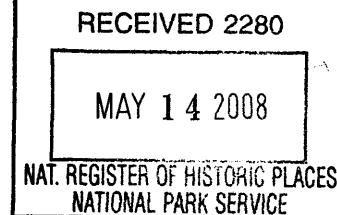


United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Registration Form



This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

### 1. Name of Property

historic name Skinner, DeForest, House

other names/site number Skinner Homestead 127-642-32069

### 2. Location

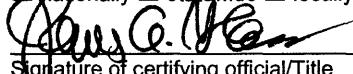
street & number 208 Washington Street N/A  not for publication

city or town Valparaiso N/A  vicinity

state Indiana code IN county Porter code 127 zip code 46383

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  
 request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of  
Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  
 meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be consider significant  
 nationally  statewide  locally. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

  
Signature of certifying official/Title

5/12/2008  
Date

Indiana Department of Natural Resources

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

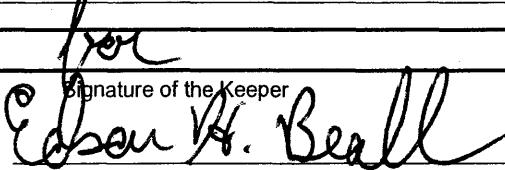
Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- entered in the National Register.  
 See continuation sheet
- determined eligible for the National Register.  
 See continuation sheet
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

  
Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

6.24.08

Skinner, DeForest, House  
Name of Property

Porter County, IN  
County and State

## 5. Classification

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-state
- public-Federal

**Category of Property**  
(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
1	0	objects
2	0	Total

## Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

## Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

## 6. Function or Use

### Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC: single dwelling

DOMESTIC: multiple dwelling

### Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC: single dwelling

## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Italianate

OTHER: upright and wing

### Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation      BRICK

walls      WOOD: weatherboard

roof      ASPHALT

other      STONE

## Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more sheets.)

**8. Statement of Significance****Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for the National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations**

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significant within the past 50 years.

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**9. Major Bibliographical References****Bibliography**

(Cite the books articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

- preliminary determination if individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey  
# \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record  
# \_\_\_\_\_

**Areas of significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

**ARCHITECTURE****COMMERCE****Period of Significance**c.1860 - 1919**Significant Dates**c.1860**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A**Cultural Affiliation**N/A**Architect/Builder**unknown

Skinner, DeForest, House  
Name of Property

Porter County, IN  
County and State

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Less than 1 acre

### UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 

1	6
---	---

4	9	4	9	3	0
---	---	---	---	---	---

4	5	9	0	7	7	0
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

  
Zone      Easting      Northing

3 

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

  
Zone      Easting      Northing

2 

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

4 

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

See continuation sheet

### Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

### Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Beverly Overmyer

organization \_\_\_\_\_ date 11-27-07

street & number 110 N. 641 West telephone 219-759-4956

city or town Valparaiso state IN zip code 46385

### Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

#### Continuation Sheets

#### Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A Sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

#### Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

#### Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

### Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name Kirk and Caroline Conner

street & number 208 N. Washington Street telephone 219-476-7269

city or town Valparaiso state IN zip code 46383

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance to the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding the burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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**Section 7 - Description**

The DeForest Skinner House, c.1860, is a two story, wood frame house located in three blocks north of the courthouse square. The house stands on a tree-lined north-south street, in the old residential section of Valparaiso, Indiana. Its street address was originally 56 N. Washington, however, the city renumbered addresses in 1899 and the house became 208 N. Washington Street, as it is today. The immediate environment is residential; neighboring houses date from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. A neighborhood school stands across the street from the house.

There is only one other resource on the site that merits counting besides the house. An original carriage stepping stone with the family name on it rests in its original location just outside the north porch of the house.

