Located at the southern end of Farmington's historic district, this building sits on a small landscaped lot facing west onto Route 10. The surrounding area contains a variety of different architectural styles dating from the late seventeenth-century to the present.
This house has undergone a number of alterations since its construction in 1875. Originally the building consisted of a simple two-story, gable-roofed cottage with pedimented gable ends. In the early twentieth century, a two-bay, Colonial Revival-style gambrel-roofed addition was incorporated onto the facade. This addition displayed a large shed-roof dormer and classical, entry portico. More recently a third bay has been added to the south end of the facade and the roof line altered to feature a low-pitched, ridge-to-street gable roof. Today the house exhibits a three-over-four bay off center entry door and six-over-six sash. The original house extends from the rear elevation.

In April of 1875 Henry Lewis acquired a one acre parcel of land along the east side of Main Street from Egbert Cowles (FLR 65:94). Shortly afterward he mortgaged the lot "with buildings I contemplate putting thereon" (FLR 65:97). A carpenter-by-trade, Lewis (1819-1900) was married to the former Nancy Woodruff (1818-1899). In 1899 he sold the house to his daughter, Catherine (Katie) Lewis Hart (FLR 71:447). The Harts rented the house during their ownership. The next owner, Atter Rosenberg of Hartford, took title to the property in 1916 (FLR 77:649). The house has been passed through a number of owners since that time.

Although modified over the years, the Henry Lewis House makes a significant contribution to the overall character of Farmington's historic district.

Sources:
OWNER'S NAME: (FISHER, MARJORIE W.) to Frederick & Ruth GEAR

ADDRESS: Main Street

DATE BUILT: FOR:

ARCHITECT
MASTER-BUILDER

FORMER OWNERS:

REFERENCES: "Farmington, Conn., 1906", p. 101; 'Residence of Thomas H. Risley'
169 Main Street

This house is pictured in the Farmington Book on page 101 as the residence of Thomas H. Risley.

It was built in 1875 by Henry Lewis on land purchased from Egbert Cowles, land which was probably part of that originally owned by George Orvis. Mr. Orvis "was an original proprietor and settler of Farmington" as stated on page 368 of Mrs. Hurlburt's "Town Clerks". His wife was Elizabeth, the widow of David Carpenter. After the death of Mr. Orvis in 1664, his widow married Richard Brownson, becoming his second wife. In 1677 this property was sold to Mrs. Elizabeth Scott, executrix of the estate of her father Thomas Upson.

Egbert Cowles purchased the land from the estate of Sydney Wadsworth, through executors of his will, Ira Hadsell and Simeon Hart, in April 1846. It was in April 1875 that Henry Lewis purchased one acre approximately, from Mr. Cowles. The present owners of the property state that after they purchased the house and removed a porch, they found the construction appeared to have been that of a barn. The deed given Mr. Lewis by Mr. Cowles did not mention any buildings on the property, but of course it is possible that a barn might not have been worthy of mention, or Mr. Lewis may have moved one onto the property and remodeled it. Mr. and Mrs. Gear state that they believe it has been remodeled and changes made at least four times.

Henry Lewis had been married in 1841 to Nancy Woodruff. Their daughter was Catherine Lewis, who married Albert Wyllys Hart in 1867. Mr. and Mrs. Hart perhaps lived their earlier married life here, but after Henry Lewis's death Mrs. Hart took title to this property on December 13, 1899, and on September 20, 1901, Mr. Hart purchased property on "Cemetery Street", now Maple Street, where Mr. Hart built a house and they lived thereafter.

Mrs. Hart retained title to this Main Street property until 1916, and apparently used it as rental property.

Thomas H. Risley was the tenant in 1906, when the Farmington Book was published. Thomas Risley, born in 1862, was the son of Levi Allen Risley of East Hartford and Adelaide Dart of Hartford. His parents purchased in 1863 the house across the street at 164 Main Street. Thomas was born in Farmington in 1862, one of four sons of Levi, perhaps born in one of the two little houses now known as 138 and 140 Main Street, and perhaps lived there later on for a while after he was married. His wife was the former Mary O'Connell, whom he married in 1885, and they had one child, a daughter Ann Mary Risley, born 1887. Thomas probably worked in his father's trucking and express business, and is also said to have driven the Porter sisters' carriage at one time. They were the three sisters of 116 Main Street, the daughters of the Rev. Noah Porter.

It is known that Charles Risley, son of Levi's son Charles, lived here a few years prior to 1909, when he and his family moved to 11 Colton Street, which his wife inherited at that time. It may be possible that both families lived here for this short period, as each had only one child.

