Set a distance back off the east side of Main Street, the John Thomson House is surrounded by a spacious, wooded lawn. The property which lies at the north end of Farmington's Historic District, is bordered by other historic dwellings of similar vintage.
This five-bay, Georgian-style house was erected around 1770. Capped by a ridge-to-street gable roof, the facade exhibits central segmental pedimented doorway enhanced by raised foliation on pilaster caps, simple geometric design on a keystone, and applied finial escalating in two points. Typical of Georgian-style homes erected in this period, the house exhibits a double hewn overhang. Twelve-over-twelve sash are featured throughout the house, except for the eight-over-eight windows found in the pedimented dormers. In 1920 the large two-and-one-half story-ell was added on the north elevation and the central chimney was replaced by the two exterior end chimneys. Contractors for the addition were Carlson and Tyrrell.

In April of 1769 John Thomson [I] purchased from James Judd, a two-acre parcel of land with a dwelling along the east side of Town Street (FLR 16:515). A year later Thomson willed to his "beloved" son John Thomson [II] "the homelot I lately purchased of James Judd with house and barn standing thereon" (FPR 1:188). It was the younger Thomson, a blacksmith by trade, who was responsible for tearing down the older Judd House and erecting the present dwelling. It is believed that Capt. Judah Woodruff, the designer of the Farmington Congregational Church, was the architect/builder of this home. Shortly after the house was completed, Thomson [III] married in 1773. The house passed on to Thomson's [II] only son, John Thomson [III] (1778-1843). Little is known about Thomson [III] but in 1857 the house was distributed to John Thomson [IV] and his brother Richard (FPR 12:57). Richard acquired full title in 1858 (FLR 54:289). The house was later inherited by Richard's widow, Jane (Palmer) Thomson in 1872 (FPR 15:47). In 1890 Mrs. Thomson willed the house to her niece, Dorothy Palmer (FLR 70:178). The house was sold out of the family in 1919. In 1920 Noah Wallace moved the house 80 feet back off the road and made a number of additions.

Architecturally significant for its state of preservation and ornate Georgian-style doorway, The John Thomson House is historically notable as one of a number of late nineteenth-century dwellings erected by master builder Capt. Judah Woodruff.

Sources:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ADDRESS:</th>
<th>17 Main Street</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DATE BUILT:</td>
<td>1769</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FOR:</td>
<td>John Thomson</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

The house stood within a few ft. of the street until moved back to its present location in 1920 by N. Wallace. It was moved 80 ft. to the e. and present addition at north end of house built in 1920 by Carlson & Tyrrell, contractors, for N. Wallace. Original central chimney removed at that time and the 2 end chimneys built.

**REFERENCES:**

"Farmington, Conn., 1906," p. 27 (OVER)
FORMER OWNERS, cont.:

noted in Prob. Rec. 2/28/1829, but not recorded - see files at State Library.
This house is pictured in photo No. 48 on page 27 of the Farmington Book as "The John Thompson place - Residence of Martin Solomonson and Miss Mattie J. Radcliffe". "Solomonson" should have been spelled "Salmonsen". Baker and Tilden's Atlas of 1869 shows R. Thompson at this site.

The names Thomson and Thompson sometimes appear to have been interchangeable, and many times confusing. It will be noted that the earliest land owners and residents were all known as Thomson, yet by the time of the publication of the Farmington Book in 1906 there is not a single reference to a Thomson, but all references are to Thompsons. One specific case is on page 27 where a caption refers to Dr. Thompson, but that doctor was Asahel, and always referred to in earlier records as Dr. Asahel Thomson. Another is the reference by Julius Gay on page 22 when he says, "John Thompson, third in descent of that name", while all earlier documented records gave the name of Thomson.

As to original settlers on this property, Mrs. Hurlburt indicates on pages xvi and xvii of "Town Clerks" that it may have been included in what she shows as lot 7 on page xvi, whose original owner was John North. She speaks of John North on pages 368 and 369 as follows:

"John North was an original proprietor and early settler in Farmington. In January 1653 he recorded three roods of land on Main street (Town Path) which he bought of Samuel Steell. This homesite was second from Hartford Road and extended halfway eastward toward High Street, not then laid out".

