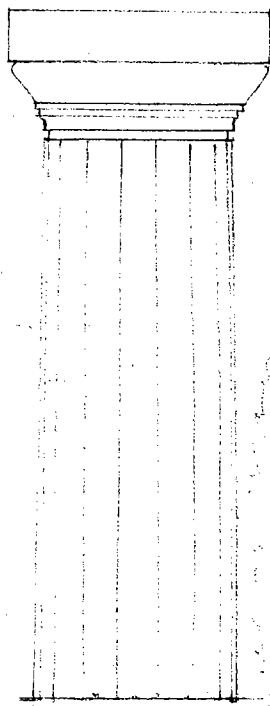
East Elevation before changes, - and - after Tower added, and N. Wing  
raised to full 2-story height, with Plan  
of 1st story.



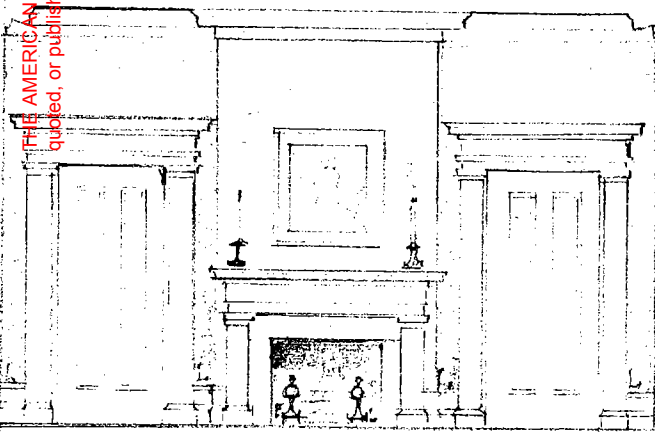
EIT with  
Carriage Shed

+66'

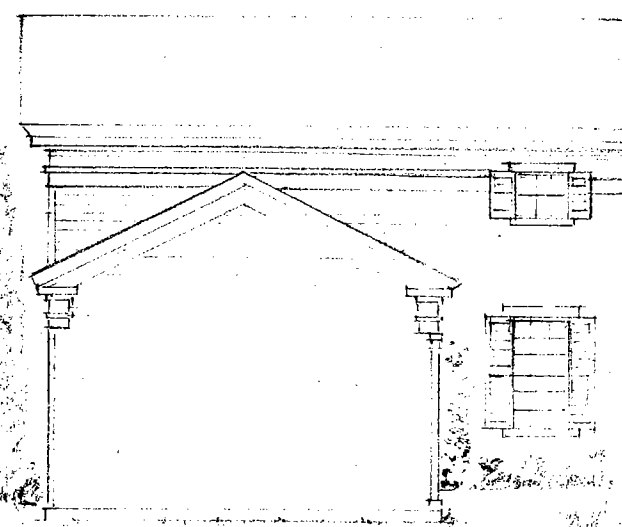
Greek Ionic Capital  
+ Part of Column  
of East Front



19' x 50' 48' x



South Side & Rear Parlor; from Drawing  
by Historic American Buildings Survey,  
1934, + from Photograph. In 1951 above  
Interior Finish was removed, as were the  
North wing and the EIT by present  
Owner.



End of Original North Wing with original Attic  
and other Sash, and West End of Carriage Shed;  
from early Photograph, + H. A. C. S. Drawings.  
Partially reconstructed in 1942-43 by Emil Lower, Jr.

### SKETCHES

Top sketches (3) show the "Judge Dexter House" as it appeared before the Civil War from the northeast, the southeast, and the west, with  $1\frac{1}{2}$  - story North and South Wings, and the Ell of North Wing with open Shed.

Upper right, - the Main House and South Wing as restored in 1940 with removal of the Tower built after Civil War.

Center, - East elevation with post-Civil War Tower, and with full-height second story on North Wing.

Plan of first story; the old North Wing and the Ell, shown grey, were removed in 1951. Replaced by a 20-foot unit.

Southwest Parlor (like front parlor) with room cornice; the doors, windows and fireplace, also the windows, were framed with pilasters and cornices of classical design.

A Greek Doric capital and part of shaft.

Part elevation of original North Wing with low attic windows, and west end (rear) of Shed, both with Greek Revival cornice.

(For the RECORD and for REFERENCE)

G O R D O N   H A L L

or

The "JUDGE DEXTER HOUSE", near Dexter, Michigan

Discussion of its "Conversion" into Apartments, in the Press and other Publications  
A News Release by the University of Michigan, week of March 18, 1951  
Some Historical and Descriptive Notes

\* \* \* \* \*

Judge Dexter completes the Mansion, about 1843

Reconstruction and Restoration, 1940-1948, for Mrs. Stanley McCormick by  
Emil Lorch, Architect

Mrs. McCormick presents the Property to the University of Michigan, 1950  
The University in Collaboration with Mrs. McCormick converts part of the Mansion  
into Apartments. Razing of the North Wing and the Ell, 1951

\* \* \* \* \*

For those not familiar with the project and who might see these notes, it should be said that GORDON HALL, popularly long known as the "Judge Dexter house", was purchased in 1938 by a granddaughter of Judge Dexter, - Mrs. Stanley McCormick, of Santa Barbara, California. After considerable progress had been made in restoring the building, the property was presented to the University in December, 1950, and the University in agreement with Mrs. McCormick, and with funds from her, is converting part of the building into four apartments involving the razing of other portions.

Irretrievably lost now are the old north parts of the house, and the spaciousness, dignity and charm of the main house interior.

Vigorous efforts were made by historical and other societies and by individuals to halt the "conversion", and there ensued lively discussion with forceful criticism of those concerned regarding the propriety of acceptance of the gift under terms so seriously damaging to a unique early cultural monument, whatever the immediate and possible later benefit.

