**Building and Structures Inventory**

**State of Connecticut**
**Connecticut Historical Commission**
59 South Prospect Street, Hartford, Connecticut 06106
(203) 566-3005

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**1. Building Name**

**Historic**: Gridley Cottage/Case Shop

**2. Town City**

Farmington

**3. Street and Number (and or, location)**

138 Main Street

**4. Owner(s)**

Thomson, James McA.

**5. Use (Present)**

Residence - 2 buildings

**6. Accessibility to Public**

Exterior visible from public road: Yes

Interior accessible: No

**7. Style of Building**

Late eighteenth-century vernacular

**8. Material (Indicate use or location when appropriate)**

- Siding Type: Brownstone
- Brownstone foundations

**9. Structural System**

- Wood frame
- Post and beam
- Balloon
- Other (Specify)

**10. Roof Type**

- Gable
- Mansard
- Monitor
- Sawtooth

- Shingle
- Roll
- Slate
- Other (Specify)

**11. Number of Stories**

1½

**12. Approximate Dimensions**

18 x 29 / 24 x 32

**13. Condition**

- Excellent
- Good
- Fair
- Deteriorated

**14. Related Outbuildings or Landscape Features**

- Barn
- Shed
- Garage
- Other landscape features or buildings (Specify)

**15. Surrounding Environment**

- Open land
- Woodland
- Residential
- Scattered buildings visible from site

**16. Interrelationship of Building and Surroundings**

Sited on the west side of Main Street, these two buildings lie to the north of the Coral Case House (144 Main Street). They sit close together near the street and are enclosed by a metal fence. Large trees border the property to the west, south, and north sides.
These two houses exhibit similar characteristics including a gable-to-street roof, brick chimneys, and simple door surround. The building to the north is larger than the building to the south and exhibits a centrally located door flanked by two windows. Six-over-six and twelve-over-eight sash are found in various places. The smaller building contains only two bays. Various combinations of sash are also visible.

The early history of these buildings is unclear; however, in 1787 Alexander Gridley mortgaged a ½ acre piece of land with a small dwelling house for L40 to Hosea Gridley of Watertown, Connecticut (FLR 27:167). The dwelling house mentioned was probably the smaller building which exists today. Little is known about Gridley except that his mortgage was released in 1794 (FLR 29:556) and in 1797 he sold the property to Coral Case for L40 (FLR 31:84). The deed mentions "together with a house, shop, and other buildings standing" and "occupied by Reuben Robinson". This proves that by 1797 both buildings were standing, one being used as a house and the other as a shop. Coral Case was a hatter and married Polly (?). His father was John Case of Simbury, a merchant, who also assisted in the manufacturing of hats. Coral Case died in 1800 and his estate was distributed to his wife, daughter Betsey (Case) Beach, and son John M. Case (FPR 6:294). His daughter received the family homestead at 144 Main Street subject to her mother's dower rights. The distribution also mentions "the house now occupied by Chauncey Sweet", suggesting the second building was still used as a shop or warehouse. In 1810 Betsey (Case) Beach, under the direction of her guardian John Mix since she was a minor, sold the Case house, barns, and other outbuildings of the total 6 acre property to Richard Cowles (FLR 36:517) for $3500.

Cowles (1786-1845) lived at 144 Main Street and probably rented out these buildings. He was the son of Isaac and Lucinda (Hooker) Cowles and married Fanny Deming in 1811. He held several Farmington town offices and eventually served as a state senator. Upon his death, his nephew Edward Cowles, the son of his brother Solomon, inherited (see cont. pg.)
his estate "except the northeast corner of the same on which are 2 small dwelling houses with 2 gardens annexed to each." These passed to his nephew Samuel H. Cowles, also a son of Solomon Cowles. The deed further mentioned that Chauncey Hills and Giles Stillman occupied the small houses (FPR 10:484). Samuel H. Cowles mortgaged the buildings standing "now occupied by Levi Risley and Mrs. Prince" in 1855 to the Farmington Savings Bank (FLR 51:513). The mortgage was foreclosed and in 1863 John W. Hart, James Munson, and Elihu S. Mix sold the property for $3000 to Ira Hadsell (FLR 57:291). The land and buildings were next sold to William Francis for $800 (FLR 58:552); he sold them to Annie L. Sedgewick for $1075 (FLR 61:173). Her son Henry W. Barbour inherited them from her estate in 1871 (FPR 15:587). Upon his death in 1915, his wife Harriet W. and daughter Anna Y. Barbour inherited the property (FPR 34:156). The next owner was the renowned playwright, Winchell Smith, of 188 Garden Street (FLR 77:571). He died in 1933 and his executors sold the property to Raymond and Genevieve Bien in 1935 (FLR 89:290).

