Facing west onto Colton Street, this building sits above a small brownstone retaining wall. The surrounding neighborhood contains a variety of residences dating from the eighteenth century to the present. Colton Street is included within Farmington's local district and the National Register district.
17 OTHER NOTABLE FEATURES OF BUILDING OR SITE (exteriors and/or interiors)

Oriented gambrel-to-street, this building displays little in the way of architectural embellishments. Alterations include the shed-roof dormers on the north and south elevations the single-story enclosed porch and replacement of all original sash with two-over-two windows. Note the molded cornice and slight cornice returns. The chimney has been also been altered since the building's construction.

18 ARCHITECT [ ]  BUILDER [ ]

19 HISTORICAL OR ARCHITECTURAL IMPORTANCE

The early history of this building is uncertain. Some local historians claim the building is an old schoolhouse built around 1756 and was moved to this site around 1851, but there are no public documents to confirm this theory. We do know that the land on which this building stands was part of the Bull family homestead for over 150 years. The first mention of buildings on this lot is in a recorded deed of 1656 which states that John Watt owned the land "on which his dwelling house now standeth" (FLR 2244). In 1670 Watt's widow Mary sold the five-acre parcel with buildings to Thomas Bull (I) of Hartford (FLR 1:60). The deed further stipulates that Bull "does hereby give unto my son Thomas Bull (II) of Farmington all interest I have in the aforesaid piece." Bull (II) (1646-1708) is recorded as being a blacksmith, gunsmith, and farmer. He also served as a deacon of the Congregational church and as town clerk. In 1708 Thomas willed the home lot and house to his youngest son, David Bull (Manwaring 2:31). A farmer like his father, David Bull (1687-1762) is believed to have moved to Westfield, Massachusetts around 1748, although he kept the homestead in Farmington. In 1760 Jonathan Bull (1718-1795), David's eldest son, inherited his father's homestead (HPR #874). Jonathan sold half the homelot to his eldest son, Martin Bull, in 1780 (FLR 23:264). Upon his death in 1795, Jonathan willed 1/3 of the homelot to his daughter Lucy and 1/3 to his grandson, Billy Mather, "upon condition he shall discharge my son Martin of a debt due said Billy by means of building the new shop on my homelott" (FPR 4:201). Deacon Martin Bull (1744-1825), who resided on the homestead was a successful goldsmith/silversmith and engraver

20 SOURCES


21 PHOTOGRAPHER

Nathan Ainspan

DATE 4/86

VIEW NE

NEGATIVE ON FILE 15:10A

22 COMPILED BY

E.R. Hart

DATE 4/86

ORGANIZATION Greater Middletown Preservation Trust

ADDRESS 27 Washington St., Middletown, CT 06457

23 THREATS TO BUILDING OR SITE

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

Renewal [ ] Private [ ] Deterioration [ ] Zoning [ ] Explanation [ ]
of early American bookplates. During the Revolution he and John Treadwell manufactured saltpeter. Bull was a deacon of the Congregational church and served as town treasurer and probate clerk. It is possible that the building which stands on this site today could be the "new" shop mentioned in 1795 and was used by Deacon Bull as a silver/goldsmith shop. In 1815 Martin willed his portion of the homestead to his grandson Martin Bull Bassett of Derby (FPR 9:89). Bassett acquired the other portions of the homestead in 1826 from Billy Mather and the heirs of Lucy Bull (FLR 43:406, 422). Elijah Porter purchased the property in January of 1827 (FLR 43:177). Two months later Chauncey Deming, a wealthy merchant, bought the parcel with buildings. Shortly thereafter, Catherine (Deming) Cowles, the wife of Timothy Cowles, inherited the lot from her father's estate. If the building in question is a school, it would have been moved to the site during the Cowles' ownership. Catherine D. Cowles' inventory in 1860 which lists the 6½ acre Bull Lot with one house (FPR 13:88), was distributed to her son Chauncey Deming Cowles (FPR 12:230). In 1867 Cowles quit-claimed part of the Bull Lot with buildings to Austin F. Williams, trustee under the wills of the late Timothy and Catherine Cowles (FLR 59:659). Williams as trustee sold the Bull Lot with buildings to Mercy G. Thompson in 1871 (FLR 61:338). Mrs. Thompson (1807-1897) was the widow of Deacon Horace Thompson (1804-1844). Upon Mrs. Thompson's death in 1897 the house was willed to her daughter Sarah G. Thompson for life use and improvement and upon her death, the real estate was to be left to the grandchildren: Simeon Thompson Hart, Ellen Flagg Hart, and Albert Langdon Hart (FLR 74:32). In 1909 Ellen Hart Risley received her brother's portion of the property (FLR 76:187). Mrs. Risley and her husband Charles resided there all their lives. In 1941 the Risleys' daughter Dorothy R. Hollister acquired the property (FLR 100:40). It was sold out of the family in 1957 (FLR 133:513).