Never before has there been such a widespread protest aiming to preserve an early Michigan house because of its architectural significance on the part of those who speak with authority on early American architecture.

It is hoped herewith to round out and clarify some parts of the discussion, particularly for those who have participated and who hope that no like fate will be suffered by other exceptional buildings.

Beautiful old houses engender genuine affection and respect. They are,-

"..... Voices of the Past,  
Yet God forbid that we should lose  
The echoes that remain."

---

Emil Lorch, F.A.I.A., Architect  
for the restoration, 1940-1948

## A CORRECTION

Erroneous and confusing is the statement in a News Release of the University of Michigan, the week of March 18, 1951, that "While Professor Lorch is retained by Mrs. McCormick until December, 1951, the supervision of the apartment work will be done by the University's Plant Department". It should be understood that the architects of that department also made the plans for the present changes. Professor Lorch ceased to have any connection with the project when the present apartment use was decided upon and the property was presented to the University in December, 1950. His interest, like that of some others, had been in preserving and restoring the building; this operation he began in 1940 by request and with the cordial and generous cooperation of Mrs. McCormick; conversion for income purposes was never discussed between them. The above is fully understood between her attorneys and Professor Lorch. That he does not approve of the present operation and deeply deplores it is understood by many others as well.

## ORIGIN OF THE 1940 RESTORATION PROJECT

The University News Release stated that "....some form of restoration" had been "recommended". Actually, the late Dr. Royal S. Copeland, Senator from New York (who was a native of Dexter like Mrs. McCormick) and Professor Lorch had long been concerned over the future of the Judge Dexter house and in 1938 interested Mrs. McCormick in its purchase specifically for restoration. The sale by Mr. C.G. Crumrine was made with that understanding. With that objective most of the main house and the south wing were substantially rebuilt and restored to their original form; heating and wiring were installed, also a new well and a complete drainage system to serve the entire building when completed. Use for multi-family occupancy was not contemplated.

## PUBLISHED ACCOUNTS OF THE CONVERSION OF GORDON HALL

Early accounts in the Press gave no hint of the destruction involved in the conversion which has resulted in the razing of the North Wing and its Ell, and the tearing out of the Interior Woodwork of the Main House and the South Wing.

The ANN ARBOR NEWS on February 20, 1951 was the first to publish the announcement of Mrs. McCormick's gift to the University and the decision to install 4 apartments by agreement with Mrs. McCormick with funds from her. The contractors were already on the ground and 8 days later the north wing and ell were "practically down". The apartments are to occupy the main house, the south wing and a new 20 foot unit on the north. A picture on February 20, 1951 showed the main house and south wing as restored after 1940; another picture, March 5, presented a view from the northwest after removal of the north wing and ell, reference to which had not yet been published and knowledge of which had not reached the general public outside of Dexter. Other notes appeared, that of March 24 commenting on a University News Release, another on March 30 on a resolution adopted by the Michigan Historical Commission.

In THE DETROIT NEWS appeared brief notes February 21, 22 and 24, the latter by the "Commentator" Mr. W.K. Kelsey; a letter by Professor-Emeritus Emil Lorch, March 7; reference to a resolution by the Michigan Society of Architects convention on March 9, and a well illustrated feature article by Miss Edith Crumb, Interior Decoration Editor, on March 16, quoting critical comments by national, state and other authoritative bodies.

The MICHIGAN ALUMNUS, March 10, had a brief note and the southeast view of the main house and south wing.

The DETROIT FREE PRESS, the DETROIT TIMES and the DETROIT NEWS all noted the Resolution by the Michigan Historical Commission on March 30, but many interested readers were not informed until seemingly irreparable damage had been done.

The MICHIGAN DAILY on April 27 published an illustrated feature article and the following day an editorial, both by John Briley; in the article he uses several of the critical comments quoted in the DETROIT NEWS and includes items from the University News Release in an effort to present various aspects of the situation, confusing to some readers; but his editorial clearly states the issue as to whether an institution of learning should participate in so seriously damaging an early architectural work of importance.

Finally the MICHIGAN ARCHITECT AND ENGINEER, in its April issue reprints the initial account by the ANN ARBOR NEWS of February 20, adding nothing of what became known after that date, thus leaving at least some of its readers but partially informed.

#### GORDON HALL, GENERAL DESIGN

The design of the original mansion was of quite even excellence, that of certain additions and alterations being very inferior. The prevailing architectural character was not "colonial", as has often been said, for the Colonial period had given way to the American. The graceful and varied pre-Revolutionary architecture, accompanied by powdered wig and quaint costumes, had been succeeded by the stately Classical Revival which became Greek in character and somewhat austere long before the Dexter house was erected. Its design followed a wide trend in adapting traditional architectural form to local conditions and was singularly expressive of its time and place.

"It is a great temple-type structure with a monumental six-column portico across the front, a through hall, and a great suite of double parlors"\* on the south, balanced by the old study and the dining room. On either side of the main house are lower wings which "project beyond the rear of the central mass forming a sort of protected court",\* the longer wing and its ell being on the north side.

The 110 year old frame mansion of 20 rooms consisted at the end of 1950 of a 2-story main house, 50 by 39 feet plus a high portico and three low porches; a 2-story north wing having an ell of one story, each unit 48 feet long; a 20-foot long south wing. The wings were nearly 20 feet wide, the one-story ell, 16 feet.

