Sited on the north side of Farmington Avenue, the Thornton C. Brooks House is located on a large, open lot trimmed with well-maintained shrubs. The encompassing neighborhood contains other historic homes built in the nineteenth- and twentieth-centuries.
Capped with a low-pitched, cross-hipped roof, this L-shaped, Italianate-style dwelling was erected in 1874. The facade features a decorative open entry porch exhibiting square posts with pronounced moldings, delicate scroll-sawn brackets and simple balustrade. Note the small paired brackets trimming the eaves. Also found on the facade is a square bay window highlighted with a horizontal band of imbricated shingles, two-over-two sash and paired brackets. The one-over-one sash featured throughout the rest of the dwelling are set into a modest window surround. The roof's wide overhanging eaves are supported by decorative paired brackets set on a plain entablature. A rectangular bay window is displayed on the west elevation and similar bay window is found on the east facade. A recent 2½ story addition extends from the west elevation.

Thornton C. Brooks (1845/46-1920) built this house in 1874 on a parcel of land he purchased from George and Julia Gridley in February of that same year (FLR 61:651). The house was standing by the following September when Brooks mortgaged the lot with "a dwelling house and other buildings" to the Farmington Savings Bank (FLR 63:163). A native of Burlington, Connecticut, Thornton C. Brooks was the son of Van Rensselaer Brooks. In 1866 he married Marsha Agnes Hamilton (1847-1886), daughter of Edward K. and Marcia A. Hamilton of Unionville. They had two daughters, Carol and Anne Isabelle Brooks. After his first wife's death, Brooks married Rachel King (1863-1952) of Hartford in 1887 and they had one son Raymond King Brooks born in 1889. As a young man Brooks worked for his father-in-law, E.K. Hamilton, who owned and operated a hook-and-eye factory along Roaring Brook. Later he was employed as a shipping clerk at the Upson Nut Company, one of the country's largest producers of forged nuts and bolts. Thornton C. Brooks was an active member of Unionville's Congregational Church and served as a church clerk and superintendent of the Sunday School for many years. In 1953 Raymond King Brooks received the house from his father's estate (FLR 111:303). Raymond had married Mildred F. Colburn (1889-1966) of Hazardville, Connecticut in 1912. She was the daughter of Benjamin and Florence (Hawthorne) Colburn. In 1913 Raymond was hired as a clerk for the Unionville firm of Charles House & Sons, manufacturer of felt used in pianos, printing, pool and game tables, textiles, lens polishing, filters. (SEE CONT.)

Sources:
and horse and bed blankets. Brooks eventually became president of the company and chairman of the board. His two sons, Raymond K. Jr. and David, ran the business until 1986. Active in local affairs, Mr. Brooks served as Chairman of the School Committee and the World War II Rationing Board, as well as chairman of the Farmington Savings Bank Board of Directors. He was also known as a noted local historian, and was the author of "Early Manufacturing in Unionville". Today the house is owned by David C. Brooks, Raymond's youngest son.

The original portion of the house remains relatively intact and stands as a good example of Italianate-style architecture in Unionville. The house is also significant for its association with the Brooks family, prominent citizens of Unionville.
In February 1874 Thornton Brooks purchased three pieces of land from George and Julia Gridley, as shown on Map 1 (61-650, 651). This house was built on piece A in 1874. In September, when Mr. Brooks mortgaged piece A, a "dwelling house" is specifically mentioned (63-163). Later in 1874, he sold piece B to J.E. Hamilton (65-341).

Ten years later Mr. Brooks sold the eastern half of piece A, \( \frac{3}{4} \) acre of land, to Josephine Alger (68-137). In 1889 he bought back four of the original 5\( \frac{1}{2} \) acres of piece B from Mr. Hamilton (68-461). These transactions resulted in the property shown in Map 2. The Brooks family has lived in the home since it was built.
Thornton Brooks' ancestor Henry emigrated to New Haven in 1654; the family spread out to Cheshire and Bristol, then some of them came to Burlington, where Thornton's father Van Rensselaer lived. Thornton was probably born in Burlington, but his adult home was Unionville. His first wife was Marsha Agnes Hamilton, a sister of Edward Hamilton, and Thornton worked for Hamilton Hook & Eye.