Although the building's history is somewhat questionable, it does contribute to the historic character of Colton Street.
FORMER OWNERS: Ellen H. Risley from Albert & Simeon Hart (bros)
"from Estate of our grandmother Mercy Gridley Thompson"
659: C.D. Cowles inherited the land from his mother,
Catherine (Deming) Colwes. He probably bought the
school ca 1852 when the new school was voted (see School
Record p Oct. 23/1852. This building was probably built
1756-58 when the Ecclesiastical Soc. voted to sell the
old building and build a new school house. (over)
REFERENCES: "Farmington Conn., 1906" p. 35
" " p. 130 'residence of
Sarah Thompson'
Mrs Risley says the house was an old school-house and marks of the benches are to be seen. The upper rooms have a barrel ceiling, partly ceiled over.

See G. Mastrobattista on Mill Lane for school house which this one replaced.
This house is pictured on page 130 of the Farmington Book as the home of Sarah Thompson.

Mrs. Hurlburt says on page 173 of "Town Clerks":

"There is an interesting, if difficult-to-prove, tradition that her house is one of the very early schoolhouses of Farmington. It does not fit the foundation on which it stands, the site being that of the Thomas Bull house. The general architecture of the house, and its dimensions, would make it coincide with measurements of the early schoolhouses".

Other reports seem to show that the old home of Thomas and Martin Bull stood farther east.

Mrs. Hurlburt goes on to say:

"The old school which was built on the meeting house green about 1747, was sold at auction to the highest bidder, and the land on which it had stood was, by vote at a District Meeting, quit-claimed to the Ecclesiastical Society for the sum of $400.00. At the first meeting held in the new school October 27, 1851, built on the southwest corner of land purchased from Samuel Deming, the committee reported that they had sold the old school house... but without giving the name of the purchaser. Simeon Hart was clerk of many of these meetings, and as the present Risley house has been in the family for three generations, the tradition of its being the ancient schoolhouse seems well founded".

We shall assume this was the case.

Ellen Hart Risley, later owner, says that this was the old schoolhouse, and that marks of the benches can be seen. It has always seemed strange to some that this house, although old, did not have a fireplace. This may have been because schoolhouses did not have them, or possibly that it DID have one, but it was removed before it was moved to this site.

The building was sold to the Timothy Cowles family and was under the ownership of that family from 1852 until 1871, during the later of those years being under the trusteeship of A. F. Williams, whose name appears at this site on Baker and Tilden's 1869 Atlas.

It was sold in 1871 to Mercy Gridley Thompson, wife of Horace Thompson. Horace Thompson, born in 1804, the son of Abel Thompson, had been in 1828 married to Mercy Gridley. They became the parents of the Luther Gridley Thompson, born 1830, who had died near Nott's Corner on October 20, 1866, presumably murdered. His home at that time had been on Old Mountain Road, just a few hundred yards north of Nott's Corner.

Whether or not Mrs. Thompson was already widowed when she purchased this house is not known, but the writer thinks she probably was.

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Mrs. Thompson died in 1897, leaving the property to her daughter Sarah Thompson, whose sister Mary Ann was the wife of John Hooker Hart of 5 Carrington Lane.

Upon the death of Miss Sarah Thompson in 1909, who reputedly left her money to the missionaries, this house came under the ownership of her niece, the former Ellen Flagg Hart, who was at this time the wife of Charles A. Risley, Jr.

Charles Risley, Jr., was the son of Charles A. Risley and Margaret Collins, and he had been born at his parents' home at what is now known as 164 Main Street.