#### ALTERATIONS, EXTERIOR AND INTERIOR, AFTER 1863

The structure underwent some drastic changes after the death of Judge Dexter; most striking was making the  $1\frac{1}{2}$ -storied south wing into an uncouth 4-story, bay-windowed tower; this tower was removed in 1940. On the south side there was formerly also a conservatory. The  $1\frac{1}{2}$ -story north wing was made full two-storied with some interior changes, and part of the carriage shed became a summer kitchen. The interior of the main house, less well known than the exterior, saw but minor changes; an alcove was made from part of the closet space between the study and dining room.

\* Greek Revival Architecture in America, by Talbot Hamlin, Columbia University, 1944.

## INTERIOR DESIGN

"The story heights were large, the trim dignified and rich".\* The interior was unusual for its time in Michigan and was very consistent in architectural character, harmonious with and the equal in design of the exterior. This is shown by the measured drawings of the Historical American Buildings Survey,\*\* 1934, and pictures made in 1940. Like the exterior the interior was a free and intelligent adaptation of classical elements to an architecture of wood and never failed to impress visitors including those particularly qualified. It did not need to be glamorized, and appropriately painted, decorated and furnished it would have been a source of pleasure and education, an outstanding attraction and a beautiful symbol of its period.

On the south side, in "the great suite of double parlors",\* pilasters and cornices framed the two-vertical panelled doors and the windows, also the marble faced fireplaces; the windows had panel backs and panelled inside blinds. The principal hearths were marble, the others of brick. In the remaining rooms of the main house there were characteristic classical trim and moldings, some openings in the second story having convex and fluted casings,-like the fluted stair newel which echoed the fluted columns of the smaller porches. All was in the spirit of the Greek Revival, including the plaster cornices of the first story. The distinction of the interior was such that a prominent art institution would like to have used the woodwork for a room representing the Early Republican period in the United States. The aim of the restoration, 1940-1948, had been to preserve what was clearly original with some of the interesting indications of use, and not renew everything. Though somewhat grimy and without fresh paint for many years the interior woodwork was in surprisingly good condition; it had been very well made and carefully installed. Thus the room base was housed into the flooring and no shoe molding was used at the junction of base and floor.

The destruction of much of this woodwork is a by-product of the conversion.

## STATE OF THE BUILDING AND RECONDITIONING

The building was in a dilapidated condition when seen by Mr. Henry Ford in 1935 and by Mrs. McCormick three years later.

By 1938 the building had failing foundations, porches, roofs, gutters and conductors due to settlement, weather and neglect. Some of the clapboarding of the main house was defective and the roof sagged; there was no heating, plumbing or drainage, water stood at times in the partial, unfloored and low basement. The outside blinds were down; the 7 chimneys reminiscent of the fireplace and stove era, only two now remain, required rebuilding or repair; the plastering was beyond repair. A saving grace was the interior woodwork which had suffered but slightly and required little attention; its character seems to have protected it from those who carved their names up in the tower. A former owner had rebuilt part of the rear or west porch, but in 1940-1941 all the other porch columns were taken down and repaired. Tramps had slept in the house and vandals had done their bit, leaving broken glass and hardware.

Many of the above elements and others were repaired, renewed or installed as needed and as funds permitted. Considerable work was done on the grounds. For protection against fire two old cisterns were made tight to add rainwater to the well supply, since outlying buildings are often destroyed once a fire has started because of insufficient water. The old group of barns burned about 50 years ago.

\* Talbot Hamlin

\*\* In the Library of Congress.

For several years the north wing had been rented to protect the house. In 1947 to continue protection by a caretaker while the remainder of the mansion was being restored, part of the north wing was made into an apartment and done in such a way that the drainage lines, as well as the fixtures, could be used in the completed building. How to be feared is the inevitable deterioration and the increased danger of loss through fire, however careful the tenants may be.

#### THE NORTH WING, AN ORIGINAL OR LATER CONSTRUCTION?

The much published exterior view from the southeast shows only what was restored beginning in 1940; a complete view from the rear or west would have included the long north wing and the ell with open carriage shed for three vehicles, all of which was razed recently because thought not of the "original structure".\* This does not accord with information from Dexter descendants, and technical data; an early picture may indicate that the original low part of the north wing was earlier than the main house. There was a striking resemblance in general design and detail of the main house, the original low north wing and its ell which points to a common source during the life of Judge Dexter. Together these units might be considered as the original mansion.

Unfortunately the 1951 demolition has destroyed the physical evidence, and no progress pictures having been made during the demolition a valuable and interesting record was lost.

When first built the north wing had only  $1\frac{1}{2}$  stories. It was raised to full 2-story height after Judge Dexter's death, pine framing being used for the raised part instead of oak timber framing which prevailed in the original  $1\frac{1}{2}$ -story wing. In this wing, as in the south wing, the brick "nogging" or brick wall-filling was identical with that in the main house. During the 'seventies, and again later, partitions of the north wing were moved, window frames and sash changed, and the blinds removed. Some of the sash and blinds were preserved until this year.

All through the mansion many but not all early changes could be traced, for old houses like old people do not reveal all they have been subjected to by the thoughtless and sadistic.

Structurally the north wing was as well preserved as the main house, and it was as far from being unsafe. During the recent wrecking the oak frame was found in good condition by the contractor, with the exception of but one timber. Only necessary repairs were made after 1940 and no exterior painting was done on this wing. Appearance of North Wing. In 1938 no part of the entire mansion had been painted since about 1916, the second story of the north wing not since long before; thus the latter's dark, shabby look and the marked contrast of the wing with the freshly painted, green-shuttered, straightened-up and rebuilt main house.

#### APARTMENTS

According to the University News Release the present conversion is a compromise between considering the house historically "as a landmark" and a complete restoration. Another compromise might have placed three apartments in the north wing and ell, each 48 feet long, involving of course fundamental and general repairs similar to those carried out in the main house and south wing. Although productive of somewhat less rent, the main house would thus have been saved for historical or other purposes.

