

MARCH 30, 2017

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spotlighting the
Historic
Manitou Hotel
renovation
project completion

glory DAYS



Reviving the Manitou

Luverne's Bill and Nancy Frakes are enjoying their recently completed four-level renovation of the former Manitou Hotel. The Star Herald featured their work in 2006 when the first two levels were finished. Now, all floors are done, and the result is a remarkable combination of old and new that's a stunning work of art. See inside for details.

Bill and Nancy Frakes are pictured March 17 outside their home at the intersection of Main Street and Freeman Avenue.

'Hotel Manitou is pride of our town'

The Manitou Hotel has stood on the southwest corner of Freeman and Main since 1901 when the Luverne Hotel Corporation inspired the red brick building.

According to the Rock County Herald of 1900 and 1901, a group of civic-minded people joined together to raise money and build the hotel.

They had about four locations to choose from, including the spot where the United Methodist Church is located, but 34 of 37 stockholders approved the purchase of the site across the street from the church from F.N. Laugharn. Col. Harrison White's implement business was located on the spot.

The lot cost \$3,000.

Luverne architect W.E.E. Greene drew up the plans for the building and supervised its construction. It opened for business Nov. 29, 1901, before a formal banquet and dance for 151 ticket holders officially kicked things off on Dec. 11.

The writers at the Rock County Herald pronounced, "Hotel Manitou is the pride of our town."

The first managing proprietors of the hotel were Grant and Martha Bronson, Owatonna.

As it was built, the hotel measured 66 by 100 feet. The foundation was built of Luverne jasper stone from the quarry. The facing was of Menomonie sand mold brick, made in Menomonie, Wis. The trim was of Lake



The following appeared in the Luverne Journal on November 28, 1901:
On Saturday at noon Luverne's new hotel, "The Manitou," will be open to the public. The proprietor, Grant Bronson, will have everything in readiness Saturday noon and will serve the first meal at that time. The formal opening, with a grand banquet and ball, will be held on the evening of December 11th, at which time the house will be turned over to the people of Luverne and vicinity for one night. The banquet will be served in the dining room of the hotel, and dancing will be in the office and writing rooms, where there is ample room. Music will be furnished by the Mason City orchestra. Tickets will be on sale next week at J.A. Harroun's, and those who wish tickets are requested to buy early. All the rooms have been handsomely furnished. Landlord Bronson has secured an able force of people for all departments of the house and opens under very favorable circumstances.

Superior sandstone.

The basement rooms had 9-foot-high ceilings. The basement, which in fact extended five feet above the ground, included

a room designed for a bar, a barber shop in the northwest corner, three sample rooms (rooms where traveling salesmen could display their wares), a vegetable

cellar, laundry area, and heating apparatus that included two boilers.

The first floor had two entrances. The main entry on the corner of the building had a 24-foot-deep tiled veranda. The lobby measured 38 by 50 feet.

Also on the first floor were a luggage room, reading room, committee room, cloak room, closets and lavatories. The dining room was 30 by 45 feet and was located in the southeast corner.

The remainder of the first floor was taken by kitchen, refrigeration room, a pantry and storage. The Herald said the floors were of hard maple with a natural oak finish. The ceilings on the first floor were 12 feet high.

On the second floor, there was an apartment for the manager. On the second and third floors were 35 guest rooms, eight bathrooms, six toilet rooms, 10 bathtubs, and 18 marble lavatories. Every room was an outside room. The Herald said each room had a telephone that connected to the front desk.

To build the hotel, subscribers contributed \$15,000. The person who leased the hotel also contributed to the project. The total cost was said to be \$30,000.

Taken from the Star Herald archives, written by Carole Olson

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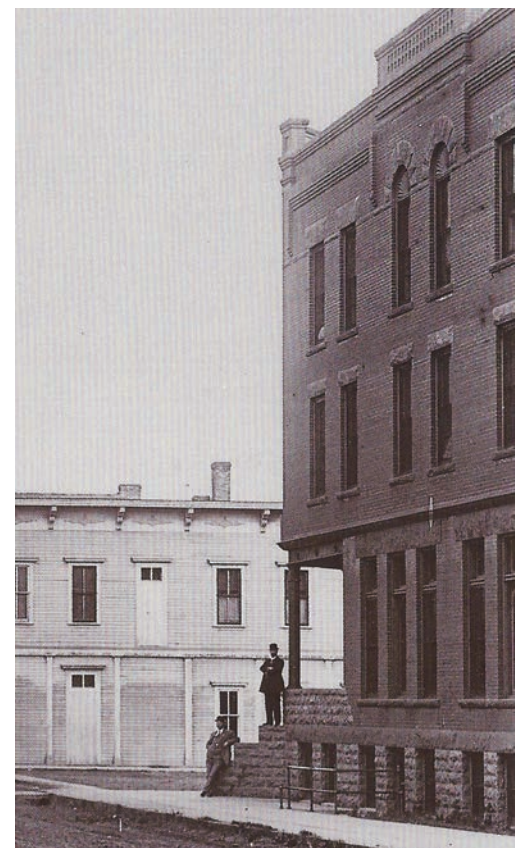
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When the Manitou was built, the lobby (above) measured 38 by 50 feet. Also on the first floor were a luggage room, reading room, committee room, cloak room, closets and lavatories.