Ellen and her husband, described by his daughter as "a strong and handsome man", lived when they were first married, in the building which had been the North District School, pictured on page 33 of the Farmington Book. Located at that time on Farmington Avenue, on the site of what is now Parsons Motors parking lot, it had earlier been converted to a residence. Dorothy Mary Risley, their only child, was born during their residence in that former schoolhouse. They later moved to the two-family house pictured on page 149 of the Farmington Book, which was situated to the rear of the large house which is now 37 Main Street. A short time after this they moved to 169 Main Street, pictured on page 101 as the home of Thomas H. Risley, the uncle of Charles. In 1909 Charles and his family moved into this house at 11 Colton Street, where the parents lived the remainder of their lives.

Charles Risley was in the transportation business in one form or another most of his life, as had been his father. This was, during earlier years, an express business, all hauling being done with horse-drawn vehicles, later of course using trucks. Mr. Risley was a member of the Farmington Fife and Drum Corps headed for a time by the young Richard Hooker of Cedar Street. Charles was an avid hunter, and a member of the Farmington Gun Club. He lived until 1949.

Ellen Hart Risley's daughter says that her mother "was a tennis champion at Northfield Seminary. She was devoted to her horse, which she rode constantly. She did fine sewing, was very active in the church Women's Club, and very proud of her heritage, displaying her family treasures at town antique shows".

Dorothy Risley, who grew up in this house, inherited it from her mother who died in 1954. A memorial to Ellen Hart Risley is the Bible on the pulpit of the Congregational Church, given by the Women's Society of the church.

Dorothy attended local schools and Northfield Seminary, as had her mother, and studied for secretarial work. She was employed in Hartford for several years, for the Connecticut General, for the Financial Digest, and for Dr. Charles Goff, commuting to Hartford. Although married by the time her mother died, and not living in Farmington, she rented the house for three years before selling it to William H. Damerel in 1957.

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Dorothy Risley had married Harris Burton Hollister, son of Harris Burton Hollister of Glastonbury and Alice Dudley of New Haven. The Hollister family is one of the earliest to have settled in Glastonbury, perhaps as early as the Hart family had settled in Hartford, from where the Harts came very soon to Farmington. One wonders what blood relationship there probably is between Harris B. Hollister and Martha Seymour, daughter of Eunice Hollister, who had been the granddaughter of Lt. John Hollister, first of that family in America. Martha Seymour became the wife of Solomon Cowles who operated the inn at what is now 149 Main Street.

Mrs. Hollister has on a wall in her home a copy of a 1635 map of Hartford, showing the house lot of Deacon Stephen Hart in Hartford, before he came to Farmington and had his home here across the street from the Congregational Church. His was the first of the generations of Harts in Farmington, of whom Mrs. Hollister's mother, Ellen Hart, was the ninth. Ellen's was also the last of her line to bear that name, as her two brothers left no male descendants to have children.

Mr. and Mrs. Hollister, after their marriage, lived first on Evergreen Avenue in Hartford, then on Boulevard in West Hartford, and after that for two or three years on Colton Street in a house built by Riverius Warren. This latter was on the site of, or near the site of, the house of the father of Riverius, Henry M. Warren, pictured on page 178 of the Farmington Book. After this they built a house on Buena Vista in West Hartford, next to the West Hartford Art League Studio, but a few years ago moved to Terry's Plain Road in Simsbury, where they now reside. Mr. Hollister was with the National Fire for a while in his early years, but has long been in the auto finance business, several years having been with E. Clayton Gengras. Mr. and Mrs. Hollister have two children, Lynn and Stephen.

Lynn Hollister is a graduate of Marjorie Webster School in Washington, D. C., and met her future husband, John Franklin Houk of Dayton, Ohio, while they were both in Yale, she in Drama School and he in Architecture, which is now his profession. Lynn is especially glad she attended Yale, as she is very proud of the fact that one of the early Harts was John, who received the first Bachelor's Degree awarded by Yale, on September 15, 1703. Lynn is now a professional model, as well as an actress, but prefers acting, a greater challenge. They reside in Wilton, Connecticut, with their son Stephen Hollister Houk.

