Located approximately 250 feet from the north side of Mountain Road, the Thomas K. Fessenden House sits on a small open lot. Somewhat set back from the road, the house is accessible by a private drive. The surrounding neighborhood contains a variety of historic public and residential buildings, many of which are associated with Miss Porter's School. St. James Episcopal Church is located a short distance to the south.
This simple, gable-to-street, Gothic Revival-style dwelling was erected in 1871. The three-bay facade is embellished with a small enclosed entry porch, ornate bay window, and decorative trussed gable. The small round, four-paned gable window is original. The west elevation displays a full-length open porch with cut-out work frieze supported by simple posts and braces. The porch is trimmed with a lattice-like skirt. A two-bay addition has been incorporated onto the east elevation and covers the two-story cross-gable ell. A number of additions extend from the rear elevation. Two-over-two sash are exhibited throughout the house although floor-length windows are found on the west elevation and one-over-one windows are featured in the bay window.

The Reverend Thomas Kendall Fessenden erected this dwelling in 1871 on land he purchased from the Farmington Parsonage Association (FLR 61:361). The house was later enlarged by a purchase from Henry M. Cowles in 1878 (FLR 65:362). Fessenden (1813-1894) was born in Brattleboro, Vermont, to Joseph and Sibyl Jane (Holbrook) Fessenden. He graduated from Williams College in 1835 and became the pastor of the Congregational Church in Norwich, Connecticut. Later he preached at Homer, New York and Ellington, Connecticut. In 1839 Fessenden married Nancy Cowles (1813-1888), the daughter of Col. Martin and Harriet (Welles) Cowles of Farmington. In 1871 the Reverend Fessenden and his wife retired to Farmington and had this house built. Upon his death in 1894, the property went to Fessenden's two nieces, Harriet Welles Cowles and Nancy Fessenden Cowles, with the stipulation that his sister-in-law, Harriet W. (Cowles) Heydock, have life use of the premises (FPR 22:224). Mrs. Heydock had resided with the Fessendens since the death of her husband, Mills Olcott Heydock in 1881. She continued to live in the house until her death in 1910. David Felix Broderick acquired the property in 1912 (FLR 77:445). He sold it three years later to St. James Parish, with the stipulation that the parish move the house from its "present" location on the road further back to the north (FLR 78:551). This sale also included the foundation walls in the cellar, step stones, furnace and electric wiring. The church did indeed move the building and used it as a rectory until 1961. The house was rented until 1968 when the parish sold it to Martha Davis Parsons (FLR 191:178). (see cont. pg.)
Architecturally significant as one of the few Gothic Revival-style buildings in Farmington, this building derives further notability for its association with the Fessenden family and St. James Episcopal Church.

FORER OWNERS: St. James Parish from David Broderick, land 100 ft. by 150 ft., also house, furnace, foundations, stones, plumbing, etc. "where Broderick was then residing, to be moved to this plot (present site of rectory) leaving the excavation filled in and in good order and appearance."

REFERENCES:
"Farmington, Conn., 1906", p. 25.
This house is pictured on page 25 of the Farmington Book as the "Rev. T. K. Fessenden place -- Residence of Mrs. M. O. Heydock".

The northwest corner of this house shows in the photo of "The Schoolhouse on the Hill" on page 193 of the Farmington Book. This shows its proximity to Mountain Road, where it first stood, adjacent to and just east of the schoolhouse, which is now known as 9 Mountain Road.

It is thought that this house was built around 1870, although it may have been somewhat later, and was built for the Rev. Mr. Fessenden.

Julius Gay speaks of him on page 81 of the Farmington Book:

"Rev. Thomas Kendall Fessenden, son of Joseph and Sibyl (Jane (Holbrook)) Fessenden, was born in Brattleboro, Vermont, on September 10, 1813, and graduated at Williams College in 1833. He was pastor of Congregational churches in Norwich, Connecticut, Homer, New York, and Ellington, Connecticut. In his later years he was eminently successful in raising funds for the Industrial School for girls in Middletown, and for the Hampton Institute in Virginia. He died in this village January 18, 1894, and is buried in the new cemetery, which he had done much to enlarge and beautify".

Although the writer does not know just when he was married, he was known in Farmington as early as 1842. In March of that year Mrs. Crosby (the former 2nd Julia Cowles, daughter of Zenas) said in a letter:

"Mr. Fessenden has returned. Which way he will go next I do not know. He had a call from Perry, a place not far from Rochester".