The formal opening, with a grand banquet and ball, was held on the evening of December 11th, 1901.

At that time the Palace Theatre (pictured across the street from the Manitou at right) had not yet been built.





The main doors on the north-east corner open into what was once the hotel lobby.

With 1,500 square feet of gleaming maple hardwood floors, 12-foot-high ceilings, 8-foot-high windows, and oversized chandeliers, it's not hard to imagine the glory days of the Manitou.

In fact, the floor still bears large grooves where the front hotel desk checked in guests (as seen in the foreground of this 2017 photograph).

Twenty-five years later, Manitou Hotel restoration complete

By Mavis Fodness

Nancy Frakes realizes each room in her husband Bill's "little" home renovation project has three must-haves: sparkling light fixtures, mirrors and wood accents.

Since purchasing the historic 20-room Manitou Hotel in downtown Luverne in 1991, Bill has worked nonstop to bring the 116-year-old building back to life.

The Rock County Star Herald first toured the construction

progress in 2006.

At that time the Frakeses turned the lower level into living quarters and were restoring the first level. The second floor was unfinished.

Now 10 years later, the news-

paper returned to a renovation that is 98 percent complete. Bill said he now "just putzes with the other 2 percent."

In the 26 years living amid the do-it-yourself remodeling project, Nancy began noticing the

three common elements Bill and carpenter/craftsman Tony Gacke have included in each room.

"Bill likes light fixtures, mirrors and wood," she said.

Manitou restoration/page 4

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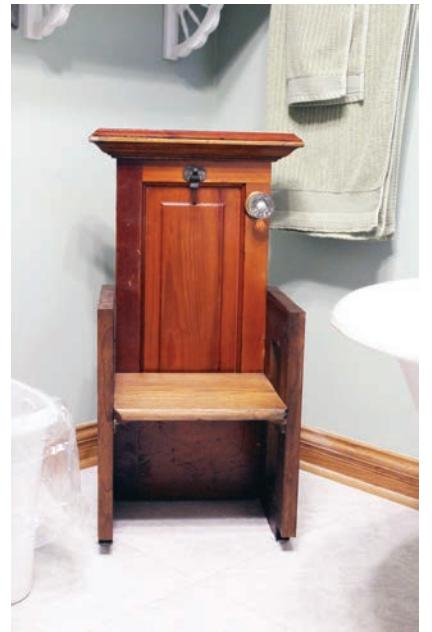
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Nancy Frakes recently tried her hand at woodworking with this design made from leftover construction materials (above). She also repurposed old doors and knobs that were salvaged from the Manitou. The one at left came from the old Manitou boiler room.

At far left, cherry cabinet doors and drawer fronts were repurposed as ceiling tile and completed with one of many chandeliers throughout the home. The Manitou uses roughly 1,000 light bulbs throughout the home.



Each room has one or more of Bill's one-of-a-kind design elements, such as these open nooks in the second-floor stairwell.



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Manitou restoration complete/from page3

What Nancy likes best is that most of those materials are no longer dominating all the space in her garage.

"This garage was so full that I could barely get my car in," she said on the recent tour on March 2.

A roomier garage also means the hundreds of reclaimed boards, doors and other home furnishings have been used somewhere in the 26,500-square-foot home.

The result is nothing short of a work of art and is "amazing," according to Nancy.

None of the materials stored in the garage went to waste. Under Bill's clever eye those materials found life in some unusual locations.

For example, the cherry wood kitchen cabinets rejected by the manufacturer for their slight size variations are now part

of an elaborate ceiling design.

Called the maroon room, the second floor bedroom suite is most sought after by family members.

"Whoever comes first gets this room," Nancy said with a laugh.

Each room has one or more of Bill's one-of-a-kind design elements.

Nancy said she left most of the detail designing to Bill, but she has chosen the paint colors.

The blue bedroom down the hall features antique glass doorknobs for curtain grabs, one of a few ideas Nancy garnered from Pinterest, the idea-sharing website.

Then there are the repurposed furniture pieces found on all four levels.

The latest is a bottle locker salvaged from the Hutchinson Country Club.

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For the Manitou restoration Bill Frakes envisioned balconies overlooking lower floors, spiral staircases and wide open spaces. It's fair to say that goal has been accomplished.



In the great room is a cat-faced bar hand-crafted by Vince Gacke.