\* The News Release

## ENDOWMENT

In 1946 an endowment of \$300,000. was proposed by the attorney of the owner to Professor Lorch, which amount was thought a most liberal endowment for the kind of use of the house then contemplated. The University News Release suggested the need of an endowment "for running expenses" of "upwards of \$2,000,000."\* This sum would have been extraordinary for such a house and would have provided an elaborate form of operation compared to that of many distinguished early buildings; both the restoration and maintenance of some has been financed from admission fees, and these were considered possible here.

## ACCESSIBILITY

Scores of American historical houses are now open to the public and play an important part in teaching local history. Many thousands of our people annually go many miles to visit such places, to see both interiors and exteriors; thus it does not seem that "nine miles from the campus" would have made the Dexter house "of little public use"; indeed, some believe that the location and the house were excellent for a regional historical center. During three days in 1941 over 2500 persons saw the first story of the main house which upon request of the Centennial Committee was temporarily furnished through the writer for Dexter's centennial railroad celebration and home-coming. Appropriate objects were sent by Mrs. McCormick, antique furniture was loaned by the Washtenaw Historical Society and by several Ann Arbor firms.

## "LANDMARK"

According to the University News Release the "chief value" of the crippled building is "as a landmark". Until recently in its complete form it was much more than that; above all it was the outstanding rural mansion, inside and out, of its time in Michigan, - a unique private residence built for the large Dexter family. Hardly does it now revert to its use as a "residence", but will surprise visitors who find 4 families living behind the monumental front of "the amplest and most imposing" mansion of early Michigan, as Dr. Fiske Kimball wrote in 1922. Dr. Albert Schweitzer's remark,\*\*\* "Behind an imposing facade he erects a tenement house" expresses the incongruity between the 1843 exterior and the re-planned interior of 1951.

## INTEREST IN AND FUNDS FOR RESTORATION, MAINTENENCE AND OPERATION OF GORDON HALL

When Mrs. Stanley McCormick became the proprietor, after visiting Dexter in 1938, she manifested a genuine interest in the mansion; and this was demonstrated when an opportunity came for its sale in 1943 at which time she declined to part with her grandfather's house and the place of her birth. Associations had made its acquisition a source of real pleasure. Through her efforts a portrait of Judge Dexter was painted from photographs, and in 1941 during the Dexter centennial railroad celebration the oil painting was hung over the mantel of what had been the Judge's study. In 1944 some of the original furniture was secured from the estates of two descendants, brought from northern Michigan and stored in the now defunct

\* The News Release

\*\* "Domestic Architecture of the American Colonies and the Early Republic", Fiske Kimball, 1922 See also his "Old Houses in Michigan", Architectural Record Sept., 1922

\*\*\* "The Animal World of Dr. Albert Schweitzer", Charles R. Joy, 1950.

north wing. Mrs. McCormick had other articles whose destination with the furniture and various portraits, including one of her great-grandfather, was to be the building when fully restored. This will probably, even in its altered form, continue to be called the "Judge Dexter house", for although the building in its entirety was of great importance, according to authorities of the first rank, the house cannot be disassociated from its distinguished builder who contributed to the development of Michigan and prospered there. The record of his activities prove him to have been of unusual stature.

Construction went on in some form during about ten years, in part before building costs spiralled upward. Included was the general reconstruction already mentioned and the equipment, heating and wiring of the main house and south wing, also the complete installation of kitchen and bathroom facilities for the caretaker in the north wing, which earned a small rental from the beginning even while in primitive form. The drainage included a disposal field, septic tank, etc. and was designed to accomodate visitors and not a 4-family, year round occupancy. Maintenance included tree care, grading and varied servicing of the grounds about the mansion. While this is not the place for a detailed statement of outlay it can be said that all expenditures for construction and including the cost of the 70 acres and the buildings equalled about the price of a good three-bedroom house and lot built in Ann Arbor during a single year.

#### MR. HENRY FORD

Very few persons are able to begin and continue such restoration projects. Only one other than Mrs. McCormick became sufficiently interested, the late Mr. Henry Ford. For him the grand place had a marked appeal and he visited it several times before coming with Mrs. Ford in 1941; two years later his effort to purchase the property was unsuccessful. At that time he was completely rebuilding the old Dexter mill after moving and raising it to a new foundation. He would certainly have completed meticulously the restoration of the Dexter mansion, its decoration and furnishing, as was his practice, with his excellent staff and great resources. Thus would have been preserved for all time the most important country mansion of Michigan's best early architectural period, the building whose interior and exterior, much of which are now but a memory, constituted a monument of the world-wide enthusiasm aroused by classical culture which swept westward to inspire ideals of education in Michigan and elsewhere.

#### THE STATE AND EARLY BUILDINGS

In the European countries which inspired most American architecture early buildings of significance are protected against violation. Our danger is that worthy buildings left to private initiative and exploitation will disappear before the need for protection is properly recognized. An extraordinary number of buildings forming part of the American cultural heritage has already been lost.

#### ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY

Architectural historians have recorded in their volumes the restoration that was going forward under direction of the writer when they visited the mansion. He hopes that readers-become-visitors will not charge him with responsibility for the "conversion" of part of the building into apartments and destruction of so much else of the remainder. With this he is in no way identified and it does not have his approval in general or in detail. He hopes that the conversion will not be regarded by others as a precedent to be followed and that, as one correspondent

stated, the long-range outcome may be like that for the modest, early Supreme Court building in Philadelphia, which "went through many interior revisions before it was given back to its original form."

\* \* \* \* \*

JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS  
1741 NEW YORK AVE., N. W., WASHINGTON 6, D. C.