John North had been born in England in 1615, sailed from London in 1635 on the "Susan and Ellen". He married Hannah Bird whose ancestors were said to have come from Yorkshire. One source says that in 1653 he bought of John Steele a house and lot of 3/4 acre situated on the east side of the north end of Main Street, now occupied by two houses, one recently owned by Sarah Shields, the other by Dorothy Palmer. Note: Miss Shields occupied, but did not own, the house on the site of 15 Main Street, while Dorothy Palmer owned, but did not occupy, the house at 17 Main Street.

John Thompson's purchase of the land on April 10, 1769, was from James Judd, and included a house. James Judd appears to have purchased it from Thomas Woodruff on January 9, 1755, who mentions "a mation house" and a barn, and reserves life use of the house for his mother Esther Woodruff.

Thomas Woodruff's genealogy is given briefly below.

Matthew Woodruff #1, died 1682
m. Hannah ?

Matthew Woodruff #3, 1646-1691
m. Mary Plumb who died prior to 1686
m. Sarah North in 1686
He built the first house at what is now 2 Mt. Spring Rd.

January 28, 1972

27 37
Joseph Woodruff, 1689-1738 #11
Joseph lived at this site, was known as the "glasser". Lieutenant of militia in 1731, captain in 1734.

Thomas Woodruff, #41, 1725-1800
m. Rebecca Lewis, 1726-1790.
Children born in Farmington. He moved to Avon, and died there by drowning.

Regarding the building of the house now on this site, Julius Gay says on page 22 of the Farmington Book:

"The next house on a slight elevation stands on a lot bought in 1769 by John Thompson, third in descent of that name, conspicuous about town with his leathern jacket and his pronounced opinion on Continental paper money. Here lived three generations of his descendants".

John Thompson, probably born in 1736, "third in descent of that name", as Mr. Gay describes him, was perhaps the great great-grandson of the Thomas Thomson who had in 1646 married Anne Welles, daughter of Governor Welles. Upon their marriage she had been given the house which stood on what is now the site of the Corner House.

Library records indicate that Capt. Judah Woodruff of Mountain Spring Road was the actual builder of the present house, building it for John Thompson. Title transfers from the library record indicate that John's son, Henry Thompson, took title from his father in 1829.

Heirs of Henry were his sons: Richard, born 1812, John, born 1815, and James, born 1822. They inherited in 1859, but Richard seems to have been the one who retained title, perhaps by buying out the other two. It will be noted that "R. Thompson" is shown by Baker and Tilden as the title holder in 1869.

It was left by Richard Thompson to his widow Jane, by Richard's will of 1872.

Jane Thompson, widow, formerly Jane Palmer, had been born in Ireland around 1820, daughter of Israel and Eliza Palmer. She died on October 30, 1888, and her will, dated August 30 of that year, named Dorothy Palmer "who lives with me" to inherit the property.

Dorothy Palmer, about thirty-four years of age at that time, and also born in Ireland, could have been Jane Thompson's niece. She was married in Farmington in 1892, by the Rev. George L. Clark, to one D. R. Brownlow, a native of Middletown, who had previously been married in 1884 by the Rev. Edward A. Smith, to one Annie Thomson.

January 28, 1972
Mrs. Brownlow appears not to have lived in the house after her marriage, at least not very long. Older residents think she may have lived in Stamford. She visited her tenants occasionally from somewhere out of town, and is remembered as "a very nice old lady". When she sold the property in 1919 however, she gave her residence as Farmington.

Miss Mattie J. Radcliffe, occupant noted in 1906, is not remembered by any local and present residents questioned. Martin Salmonsen, the other occupant noted in 1906, was employed by Mrs. Catherine W. Griswold, of the house presently known as 27 Main Street. She was the widow of George Griswold.