"...in 1850 Edward K. Hamilton acquired the property and manufactured wood and tin buttons and later hooks and eyes. In the early days hooks and eyes were sold sewed to cardboard. Once a week an employee drove around to the farm houses in the area and left hooks, eyes and cardboard and picked up the cards that were finished. The sewing of the hooks to the cardboard was paid for on a piece work basis. Eventually his son, James Hamilton, operated the business until he sold the property to S. & F. Sanford."

(from "Early Manufacturing in Unionville, Raymond K. Brooks)

Later Thornton Brooks worked for Upson Nut Co. in the shipping department. In town affairs, he was clerk of the Congregational Church Society for a long time. Some time after the death of Agnes Brooks, Thornton married for a second time, to Rachel King. When he died in 1920, ownership of the home passed to Rachel. She continued living in the home, with their son Raymond and his family, until her death in 1952, at which time Raymond became owner.
Raymond King Brooks was born in this house in 1889, went to the local schools, and then attended Williston Academy in Massachusetts. He worked briefly for the Electric Company and then P.F. Corbin before coming to Charles House & Sons in 1913 as clerk. He rose to become President and then Chairman of the Board of this local woven wool felt manufacturing company. Today his sons operate the business.

"...In 1907 three brothers living in Brooklyn came to town and bought the land and buildings of the Ripley Paper Mill. The following year they formed the Corporation of Charles W. House & Sons and began selling woven felt. They had just got started when on Washington's Birthday 1909 the building was destroyed by fire. Repairs were made and they were again underway. For about five years they had the felt made outside to their specifications and sales were made to Textile and Piano Traders. It was decided that to be successful it was necessary to have their own mill and in 1912 a new building was started on the south bank of the lower canal which was finished and dedicated with an employees ball on January 1, 1913. Machinery was moved in and late in that year they were in production supervised by a textile engineer educated in England."

"1914 was a very important year as the company began the manufacturing of Scarlet Bushing Cloth one of the most important items in the production of pianos and all was imported from Germany. The war started in August and the last bushing cloth came into the country by submarine. House & Sons perfected the manufacturing of this item and has been the only firm in the country that has supplied the piano industry since 1915. Other types of felts are used for lens polishing, printing, filters, bearings, pool and gaming tables, textile, bakery, horse blankets, bed blankets and in the two world wars we made Navy Blankets, and horse saddle pads....In the second world war we made a very important item that was used by Scovill Manufacturing Company of Waterbury known as Fuse cloth. The specifications were very rigid and checked by the government. Two washers were cut from the material and used in the fuse of every 36mm shell made by Scovill..."

(from "Early Manufacturing in Unionville", Raymond K. Brooks)

Raymond Brooks has also been active in church and town affairs, was at one time Chairman of the School Committee, was Chairman of the Rationing Board during World War II, and has been Chairman of the Board of Farmington Savings Bank since 1967. He is the author of the long paper quoted above, "Early Manufacturing in Unionville", which is on file at the West End Branch library.

Architecture - Note the hipped roof and Italianate brackets under the eaves. The side bay window and rear section of the house are both additions to the original house.
Thornton C. Brooks: b. 1844/5 in Burlington, son of VanRennsaelar Brooks; m. Marsha Agnes Hamilton 8-5-1866; m. Rachel King 9-7-1887; d. 1-9-1920
Marsha Agnes Hamilton Brooks: b. 1846/7; d. 4-1886
Carrol H. - b. 11-22-1868
Aimee I. - b. 9-8-1882; m. Robert C. Eddy 6-14-1906
Rachel King Brooks: b. 7-21-1863 in Hartford, daughter of Robert and Rachel Scott King; d. 10-24-1952
Raymond King - see below
Raymond King Brooks: b. 3-11-1889; m. Mildred F. Colborn 1912
Mildred Colborn Brooks: b. 7-26-1889 in Hazardville, daughter of Benjamin & Florence Hawthorne Colborn; d. 2-5-1966
Carol - b.
Raymond K. Jr. - b. 10-2-1917
Phyllis A. - b. 6-13-1924
David B. - b. 3-26-1929
Priscilla H. - b. 3-26-1929