Facing south onto Farmington Avenue, the Gideon Walker House sits on a small rectangular lot, bordered to the rear by billy woodland. This is one of the earliest houses to be built in this residential neighborhood which developed from the early nineteenth century to the present.
Oriented gable-to-street, this three-bay, vernacular-style building exhibits details of the Greek Revival and Queen Anne styles. Tradition asserts that the house, which was built a few hundred feet farther to the north, was moved to its present site between 1855 and 1869 by cart and ox. At this time the building was jacked up a full story and the present first story was erected beneath it. The "Unionville Historic District Report" claims the first story was not built until 1882. It is apparent that the first and second stories were constructed at different times, due to the exterior and interior differences. The first floor exhibits a Victorian-period, wraparound, open veranda with beveled posts, ornate brackets, extended rafters and decorative porch skirt. The main entrance is found on the west elevation. A small gable-roof, entry porch with lattice-work enhances the (see cont. pg.)

In 1839 Gideon Walker of Avon purchased an 8½ acre tract of land in Unionville from Levi Smith for $322 (FLR 48:8). Walker erected the original portion of the house between 1839 and 1841. In 1841 he mortgaged the property with buildings to Joshua Moses for $200 (FLR 48:223). There is little historical information available concerning Walker. Eber N. Gibbs (1807-1875) purchased the house in 1845 for $500 (FLR 49:115). A native of Goshen, Connecticut, Gibbs was married to Abigail W. Hudson (1809-1888) of Torrington. They had one daughter, Mary H., born in 1845. A year after acquiring the house, Gibbs was issued a license "to sell wines and spiritous liquors for medical, mechanical, scientific, and sacramental uses" (FTMR 2:361). In 1853 Gibbs entered into partnership with August Fuller to manufacture soap and candles. The firm was located along Water Street in a building rented from Walter and Samuel Cowles, the previous owners of the soap/candle factory. Fuller left the firm four months later and deeded his shares to Gibbs (FLR 55:510). Active in community affairs, Gibbs was a founding member of Unionville's Congregational Church and served as deacon for many years. He also was elected a poundkeeper in 1859. On the 1855 Map of Unionville, this building is set approximately 700 feet back off the north side of Farmington Avenue. The 1869 Baker and Tilden Map shows that Eber Gibbs' house had been moved to the front of the lot, to its present site. It is clearly Gibbs who was responsible for the relocation of the building, although it is not known whether he was responsible for the new first story when the house was moved or if his heirs jacked up the house in 1882 when they mortgaged the property for $550 (see cont.)

eastern elevation. A 2½ story ell extends from west elevation. The second floor exhibits an off-center panelled door protected by a small, decorative porch adorned with ogee arches and ornate posts. This was the original entry door when the building was 1½ stories in height. The east and west elevations feature a wide entablature beneath the eaves with small "eyebrow" windows, a characteristic of the Greek Revival style. The facade's gable end displays paired windows and raking cornice which terminates in slight returns. The first floor two-over-two sash are much larger than the two-over-two windows found on the second floor. A small brick chimney rises from the center of the house and a two-story, shed roof addition has been incorporated onto the north elevation.

19. cont.

Upon Gibbs' death in 1875, the house was willed to his wife and daughter Mary (FPR 15:29). Mary Gibbs (1844-1920) had married George L. Hill (1843-1907) of Westboro, Massachusetts, in 1868. A "laborer" by trade, Hill was a Civil War veteran, serving in Massachusetts Co. B., 37th Infantry. In 1884 Abigail Gibbs sold her daughter her share of the house "for love, good will and $5.00" (FLR 68:141). The deed stipulated that Abigail was to have "life use and improvement of the house for the term of her natural life." Mary Hill sold the property to Charles E. Hitchcock (1877-1922), a native of Winsted, Connecticut (FLR 80:177). His daughter Carolyn presently owns the house.

