

K-651

Circa 1880-1885

Downer House

Galena

Private

The Downer House is the last house in the row of buildings that extends almost unbroken northward along the west side of Main Street from the crossroads to Seminary Avenue. The large, tall Downer House is the dominant house in its area of the Galena streetscape. To the north are a vacant lot and the Galena cemetery. The house is a large, frame, 2-1/2 storey, 5-bay wide, frame Victorian Gothic Revival dwelling with two-storey rear wing that was built about 1880 by a Dr. Dulany and remodeled in 1949 to appear colonial. The central gable with lacey bargeboard, the dormer trim, the tall spire finials on central gable and dormer roofs, and the 5-bay Victorian porch were removed, among other changes. On the interior the plan was changed somewhat though the main section plan remains central-hall, with space altered on the south end, however. Some window changes were made and decorative details installed according to the colonial theme. The main stair is unchanged. During the 1970s additions were made to the rear gable-end of the wing. In spite of its "colonial" alterations during a period when there was little appreciation of Victorian architecture, its origins are unmistakable. It is a large and comfortable house that is an interesting example of a merging of two disparate styles. An early twentieth-century photograph shows it to have been "high Victorian" in detail, though in form and plan it was representative of the most common type of large, frame Kent County vernacular Gothic Revival houses. It must have been a "showplace" of Galena during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

7. Description

Survey No. K-651

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date of move _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Prepare both a summary paragraph and a general description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

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(Continued)

8. Significance

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Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates Circa 1880-1885 **Builder/Architect**

check: Applicable Criteria: A B C D
and/or

Applicable Exception: A B C D E F G

Level of Significance: national state local

Prepare both a summary paragraph of significance and a general statement of history and support.

The large, tall Downer House is the dominant house in its area of the Galena streetscape. In spite of its "colonial" alterations during a period when there was little appreciation of Victorian architecture, its origins are unmistakable. It is a large and comfortable house that is an example of a merging at two disparate styles. An early twentieth-century photograph shows it to have been "high Victorian" in detail, though in form and plan it was representative of the most common type of large, frame Kent County vernacular Gothic Revival houses. It must have been a "showplace" of Galena during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The Downer House was built between 1880 and 1885 for a Dr. Dulany, a Galena physician. In 1890 he sold it to Mr. and Mrs. Theodore Dempsey when they moved from Washington Territory in that year, where they had been early settlers near Ocosta when the area was opened for land-claims. They evidently returned to Galena because of Mrs. Dempsey's health. They bought this house to live in and what was called the Lynch Farm 1-1/4 miles from Galena for investment. The Dempsey family owned the house until its sale in the 1920s after Mrs. Dempsey's death to Mr. and Mrs. William LeCates. The next owners were Mr. and Mrs. John Fletcher Wilson, who remodeled and to some extent rearranged the house. They sold it to Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Hall. Mrs. Hall, a widow after 1967, sold it to the Downers in 1972.

Both Victorian sections of this house were built at the same time, the wing behind the north portion of the main section. The professional responsible for the 1949 remodeling was F. Trevor Hogg, an architect from Centreville, Maryland. The present owners have the construction drawings he prepared.

The plan was and still is central hall in the main section, with access under the stair to the wing as well as to the rear porch, an unusual and convenient feature not often seen in these "standard" Kent County Victorian houses, in which wing access is possible only through a main-section room. The first-storey room south of the central hall was partitioned and the south chimney removed. A relatively small front room was created with bathroom and large closet behind, all accessible from the hall. The second-storey space above was also modified. There had been a large opening between the north parlor and the dining room, which is in the wing, either trimmed or, as is more likely for the 1880s, with large double doors. The opening was largely closed and a conventional door installed. Cornice and chair rail were installed in that parlor, and a stock millwork "colonial" mantel, with shelving and cabinets built at each side, necessitating shortening the end windows.

The exterior walls were originally covered with German shiplap weatherboard. During the 1970s it was covered with 4"- exposure gold-colored aluminum siding, although some weatherboard remains within the wing porch in the L between main section and wing. The one-storey wing the present owners added to the rear of the original wing is covered with Texture 1-11 plywood on the north side and wood shingles on the south side. They completely opened the back room of the first storey of the rear wing to the new lower addition. The old rear room remains a kitchen, however, though it is entirely remodeled, largely in 1949. At that time the kitchen's corner stair (northwest corner) was removed. On the second storey the large rear room may have been two rooms originally.

The main section originally had a chimney at the center of each gable end, within the wall. The south one is gone, but the present owners built a new corner fireplace in the southwest corner of the smaller south end room and installed a flue that exits in an artificial chimney. The north chimney remains, for the first-storey fireplace. It appears to have been rebuilt. It has a corbelled cap, out and in. The wing has one chimney, between the rooms that emerges through the roof ridge. It too has been rebuilt.

The main section was originally entirely built over a crawl space, with the rear wing having the cellar. However, in 1949 the area under the central hall was dug out and a cellar stair installed under the main stair with access to the rear cellar via the under-hall area. The foundation of the main section and wing is built of brick.

The roofs of all but the newest sections are covered with wood shingles, now in poor condition. The cornice is boxed, with built-in gutters that were retained from the original construction. The overhang on sides and ends is about 12-14". The cornice is deep and there are quite large cornice returns on the gable ends--about 24-28". These are original, as also the large
(continued)

cyma-with-fillets crown molding may be. The bed molding is gone. Two dormers remain in the street facade; the central gable was removed. The dormers are positioned almost over the outermost windows below, but slightly toward the center. The dormer roofs are gable and steep with considerable overhang that is not boxed. The double-hung sash, with 2-over-2 lights and with upper sash triangularly pointed, is still in place. Though the filigree bargeboard and spires were removed, these are still clearly identifiable as Victorian Gothic Revival dormers.

A small, gable-roofed porch is now at the main entry, whose architrave has been entirely replaced by a door and sidelights with fan-light transom.

The windows are double-hung and tall, but the 2-over-2 sash are gone. In their places are sash with 9-over-9 lights; the new windows of the first-storey's north end have 9-over-6 lights. Though the sash was replaced, the trim appears to have been retained. It is 4" wide with an inside bead. The head trim is noticeably prominent, both at present and in an old photograph, where the feeling of a heavy lintel was conveyed. At the lintel there are additions to the plain trim: a plain cap above a cyma reversa molding with bevel. First storey shutters have fixed louvers above a single panel, with reproduction colonial shutter dogs. The second-storey shutters are entirely with movable louvers. All these shutters probably date from 1949.

The stair is a handsome Victorian catalogue one. It is open-string and dogleg, though most of the ascent precedes the landing, which also has access to the rear wing. Only several steps remain above the landing to the second-storey level. The newel is large and compoundly turned with compoundly round cap from which the molded rail rises. The balusters, two per tread, are compoundly turned Victorian balusters that are now painted. The stair is continuous to the third level.

In the old photograph consulted, a handsome picket fence was shown as being in the front of the house near the street. It is probable that most of Galena's Main Street houses had such fences, creating a quite different appearance from the open lawns there today.



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Downer House

Main Street, Galena

M. Q. Fallaw - 4/6/85

View to northeast



K-651-35

K-651

Downer House

Main Street, Galena

M. Q. Fallaw - 8/2/86

View to west