Stephen John Hollister, graduate of Mt. Herman in Northfield, Mass., served for a time on the Voice of America broadcasting ship off the Island of Rhodes before going on to the University of Colorado. After his graduation he was out of active circulation for about two years as the result of an auto accident, then joined the naval reserve, and is now a Lieutenant in Regular Navy. He is married to Gale Clark of East Berlin, Connecticut, and they have a daughter Gweneth, born in 1967. As of March 1970 they were in Norfolk, Virginia, where he was awaiting assignment to a third tour of duty in Viet Nam. They spent two years in Japan while he was on assignment in the Viet Nam area on off-shore gun line duty on the destroyer U. S. S. Hollister.

June 10, 1970
Woman Architect Designs Life With Flare

By ANNE DEMEUSY

FARMINGTON — If you visit the U.S. Coast Guard Academy in New London this fall and stand on a rampway putting over the Thames River, you can thank a vivacious red-head for putting you there.

The ramps, which create the feeling of a ship's deck, are part of a $300,000 park to be dedicated this fall.

The designer is one of the few women landscape architects in the state, Sylvia Chisholm of the firm of Currier, Andersen and Geda of Avon.

For the past six months, the stylish mother, wife, and world-traveler has been almost as familiar a figure on the 86-acre campus as the cadets. She made a dozen trips to the site to study the terrain and talk to the cadets even before she began actual design of the living memorial to Capt. Robert Crown, USNR.

Park Commissioned

Capt. Crown was past national president of the Navy League, and the park was commissioned by the Coast Guard Academy Foundation, organized in 1968 as the philanthropic arm of the academy.

At 35, Mrs. Chisholm exudes confidence.

Married in her freshman year at the University of Massachusetts, she and her husband Leland, a town planner and landscape architect, became parents of their first child, Lisa, shortly after graduation in 1958. Their son Christopher, was born two years later.

Although she kept her hand in landscape architecture, while the children were toddlers, she returned to her profession full-time five years ago.

Now, she's in charge of multi-million dollar projects, including design of the second phase of Holyoke Community College in Massachusetts, a facility that eventually will house 4,500 students on 600 acres.

Mrs. Chisholm, who scoffs at the women's liberation movement and says women have always been liberated but haven't believed it, sums up what she calls her "contented" state in three words: "Don't frustrate yourself."

She says women get hangups because they mold themselves into one role, the domestic. Instead of remembering "first of all that a woman is a person."

Women, says Mrs. Chisholm, can easily handle a career and a home, especially if they get support from family.

"My husband is proud of me," she says. "My work has made me more interesting to him and our children, and we genuinely enjoy family life."

She says she worked hasn't deprived her children. "Quite to the contrary," she says. "In addition to the obvious financial benefits, the fact that you are successful and contributing is a feeling you pass on to your children."

Consults Children

As a matter of fact, the youngsters often are consulted when parents are working on a child-related project. Several school playground designs reflect the opinions of Lisa and Chris.

In recent years, Lisa has accompanied her mother on world tours, and they soon will be on their way to Greece.

"People are amazed at my financial capacity to take so many trips abroad each year," she chuckles.

"Actually, I show little old ladies and little old men where to go and what to do, make certain they get on the right bus, don't lose their luggage, and that sort of thing," she confides.

Lisa and her mother help Chisholm's parents run a tour guide service whenever they can get away.

"It's a hectic way to see Europe, but we get a lot of free time to do as we please," she says. Her husband stays home because "he hates to travel."

Husband Jogs

Lee Chisholm probably has covered more territory, however, than his family. For the past 20 years, he's logged at least seven miles a day on foot. When he was Farmington's town planner, he jogged to work and back a total of 20 miles every day for four years.

In recent years, he has coached the Farmington High School track team, leading them to a state championship this year.

The Chisholms live in a 250-year-old house on Colton Street in the historic district of Farmington Village. Their house provides a perfect setting for their hobby, finding and restoring antiques.

Mrs. Chisholm, raised on a 350-acre wildlife sanctuary in Northampton which her father directed, says her background propelled her into landscape architecture.

She wishes more women would enter the profession, and says in this era of environmental concern, women, with their instinct for beauty and design, could contribute greatly to what landscape architecture is all about—the proper balance between nature and...