June 3, 1972

1274
Many dates are missing regarding this house. We do not know how long Thomas Risley lived here, nor when his wife Mary died, but in 1921 Thomas took a second wife, Fanny Hogan, daughter of Michael Hogan and Anne Driscoll. He and his second wife moved to Hayden Station, up past Wilson, in the Windsor area. He died in 1942 and is buried in Riverside Cemetery here.

Ann Mary Risley was married to Arthur Lee Derby, son of Arthur Derby and Mabel Bickford. He was employed on Miss. Sarah Porter's farm, became its superintendent, and lived in the house farthest west on Maple Street, pictured in the Farmington Book on page 112 as the residence of Watson Smith, who was the earlier farm superintendent.

When they were first married however, the Derby's lived at the foot of Mill Lane on Garden Street, Warren Stevens living just above them. Their first child, Marie Claire Derby, was born in that house. Two more children, Gladys Catherine and Helen Armine were born on Garden Street and in Hartford, respectively.

Arthur Lee Derby died in 1937 and Mrs. Derby moved to West Hartford after his death. See account of the Maple Street house for more on the Derby family.

To go back now to our house at 169 Main Street, from which we have been led away, it was sold in 1916 to Atter Rosenberg, of whom we have no information, and then by him in 1920 to John Adam Wright.

It was sold in 1923 to John J. Curtin, and in that same year by the latter, to George D. Chase, both purchases probably solely as investments. Both lived across the street, Mr. Curtin at #184 and Mr. Chase at #164. Mr. Chase found its renovation quite expensive.

Sometime during the period from 1916 to 1930, the family of George Edward Griswold lived here, having moved from a house on Mountain Road.

George Edward Griswold, always known as Ed, born in 1872, was the son of Cyrus Griswold and Jane Rhodes, widow of Joseph Rhodes, the former Jane Gallagher. See 88 Mountain Road. Cyrus Griswold was the brother of Chauncey E. Griswold, 1857-1920, of 14 Meadow Road, son of Henry Griswold and Jane Nunn. Ed Griswold's wife was the former Catherine Murphy. Their five children were:

Helen, m. (1) Howard W. Radcliffe,
    (2) John Reira of Plainville,
Althea, m. George Parrott of Springfield,
Leila, m. Clarence Hemingway of Plainville,
Clara, m. Clarence K. May of Plainville,
Laura, m. James Carroll of Hartford.

June 3, 1972

Clarence J. Hemingway, Sr., Born 1900 in Plainville, World War I Navy veteran, died in early March 1974, leaving his wife, a son, Clarence J. Hemingway, Jr., of Unionville, and a daughter, Mrs. Catherine Manyak of Unionville.

March 10, 1974
The Griswold family lived in this house about six years it is believed, and recall that the owner of the house was Adam Wright, who the records indicate was John Adam Wright. He was a colored man, said to have been a teamster, who lived on Tunxis Road. Exact dates of the Griswold occupancy are not known. They moved from here to New Britain Avenue, Unionville sometime around 1927 it is thought. Mrs. Griswold died in May 1941, Mr. Griswold in February 1945. Their daughter Leila, now Mrs. Hemingway, and her family still live in the home on New Britain Avenue.

A Bill Goodwin has been mentioned as having lived here after the Griswolds, but this is not confirmed.

In 1927 the house was again sold, this time to Amanda Judatz. This purchase was made as an investment, as Mr. and Mrs. Judatz had already purchased and were living at 785 Farmington Avenue, next door to the garage they had built. They felt that this new purchase would be a sort of cushion against any trouble they might have due to business reverses, or similar ill fortune.

It has been difficult to ascertain who lived here for the 19 years that Mrs. Judatz owned the property. One tenant was Jack Rourke, presently of West Hartford, who must have been one of the first of Mrs. Judatz' tenants. He was married in 1927 and lived here about one and a half years.

A Mr. and Mrs. Soule are also stated to have been tenants in the 1930's, later moved to West Hartford.

Anna Graydon purchased the house in 1946, she and her husband Sherman Graydon living here while he worked at

The Graydons sold to Marjorie W. Fisher in 1951. She had recently been widowed, and lived here a few years.

Frederick T. Gear and his wife, the former Ruth Allen, purchased the house from Mrs. Fisher in April 1958. They rented it for a time to a young married couple who were building a house in West Hartford, and later to a Mr. Horton, whose brother operates a little plant on Cook Street, Plainville.

The Gears were at that time living in the house next door, at 165 Main Street, which they were renting from Mrs. Simonds of Unionville. After about two years of renting out the house at #169, they renovated and remodeled it to some extent and moved in, and are living here at present.

Mr. and Mrs. Gear moved here from Montpelier, Vermont, where Mr. Gear was born, and to which Mrs. Gear's parents moved when she was eight years of age.