The house has a double brick foundation and its frame walls are sided with original (or early) cedar wood clapboard siding and trim work held by square-headed nails. The house faces west onto Washington Street (photos 1 and 6). From the street, the house appears to be an example of a once common vernacular house type for the area, the upright and wing. However, the house has a combination of hip and gabled roofs rather than the intersecting gables one might expect for this type of house. The north section of the house, the "upright," is a medium-pitched front-facing gabled mass with one story bay window centered on the first floor. The bay window is rectangular in plan and has a truncated Mansardic roof. The flanks have one one-over-one wood window, while the front has two. Windows are framed by a raised relief pattern of paneled Doric-like pilasters with a radius-cornered spandrel piece linking them. The radius-corner treatment echoes the window sash, which are themselves radius-cornered at the sash top. Small brackets align with the pilasters. A bold dentil course lines under the bay's eaves. A pair of round-arched one-over-one wood windows are centered over the bay on the second story. The two are linked by a surround of plain boards that outline the openings; at the top the design arches upward to include a broken pediment with cornice hood centered over the windows. The house has a plain entablature on every side at the roof/wall junction. The entablature is articulated into architrave, frieze, and cornice by simple narrow moldings. Pairs of elaborately scroll or jig-sawn open brackets further embellish the house. The front gable has three sets: one at each corner and one at the apex. The overhanging boarded eaves serve as a cornice.

The south portion of the west elevation, the "wing," is set back roughly eight feet from the front plane of the gabled section. The first story of this portion of the house is covered by a flat-roofed porch. A porch was always in this location, however, this porch bears marks from several

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periods. Originally, the porch had wood arches supported by chamfered posts (see historic photo). The porch is surrounded by a rock-faced coursed limestone wall several feet high, installed c.1890. At the south end of the porch, the wall sweeps to form a small half-circle in plan; this area projects beyond the porch roof. The wall has a heavy dressed stone coping. Piers are articulated in the wall mass, these support squat wood columns with paneled faces and Doric-like capitals. These wood columns are recent replacements for plain square wood columns that had deteriorated. Mr. Conner, the current owner, crafted the piers to resemble those on the bay window. Flat arched shaped wood plates give the porch beams an arched appearance; this is another recent modification to the simple wood cased beam that supports the porch. Both the simple beam and columns were themselves likely from the 1920s or 30s.

The porch has a concrete floor, likely installed in the 1920s. Its ceiling is recently installed bead board painted light blue. Under the porch, the long west wall has two openings: the front door, located toward the inside corner, and a paired window opening, toward the south end of the porch. The main entrance includes double leafed doors, with plain board surround and segmental arched pediment for a hood. The porch ceiling interrupts the hood. Each wood door leaf has square recessed lower panel, inset with raised, scallop-cornered center, itself inset with molded disk panel. Above the wide closing rail is a tall single light with round arched top, defined by a wide arched dividing rail. The window pane above the rail is a quarter-circle segment; the door top conforms to the segmental hood. The window pair to the right includes two tall, narrow wood four-over-four sash with wood storm windows. The sash are rectangular; a wood filler makes the transition to the segmental arch surround over each window. The windows have plain board surrounds that share a center board. An overarching segmental pediment links the two windows, the spandrel area between the various arches is a recessed panel. Under the porch on the south inside wall (the side wall of the “upright”), a large window opens to the porch. It fills nearly all the wall space, and has a molded surround and wood storm windows. Later owners installed the window in about 1890. It has a large single light below a transom bar. The transom is filled with beveled, leaded, diamond-paned glass.

The second floor of the “wing” part of the house has two paired windows on the west wall, aligning with the doorway and window pair below them. The pair of windows toward the inside corner has one-over-one sash. A single four-over-four window is above the large fixed window described earlier. It is set toward the inside corner rather than being centered over the opening below. The entablature and bracket treatment continues across this side.

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Section number 7 Page 3 *DeForest Skinner House, Porter County, IN*

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The north side of the house has a side porch (photos 5 and 13). The entire west portion of the north wall is blank. In about 1890, the owners installed a red brick exterior chimney that rises up this portion of the north wall. From a wide base, the hearth has stone-capped crow steps that narrow down to a broad flue. The chimney obscures the frieze boards, breaks the roof plane (but not the guttering) and rises well above the roof. Brackets flank the flue at the eaves. A cricket or gablet surrounds the chimney's roofline base, with wood-sided small half gables facing north.