Martin Salmonsen and his wife, the former Johanna Jensen, both of Denmark, had come to Farmington probably around the mid-1890's. Martin Salmonsen became caretaker of the Congregational Church and in 1917 he and his family moved to a home on Hart Lane, a home provided by the Church Society by moving the old Lucius Dorman house from its site at about 24 Mountain Road to its present location just south of the old Grange Hall, formerly the Farmington Academy. Edward Salmonsen recalls that they used kerosene lamps during their occupancy of 17 Main Street, and he remembers his Dad coming home from shopping in Hartford with a spring-driven Victor Talking Machine with a Morning Glory horn. It had to be wound after every record played.

John W. Russell, a house painter, lived for a time in this house at 17 Main Street, moving from the house next south when it was closed up due to renovation and remodeling. That was the house pictured in Photo No. 47 on page 27. The house now known as 19 Main Street stands now in its place, or actually a bit to the rear, farther from the street. Mr. Russell was noted as one one of its occupants in 1906.

Otto Christensen and his family also lived here for a time, in 1907 and for two years following, when they had first come to Farmington from Denmark. John Christensen was born here, his brother Christian having already been born before their arrival in Farmington. The wives of Otto Christensen and Martin Salmonsen were sisters.

January 28, 1972
Mrs. Brownlow sold the property on June 19, 1919, to Noah Wallace. One of the witnesses to the signing of the deed given by Mrs. Brownlow at that time was Hilda Salmonsen, daughter of Martin Salmonsen.

Noah Wallace moved the house eighty feet east and built the large addition to the north, all the actual work being contracted to Carlson and Tyrell. The remodeling of the house may have been at the request and under the direction of Mr. and Mrs. Holcombe, as a bond for deed was given prior to that actual purchase, and the Holcombes may have been the ones who wished the house substantially enlarged. An original kitchen to the rear had housed a large fireplace and oven. Mrs. Marguerite Chase Holcombe took title to the property on June 9, 1921.

Mrs. Holcombe purchased this property to be the residence of her husband and herself and her family of three children from a first marriage from which she had been widowed by the death of her first husband Herbert A. Boas.

She and her second husband, John Marshall Holcombe, Jr., were married in 1920. Mr. Holcombe, born in 1889, the son of John Marshall Holcombe, Sr., and Emily S. Goodwin, was a graduate of Yale in 1911 and of Harvard Law School in 1914. He went into the legal department of Phoenix Mutual Life right after receiving his law degree. He served in the Army in the Mexican border engagement of 1916, and in Europe in 1918 and 1919, as a captain in the air service. He returned to Phoenix after the war, but in 1922 he became business manager for a newly organized Life Insurance Sales Research Bureau.

Three children were born of this marriage: Marguerite Emily, John Marshall III and Ada Chase.

The Holcombes lived in this house until after Mrs. Holcombe's mother's death in 1932, after which they moved to 87 Main Street, which was inherited by Mrs. Holcombe. See more regarding the Holcombes in the account of that house.

Ownership of this house remained with Mrs. Holcombe until 1948, but the house was rented to various tenants during the period between 1932 and 1944. Among these tenants were:

Mr. and Mrs. Douglas Holmes,

Mrs. Patrick Russell and her daughter Jane, and

Herbert A. Boas, Jr., and his wife Millie, who were living here at the time of the sale of the house in 1944.

Purchaser on September 29, 1944, was Emily Pope Hoffman, wife of Robert M. Hoffman. She and her husband and family lived here until 1948, when on July 21 it was sold to George M. Jr., and Barbara B. Williams.

January 28, 1972
Purchaser of this house in July 1948 was George M. Williams, Jr., born in Dayton, Ohio, whose parents were at the time of this purchase living very near here at 31 Main Street.

Mr. Williams makes the following statement regarding this house:

"Mr. Holcombe had .... changed the house, which as shown in the Farmington Book was a central chimney house, with doors on the south side. I assume it was not possible to reconstruct the chimney, or maybe they wanted a larger front hall and a more imposing stairway. The chimneys and the paneling from the old fireplaces were placed on the north and south walls of the original house. The north wing was added at that time also. The third floor was finished into bedrooms".

Mr. and Mrs. Williams, the latter the former Barbara Bulley, moved into this house in 1948, and they had three children: Barbara Gaël, George Montague III and Linda Elizabeth. Jonathan Witherbee Williams was born during their residence here.