June 3, 1972

Other families said to have lived in this house between 1939 and 1964 were Brigham Storrs, Edgar Sloan, Jr., and the Nylunds.
Frederick T. and Ruth A. Gear purchased this house in 1958.

Frederick Gear's grandparents were from England. His father, Frederick Hanson Gear, was born in Amesbury, Massachusetts, after which his parents moved eight years later to Reading, where he attended school and met his bride-to-be, Ethel Graham Krass. She left Reading however, to study at Boston Normal Art School, and from there went to Montpelier, Vermont, to take up the teaching of Art.

Frederick H. Gear took employment with Brown-Burrell Company, dry goods and related items, selling for them in outlying areas, including Montpelier, where he again met, and this time courted, Miss Krass, and they were married.

Mr. Gear was with Brown-Burrell 28 years, afterward was Lister for the city of Montpelier, and then became dealers' representative for Lee, work clothes manufacturers. He was a great sports enthusiast, and although only a high school graduate, most people thought him a graduate of Norwich University, he was such a strong supporter of their athletic teams. He died in 1953.

Frederick T. Gear was born and reared and schooled in Montpelier, Vermont. He was the first child, and not long afterward came his sister Shirley. His mother taught art when she could find the time, but retired after the birth of her son Charles.

Frederick T. Gear was graduated from the University of Vermont in 1938 with a BS in engineering, and took a position with Young and Lamson Machine Company in Springfield, Massachusetts. He and Ruth Allen were married in 1941, and lived in Springfield.

Ruth Allen, now Mrs. Gear, was born in Montpelier, the daughter of Dr. George Edgar Allen, who had been born in Bradford, Mass., and was the son of a practicing physician. Her mother is the former Mary R. Ferris, born in Lowell, Mass. Dr. George Allen, graduate of Dartmouth's medical school, became Medical Director for National Life Insurance Company in Montpelier, Vermont.

Ruth Allen was graduated from Colby Junior College, then decided to take up teaching, so was also graduated from the State Teachers' College at Trenton, New Jersey. She taught a year at Orange, New Jersey, and one at Montpelier, and then she married Frederick T. Gear, they having been high school sweethearts.

Frederick Gear transferred in 1944 to a company in Elmira, New York, where he worked and they lived until 1947. In that year Mr. Gear came to Connecticut to work for the Allen T. Cardwell Corporation of Plainville. One of the owners of Cardwell Corporation was Carl Gray of Farmington, who offered Mr. Gear a room on Waterville Road until he could find a place to live.

Here in Farmington Mr. Gear ran into Robert and Cornelia Keegan, Bob Keegan having been a high school classmate, and he took a room in their house at 165 Main Street, his family having moved from Elmira to Montpelier to wait until he could find a permanent residence here. When Mr. Keegan was offered better employment in Hudson, Ohio, he and his wife left Farmington, Mr. Gear rented the house they had vacated, and brought his family down from Montpelier.

April 30, 1974

1277.
Acquaintance with Irwin Clark of Carrington Lane led to an introduction to Stanley Works in New Britain for Mr. Gear, and he took employment there after Labor Day in 1948, and just now has completed twenty-five years with them.

In 1958 the Gears purchased this house at 169 Main Street, next door to their rented home. They continued their residence at 165 Main Street, owned by Mrs. Simonds, until two years later, when they renovated and remodeled 169 Main Street and moved into it, and are still occupying it.

The Gears had joined the Congregational Church upon moving to Farmington, and in 1952 entered wholeheartedly into the ceremonies commemorating the 200th anniversary of the founding of that church. In that same year Mrs. Gear took up teaching again, this time in Farmington's Noah Wallace School, and at the present is teaching third grade.

The Gear children are Allen, Jean and Nancy.

Allen Gear, born in Burlington, Vermont, attended schools in Elmira, Montpelier and Farmington, and is a graduate of the University of Vermont. His wife is the former Sarah Moreau of Burlington. They moved to Rockville, Maryland, where he attended law school at Catholic University. He presently practices law in Burlington, where they now live. They have three daughters.

Jean Gear attended Farmington schools and was graduated from Middlebury College, Vermont. Jean and her husband Samuel Gillespie joined the Peace Corps and taught school in Kenya, Africa, most of their pupils being children of Indian merchants. Samuel, now a graduate of Vanderbilt University's law school, practices law in New York City. They live in Brooklyn Heights and have one child.

Nancy Gear also attended Farmington schools, and was graduated from the University of Vermont in 1968. She accompanied her parents on a visit to Kenya, and stayed to teach two years in Nairobi. She now has a Master's from Columbia University's teacher's college and is in an adult education program sponsored by RCA, teaching English to the foreign born, principally those of Puerto Rico.

April 30, 1974