Roughly at the center of the north elevation, there is one window on each floor. These two are four-over-four as well, but have simple flat board trim and headers rather than the segmental surrounds. Just east of the two windows, the house's massing changes and the north wall jogs back about eight feet. The jog corresponds to the corner of the gabled block, the "upright" of the house. A one story side porch attaches to this area of the house, just beside the two aligned windows, masking the abrupt shift. This porch existed prior to the recent rehabilitation of the house, however, it had been modified and enclosed. The current owners restored its early (c.1890) appearance in spirit from a photograph. The turned posts and spindle frieze and brackets are from the recent effort, but the porch's footprint and flat roof structure likely have looked this way since the early 1900s.

Underneath the side porch, the recessed north wall has a paneled door with single light transom. Beside the door, to the east, is a pair of small, high-set double hung windows of a later vintage. Moving around to the east elevation, the rear of the house shows how the various masses and rooflines merge and terminate (photos 10, 11 and 12). A small one story room encloses what could have been an early section of the north side porch at the northeast corner of the house. The entry door was previously described; on its east face this small room has a narrow double hung window. At some point, an owner replaced this window with a vinyl unit, however, its proportions are consistent with other window openings. Above this, the flat of the porch abuts an inside corner where gable end of the "upright" meets with the bulk of the rest of the house. The gable end wall has a single four-over-four window to the left, and a high-set, narrow horizontal leaded beveled glass window right of center. The gable roof/wall junction continues the entablature with raking paired brackets.

The wall and eaves of the hip-roofed south section of the house interrupt the south edge of the gable roof of the north section and form an inside corner; the north wall of this corner has a single window. All windows on the rear of the house lack the arched pediment hood. The east face of the hip-roofed section has one story addition projecting to the east. On the north side of the addition, the main wall of the house has two windows divided by a rock-faced molded

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concrete block exterior chimney on the first floor. There is a bulkhead cellar entrance under the north window. The windows are one-over-one replacement sash. There is a four-over-four wood window immediately south of the chimney on the second floor, but no opening is to the north. The chimney vented a coal furnace added to the house in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. It is square in proportion and rises through the eaves and well above the roofline.

The one story, frame, hip roof addition has a parged foundation that is likely brick underneath. The foundation wall has metal ventilation grilles. Frieze boards and shallow eaves finish the walls. Windows are set high against the frieze board and are horizontal sliding units; those on the north and south sides of the addition are centered, while the east window set is right of center to accommodate a simple doorway beside it. Currently this door is a steel Colonial style unit, reached by a small set of concrete steps. Above the steep hip roof of the addition, the second story of the main wall of the house has a similar horizontal window set nearly against the frieze board.

The south face of the hip-roofed section of the house has a more formal composition, with a central doorway flanked by openings. At some point, however, the near-symmetry was unbalanced by installation of a band of small triple windows. The doorway is centered in this section, and is a single leaf segmental arched wood door with vertical lower panels and a large single upper light. Its plain surround follows the segmental arch of the door. A large wood canopy shelters the door. It rests on two overscaled console-brackets. Each bracket face is articulated with raised scroll and foliage detail, probably scroll-sawn and built up in layers, the console edges are ornamented with raised studs. The canopy roof is flat, its edge is treated with cornice moldings.

On the first floor, to the right of the door, is a high-set band of three plain one-over-one windows with plain board surround. To the left or west is a single window, four-over-four wood, with segmental pediment hood and details per the front windows. Aligned directly above it is an identical window. East of center, above the triple window band, there is a single arched window. Directly above the hooded doorway, there is a small square four-pane window with arched surround. The eaves line of this side of the house continues the bracketed entablature. The shallow hip roof has a short ridge running east-west; at the ridge, a tall brick chimney rises. The chimney has a corbelled cap but its detail is covered by a layer of parging.