February 2, 1953

AMERICAN INSTITUTE  
OF  
ARCHITECTS

TO: Mr. Pettengill

FROM: Mr. Saylor

LIBRARY

This copy of "Michigan History"  
contains a rather rare historical  
note by Emil Lorch, page 389.

HHS/at

# Michigan History



DECEMBER 1952

**MICHIGAN HISTORICAL COMMISSION**

# MICHIGAN HISTORY

LEWIS BRESON, Editor

HELEN EVERETT, Assistant Editor

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# MICHIGAN HISTORY

VOLUME 36

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NUMBER 4

## Michigan Statehood: 1835, 1836, or 1837

Clark F. Norton

THE DATE ON WHICH MICHIGAN BECAME A STATE is still open to question. Although the precise chronological sequence of events in the transition from territorial to statehood status may seem inconsequential, except insofar as it might furnish the correct time for inscriptions on seals or for the celebration of anniversaries, in the last analysis it is of more than academic importance. Although Michigan's first state constitution was framed, ratified, and in a small degree put into operation in 1835, the state itself was not admitted into the Union by Congress until late in January, 1837. Ever since then opinion has varied as to when the state government actually did begin its legal existence.

There are many ramifications to the constitutional and legal problem, some of which involve significant questions of constitutional law. For instance, did the Northwest Ordinance of 1787, and the succeeding fundamental laws enacted under it, guarantee to the various governmental units projected within the Northwest Territory the right to establish a state government, whenever the minimum population of sixty thousand had been attained therein, without the passage of an act by Congress authorizing the formation of a state constitution? Can there be any legitimate basis for one portion of a territorial government to sever itself wholly by its own actions from another portion of the same territory? Once a state constitution has been framed and ratified, can it legally be put into effect before Congress has given final approval? Can a state government exist at all prior to the admission of the state by Congress into the Union? Can two governments, territorial and state, possess sovereignty over the same area concurrently? Can a state government automatically

government to provide monetary allowances for the settlement of claims against the Indians in a land cession. More often than not, traders exerted considerable pressure on the Indians to sell their lands with careless disregard for the consequences to the Indians. The traders were motivated by the prospects of personal gain. This being the case, it would seem that had there been any serious question concerning Robinson's motives or integrity, his assistance would not have been requested with such frequency. Certainly Robinson hoped to safeguard his own investments but if he had been motivated solely by self-interest, no doubt he would have followed the prevailing practice and would have submitted a well padded account of claims. As it was, the commissioners who reviewed his claim did not feel that it was out of order. Other claimants who followed the prevailing practice did not fare as well. Robinson's interest beyond his own monetary gain is evidenced by the complete trust that the Indians placed in him. They too felt that his claim was a just one. Had he been guilty of the typical practices of many of the Indian traders of his time this would not have been the case. It is apparent that through his long residence in the area the Indians had come to respect him for his fair dealing. Robinson's integrity is further substantiated by the fact that he did not object to the site selected for the treaty negotiations. It would have been to his advantage to have had the conferences held on home ground where his influence among the Indians could have been exerted to the best advantage. As it was, he used his influence to convince the Indians of the desirability of holding the treaty in Washington. Furthermore, when the Indians were being pressured by some not to sell their lands in hopes of obtaining better terms at a later date, Robinson was among those delegated by Henry Schoolcraft, the commissioner, to protect the Indians from such interference.

Thus Michigan owes a considerable debt to Rix Robinson, whose life so closely paralleled the development of this area during parts of its territorial years and the early formative years as a state. It was through such men as Robinson, with dual interests in the welfare of their Indian friends and in the future development of the lands, that the Indian titles to vast sections of the public domain were extinguished with a minimum of difficulty and friction—a fact that was almost unique in the long history of acquiring Indian lands.

## The Detroit and Cleveland Navigation Company Warehouse at Detroit

*Emil Lorch*

THIS SURVEY WAS UNDERTAKEN BY THE WRITER when it was evident that the warehouse of the Detroit and Cleveland Navigation Company would be razed. Its purpose is to preserve in graphic and pictorial form something of the structure which for nearly a century has been associated with some of Detroit's business leaders and with one of its outstanding enterprises. The survey became possible through the cooperation of Prentiss M. Brown, chairman of the board of the Detroit Edison Company. Excellent pictures were made of the exterior and interior of the building by an expert photographer and it was possible to employ two young men to make measured drawings of floor plans, elevations, a section, and some of the details of the building.

The warehouse of the Detroit and Cleveland Transportation Company at Detroit, long known as the "D & C Warehouse," also housed the company offices for many years. The structure occupied most of lots ninety one and ninety two of the Governors and Judges Plan at the northeast corner of Wayne Street and the dock at the Detroit River, in the area which for over one hundred years was one of the most active shipping centers of the Great Lakes. Acquired by the city of Detroit, the building was razed in the fall of 1951 and the site joined with the space extending to Woodbridge Street cleared to form part of the river front development. It is now a public parking place. The gabled four and a half story building, measuring eighty feet on Wayne Street and sixty feet east and west, had rather shallow limestone foundations and brick walls. The original covering of the pitched roof, perhaps tin, had long disappeared and given way to one of roofing felt. The floor construction was of heavy timber posts and beams supporting joists and thick pine flooring. The attic floor was supported by the heavy wooden roof trusses. There was no freight elevator. Merchandise was raised outside by means of ropes running through pulleys fixed to projecting beams and winding

on large wheels and drums. These windlasses were in the attic. The larger of the two wheels was eight feet in diameter. On each floor on the north, south, and west sides of the building were wide openings for receiving packages and boxes. Inside there was a hatch or opening in each floor for lifting and lowering stored material. Near the southeast corner a narrow, open stair led to the attic and thence to a scuttle in the roof. Nearby was the original chimney, another being added when a steam heating plant became necessary for the offices. Two additions were made to the structure before 1889:<sup>1</sup> a two and one-half story brick building on the east and a one-story frame freight shed extending from the main building to the river edge of the dock. Both had been removed by 1933.<sup>2</sup>