This house is significant for its unusual architectural history as well as its long association with the Gibbs family.
1758 Farmington Avenue

Built: 2nd floor - 1839-41  
1st floor - 1852?  
For: Gideon Walker  
Eber N. Gibbs

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Owners</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gideon Walker</td>
<td>4-5-1839</td>
<td>48-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eber N. Gibbs</td>
<td>4-3-1845</td>
<td>49-13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abigail Gibbs</td>
<td>10-22-1884</td>
<td>66-367</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary Gibbs Hill</td>
<td>10-23-1884</td>
<td>68-141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles E. Hitchcock</td>
<td>7-1-1920</td>
<td>80-177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elizabeth J. Hitchcock</td>
<td>11-18-1922</td>
<td>74-383;82-105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carolyn E. Hitchcock</td>
<td>10-3-1962</td>
<td>161-188</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The date built for this house is listed as 1850 in the town assessor's record, but this is not accurate and does not tell the whole story. This property was once part of Solomon Langdon's Farm; when Langdon died and the farm was divided, this particular piece of land became Lot #3. It was sold by Timothy Pitkin, the executor of the Langdon estate, to William Mather and Charles Hillyer on Sept. 12, 1835 (47-91); at that time it was described as "eight acres, three roods (quarters of an acre), and eleven rods" of land, with a public highway running through it; it was bounded on the south by the river. In February 1838 Levi Smith bought it from Mather & Hillyer (46-529); it was then described as eight acres, three quarters, eleven rods of land, with no mention of buildings. In April 1839 Smith sold "8 acres and one quarter" of the land to Gideon Walker (48-8); this time the southern boundary is the highway and not the river, thus the loss of about a half acre. Once again there is no mention of buildings. See Map 1.
In September 1841 Gideon Walker mortgaged the property to Joshua Moses; this record (48-223) describes it as 8 acres and one quarter "with the buildings". So the original house, now the second floor, was probably built between 1839 and 1841. In 1842 Walker again mortgaged "the same land I bought of Levi Smith", but now it is referred to as "9 acres...with buildings" (48-310). When Eber Gibbs bought it in 1845, the same terminology was used.

It is said that the house was originally a distance behind where it now stands and that at some unknown date it was drawn forward by oxen and jacked to second story height, then the first floor was built underneath it. It is difficult to discover when this happened; one can only guess from the town land records. Gibbs mortgaged the property several times; the first time, 1845 (49-14), was paid by 1847. Another mortgage in 1849 (49-507) mentions "a house and barn" and was paid by 1852. The most likely date for the addition seems to be 1852, when he took out two separate mortgages totaling $850 (52-371,422); but no specific mention is made in these records of moving the house. Other possible dates are 1867, 1871 or 1882; all of those times the property was mortgaged (60-613;61-354;63-338,345).

In 1846 Eber Gibbs was one of several residents licensed to sell wine and "spirituous liquors" for medicinal purposes. He was also one of the six men who formed the Congregational Church in Unionville. In 1858 he and Augustus Fuller went into business together, making soap and candles. They rented a building and a barn on Water Street from Walter & Samuel Cowles; the lease is an interesting document and is copied and included at the end of this narrative (57-49). Less than four months after they started the business, Mr. Fuller sold his share of it to Mr. Gibbs (55-510).

Eber Gibbs died in 1875, but the inventory of his estate (P14-449) gives no clues as to the size of the house at that time. The estate was not settled until 1884; in the meantime his heirs - widow Abigail, daughter Mary Gibbs Hill, and son-in-law George Hill - had sold ½ acre of the land just west of the house to Robert & Wilmens Chapman in 1881 (65-526). In July 1882 they mortgaged a section of the property twice (63-338,345); this description is "land and a dwelling house" on a lot 52'x165' along Farmington Avenue. So one can reasonably assume that the house had been moved and enlarged by that time. The 1884 estate settlement was as follows: Abigail received "½ acre with buildings" on Farmington Avenue; Mary Hill received all the remaining land, 8 acres, in the back, but no buildings. See Map 2. One day later, Abigail gave her property to Mary Hill (68-141) with the provision that Abigail could use it for the rest of her life, which proved to be until 1888.
Mary Gibbs Hill's husband George was a veteran of the Civil War, having been in Co. B, 37th Inf., Mass. Vols. Mary Hill owned this house until 1920. In 1908 she sold almost all of the land in two pieces to Robert Eddy (77-200); these were a strip about 50' wide just east of the house, and the 8 acres in the back. See Map 3. In 1920 she sold the remaining ½ acre plus house to Charles Hitchcock. When he died in 1922, ownership passed to his widow Elizabeth (74-383;82-105); their daughter Carolyn became the owner in 1962 (161-188).