Although the early history and original use of these buildings remain a mystery, they significantly contribute to the early development of Main Street and the manufacturing endeavors of the Case family.
OWNER'S NAME  BIEN, RAYMOND & GENEVIEVE

1950-res. - "Two Houses"

ADDRESS:  138 Main Street & Winchell Smith Drive

DATE BUILT:  ca. 1770  FOR:  John Case

ARCHITECT

MASTER-BUILDER


REFERENCES:  "Farmington, Conn., 1906", p. 96

"Baker & Tilden Atlas, 1869", p. 33 - 'Francis'
Former Owners, cont.:

Rec. 4/25/1845, Vol. 10, p. 484 of the Prob. Rec.; Richard Cowles from Betsy Case Beach, by John Mix, Guardian, 6 acres & 2 roods, houses & other bldgs., n. on George Cowles, s. on Zenas Cowles, e. on Main St., with use of the house she now occupies to widow Polly Case, 12/29/1810, Vol. 36, p. 17; Betsy Case Beach being the daughter of John & Polly Case - Richard Cowles paid $3500. for the 3 houses; John Case from Samuel Deming, 7 acres, no houses mentioned, "near the house of John Case" 4/26/1771, Vol. 18, p. 232; Samuel Deming from Joseph & Ebenezer Lankton, "7 acres, dwellinghouse, barns & all other bldgs., where Joseph Lankton now dwells" 3/28/1768, Vol. 16, p. 228, for 250 pounds.

To James Thompson, 1970  See Prentiss Papers 212-1-3
These houses are pictured on page 96 of the Farmington Book as the property of H. W. Barbour, residence of Fred H. Hotchkiss and Charles E. Hotchkiss. They are shown on page 33 of the 1869 Baker and Tilden Atlas, designated by only one word, "Francis".

The original owner of the land at this address seems to have been John Talcott, son of Governor Talcott, and brother of John Steele's first wife. Mrs. Hurlburt writes of this in "Town Clerks", as follows: "In 1650 John 'Tallycotte' had land on Town Street just north of that of John Lankton, making it approximately between Oldgate and Smith Street".

The houses were believed to have been built in the early 1770's by John Case, on land which he purchased in 1771. In that year he bought it from Samuel Deming, who had purchased it in 1768 from Joseph and Ebenezer Lankton. The Lankton family had originally settled on the land just south of this, and had probably added this to their holdings later on.

John Hooker, in his book "Reminiscences", states that Coral Case, son of early merchant John Case, was an active hat manufacturer, employed a number of workmen (perhaps on Hatters Lane?) and traveled much in the sale of his products. He died at the early age of 37 in 1791.

Julia Cowles, who lived her short life in "Oldgate", mentions the elder Mr. Case several times in her letters. In August, 1778, she states: "Mr. Case has got home with the Southern Fever". In November, 1799: "You will have this letter by Mr. Case, after so much talk about it. He has gone to Hartford today with his lady, and will go to New York Thursday if possible". In March, 1800, she despaired of his life. She said: "Mr. Case declines fast - he is going to have his freedom clothes made - a cambrick shirt to be buried in". He apparently recovered from this particular illness, but in August 1800, she noted: "Your family and ours and indeed all the surrounding ones are well excepting the Hon. Mr. Case, who had some more fits".