Bill Frakes points toward a liquor bottle locker salvaged from the Hutchinson Country Club. Dozens of bottle-sized locking doors dot the locker where club members would store individual bottles of alcohol inside for their own personal use.



dot the locker where club members would store individual bottles of alcohol inside for their own personal use.

The Frakeses placed the locker in the first floor ballroom, next to the bar.

"You've got to have a little humor," Nancy said.

Humor played a role in bringing the decades-long project to a close.

"I don't think we will ever do it again," she said with a grin. "We didn't know what we were doing."

Or how long the project would take to reach completion.

Throughout the Manitou Nancy attached engraved plaques detailing where some building materials originated.

One plaque (at right) was placed in the main entrance and will need updating. Nancy anticipated the renovation would finish eight years ago.

"She was optimistic," Bill said.



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The main lobby corner entrance (pictured at far left) still has its original decorative tile floor. "I'll bet each of those little squares was laid by hand," Bill said.

Also pictured (at left and below) are a main floor dining room and modern kitchen.

These photos were taken during the first phase of renovation - the lower level and main floor of the Manitou.



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If the walls of Luverne's Manitou Hotel could talk ... they'd tell stories of a grand opening in 1900 ... of formal ballroom dances, live bands, visiting dignitaries, luxurious accommodations and of untold exploits with "ladies of the evening."

But over the span of a century, the once majestic Manitou Hotel weathered a long stretch of not-so-bustling times.

Through the years, landlords partitioned its large interior spaces into modest rooms for rent.

Former hotel rooms also became rental rooms, and businesses (bars, barber shops and insurance offices, for example) in the lower level came and went.

The most recent landlord was Alex Frick, who purchased the building in 1987 from Inga Bolte.

Frick ran his business, Manitou Carpets, just down the street and rented out six apartments in what remained of the old hotel.

In this way, the Manitou avoided the wrecking ball and maintained a humble existence in the shadow of its grandiose past.

In 1991, Frick convinced local do-it-yourselfer Bill Frakes to purchase the Manitou as an improvement project.

Although the building was structurally sound, it needed plumbing and electrical work. "He's the most qualified person in town to take on something like this," Frick said at the time.

Manitou rebuilt from ground up/page 8



The Great Room occupies what was once the formal hotel dining room. Its walls are lined by earthen colored brick and characteristic 8-foot-tall windows. The 1,400-square-foot room has seating areas in one corner with a bar in one corner. Light fixtures and fans are suspended from the restored tin ceiling. The south wall (at right) is accented by field stones hauled in from local farm ground. (2006 photos)





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On the northwest corner of the main floor just off the kitchen and dining area, a 20-foot waterfall spans two stories. Pictured in 2006 are Bill Frakes (right) with the late Curt Maxell who crafted all the stone work and masonry in the Manitou restoration project.



A quaint walk bridge crosses a small pond where the water pools from the upper part of the fall before spilling into the bar area in the lower level.

Manitou rebuilt/ continued from page 7

In a 2006 feature about the beginning of the Manitou restoration project, Nancy Frakes said she recalled being less than thrilled when her husband announced his purchase.

"I said, 'What'd you do that for?'" Nancy said, in that feature.

She said the Manitou is perfect for Bill because he's fascinated by history and collecting memorabilia.

"But we're at an age where we should be getting rid of stuff, and he keeps bringing it home," she joked.

But she admits her new (old) home has plenty of her own personal touches.

"I like it," she said.

From the ground up

In the years since the building changed hands, passersby on Main Street and Freeman Avenue have watched a slow, steady transformation.

The first things people noticed were new, modern windows. To be exact, 100 of them were replaced.

Work progressed from the ground up.

In the basement, walls between former offices and hallways were knocked out to open the entire east half for a recreation room and TV room.

That area opened into a kitchenette, bar, wine cellar, three bedrooms,

Manitou rebuilt/see page 11

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A foosball table is at left. There is also a pool table that once belonged to Flett's Pool Hall.

In the background of this photo are French doors that were salvaged from the former Schoon Motors Co. showroom. In the background of the dining room (at upper right) is a living room area that for years was occupied by a barbershop and commercial offices. Grace Loose once shared with the Frakeses that she got her first permanent wave in 1932 in what was the Delaney Beauty Shop. Local barber Marlyn Roberts also had a business in that corner of the Manitou for several years.



The area of the lower level dining room (above and at left) was once the Happy Hour Bar. Servicemen and other travelers were known to get off the passenger train at the depot and come directly to the Manitou to either check in for the night or just to visit the bar. Also known as the "Rat Hole," it reportedly got such a reputation for wild times and wild women that it was forced to close down. Frakes designed arches below the windows on the east to match arched doorways across the room.

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Above, a wall of corks in the lower level bar has 2,251 corks. Some are from favorite or memorable bottles of wine, but many are given by friends. The bar is accented by a freight elevator gate from the former AR Wood building in Luverne.

