

# Reformed 'whiskey boy'

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** This is the 49th in our series of columns about local history written by Ted Fenstermacher, editor of the Berwick Enterprise for 41 years and a Press Enterprise columnist until his death in 1992. The columns, with some editing, are taken from "Tracking Yesterday," his collection of columns in book form, first published in 1983.

For many years, I have considered the former Vincent Low home at Lime Ridge to be one of the most attractive dwellings in the region, both inside and out.

But until recently, I had been unaware that it was once a hotel called the Temperance House, built about 140 years ago.

The story of how such a non-drinking establishment came about is told in seven long pages of handwritten copy by one Daniel Jamison, who was the great-grandfather of Wilbur D. Riegel of Scenic Knolls, Bloomsburg R.D. 5.

A description of religious activity at both Lime Ridge and Mifflinville is contained in the writing. Much of the spelling is phonetic, and much is on the Pennsy Dutch side — such as "chumpt" for jumped; "hat" for had and "fardest" for farthest.

The handwriting, however, is exceptionally good — certainly far better than mine, although that isn't saying much.

I'm going to use a number of excerpts from the Jamison handwritten article, although I'll not use phonetic and Dutch spelling, as in the original.

## 'Bad business'

In the early part of the

## TRACKING YESTERDAY

writing, he tells about being sent, as a boy, by his mother, to the Presbyterian Church, and how, after doing well in his instruction, he later became a member. He said there was "no wrong in the doctrine; the wrong was altogether my fault. I had eyes but did not see."

Still later, he was a Methodist for many years, but the situation remained about the same. He remained the owner of a tavern at Lime Ridge. Jamison wrote, "I sold whiskey, brandy and wine to everybody that wanted a drink of liquor. I made more money in a short time than ever I did before or after. It was bad business but made money fast."

Then came three years, starting in the winter of 1841, when Jamison attended annual evangelistic meetings — he used the old term, "protracted meetings" — one at Lime Ridge and two at Mifflinville.

## 'Whiskey boys'

The first was held for six weeks, "about a mile from where I kept tavern and quite a number of my whiskey boys would come to my tavern and take a drink before they went to church. When church was out, the boys came back and reported what happened during the meeting; how they jumped and shouted and who got converted that evening.

After the report, the boys took two or three drinks and went home. This kept on about four weeks and at the beginning of the fifth, my whiskey boys reported that Joseph Webb and Mary, his



THIS STATELY old house at the

wife, were converted. I could not believe it. Joseph and Mary were the best friends I had in all that neighborhood

"Now in order to know and see if that was so, I went to church myself. When I came to the church I went into the farthest corner I could get. I did not go there to get converted."

Then more detail is given as to how the evangelist exhorted, and how tears ran down his face. It affected Jamison, and although he didn't feel he was really "converted," he wrote, "I stopped swearing and stopped keeping tavern and kept from all evil and sinful thoughts."

## 'Mourners' bench'

The next year, 1842, Jamison was back at protracted meeting. In the fall of that year he wrote, "I built a large brick home, 32 by 40, two stories, for the purpose of keeping a temperance house or tavern to accommodate temperance people and strangers."



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