Before 1889 the business offices were moved to part of the second and third floors on the west or Wayne Street and the river sides. At that time the number of window openings was almost doubled,<sup>3</sup> some old windows were enlarged and a half dozen small bay windows sprouted on the river side. Long iron balconies and a stair were added along the Wayne Street side as fire escapes from the two office floors. These changes seriously disturbed and marred the unaffected and pleasing original design of what was a somewhat unusual utilitarian structure. At floor levels and in the brick frieze the iron wall plates, round in form, made a pleasant pattern. On the long or nongabled sides a cornice three feet high crowned the walls. It was of brick with eight courses for the frieze topped with first four and then two brick courses. Some distinction was given the exterior by the window openings having panelled and well-ornamented cast-iron lintels, or heads, and sills, all in excellent taste. On the interior the window openings were widened by spread sides, or splayed jambs, and supporting segmental arches of brick. The inside window sills were of plank. The double sash windows lacked pulleys and weights, each sash having twelve lights. Iron bars protected some of the first story windows. There were no shutters. The cast-iron door heads had plain panelled faces and a cap moulding. With installation of the wainscoted offices ornamental cast-iron columns replaced some of the wooden posts.

<sup>1</sup>Silas Farmer, *History of Detroit and Michigan*, illustration page 911 (Detroit, 1889).

<sup>2</sup>"Detroit's Oldest Building", *Detroit News*, March 6, 1933, illustration.

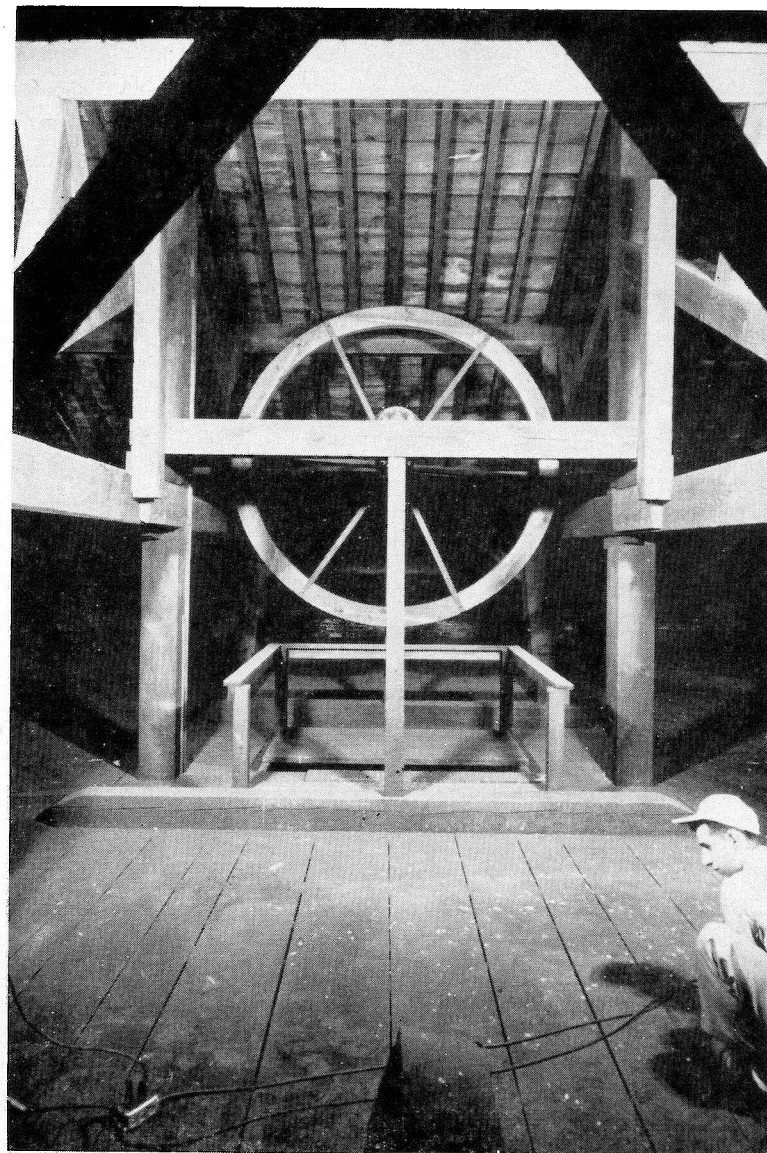
<sup>3</sup>Farmer, *History of Detroit* . . . , 911.