In the lower level alone, 16,000 bricks from dozens of demolished local landmarks line the walls. Their contrasting colors and shapes give each room a distinctive appeal. Some of them still carry the names of their original landmarks.

For example, in the photo at far right, salmon-colored bricks in the basement rec room wall have "Heron Lake B&R" carved lightly in their surfaces from the Adrian parochial school building.



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**Manitou rebuilt/
continued from page 8**

a bathroom and a sauna, along with a utility room laundry.

The basement, which actually extends 3 feet above ground level, has nine-foot ceilings and the exterior walls are lined by windows.

Because of the thickness of the foundation, the window frames are two feet deep and finished with a honey-colored oak.

Interior shutters can be closed for privacy, but they're mirrored on the inside to maximize lighting.

When they're open, the mirrored shutters draw in extra light and provide added peripheral visibility.

The Frakeses started moving into the lower level in 2001, 10 years after buying the building. They were completely settled in until 2003.

The Great Room

Meanwhile, work got underway on the main floor.

The main doors on the northeast corner open into what was once the hotel lobby.

With 1,500 square feet of gleaming maple hardwood floors, 12-foot-high ceilings, 8-foot-high windows, and oversized chandeliers, it's not hard to imagine the glory days of the Manitou.

In fact, the floor still bears large grooves where the front hotel desk checked in guests.

What was once the hotel lobby is now a brick-colored sitting room that opens to the main floor kitchen and dining room on the north and the "Great Room" and library on the south.

The color scheme blends cheerfully with the abundance of natural light.

The Great Room occupies what was once the formal hotel dining room. Its walls are lined by earthen colored brick and characteristic 8-foot-tall windows, but the east wall provides a sunny contrast with a mango-painted finish.

The 1,400-square-foot space is accented by decorative rugs and furniture arranged in two separate seating areas with a bar in one corner.

Light fixtures and fans are suspended from the restored tin ceiling.

Brick outhouse indoors

A unique feature in the library is a hexagonal brick bathroom with wood shingles and a stained-glass skylight at the top.

The circular exterior features a sink and countertop with a lounge chair in the corner. That room encases a small room with little more than a toilet.

A window over the sink overlooks the library, but a door to the actual toilet room can

Manitou rebuilt from ground up/see page 12



Alder doors in the lower level living quarters were quoted by a San Diego firm at \$3,000 each. Luverne craftsman Tony Gacke was able to reproduce them at a fraction of that cost.



A unique feature in the library (at left) is a hexagonal brick bathroom with wood shingles and skylight at the top made of wire translucent glass. The circular exterior features a sink and countertop with a lounge chair in the corner.

That room encases a small room with little more than a toilet. A window over the sink overlooks the library, but a door to the actual toilet room can be closed for privacy. It has to be seen to be appreciated. And, of course, in jest, it often gets referred to as "the brick sh-- house."

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Manitou rebuilt/ continued from page 11

be closed for privacy.

It has to be seen to be appreciated. And, of course, in jest, it often gets referred to as “the brick sh-- house.”

Waterfalls and sunlight

South windows in the Great Room overlook a garden-level sunroom below.

Its glass encases both the lower and second-floor windows, and a 16-foot waterfall flows in one corner, opposite a wood-burning stove.

“It can get to be 100 degrees in here in the middle of winter,” Frakes said in the 2006 *Star Herald* feature, basking in the direct sunlight. “I love to just sit in here.”

On the northwest corner of the main floor just off the kitchen and dining area, another waterfall nearly 20 feet tall spans two stories.

A quaint walk bridge crosses a small pond where the water will pool from the upper part of the fall before spilling into the bar area in the lower level.

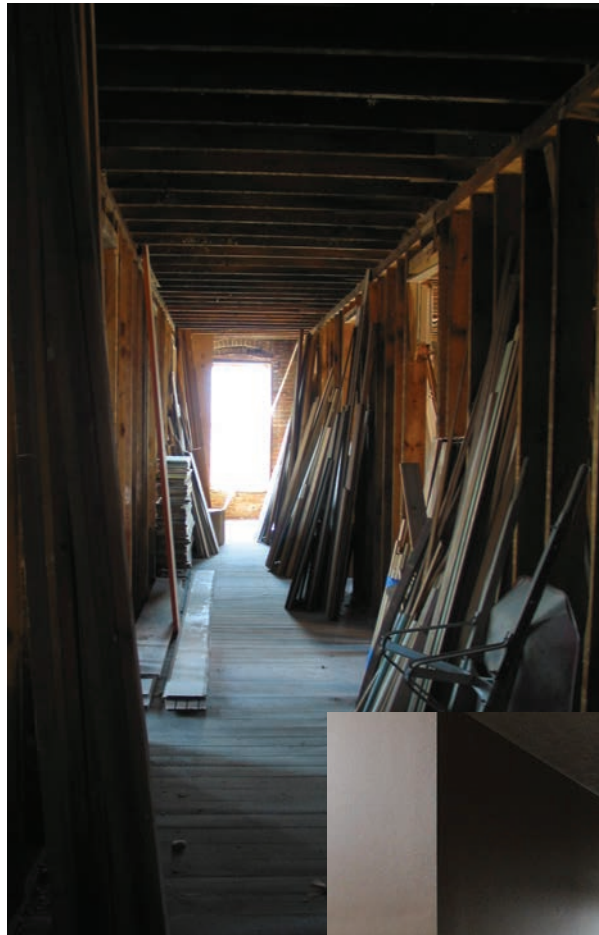
Moving on up ...

