

# This home's a step back in time

By John Beauge  
For The Patriot-News

PENNSDALE — It's called the house of many stairs — with good reason.

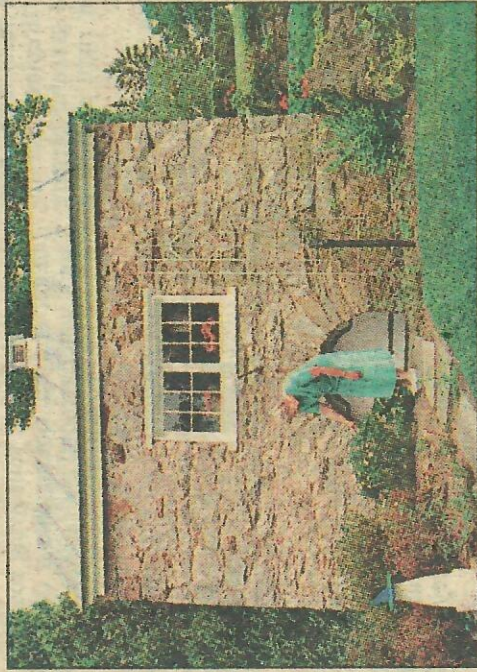
The home of Elwood and Ione Brant in the eastern Lycoming County village of Pennsdale has 10 stairways ranging from one to 13 steps.

The reason for the abundance of steps in the home, the original part of which was built in 1790, is a matter of conjecture.

One theory is that rooms were added one at a time and at different levels. The Brants, who have owned the house for 55 years, do not buy that theory but do not offer any other idea, either.

The original structure, whose sandstone walls are 22 inches thick, was three stories high, with one room on each level. The doorways are narrow by today's standards.

The first-floor room was a combi-



Ione Brant prunes some mums at the "blockhouse" which was once used for storage.

nation living room, dining room and kitchen. It contains a fireplace, one of three in the house, although the Brants no longer use it.

The house is built into an embankment, so the area in back of this room, what is now the kitchen, was once a wine and vegetable cellar

with an earthen floor. Bedrooms were on the second and third floors.

An addition with nearly matching exterior walls of limestone was built on the north side before 1829, although the exact date is not known.

It was in 1829 when John Burget, by promising to "always keep good liquor," was granted a liquor license for the Bulls Head Tavern in the newer part.

That area later was a tea room, and Brant said his parents catered parties there for a while after buying the house in 1935.

The house was a station on the underground railroad for slaves trying to escape to Canada.

One flight of steps is known as the "stairs to nowhere" because it leads only to a lookout window.



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The stairway to nowhere — leads only to a window.

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Ione Brant next to fireplace in original part of house.

## Step into home's fascinating history

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A small entrance to the quarters where runaway slaves were hidden was cut into the wall off these eight steps. Access to a room large enough to hold 16 to 18 slaves was by hands and knees.

Not far from the steps in one of the bedrooms, musket cupboards line one wall.

The Brants added a one-story family room on the south side of the house about 20 years ago but were careful to make sure the exterior matched.

A short distance away is a stone building, also built into the embankment, which the

Brants believe was used for storage and a place to fight off Indians.

There's an old windmill at the back of the 4-acre parcel the Brants used to get water from their well for a period after they moved in.

A large log cabin on the southern end where pottery was made was removed years ago.

The house has a rich history, but unfortunately it's never been recorded on paper, Mrs. Brant lamented.

Pennsdale was a Quaker settlement, and the home was owned by a Quaker until 1922, she said.