In 1810 Richard Cowles, 1786-1845, purchased the property from Betsy Case Beach, daughter of John and Polly Case. Mr. Cowles probably did not live here. His residence is shown on page 19 of the Farmington Book as the house at 144 Main Street, which he also purchased at the same time.

In 1845 Samuel H. Cowles, son of Solomon Cowles, acquired title from his uncle, Richard Cowles. At that time the houses were occupied by Chauncey Hills and Giles Stillman who were perhaps workmen on the place. Giles Stillman became half owner of 99 Main Street in 1843, and full owner in 1846, but sold it in 1850. It is not known which was his residence.

In 1864 William Francis purchased. No other mention of William Francis has been found. Baker and Tilden show him only as "Francis".

In 1869 Annie L. Sedgewick purchased.

November 15, 1970.
In 1885 Henry W. Barbour inherited from his mother, Mrs. Sedgewick.

Mr. Barbour operated a fairly large farm and lived in the house at 144 Main Street, just south of these two houses. He used these two, at least part of the time, to house his employees, and some of the time rented them out. It is noted that Fred H. Hotchkiss, an employee, lived in one, and Charles Hotchkiss, Fred's son, occupied the other, when the Farmington Book was published in 1906.

A Carroll family is said to have lived here at one time. It is possible that Mr. Carroll died, and that his widow and her daughter later moved to Avon.

In 1915 Winchell Smith purchased from Harriet and Anna Barbour, widow and daughter of Henry Barbour who had recently been killed in an auto accident in Diamond Glen.

Mrs. Richard Bissell, Sr., and John Alsop operated an antique shop in the smaller of these two houses for a time, and it is said that it was they who added the addition on the south side of it. The owners' tastes in antiques were very good, and their stock was well chosen, but in spite of this the shop did not prosper, and the business was given up after a few years. Mrs. William Hopkinson, who with her husband lived several years in the larger of the two houses (her husband working for Mr. Winchell Smith), often tended shop while the owners were on buying trips. One of their good customers was Wilmarth Lewis who was in the process of furnishing his house at that time.

Wilmarth Lewis, on page 187 of "One Man's Education", spoke of "John Alsop, the uncle of Joe, Stewart and John", as follows:

"He lived in the family's large 1840 house in Middletown that was filled with family possessions, but he was hampered by an inadequate income. During Lefty's first year in Farmington he rented a cottage there to economize and to run a small antique shop that he and Marie Bissell had just opened. Both had excellent taste ---- they were among the first to re-discover Victorian ornaments ---- but the Bissells were building a new house, John couldn't be bothered with routine, and the shop languished after the first buying sprees".

The smaller house was also used for Mr. Smith's workers after being vacated by the antique shop.

Winchell Smith died in 1933.

In 1935 the property was purchased from the Winchell Smith estate by Mr. and Mrs. Bien, who are the present owners.

November 15, 1970
Raymond Bien is the son of John Martin Bien and Anna Glassman, whose grandmother (daughter of the Burgomaster of Munich) came to the United States in the early part of the 19th century. Mrs. Raymond Bien is the former Genevieve Dunne, the daughter of Martin Dunne and Melissa Trudeau, a relative of the Dr. Trudeau who started the sanatorium at Saranac, New York. Raymond and Genevieve met on a youth hike in Massachusetts. After their marriage he worked a while in New York City, then came to Hartford. They first lived in West Hartford, then came to Farmington in 1935. He was employed as fire underwriter by Aetna Life and Casualty until 1960, when he retired. Since then they have been dividing their time between here and Florida. At the present time however, they have the property in the hands of realtors, for sale, and they expect to make Florida their permanent home.

November 15, 1970

Sale of the property to neighbor James McA. Thomsen was consummated early in December 1970. Mr. Thomsen has great enthusiasm for what he expects to be able to do regarding the restoration of the houses, and improvement of the grounds, the trimming of the trees and shrubs having been neglected now for some years. He will do all possible to preserve the original character of the two houses, but plans to make them comfortably livable also. The Village of Farmington is fortunate that the houses have found an owner who appreciates and will care for them.

April 29, 1971