The second and third floors were still in demolition phase when the 2006 feature was written, but when Bill ascended the stairs and surveyed the destruction, he had a clear picture in his mind.

“Over here will be an open sitting area with French doors over here,” he said gesturing about.

He moves to a third floor window to see Main Street below. “I can imagine sitting here drinking my coffee watching as the town wakes up,” he said.

He describes grand, master bedrooms, a



The second and third floors were still in demolition phase when the 2006 feature was written. But Bill had a clear picture in his mind and the photo at right illustrates the completed upper level hallways, standing in contrast to the other two images.



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central area sharing a light shaft that will shed sunshine from the roof to the downstairs lobby.

He envisioned balconies overlooking lower floors, spiral staircases, greenery courtyards and more.

He even utilized the roof. With such a panoramic view of the city in all directions, he said it would be a waste not to utilize that space.

Looking to the southeast, he notes that the city hasn't expanded much in that direction. "I imagine this view today is much like it was when they built this place," he said.

The roof is occasionally an area for barbeques and summer night parties.

Turning up the heat

When the lower level project started around 2000, the first priority was installing radiant heat under the floor tiles in the basement.

That heat rises to supplement a forced-air fuel furnace. There are now six furnaces throughout the finished building.

The top two floors of the building were at first closed off to conserve heat and to control construction dust.

Bricks and mortar map history of Rock County

The Manitou structure itself holds a significant place in Rock County history. But with Frakes' remodeling and restoration, the walls practically ooze history.

For example, 16,000 bricks from **Manitou rebuilt from ground up/see 15**




Balconies overlooking lower floors, large window, natural light and abundant attention to detail are featured throughout the completed Manitou project, from basement to roof.

Star Herald general manager Rick Peterson is pictured in the lower level lobby during a recent tour for this feature.



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The second and third floors feature large suites with sleeping quarters and living quarters, each of them with their own unique points of interest. For example the master bedroom in this suite is set off by a sliding track that was salvaged from the haymow of the old Ehler Willard barn along North Highway 75 (pictured above and at left). Attached to the track are freight elevator gates from the former AR Wood building. The rooms are furnished by many antique pieces that were bought at auctions. The one pictured at lower right was found by Bill's mother, Annabelle Frakes, at an auction. Throughout the Manitou, the primary focal points are windows, mirrors and artistic wood pieces.



At left is a transom window frame backed with a mirror to make it appear to be an actual window. **Above** is another leaded glass window from an old home in town. It's set off by an artistic arrangement of salvaged end pieces of wood used in the Manitou restoration. Stained glass throughout the building was either salvaged or created by Luverne artist Lori Hallstrom.

Above at right, a leaded glass window from the hallway to the blue room was salvaged from a demolished home in Luverne. Corbels that accent doorways and corners (below) came from the Avis Hazelton house on Cedar Street in Luverne.



Manitou rebuilt/ continued from page 13

dozens of demolished local landmarks line the walls of the lower level alone.

Their contrasting colors and shapes give each room a distinctive appeal.

On the lower level, Frakes used the Manitou's original Sioux quartzite foundation (quarried from the Blue Mounds) to add color and texture of its own in some of the rooms.

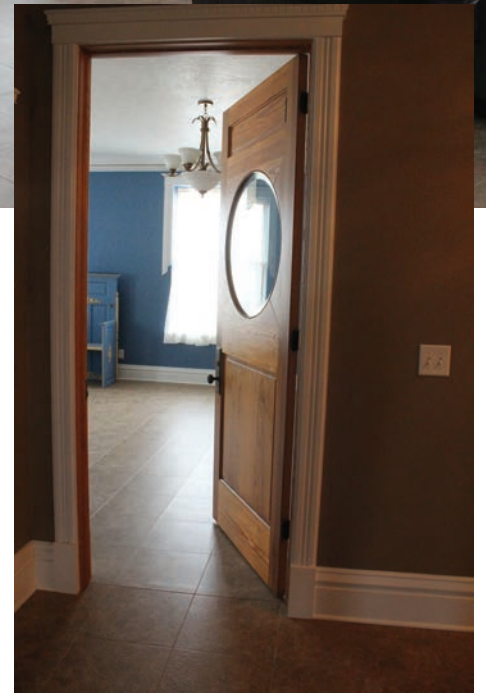
The list of demolition sites where he salvaged bricks includes:

- The Schoon Motor Co. building, which was torn down about 10 years ago (around 1996).
 - The AR Wood Manufacturing building, which went down decades ago.
 - The Adrian parochial school building. Some salmon-colored bricks in the basement rec room wall have "Heron Lake B&R" carved lightly in their surfaces.
 - Rauk's Grocery Store in Beaver Creek, which went down in 1998.
 - Carmen Suurmeyer Christensen's house, which was demolished in 1998 on North Freeman.
 - The Arnold and Mardella Hansen acreage west of Hardwick, which was sold in 2002 to the Brandenburg Foundation for Touch the Sky Prairie.
 - The Albert Christensen house, which was moved from North Blue Mound Avenue in 2002
 - Stone, used to accent walls and the waterfalls, came from local fields where farmers picked them from the dirt and piled them into ditches.
 - The old Kirchbergen Hatchery building.
- "Most of them came from Nobles County," Frakes said. "I'd be driving along the interstate and see a pile and get off on the next exit and drive around the section to get them."

Manitou rebuilt from ground up/see page 16



The blue room was once the manager's suite in the Manitou. It features antique glass doorknobs for curtain grabs (at right), one of a few ideas Nancy garnered from Pinterest, the idea-sharing website. At far right, the room is accessed through a heavy wooden door with a round beveled glass window that was salvaged from the former Rock County Jail residence. Pictured are Star Herald staff members touring the suite.



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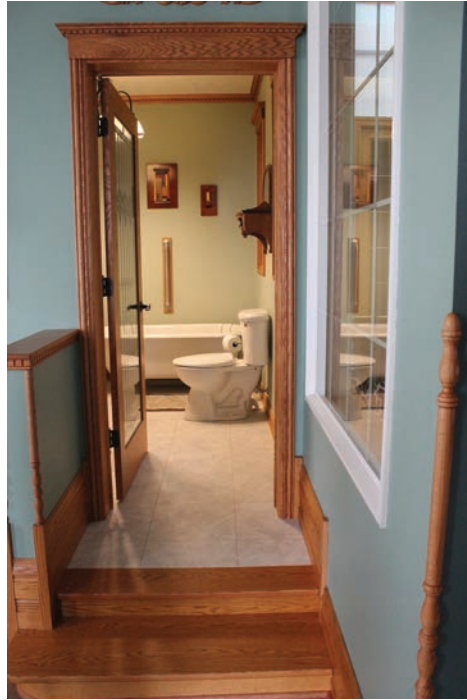
Manitou rebuilt/from page 15

Historical accents

Salvaged remains of Rock County history don't end with the bricks.

- Two support beams (at 750 pounds apiece) from the former Schoon Motors building are now holding up weight in the basement. (It's cleverly disguised by attractive wood shelving at the ceiling level.)
 - The center medallion of the tin ceiling in the Great Room came from Orey's Café in Luverne.
 - Windows salvaged from the Palace Theatre hang between walls to spread light and add depth to lower level rooms.
 - Stained glass windows came from the Methodist Church and from local homes that were demolished.
 - Other accent windows came from the Marty Mayes chicken coop, the former jailhouse residence and others.
 - In the basement recreation room is a pool table that once was used in Flett's Pool Hall.
 - The red-painted French doors between the rec room and a TV room were once part of Schoon Motor Co., separating the showroom from the shop.
 - Other doors were salvaged from homes and businesses, such as the former Larkin Law Office building.
 - In the corner of the lower level TV room is a rusty bicycle Frakes once used to deliver papers for the Worthington Daily Globe.
- That same corner has a 1948 license plate — that's the year he was born — a wood-handled dolly salvaged from the former E.A. Brown elevator and a tumbleweed, which has no historical significance.
- Two corners of the lower level are occupied by red-accented fuel pumps that once fueled local automobiles during the 1930s and '40s.
 - In the library, large leather-bound journals salvaged from Nelson Bros. Store record transactions from business dating back to 1901.
 - A tin Budweiser beer can from 1936 includes a graphic on the back with instruction on how to open the beverage.

Manitou rebuilt from ground up/continued on page 20



On the second and third floors of the original Manitou were "35 guest rooms, eight bath rooms, six toilet rooms, 10 bathtubs, and 18 marble lavatories." The second and third floors shared bathrooms.

Today there are 15 toilets and one urinal. Some bathrooms have claw-foot tubs salvaged from old homes in town that Frakes once owned.