Map 1 -- 1839  Map 2 -- 1884  Map 3 -- 1920

Architecture - The most interesting feature of the house is the exterior second floor; notice that the original front door structure remains in place. Inside, it is obvious that different building techniques were used for the two floors; the upper floor beams are pegged and some beams have bark remaining on them. The upper floor also uses the corner post construction method, whereas the first floor uses more modern techniques.
Genealogy

Eber N. Gibbs: b. 3-14-1807 in Goshen; m. Abigail W. Hudson; d. 8-7-1875
Abigail Hudson Gibbs: b. 4-16-1809 in Torrington, daughter of Barzilla & Constant Hudson; d. 2-4-1888
Mary H. - see below

Mary Gibbs Hill: b. 8-9-1844; m. George Hill 6-13-1868; d. 10-22-1920
George L. Hill: b. 3-31-1843 in Westboro, Mass., son of Levi Hill; d. 9-6-1907
G. Arthur - b. ---; m. Hilda Boyle 6-1-1905
Mary - b. ---; m. Hiram Holroyd; m. ---
May - b. 4-15-1874; d. 5-7-1874

Charles E. Hitchcock: b. 3-15-1877 in Winsted, son of Scoville & Ophelia Knowlton Hitchcock; m. Elizabeth J. Bunnell; d. 1-7-1922
Elizabeth Bunnell Hitchcock: b. 5-2-1883 in Barkhamstead, daughter of Henry & Laura Castle Bunnell; d. 10-14-1975
Carolyn E. - b. ---
This agreement made on the 27th day of December A.D. 1858 by and between Walter H. Cowles and Samuel H. Cowles of the town of Farmington, County of Hartford and State of Connecticut of the first part, and Ebenezer Bibbey and Augustus J. Fuller of the town county and state aforesaid, Wethersfield.

That the party of the first part in consideration of the premises herein after mentioned, hath leased and let, and by these presents do lease and let unto the party of the second part the following described piece of land, with the buildings thereon, situated in said town of Farmington by a certain piece of land bounded North by Water Street in the village of Unionville, South by Farmington River, East and West by land belonging to the estate of James Cowles, also the fodder barn standing on a piece of land upon the north side of Water Street, also
the following real estate and machinery of one farm
two post block walls one log wall three ash trees one log
corner pump one water pump two corner ditches one part
one balanced two stone three hollow wells one stone well
one hollow plot three ore pits six large bugholes 23 twenty
three islands candles provided one wind vane three machines
one and making candles one board for cutting wood there
and to hold the same to them the party of the second part for
the period of five years from the 1st day of December 1869 and
their heirs and assigns and the party of the first part to keep
the building in comfortable repair with the curb on the
road and the beach lot reserving the privilege of making
one a two story w barn keep on the barn house at any time
previous to the 1st of April next and the privilege of having
remain upon the land until sold a pile of beached ashes now
after said land and the privilege of entering upon said land and carry
ing them away when sold.

And the party of the second part in consideration of
the premises aforesaid agree to and will with the party of the
first part that they will live and keep the above described
and personal property for the time aforesaid and at the end of
said term or at the termination of this lease restore the same to the
party of the first part in as good state and condition as the
same now are damaged by the elements as of burning buildings
excepted and will pay them for the use and use of
the piece of land first above described and the personal property
the sum of two hundred and eighty dollars per year the first
payment of one fourths

ten dollars is to be paid upon
the 1st day of July next and after that the said rent is to be
paid in quarterly payments of fifty dollars each one of
which is to be paid upon the 1st day of January April July
October the next year during said term that said property
and no part of the same shall be underlet or this lease assigned
without the permission of the lessor and that if said rent shall
remain unpaid eight days after the same become due or if there
shall be any other breach of this Contract by the party of
the second part the party of the first part may at any
time thereafter recover into the possession of the said premis
and this lease shall thereby terminate and become
valid.

It is also agreed by and between said parties that
said premises aforesaid property shall be used for the manu-
facture of candles soft and shaving a frame shop and for
no other purpose that the party of the second part will
lease to the party of the second part said premises and pro-
erty at a reasonable rent for a further term if the party of
the second part shall give the party of the first part notice
at least three months before such lease term expires.
the party of the first part, either of them, by themselves or in company with any other persons or persons, or into the business of making or selling candles, at any place within fifteen miles of Unionville, they will buy of the party of the
first part at a reasonable price, all of the above-furnished that the party of the first part may at that time sell or that they may any time & during the addition or the east end of the candle shop. The party of the second part agree to pay David 
Hirch well allowed a year for the well taken proper & well and keep the plow in repair, the party of the first part reserve the hay pen under the horse barn, standing upon the north side of the street and he shall be said horse barn.