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*Interior*

The interior has many early features; wood floors, plaster walls and woodwork. Most woodwork was painted originally, since no stain or varnish was detected under the numerous layers of paint. Its key spaces remain intact, service areas such as the kitchen and bathrooms were rehabilitated by the current owners. Entering by way of the front door, visitors immediately encounter the original winding staircase with casket niche and original newel post (photos 14 and 15). The walls curve to conform to the winding stairs. The stairs are open string, with molded tread nosings but no string ornamentation. The newel post has turned cap, tapered octagonal shaft, turned base and octagonal plinth. Each face of the newel shaft and plinth has a recessed arrow-shaped panel edged in scalloped moldings. The balusters are turned and mimic the form of the newel, the handrail is molded in profile. A tall base with molded cap runs along the outside curved wall of the staircase. Moldings around doors and windows are simple painted wood architrave surrounds.

One such opening is immediate to the right of the staircase and opens into what is used today as the dining room (photo 17). This is the only room with an ornate plaster entablature molding. Floors are oak boards. The baseboards are high and finished with a bead string and cyma cap. The room has a projecting chimney breast with cast iron arched fireplace mantel. The face of the mantel has raised spandrel panels and a central raised shield motif. Windows are nearly floor to ceiling; there are windows on the east and south walls. Each has a molded panel beneath it (photo 18).

A door on the east side of the room leads to the family room, kitchen, and stairs to the basement (photo 19). Beyond the kitchen area, one also finds the sunroom and pantry, both in the one story rear addition of the house. The kitchen has vintage appliances. As part of a recent rehabilitation of the house, the current owners built a half wall with columns and archway to open the kitchen and family room into one another (photo 20). The sunroom, located off of the kitchen, has a floor of terra-cotta tile. During the recent rehabilitation, the current owners installed a vaulted ceiling in the sunroom. The high pitch of the addition's hip roof allows room for the feature. The south porch door opens to the back stairway to the second floor. These stairs are narrow and steep.

The family room is located behind the staircase and adjacent to the kitchen. It has a doorway to the front hall and a door to a private office, believed to have been used as bedroom (photo 21 shows view into office/bedroom). The door to the north porch has the original glass transom.

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This door was uncovered during the recent rehabilitation. It now leads to a mud room, laundry room, and two small bathrooms (photo 21).

A segmental arch opening leads to the front living room (photo 2). The opening has double leaf paneled doors and rectangular surround. Both the office/bedroom and front living room have cased beams criss-crossing the ceiling in a large grid pattern, probably installed in about 1890. The front living room includes the bay window interior (photo 23). Like other public rooms of the house, the bay's windows have painted wood architrave moldings with kick panels below the tall window sash. The living room also has a fireplace, added to the north wall in c.1890 (photo 22). Red brick and molded brick detail characterize this fireplace, which has two superimposed mantels, but no vertical flue on the interior. The base mantel projects about one brick deep into the room, and is articulated into two piers upholding a wood mantel shelf. The firebox area has its own brick mantel, projecting even further into the room. It has two piers on either side of the opening, upholding a course of brick, then a course of bead-and-reel molded brick, two plain courses, then a course of egg-and-dart and cyma molded brick under a wooden shelf. The window on the opposite wall likely dates to the same time as the fireplace. It is a fixed sash with concave diamond pane leaded glass transom (photo 24).

Moving upstairs, a short hall leads from the stairs to the front of the house and the handrail continues around the stairwell (photo 25). The room in the southwest corner of the second floor is a bedroom, and has moldings like those of other rooms in the house (photo 26). There is a chimney breast and flue in this room, however, the mantelpiece is missing. Floors damaged in previous conversions to apartments have been replaced with quarter-inch oak tongue-and-groove flooring. A door on the east wall of this room leads to a small interior passageway. Just outside of this door is newel post and stairway to the south exterior door (photo 27).