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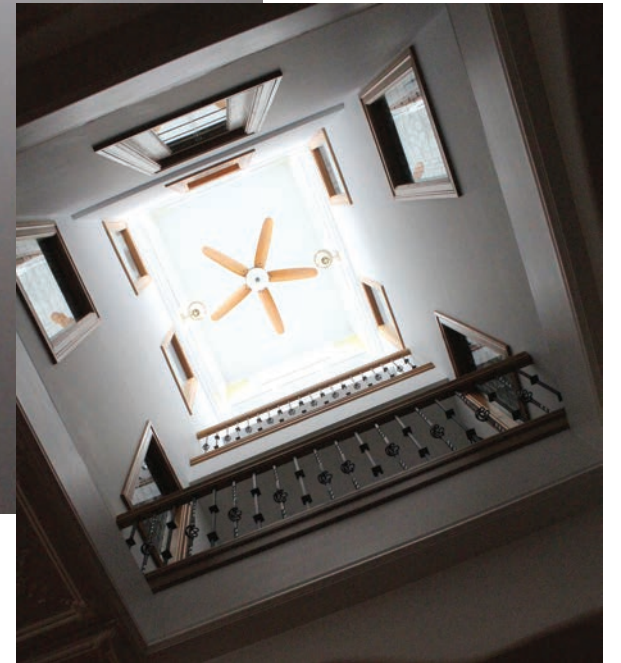
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From the main floor to the top of the light shaft is 40 feet.



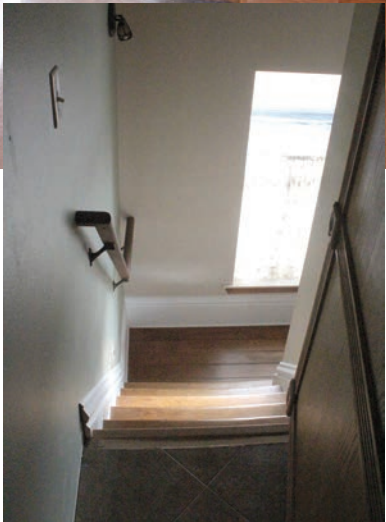
Master bedrooms and suites share a central area around a light shaft that cuts through the middle of the building from the main floor to the roof. It sheds light on the living quarters via balconies, decorative windows and other open spaces. The light shaft in the original Manitou was surrounded by bathrooms, and the windows were pebbled glass for privacy. Frakes also speculates that the light shaft allowed for ventilation when the windows were opened toward the shaft.

The opening originally didn't reach the main floor lobby, but it was extended another level during the renovation.


At right is the lobby, former desk area on the main floor. Above at far right is the view up the shaft from the main floor lobby.


Above left is the second floor view of the lobby below through the shaft, and the middle top and lower left are the shaft view from the third floor facing up and peering down.





A sitting area in one of the suites has an inset desk with a large, weathered leather-bound book with thick yellowed pages. It is the official 1913 general ledger book once used by Nelson's General Store nearly a century ago. That same sitting area has a Murphy door — a hinged bookcase that swings open to access the other side of the wall. In this case, the secret door opens to a narrow staircase that leads to the suite below. It originally went all the way to the basement and was used by housekeeping to carry laundry to the basement laundry facilities.

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This community area on the third floor is designed with the old Magnolia schoolhouse in mind. Frakes has a black and white photograph (in the inset below) of the former schoolhouse after his grandparents, Richard and Minnie Krenzien (Annabelle Frakes' parents), bought it and converted it to a gas station and convenience store. That was in the early 1930s shortly after the brick school building was built on the west side of town (now Southwest Youth Services). The original school front entry featured double newel posts on each side of the door with a curved wood frame between. The rounded theme carried through to the ceiling, which arches in the center. The Main Street awning, and all other awnings inside and outside the Manitou building, were made by his sister, Becky (and Jerry) Sherwood in Iowa. Their business creates and sells awnings, tents and other materials.



Manitou rebuilt from ground up/from page 18

age with a church key. It was found between the floor and ceiling of the main and second level.

•Books and knickknacks are displayed on stone ledges salvaged from the Arnold Hanson acreage purchased by the Brandenburg Foundation.

•Slabs of stone forming window seats in the library are from the Britz house that the city moved from the corner of Main Street and Highway 75 about 20 years ago.

•Sioux quartzite was salvaged from the Al and Marge Christensen home that moved off their former farm on North Blue Mound Avenue.

•An old wooden pulpit in the library was salvaged from a home on Edgehill and Donaldson, but no one knows which church it originally came from.

•Wooden blinds between the kitchen and porch on the main floor were salvaged from Dr. C. L. Sherman's former office on Main Street.

•The Dr. Sherman Office wooden sign is now displayed in the lower level recreation room.

•Stones along the dining room wall were salvaged from the front steps of an old farm place near the Touch the Sky Prairie northwest of Luverne.

•The main lobby corner entrance still has its original decorative tile floor. "I'll bet each of those little squares was laid by hand," Bill said.

Conversation pieces

The house is filled with conver-

sation pieces to keep people talking for hours, and they're not all necessarily historical:

•cable car bell

•A wall of corks in the lower level bar has 2,251 corks. Some are from favorite or memorable bottles of wine, but many are given to them by friends.