Mr. Fessenden himself mentions that he was here before 1842, when he says:

"It was in the fall of 1838.....that I first became acquainted with Farmington. It was then my delightful privilege to spend a few days in the family of the ever loved and revered Dr. Porter, and on Thanksgiving day and the following Sabbath, for the first time to listen to his pulpit exercises". He goes on to say:

"On the afternoon of that Sabbath day I for the first time officiated in that pulpit...... I recall the appearance of many of the aged men and women of the congregation, some of whom usually occupied the pews directly in front of the pulpit. There were the Lewis's, and Cramptons, the Thompsons and Gays, the Stanleys and Langdons. In yonder seat was the tall and courtly figure of Gen. Solomon Cowles. Behind him was the stalwart frame and noble countenance of Major Timothy Cowles, ---- next to him sat the late John T. Norton, a noble example of a true New England man".

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Mr. Fessenden continues, regarding Mr. Norton:

"Having early acquired a competence in Albany, by his integrity, industry, and business skill, he in mid life returned to his native town and built a beautiful home near the spot of his birth. There the later years of his life were passed, devoted to the pursuits of agriculture, in the quiet and culture of a beloved family, the friend and patron of everything good. Yonder was the seat of the sagacious and staunch Horace Cowles, and near him the peaceloving, and peacemaking, Edward Hooker. There was the beloved physician, Asahel Thomson, and there the benevolent, and eminently useful and successful teacher, Deacon Simeon Hart. These and other scarcely less remarkable men then gave character to this community."

Mr. Fessenden's wife was Nancy Cowles, born in Farmington in 1813, the daughter of Col. Martin Cowles and Harriet Welles of 41 Main Street. The Fessendens had no children. Mr. Fessenden was official school visitor in Farmington in 1884-85, earning $2.00 per day while officiating.

Mrs. Fessenden died in 1888, Mr. Fessenden surviving her by six years, dying in 1894.

Mrs. Heydock, the former Harriet Welles Cowles, born in 1830, was the much younger sister of Mrs. Fessenden. She had been married in 1856 to Dr. Mills Olcott Heydock, 1828-1881, of Hanover, New Hampshire and Chicago, Illinois. They had no children. She returned to Farmington after her husband's death, to live with the Fessendens. She continued living here after their deaths. She usually took a ride each afternoon in a hired buggy, driven by the same driver each day. Her maid was known as "the Valentine". Mrs. Heydock died in 1910.

In 1912 the house was purchased by David Broderick, from Nancy Fessenden Cowles and Harriet C. Allen. Nancy F. Cowles was the daughter of Edmund Butler Cowles and niece of Mrs. Heydock, as was her sister Harriet, the latter being the wife of Henry Trowbridge Allen of 41 Main Street.

David Broderick probably lived in this house, and was the one who moved it to its present site, well back from Mountain Road, and just about west of the present house at 44 High Street. Mr. Broderick purchased the old barn of the former Deacon Edward Hooker property at 50 High Street, moved that barn down the hill west, and converted it to the house now known as 11 Mountain Road.

Mr. Broderick sold the former Fessenden house to St. James Parish in 1915, and it became the Rectory for the pastors of the Episcopal Church at 3 Mountain Road.

The Rev Charles E. Roberts was the first resident as such, with his wife and his seven year old son. They came to this house from 4 Porter Road, but from 1908 to 1914 had lived at 123 Main Street.

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Mrs. Charles E. Roberts, the former Louise Elliott Shriver, born in 1869 in Cincinnati, Ohio, the daughter of Franklin L. Shriver and Mary Elliott, died here in 1920. Later Mr. Roberts' widowed daughter, Mrs. Stuart Phelps, brought her three children and they lived here about four years, until her father's death in 1931. Mr. Roberts' son Edward had already been away, at school and working, by 1931, and Mrs. Phelps and her children then moved to 12 Colton Street.

Following Mr. Roberts as resident rectors, came:

L. M. Brewster 1932-1942,
Roman L. Harding 1943-1953, and

When the Rev. Roger M. Smith succeeded the Rev. Whitley in 1961 he found this house inadequate for the needs of his family, so purchased the house at 8 Dorset Lane, where he presently resides.

St. James rented the house for a time, then sold it.

The present owner is not known by the writer, but the 1972 phone book lists M. D. Parsons at this address.

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