Facing west away from the street, this building shares a small open lot with the Miss Porter's School Studio. Private property borders the lot to the rear, while other buildings associated with Miss Porter's School are found in all other directions.

This area of Mountain Road is included in both Farmington's local historic district and the National Register district.
This Gothic Revival-style schoolhouse was erected in 1849. The facade displays a central, classical open porch with grouped columns, modest balustrade, and lattice base. The most prominent Gothic Revival-style elements are the steeply pitched paired gables. Note the right gable with a slender paired window; it is original to the building. The left portion of the building and gable were added later. Set between the gables is a slightly projecting gabled dormer with tripartite window and imbricated shingles (a late nineteenth-century addition). A variety of window sizes and shapes are displayed throughout the building and are not original. Additions were made in 1854 and 1913. Numerous original Gothic Revival-style embellishments have been removed including decorative bargeboard, drip mold window crown, arched door, and bay window, according to a drawing published in the 1949 Alumni Bulletin.

In 1847 a number of prominent and wealthy Farmington men met and organized the Farmington Female Seminary Association to provide the young women of Farmington a proper education. Deacon Simeon Hart had for some years been operating a successful and prestigious boys school, known as the Academy, in the Village Center and the Association believed the Female Seminary would be an added benefit to the town. To finance the construction of a schoolhouse, members of the Association purchased stock at $25 per share. Miss Sarah Porter was asked to be the headmistress. She accepted and in 1848 John Hooker leased the Female Seminary Association a parcel of land on Mountain Road "to be occupied by said Association as the site of a female school" (FLR 51:100). The schoolhouse was completed and ready for use on January 1, 1849. The headmistress, Miss Sarah Porter (1813-1900) was born in Farmington to Rev. Noah and Mehitabel (Meigs) Porter. The Rev. Porter served as pastor of the Farmington Congregational Church for sixty years, 1806-1866. Sarah was educated at Simeon Hart's Academy and later attended E. A. Andrew's School in New Haven. Between 1825 and 1847 Miss Porter taught in Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Connecticut, and New York including a small day school in Farmington for local girls, which was located above the post office in the stone store.

When the seminary opened, Miss Porter was allowed to use the first floor only. The second story was intended to be used for a "juveniles school". The upstairs school never materialized and in 1851 she asked the association to complete the upper chamber for her use. The school continued to grow and eventually Sarah Porter acquired other buildings (see cont. pg.)

Sources

Photographer: N. Ainspan Date: 4/86
View: E Negative on file: 17:32
Name: Elizabeth R. Hart Date: 4/86
Organization: Greater Middletown Preservation Trust
Address: 27 Washington Street, Middletown, CT

Threats to Building or Site

[X] None known [ ] Highways [ ] Vandalism [ ] Developers [ ] Other

[ ] Renewal [ ] Private [ ] Deterioration [ ] Zoning [ ] Explanation
in Farmington village to serve as dormitories and classrooms. In 1854 an 18 x 10 addition enlarged this building. John Hooker in 1864 sold his homestead to the Farmington Parsonage Association (FLR 60:66). The deed included 6-7 acres of land and all buildings "except the schoolhouse known as the Female Seminary...". In 1871 the Parsonage Association sold the Female Seminary "a three-quarter acre piece of land on which the schoolhouse stands." (FLR 61:353). Miss Porter's School continued to use the building and in 1885 Sarah purchased the building for $1000 (FLR 68:170). The asking price had been $1200, but Miss Porter, in a letter to Julius Gay, felt "The house was, I think slightly built, it has never been at all water tight. ... there is is no cellar and the brick foundation is not altogether good. ... I am unwilling to pay more than $1000" (M. P. S. Alumnae Bulletin, Spring, 1949). The building continued to house classrooms and in 1913 was enlarged again, under the direction of R. F. Jones. Classes are still held here today.

The Farmington Female Seminary is historically significant for its early association with Miss Porter's School, the major private educational institution in the town.

Sources (Cont)

OWNER'S NAME: PORTER'S SCHOOL, MISS, Inc
1951 "School House" "Science Building"

ADDRESS: Mountain Road

DATE BUILT: 1848 FOR: Farmington Female Seminary

ARCHITECT: For re-modelling into a Science Building in 1950 - Richard A. Kimball

MASTER-BUILDER

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

REFERENCE:
"Alumnae Bulletin of Miss Porter's School, Spring, 1949" p8, 9
Farmington, Conn.1906 p193
Baker & Tilden Atlas p 33
Farmington Town Clerks (Hurlburt, 1943) pp 183, 284.
Subject to rights of said seminary company, 6/13/1864, Vol. 60, p. 66.

According to a record book at Miss Porter's School, the house was occupied January 1, 1849 by the Farmington Female Seminary, an Association subscribed by friends of Sarah Porter for her school.
This house is pictured on page 193 of the Farmington Book as "The School House on the Hill", and referred to in Baker and Tilden's 1869 Atlas as "Miss S. Porter's School House".

John Hooker had contributed the land for its site, bounded at that time by James and Augustus Cowles on the west, by John Hooker on the east and north, and by Mountain Street on the south. John Hooker reserved the right to re-purchase after 15 years. The building was constructed in 1848 with contributed funds, $1000 of which was given by Deacon Simeon Hart. It was called at that time the Farmington Female Seminary, and was built for the use of Miss Sarah Porter, who had been a student of Deacon Hart, and whose classes had been started in the upper floor of the old Stone Store.

In 1864 John Hooker sold to the Farmington Parsonage Association six or seven acres, and all the buildings of his father's old homestead, including the land on which stood the seminary, but of course not the seminary itself. Later the Parsonage Association sold to the Female Seminary Association the land on which the seminary stood.

On April 21, 1885, Miss Porter purchased from the Female Seminary Association one-half acre of land, bounded north on H. M. Cowles, East on Fassenden, South on Mountain Road, and West on Sarah Porter (the land on which the Memorial Studio stood), and including the seminary building itself.

It has been the property of her heirs, and subsequently of Miss Porter's School, since that time. See the MPS bulletin of Spring 1949, for a good history of this school building, and also of the studio next west of it.

In 1951 the school building was remodeled according to plans by R. A. Kimball, for use as Science Building.

October 5, 1973

This house has been endowed, through a "70's Fund" gift, by Mrs. G. Frederic Neilson, Jr. (Clare Prentice '28). This assures its preservation and maintenance.

September 7, 1974