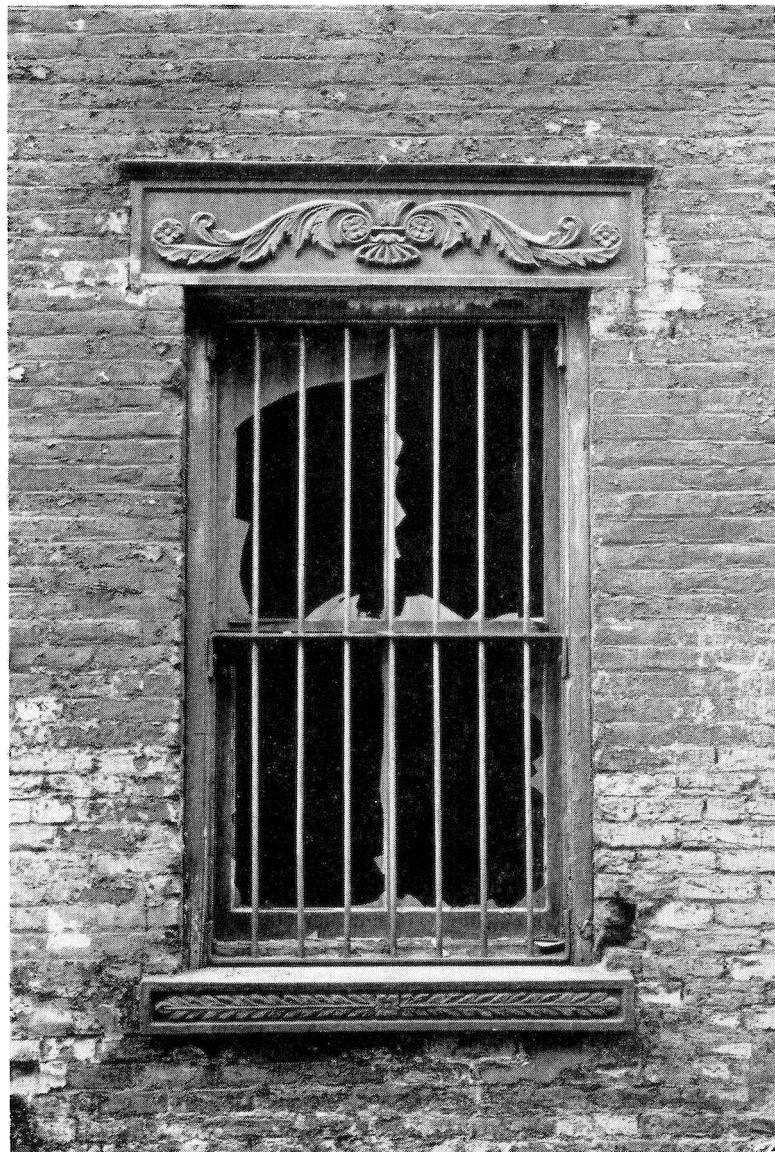
D & C NAVIGATION COMPANY WAREHOUSE AT DETROIT



ATTIC OF D & C WAREHOUSE



WHEEL IN ATTIC USED TO RAISE MERCHANDISE



ORNAMENTAL WINDOW LINTEL AND SILL

By whom was the warehouse built? According to the abstract of the property, consulted through the courtesy of William C. McMillan, Henry Whiting and Oliver Newberry purchased lots 91 and 92 and two other lots in 1825, five years after Newberry came to Detroit to stay. In 1857 Whiting transferred his interest to Newberry, who died three years later, and on March 22, 1864, Henry Warner Newberry as executor of Oliver Newberry's estate sold lots 91 and 92 to Eber Brock Ward, the lots running "to the channel bank. On said premises are situated a large brick warehouse and dock occupied by Newberry and Co." With the property in Oliver Newberry's name from 1857 to 1864 and held jointly by Whiting and Newberry during the twenty-two preceding years there is no doubt that building the warehouse was the work of Whiting and Newberry.

Silas Farmer states that the Detroit and Cleveland Navigation Company was established in 1850, and has been managed chiefly by the present owners since 1850.<sup>4</sup> The company was incorporated in 1868. "Detroit and Cleveland Steamboat line, office foot of Shelby" is the first entry for the company in the Detroit city directory for 1869. In 1864 Eber B. Ward purchased the property from the Oliver Newberry estate.<sup>5</sup> The Ward will was probated in 1875, James McMillan and John Owen becoming the owners in 1878. The latter date may approximate the time when the Detroit and Cleveland Navigation Company began using the old warehouse. With the growth of Detroit and the increase of traffic the company used more and more dockage near Wayne Street and built additional freight sheds; the company's fleet of steamers increased in number and size, some of the many-decked ships being among the largest ever built for lake transportation. Cleveland, Buffalo, and Mackinac Island were the chief destinations for passengers and freight. During the summer months the wharf at the foot of Wayne Street was enlivened by the colorful departures and arrivals of unnumbered excursionists and travelers accompanied by the honking of horns and click of hand trucks and at times by the music of a band.

The old D & C warehouse was the last and was largely typical of the gabled early warehouses which lined the river west of

<sup>4</sup>Farmer, *History of Detroit* . . . , 910.

<sup>5</sup>Abstract of the property.

Woodward Avenue between Woodbridge and the Detroit River.<sup>6</sup> With the razing of the structure the last evidence of the sailing ship and steamboat era of early Detroit has been destroyed.

The first mention of the structure in the abstract appears in 1864, four years after the death of Oliver Newberry, when Eber B. Ward became the owner. Leroy De Forest Satterlee, after a searching study of the site and area in 1941, concluded that the building might not be older than 1852 and that it was erected on filled ground adjoining the foot of Wayne Street on the east.<sup>7</sup> This was during the ownership of the property by Henry Whiting and Oliver Newberry. If, as claimed, the site was under water until 1850, it is remarkable that so few cracks developed in the brick walls due to settlement, since no piling was found under the wall footings when the building was razed. These cracks seen in 1951 were in part evidently due to the cutting of additional window openings over sixty years ago. Mr. Satterlee points out that in 1835, according to the map of John Farmer,<sup>8</sup> Wayne Street ended in a wide indentation of the shore line. In this inlet the indefatigable Oliver Newberry in 1833 built his boat the *Michigan*. At that time he was already the owner of eight small vessels and one of Detroit's business leaders. Two years later he built his large residence at the northeast corner of Shelby and Fort streets. His house and the adjoining lots were bought in 1863 by Hiram Walker, who sold them in 1895 to three members of his family. The University Club occupied the house from 1910 to the end of 1913. Later the Federal Reserve Bank was built on the site, the formal opening taking place on March 15, 1928, and the fine little Ionic porch of the Walker residence was moved across the river to Walkerville.