•the cat-faced bar in the great room designed and built by Vince Gacke.

•Alder doors in the lower level living quarters were quoted by a San Diego firm at \$3,000 each. He showed the design to Tony Gacke, who was able to reproduce them at a fraction of that cost.

Project of a lifetime

Of all the questions people ask him about his Manitou restoration project, he said they most often ask when he'll be *done*.

"... hopefully before I die," was his common reply.

Last week he reflected on that statement. "Well, we've at least made it past Social Security age," he said, declining to share his age.

People also ask why he took on such a mammoth project of such expense and detail.

"It's probably because of all the holes in my head," he said. "Some days I just sit and listen to the wind whistle through them."

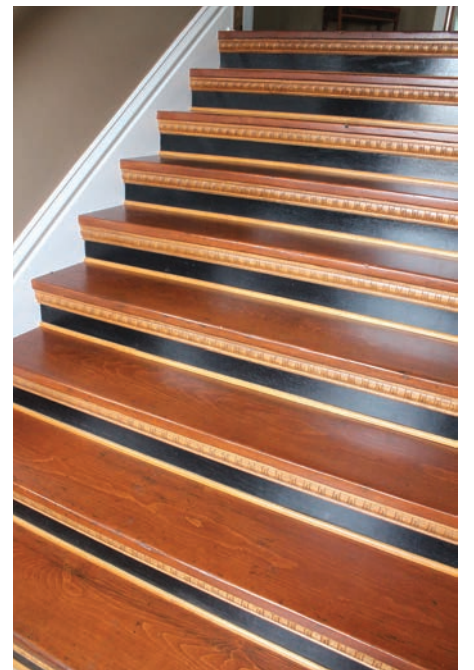
His advice to others considering a project of this scale: "The dust is endless and the banks and insurance people think you're nuts."



One of Bill's favorite spaces (above) is his "thinking room." The door carries the words, "Editorials - Bill Frakes - Talk to Me." The office doors were salvaged from the former Larkin Law Office on Main Street Luverne where American Family Insurance is now located.

At right is an up-close photograph of a third-floor stairway that carries detailed woodworking and artistic painting.

In the process of renovating the Manitou, nearly all the stairwells had to be stripped of layers of carpeting, paint and in some cases rubber edges.



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The Manitou roof is used for entertaining guests and enjoying the view of the city. At left is a small staircase on the third floor that accesses a "pump house" on the roof. At right is the view of downtown through a third floor bedroom window.

In 2006 Frakes told the Star Herald he looked forward to "sitting here, drinking my coffee and watching as the town wakes up."



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“I showed up and started working in the basement, but I wasn’t sure about it. ... The paychecks kept coming, so I kept showing up.”

— Tony Gacke carpenter, craftsman for the Manitou restoration project



Luverne carpenter makes Manitou his full-time job

For local contractor Tony Gacke, the Manitou was a full-time job during the restoration.

“That’s all I did for eight years,” he said. “It was my military experience that got me there.”

Gacke served in the U.S. Navy from 1987 until 2001 as a Seabee, doing military construction all over the world.

“I lived in Italy for five years,” he said. “The mountain I lived on — Mt. Etna in Sicily — is erupting now.”

After working on building projects overseas and in the states — Virginia, Mississippi, California — Gacke moved back to Luverne.

He connected with Bill Frakes when he was looking for a house to rent in Luverne.

“I didn’t know him at the time, but his dad (Neil Frakes) was a Seabee,” Gacke said.

Conversation took its path to Gacke’s construction experience and Frakes offered him a job with the Manitou project.

“I showed up and started working in the basement, but I wasn’t sure about it,” Gacke said. “The paychecks kept coming, so I kept showing up.”

Fifteen years later, he said he still stops in every so often to work on projects not yet finished.

Curt Maxwell Sr. and Curt Maxwell Jr. handled the brick work, and Curt Maxwell Jr. did the stone work.

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Above and at right, crews work on tuckpointing the Manitou exterior in 2002.

At right, cement crews access the lower level of the Manitou through a window in March of 2000.



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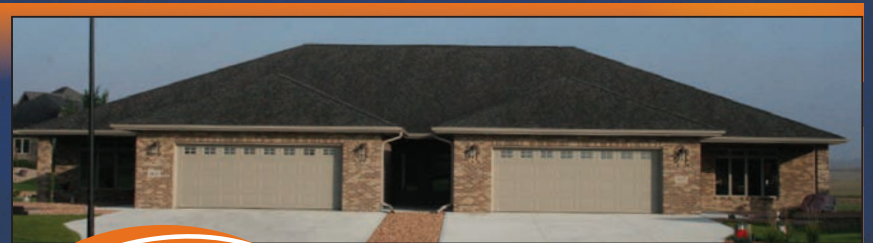
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