There are two bedrooms facing the back of the house. One is not in use as a bedroom. It has a closet and two windows facing south and east (photo 28). The third bedroom has windows facing east and north. A bathroom fills part of the north section of the house; it was a bedroom originally and has the previously mentioned narrow window over the bathtub (photo 31). The claw foot tub and other fittings, such as the black and white floor tile and bead board wainscot, are recent additions or replacements for non-historic fixtures that had been installed previously.

The master bedroom opens off of the hallway. On its west wall are the paired windows over the first floor bay. The interior surround is rectangular rather than arched and the windows are nearly floor-to-ceiling (photo 30).

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The current owners, Kirk and Caroline Conner, restored the house in 2005-2006. On the exterior, the restoration included removal of aluminum siding. All exterior woodwork was repaired or crafted by Kirk Conner. The wood clapboard was repaired where damaged, prepared, and painted. In the process of applying the siding, past owners had removed several of the characteristic brackets. Locations of the missing brackets were visible once the siding was removed and Mr. Conner used intact brackets as templates for missing ones. The front porch was deteriorated. The Conners replaced the deteriorated columns with compatible new posts inspired by the woodwork of the bay window. Interior work left key rooms as they were, and removed alterations from the home's apartment period. The Conners had the kitchen extensively updated and opened an archway into another room. Bathroom fixtures throughout were replaced; bathrooms were modernized. In all, the house retains its key historic architectural elements while having contemporary conveniences.

**Section 8 – Statement of Significance**

The DeForest Skinner House is significant under National Register criteria A and C. Built in about 1860, the architecture of the house combines the northern Indiana “upright and wing” vernacular type with Italianate details. Several generations of the Skinner family occupied the house during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Long known for their contributions to commerce and finance, at least two Skinner family members who lived here played important roles in the growth of Valparaiso, Indiana. The contributions of the family over time meet Criterion A as a pattern of history.

Unlike Southern Indiana, the Calumet region had no long history of settlement prior to statehood. Draining of swamp lands for agriculture and railroad activity brought comparatively quick growth. In 1836, a group of investors formed the Portersville Land Company, bought a site at the center of Porter County, Indiana, and platted Portersville. The group included J.F.D. Lanier, one of Indiana’s most wealthy men and president of the State Bank of Indiana. Lanier lived in the Ohio River town of Madison, Indiana. Officials changed the name to Valparaiso in 1837. The name links to Commodore David Porter, the county’s namesake; he had defeated elements of the Royal Navy off of Valparaiso, Chile during the War of 1812.

The town was on an overland trade route between Fort Wayne and Chicago. This and status as a county seat established a basis for the town to develop. In 1850, the settlement had 552 residents and its citizens applied for incorporation as a town. In 1858, the Pittsburgh, Fort Wayne, and Chicago Railroad completed a line through Valparaiso. Railroad connections, agricultural

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processing and general industrial expansion underpinned the economic growth of Valparaiso in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Unlike many Indiana towns, Valparaiso was not dependent on a specific industry or business.<sup>1</sup> In addition to its commercial and industrial interests, Valparaiso had significant educational interests. Henry Brown opened the Northern Indiana Normal School and Business Institute in town in 1873. Eventually, the school grew and was renamed Valparaiso University. By the early 1900s, the university was drawing thousands of students in enrollment, making Valparaiso a college town in addition to its other pursuits.

*The Skinners and Valparaiso*

The Skinner family played a significant role in the ongoing growth of the community. Three generations of Skinners had a hand in the settlement, commercial development, banking, politics, railroads, and educational heritage of Valparaiso; four generations lived in the frame Italianate house at 208 North Washington Street. The history of this branch of the Skinner family in Valparaiso dates back to 1847 when John Richard Skinner and his family came from Hardwick, Caldonia County, Vermont to Valparaiso. John was a prominent attorney and orator. Emily Ward Skinner, John's wife, was highly educated, a descendent of Edward Rawson, secretary of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. She was native to Massachusetts. Her work in the community included founding of private schools in Valparaiso, and she was noted for church projects with the Methodist congregation in town. Though John died in 1850, Emily lived long enough to enjoy the comfort of her son's home at 208 North Washington until her death at age 76.

