

DeWitt House-Lydia Huntley Sigourney School  
189 Broadway  
Norwich  
New London County  
Connecticut

HABS No. CONN-249

HABS  
CONN  
6-NOR

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PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Eastern Office, Division of Design and Construction  
143 South Third Street  
Philadelphia 6, Pennsylvania

## DEWITT HOUSE-LYDIA HUNTLEY SIGOURNEY SCHOOL

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6-NOR  
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Address: 189 Broadway, Norwich, New London County,  
Connecticut

Present Owner  
and Occupant: William Welles Lyman, 189 Broadway, Norwich,  
Connecticut

Present Use: Residence

Brief Statement  
of Significance: This is a typical frame house from the last  
quarter of the eighteenth century, and at one  
time was used as a school by Lydia Huntley  
Sigourney.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

## A. Physical History

1. Original and subsequent owners: Captain Jacob DeWitt, a prominent Norwich merchant, is the earliest known owner, though he may not be the first. In 1812 Lydia Huntley (later Mrs. Sigourney) and Nancy Maria Hyde conducted a school for young ladies in the house. The house was later owned by the Converse family, then the Bishop family, then the present owner.
2. Date of erection: Probably last quarter of eighteenth century.
3. Builder: The house is similar to the Hezekiah Perkins House neighboring on the southeast, and was probably built by the same builder.
4. Notes on alterations and additions: The two rear wings are later additions.
5. Sources of information: Ada R. Chase "History in Towns: Norwich, Connecticut," Antiques, June 1961, pp. 560-565. Mary E. Perkins, Old Houses of the Antient Town of Norwich, 1660-1800 (Norwich, Connecticut: 1895), in which it is identified as the DeWitt House on the accompanying map drawn by Mr. Mitchell.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement

1. Architectural character: This is a two-story, five-bay, frame house, built in the last quarter of the eighteenth century, and typical of the period and place.
2. Condition of fabric: Excellent.

B. Technical Description of Exterior

1. Overall dimensions: The house is two stories high plus a cellar with a rectangular front main block, facing southwest, and two later wings to the rear. The front block is 40' wide divided into five bays by 30' deep.
2. Foundations: Coursed ashlar.
3. Wall construction: Timber frame structure covered with clapboards. Clapboards have an average 4" exposure on the front and northwest side and the rear, and are graduated on the front and southeast sides between 2-1/2" at the bottom and 4" at the top.
4. Porches: There is a small porch on the rear between the two wings.
5. Chimneys: Two brick chimneys in the front block on either side of the center hall; one in rear ell.
6. Openings:
  - a. Doorways and doors: Paneled front door with a semi-circular fan light. Pedimented doorway with denticulated cornice and flat, fluted pilasters. The entrance is in the center bay of the front block which is stepped slightly forward and is carried up with a low pitched gable with a three centered fan light in the pediment.
  - b. Windows and shutters: Double hung wood windows with six light sash over six light sash. There are no shutters on the house, but some windows are fitted with shutter hardware.
7. Roof:
  - a. Shape, covering: Hip roof on main block and one wing, gable roof on other wing, covered with asphalt shingles.

- b. Eaves: Boxed eave with cyma versa crown mold and bed mold.

C. Technical Description of Interior

1. Floor plans: Central hall type plan, two rooms deep.
2. Stairways: Main stairway in central hall winds 90 degrees at the top. The stairway has been refinished and has a later, carved hand rail. There is also a back stairs in the north wing.
3. Flooring: Later hardwood flooring on top of the original wide oak boards which still show in the attic.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: Plastered walls and ceilings, papered or painted walls. The heavy timber frame of the building is exposed on the interior.
5. Doorways and doors: Paneled wood doors in molded doorways.
6. Trim: Molded wood trim, painted.
7. Lighting: Electric
8. Heating: Modern central heat replaced the original fireplaces, most of which have been blocked up.

D. Site

1. General setting and orientation: The house is situated about 15' from the front of an open city lot approximately 100' wide by 300'.
2. Enclosures: There is a cast iron fence about 3'-6" high across woodshed in rear.
3. Landscaping: Informal landscaping with lawn, shrubs, trees, and flowers.

Prepared by William Welles Lyman  
Norwich, Connecticut - October 1958  
AND  
Osmond R. Overby, Architect  
Philadelphia, Penna. - June 1961