Mr. Williams, who had been with Scovill Manufacturing of Waterbury since 1947, was assigned to Clarksville, Georgia, in 1957, to be in charge of a plant belonging to Scovill, and the family lived there for two years.

During these two years of absence from Farmington the house was rented part of the time to Mrs. Helen Crocker, and part of the time to the Murphy family, who had just sold 31 Main Street.

In 1960, after a 1959 divorce, Mr. Williams married Nancy Ballou Crocker, whose former husband had been Courtenay Crocker. They were married in the garden in the rear of this house. The former Mrs. Williams is now Mrs. Vivian P. Edwards, Jr., of Dalton, Pennsylvania.

Nancy Ballou was born in Salem, Massachusetts, the daughter of Franklin Burgess Ballou and Sally Spofford. Her two brothers, who still live there, are James Howland, an architect, and Dr. John Bartlett, a surgeon. The Ballou house in Salem was "The East India House", and Nancy's mother and grandmother were both active at "The House of the Seven Gables" on Essex Street.

After Ann Montague Williams was born in the early 1960's, and with GeorgeH.'s children and Nancy's two, Courtenay Crocker III and Sally Spofford Crocker, the house was full.

On New Year's Eve 1967 a formal dinner party was held here, not only to welcome the New Year, but to celebrate the first 200 years of this house, and to offer a toast and wishes for its continued graciousness in the centuries to come. Mr. and Mrs. Holcombe called this house "Journey's End", but the Williams family is searching for a name less ominous.

Mr. Williams covered a wide range in his schooling starting with public schools in Dayton, Ohio, and then Indianapolis, Trinity College School in Port Hope, Ontario, then Hotchkiss School and Trinity College, both in Connecticut.

July 9, 1973
He started work at the Russell Manufacturing in Middletown in 1938, and after the war he was president of Williams Products Company of Middletown, a marketing business. As previously mentioned he began work with Scovill of Waterbury in 1947.

In 1965 he and two others formed a company and purchased from Scovill a small business manufacturing Paneloc fasteners. In 1967 Mr. Williams purchased the interests of the other two owners. He has designed new types of quarter-turn fasteners, and the business is doing well. It is the Paneloc Corporation, Front Street, Collinsville, manufacturing electronic equipment, locks, and various specialty fasteners, principally for airplanes, Mr. Williams being president of the company.

The Williams family moved to Farmington from Plainville, having earlier lived in Middletown and then Haddam, where they were in a house even older than their present home. At home Mr. Williams is "a self-styled cabinet maker and antique furniture rebuilders". He has been, during all their residence in Farmington, very active in St. James Parish, serving in many posts there, and was in charge of establishing the Columbarium there.

Nancy Williams is an associate with Helen Winter in her gallery at the Grist Mill at the foot of Mill Road. They hand antiques, gifts, and some paintings. She says: "I grew up with antiques. My parents were interested in them and their friends had antique stores". She has been very active in work with children, and also in the Garden Club of Farmington.

Their children are presently situated as follows:

Barbara Gael Williams and Frederick Gardner were married from this house, and the reception held here, in February 1964. They and their son Frederick Porter Gardner (Terry) have a home in Forest Hills, New York, and a summer place in Quogue, Long Island.

George Montague Williams III (Chip), whose wife is the former Priscilla Chapin of Duxbury, Massachusetts, were married in September 1967, and live in Avon, Connecticut, with their son Timothy Montague Williams.

Linda Elizabeth Williams, a bridal dinner having been given for her and Dr. M. Foster Mather in this house on April 13, 1973, live in Durham, Connecticut, where he is a practicing veterinarian, a graduate of Cornell. Linda has attended Fryeburg Academy and Mt. Ida Junior College.

Jonathan Williams is in Bethany College, West Virginia.

Ann Montague Williams will enter Oxford School this fall.

Sally Spofford Crocker was married in June 1969 in the garden at the rear of this house, to William Howard Bailey. They live in New Haven while Bill finishes at New Haven College after four years in the Navy.

Courtenay Crocker III, a graduate of the University of Richmond in January 1973, lives in Farmington.

July 9, 1973