DeForest Skinner had accompanied his parents John and Emily to Valparaiso at age 11 in 1847. He was educated in local schools and worked for a number of local merchants, where he showed business acumen well beyond his years. He worked in mercantile stores as a teenager, boarding at the store and sleeping in the storeroom. At age 18, DeForest started his own store. For many years he was associated with Skinner & Harrold, a retail grocer.

In 1861, DeForest was rooming at the Tremont House Hotel, where he met hotel owner's daughter, Rachel Ann Maxwell. The two married and moved into the 208 N. Washington Street house. Evidence indicates that the house was built at about this time, which coincides well with this key event. The two raised four children in the house, and Emily Skinner lived with them.

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<sup>1</sup> Stamper, National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, Valparaiso Downtown Commercial District, p. 30.

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Business success led to political activity for Skinner. He ran for State Senator as a Republican in 1874, representing Lake and Porter Counties until 1878. Skinner was a commissioner for the state agency that built three hospitals for the insane during his tenure as a state senator. Skinner had changed parties by 1880, when he was a delegate to the Democratic National Convention in Cincinnati. He served the same role in 1888 at St. Louis.

Involvement in the city's business community also led Skinner to the banking industry. In 1874, he was voted to the board of directors of First National Bank of Valparaiso, and became its president in 1877 at age 41. As the bank changed names to First National Bank of Valparaiso, Skinner remained president, and remained so until his death in 1902.<sup>2</sup>

A measure of the importance Skinner held in the banking community is reflected by Governor Matthew's appointment of Skinner to the World's Congress of Bankers in 1893. Organizers of the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893 in Chicago established a series of thousands of educational lectures, meetings, and gatherings. Each governor appointed a representative from their state, Skinner represented Indiana at the World's Congress of Bankers. Financial experts at the event seemed to use the congress as a platform to speak for adoption of the Gold Standard; Skinner was against William Jennings Bryan's "Free Silver" campaign.<sup>3</sup>

Also at this time, Skinner had been elected to the board of directors of the Chicago and Grand Trunk Railroad, a line that passed through Valparaiso and contributed to its vitality. Lastly, DeForest Skinner's leadership extended to the educational improvement of Valparaiso. In 1873, when Henry Baker Brown established Northern Indiana Normal School, Skinner served as a board member of the institution and in its early years. DeForest Skinner passed away in the family home in 1902.

The same year as the founding of the Normal School, 1873, was also the year that Rachel and DeForest had a son, Leslie Reid Skinner. Once college age, young Leslie attended Northern Indiana Normal School/Valparaiso University and DePauw University, Greencastle, Indiana. Leslie and his wife Louise Windle Skinner also lived at 208 N. Washington Street and raised four children here.

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<sup>2</sup> *History of Porter County*, Vol. I, p. 365

<sup>3</sup> *History of Porter County*, Vol. I, p. 367. Skinner changed parties over the Gold Standard issue and supported McKinley and local Republicans after this period.

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Leslie continued the family business interests, serving as secretary-treasurer of Sprecht, Finney, Skinner & Company, a Valparaiso retail firm his father had established. He succeeded his father as director of the Chicago and Grand Trunk Railroad upon his death in 1902. At age 30, Leslie Skinner was the youngest railroad director in the United States at the time.

In banking, Leslie was likewise a prodigy; he was the youngest bank cashier in Indiana at one point. He was elected vice-president of the Valparaiso National Bank in 1902. He was a principal stockholder in American Trust Company of South Bend, and served on its advisory board.