George B. Catlin, historian of the *Detroit News*, states that in 1854 Oliver Newberry "built a brick warehouse and elevator at the river-front." Catlin credits Newberry with "leasing a warehouse at the

<sup>6</sup>See the lithograph, copyright 1857, drawn by George T. Robertson, showing the Detroit River front, in the Michigan Historical Collections at the University of Michigan.

<sup>7</sup>Leroy De Forest Satterlee, *Some Data regarding the Antiquity of the Detroit and Cleveland Navigation Company Office and Warehouse*, Detroit, 1941, in the Burton Historical Collection of the Detroit Public Library.

<sup>8</sup>John Farmer, *Map of the City of Detroit in the State of Michigan* (New York, 1835). This map shows lots 91 and 92 on the river side of the shore line.

foot of Wayne Street," and mentions a painted sign, "Newberry and Co.," on the wall of the building, seen when adjoining buildings were razed; no dates are given.<sup>9</sup>

In 1837, in the first Detroit city directory, appears "Newberry O. and Company, forwarding and commission merchants, 16 Woodbridge Street"; in the city directory for 1853-54, Newberry's warehouse is listed as at the northwest corner of Front and Second streets and west of Wayne Street.

In 1853, on May 13, according to an item in the *Detroit Free Press*, it was "understood" that a brick warehouse and steam elevator<sup>10</sup> were to be built "on the unoccupied ground at the foot of Wayne Street on the river." On May 2 of the following year the *Daily Advertiser* announced that "O. Newberry has commenced building a new wharf at the foot of Wayne Street on which he is about to erect a large brick store-house."<sup>11</sup> Finally, according to the 1855-56 directory, Newberry and Company's warehouse is placed "on Dock, foot Wayne." Thus 1854, the date given by Catlin is apparently correct.

On the east and west sides the brick walls were twenty, and those on the north and south sides twenty-four inches thick. Every eighth course was of headers. On twelve by twelve inch square timber columns having chamfered angles rested wooden corbels or horizontal pieces of the same size and five feet eight inches long. These supported sixteen by twelve inch beams and three by twelve inch joists twelve inches on center. The flooring was two inches thick. Some boards were twenty-one inches wide. The outer rows of columns were partially set into the brick walls and had angle braces to help support the beams. The average column spacing was about eleven feet. The floor beams and the roof trusses ran east and west. In the fourth story there was but a single center line of columns, leaving the space comparatively clear. This was made possible by having the attic or fifth floor beams form the bottom member of the trusses. The latter and the floor construction were tied to the brick

<sup>9</sup>Biography of Oliver Newberry, in the George B. Catlin Papers in the Burton Historical Collection.

<sup>10</sup>At the time "steam elevator" probably indicated a donkey engine or steam-driven hoisting apparatus.

<sup>11</sup>Clarence M. Burton, *Detroit, 1814-1863: Digest of Current Newspapers*, 332, in the Burton Historical Collection.

walls by iron rods and the cast round plates seen in the photographs and drawings.

The cast-iron lintels over the door openings were panelled, of "channel" shape, thirteen and one-half inches high with four and one-half inch bands or flanges extending into the wall; the window lintels, also with channel section, were twelve inches high. The iron window sills were of L section, five by six and one-half inches, the longer side forming the top of the sill. The iron was one-half inch in thickness. Arrangements were made to preserve examples of these interesting iron lintels and sills, construction elements which preceded the development of present day steel and concrete.

## The Inimitable Marxists: The Finnish Immigrant Socialists

John I. Kolehmainen

"THEIR THIRST FOR KNOWLEDGE IS AMAZING. They are natural-born speakers. They are inimitable, bold, proletarian, revolutionary, Marxist."\* When an obscure Dr. Herman Titus proffered this sweet-smelling bouquet to the Finnish-American Socialists, thereby winning an enduring place in their affections, there was an occasional and proper remonstrance. The editor of a working-class newspaper gulped, and managed to say: "Oh if this were altogether true!" Several others mumbled something about rhetorical praise.<sup>1</sup>

Yet if the truth be told, a surprisingly large number of immigrant Socialists were of the opinion that their achievements prior to the first World War merited good words.

Bread and butter Socialism, disregarding an American newspaperman's rash assertion that "the Finnish people are too intelligent to be fooled by the hare-brained doctrines of Socialism," advanced swiftly, especially in the years after 1903.<sup>2</sup> "That Jew Karl Marx" triumphed over the utopianism of Matti Kurikka and swallowed up a potpourri of humanitarianism, petit-bourgeois reformism, nationalism, Tolstoyian anarchism, free thought, and theosophy, masquerading as a working-class movement. Sundry dream books as well as the writings of Robert Ingersoll, Robert Blatchford, and Edward Bellamy, were relegated to the kindergarten as an increasing number of immigrants took to the sterner studies of Marx, Friedrich Engels, Karl Kautsky and Werner Sombart.

\*This paper was read at the annual meeting of the Mississippi Valley Historical Association, April, 1952.

<sup>1</sup>Seattle (Washington) *Socialist*, July 18, 1908; Hancock *Työmies*, July 28, 1908.

<sup>2</sup>Conneaut (Ohio) *Post-Herald*, August 1, 1900. The standard works on the Finnish-American working-class movement are F. J. Syrjälä, *Historia-aiheita Ameriikan Suomalaisesta Työväenliikkeestä* (Fitchburg, Massachusetts, n.d. and Elis Sulkanen, *Amerikan Suomalaisen Työväenliikkeen Historia* (Fitchburg, 1951). For a survey of the literature see the writer's *The Finns in America: A Bibliographical Guide to Their History*, 56-64 (Hancock, 1947).