And the said party of the first part shall also lease and let to the party of the second part their barn farm upon the following terms. The party of the second part are to use 
upon said farm all the manure by them made in the barn rented them by the party of the second part and standing on the
north side of State street, which is to be in full payment and satisfaction for the rent of said barn
when they stop carrying the manure to said farm they are to pay a reasonable sum for the rent of said barn they are to corned bread when the farm at least one hundred six
hundred sixty barrels of leached ashes each year that they shall occupy said farm and that the party of the first part is to 
pay them for the same one half of what they are worth at the farm the party of the first part reserve the crop now growing upon said farm and the right to go upon the same to take
hay of and to harvest the same. The party of the first part may direct what part of said farm shall be planted and how
and cultivated and the same shall be cultivated in the
manner that they shall direct, all the produce and crops that shall be raised upon said premises shall be divided equally between said parties share and share alike the half of the party of the first part shall be delivered to the party of the first part on the north side of Water street in Unionville.

The party of the first part is to furnish the necessary fencing, materials and the party of the second part is to keep the fences in repair and do all the labor necessary upon the farm for the proper cultivation of the farm. The wood is to be cut upon the farm by the party of the second part. The party of 
the first part reserved to themselves so much of said farm as shall be left for planting with the privilege of letting the same to whom they choose and of letting at any time all or any part of said farm subject to the right of the party of the said farmer and tenant in a suitable time all goods that shall be

The party of the first part shall also lease and let to the party of the second part their barn farm upon the following terms. The party of the second part are to use upon said farm all the manure by them made in the barn rented them by the party of the second part and standing on the north side of State street, which is to be in full payment and satisfaction for the rent of said barn when they stop carrying the manure to said farm they are to pay a reasonable sum for the rent of said barn they are to corned bread when the farm at least one hundred six hundred sixty barrels of leached ashes each year that they shall occupy said farm and that the party of the first part is to pay them for the same one half of what they are worth at the farm the party of the first part reserve the crop now growing upon said farm and the right to go upon the same to take hay of and to harvest the same. The party of the first part may direct what part of said farm shall be planted and how and cultivated and the same shall be cultivated in the manner that they shall direct, all the produce and crops that shall be raised upon said premises shall be divided equally between said parties share and share alike the half of the party of the first part shall be delivered to the party of the first part on the north side of Water street in Unionville.

The party of the first part is to furnish the necessary fencing, materials and the party of the second part is to keep the fences in repair and do all the labor necessary upon the farm for the proper cultivation of the farm. The wood is to be cut upon the farm by the party of the second part. The party of the first part reserved to themselves so much of said farm as shall be left for planting with the privilege of letting the same to whom they choose and of letting at any time all or any part of said farm subject to the right of the party of the said farmer and tenant in a suitable time all goods that shall be
be growing upon said land and the lease of the Avon farm be terminated at the end of any year by either party upon his giving the other party thirty five days notice of his wish to terminate the same.

And the party of the second part further agree that they will not use or suffer or permit to be used at any other place except within said candle factory the making or using of zinc colors (here leased to them) for making or working and or apply for any patent for the same by themselves or throw the agency of any person or persons but that they will also keep the doors of their factory closed.

And it is agreed that if the party of the second part withdraw it do not cultivate the Avon farm belonging to the party of the first part, that the party of the first part claim all the manure made at the barn yard, on the north side of the street and occupied by the party of the second part.

In witness whereof we have hereunto set our hands and seal this 29th day of December A.D. 1858

The party of the first part

Walter H. Cowles (seal)
Samuel W. Cowles (seal)

The party of the second part

Eber N. Gibs (seal)
Augustus J. Fuller (seal)

Hartford County

Farmington Dec 29th 1858

Personally appeared the above named Walter H. Cowles, Samuel W. Cowles of the first part and Eber N. Gibbs and Augustus J. Fuller of the second part and acknowledged same to be their free act and deed before me,

E. R. Hamilton
Justice of the Peace

Received December 29, 1858 for record by C.D. Cowles Register