In 1919, Leslie and Rachel Skinner sold 208 N. Washington Street to long-time local business owner Louis Szold. He was a successful merchant with a store on the courthouse square. Szold and his wife Olga and three children lived in the house for a time. Later, Szold divided the house into apartments. City directories list the first renter at the house in 1930. The Szolds remained in the house until 1946. Later owners maintained the house as apartments until December of 2005.

*Architecture*

Valparaiso and Porter County's relatively short period of settlement and location in northern Indiana shaped its vernacular architectural influences. Though long considered part of Calumet region of Indiana, culturally, much of the northern portion of Indiana had more in common with eastern states than the prairie beyond. In pre and post Revolutionary times, the government of Connecticut claimed rights to a strip of westward lands that included northern Ohio, extending to and beyond would-be Porter County, Indiana. In 1796, the State of Connecticut sold the Western Reserve, a portion of Ohio, to private investors and settlement slowly took hold.

This historic fact underscores the cultural influence that Yankee westward migration had on northern Indiana's architecture, until railroads and greater settlement diffused vernacular influences. One of the most pervasive housing types, the upright and wing, has strong cultural origins in New England.

Cultural geographers generally agree that the upright and wing type has origins in the gable front type, a common New England housing form consisting of a rectangular gabled mass with gable end oriented toward the intended main view. The gable front and upright and wing types also corresponded generally to the time frame of the Greek Revival era in U.S. architecture. By orienting the gable front toward the street, ordinary builders could provide something of the

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grandeur of classic Greek temple front to their clients. The upright and wing form preserved the gable front format but allowed for informal uses to expand to a side wing.

The Skinner House is a distant echo of the upright and wing form, with its more sophisticated hip roofed side wing. Like many vernacular houses, the Skinners enlarged their home over time to accommodate rising fortunes. The intersection of rooflines at the rear of the gabled mass indicates that at least one section was added to the house.

Ornamentation also distinguishes the Skinner House from earlier U.S. examples of the upright and wing. The builder embellished the basic form of the house with rich Italianate detail. An elaborate bay window, radius-cornered windows, arched surrounds, paired brackets, pedimented window hoods, and other elements are clearly identified with the Italianate style. Interior features, such as the winding staircase with octagonal newel, architrave door and window moldings and arched cast iron fireplace mantel are also good examples of Italianate period craftsmanship. The Skinner family continued to improve the house in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, when they added a Romanesque Revival-inspired brick fireplace and Victorian era plate glass window with leaded transom to a front room.

A handful of residential properties in Valparaiso can compare to the combination of Italianate and vernacular design of the Skinner House. The grandest example of Italianate residential architecture in town is the Sheriff's House and Jail (NR, 1976). The Sheriff's House portion dates to c.1860, and it demonstrates how early the style was accepted locally. Granted, its opulent brick and stone architecture with arched windows, stone surrounds, and paired brackets was built on a larger budget and scale than most citizens could afford. The Col. Mark DeMotte House on N. Franklin (#32097), is a mid 19<sup>th</sup> century brick example of an upright and wing, comparable in many ways to the Skinner House. Both have nearly identical gable end bay windows, bracketed eaves, and arched window hoods. The Lorenzo Freeman House, c.1849, N. Washington Street (#32066), is an Italianate Cube house, executed in wood frame construction, features paired windows, bay window, and bracket work. A.J. Buel's c.1867 brick house on N. Washington (#32049) is less ornate but combines Italianate elements with a gabled ell format. Lastly, a brick house on Academy Street (c.1875, #34046), a double pile vernacular house with paired, arched, stone framed windows and wood bracketed entablature.

A number of other houses in Valparaiso have Italianate elements. These homes generally lack enough stylistic elements to be called Italianate, but simply reflect craftsmanship practices of the

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era – eaves with frieze panels or boards, window hoods, arched doorways, and other elements. The Skinner House is significant as one of the finer examples of Italianate in Valparaiso. The builder's use of vernacular forms with New England sources adds to the sense of time and place of the house.

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**Personal Interviews**

Conducted by Beverly Overmyer, transcripts stored with interviewer, 110 N. 641 West, Valparaiso, IN 46385

Brietzke, Kevin, Porter County Surveyor, July 10, 2006 and May 18, 2007.

Conner, Kirk and Caroline. March 12 and September 13, 2006; February 10, May 18, September 18, October 26, 2007.

Pierce, Doug. Retired restoration architect. May 24, 2006.

Jones, Evelyn. Past owner of Skinner House. July 24, 2006

McGill, Jim. Grandson of Fannie Ruth Skinner, sister of Leslie Skinner, September 28, 2006.

**Section 10 – Geographical Data, Verbal Boundary Description**

Lots 3 and 4 of Block 8 in the original plat of the City of Valparaiso, Indiana.

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**Boundary Justification**

This is the historic boundary.

**Photograph Information**

The following information is identical for all photos except as indicated:

Property: DeForest Skinner House  
County, State: Porter County, Indiana  
Photographer: Gary Overmyer  
Date of Photo: September, 2007  
Location of Negs: DHPA, 402 W. Washington Street, Room W274, Indianapolis IN 46204

Photo #1  
West or front elevation  
Camera facing north/east

Photo #6  
West elevation, bay window  
Camera facing east/se

Photo #2  
Living room double doors  
Camera facing east

Photo #7  
Eaves brackets, window  
Camera facing northwest

Photo #3  
Exterior front door  
Camera facing east

Photo #8  
South elevation  
Camera facing north

Photo #4  
South porch  
Camera facing north

Photo #9  
Taken April 2007  
South porch brackets  
Camera facing east/ne

Photo #5  
North elevation, porch  
Camera facing south

Photo #10  
Taken November 2006  
East elevation  
Camera facing west

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Photo #11  
Taken April 2007  
Addition windows  
Camera facing west

Photo #12  
East elevation  
Camera facing west

Photo #13  
Taken May 2007  
North elevation, porch  
Camera facing south

Photo #14  
Staircase  
Camera facing east

Photo #15  
Taken May 2007  
Newel post  
Camera facing south

Photo #16  
Typical woodwork, interior  
Camera facing south

Photo #17  
Taken May 2007  
Dining Room frieze, fireplace  
Camera facing southeast

Photo #18  
Taken May 2007  
Dining room woodwork  
Camera facing southwest

Photo #19  
Taken May 2007  
Family room, kitchen  
Camera facing east

Photo #20  
Taken April 2007  
Kitchen  
Camera facing south

Photo #21  
Office, from family room  
Camera facing north

Photo #22  
Taken April 2007  
Living room fireplace  
Camera facing north

Photo #23  
Living room bay window interior  
Camera facing west

Photo #24  
Living room beveled window  
Camera facing south

Photo #25  
Taken April 2007  
Upstairs main hallway  
Camera facing southeast

Photo #26  
Taken April 2007  
View in bedroom 1  
Camera facing southeast

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Photo #27  
Taken April 2007  
Interior hallway, stairs  
Camera facing south

Photo #28  
Taken April 2007  
View in bedroom 2  
Camera facing east

Photo #29  
Taken April 2007  
View in bedroom 3  
Camera facing southeast

Photo #30  
Master bedroom  
Camera facing northwest

Photo #31  
Master bedroom  
Camera facing east

IN Porter County, Skinner Homestead  
Historic material 2

Skinner Homestead,  
Home of Four Generations  
Now occupied by L.R. Skinner  
and family.

THE picture to the right shows a part of Main Street as it was in the early sixties. Looking east on Main Street is the old historic Tremont House, located where now stands the modern Specht-Finney-Skinner Co. department store.

During the early days of this hotel Col. Mark L. DeMotte, Chas. W. Dickover and DeForest L. Skinner were listed among the boarders; and at this old hotel the courtship began which resulted in the marriage of DeForest Leslie Skinner to Rachel Ann Maxwell, daughter of James Maxwell, who was at that time the proprietor.



East Main Street, 1856