Standing along the south side of Mountain Road, the John R. Smith House is surrounded by other historic dwellings of similar vintage. This portion of Mountain Road which slopes upward towards the top of the hill, is included within Farmington's National Register and local historic districts.
Erected in 1857-58, this nineteenth-century vernacular-style dwelling has been influenced by the Greek Revival style. The two-bay facade oriented gable-to-street, exhibits a fully pedimented gable end with rectangular opening, a common characteristic found on Greek Revival-style architecture. The six-over-six sash with louvered shutters are original. A number of ells extend from the south and east elevations. Decorative cut-out work enhances a rear, open framed-porch. A central brick chimney rises from the main block.

John Reed Smith built this house between 1857 and 1858 on land he purchased from Samuel Deming (FLR 55:156). A mortgage in January of 1859 from Smith to the Farmington Savings Bank mentions a dwelling house on the property (FLR 55:472). A "mechanic" by trade, Smith (1804-1884) was born in Hartford to Jeremiah and Sarah Smith. His wife was the former Ann Alford (1801-1884). Little is known about Smith except that he operated a joiners shop on his property and was elected sealer of weights and measures in 1859. In 1884 Ann Smith inherited the house from her husband's estate (FLR 66:377). Three years later in 1887, the Smith's daughter, Mrs. Sarah Ann (Smith) Farnham, inherited the house (FLR 66:580). The next owner was Fanny Langdon, who acquired the parcel with house and shop in March of 1887 (FLR 68:298). Miss Langdon (1831-1889) lived here with her good friend, Maria Loesch (1833-1906), a teacher at Miss Porter's School. Arthur L. Brandegee, noted author and co-publisher of "Farmington, Connecticut, Village of Beautiful Homes", bought the house in 1906 (FLR 74:1367). Upon moving to Northampton, Massachusetts in 1911, Brandegee sold the house to the wealthy A.A. Pope, owner and resident of Hillstead (FLR 77:377). It is thought that Mr. Pope acquired the house for his daughter Theodate to house the architects and draftsmen who were employed by her. Theodate inherited the house upon her father's death in 1913. She sold it in 1920 (FLR 80:220) to Lee M. Atwood who was in her employ as an architect helping her with her designs for schools. The Eyers family bought the property in 1926 and they retained ownership until 1955 (FLR 80:657 and 121:183).

Sources


Photographer: N. Ainspan

Date: 4/86

View: S

Negative on File: 17:24

Compiled By: Elizabeth R. Hart

Organization: Greater Middletown Preservation Trust

Address: 27 Washington Street, Middletown, CT

Subsequent Evaluation

The John R. Smith House is historically significant for its association with the Smith, Brandegee and Pope families. It also contributes to the historic character of Mountain Road.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OWNER'S NAME</th>
<th>SANFORD, Robert W. and June (Eyers) Sanford</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ADDRESS</td>
<td>18 Mountain Road</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DATE BUILT</td>
<td>ca. 1858</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FOR</td>
<td>John B. Smith</td>
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<th>FORMER OWNERS:</th>
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<th>REFERENCES:</th>
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This house is pictured on page 170 of the Farmington Book, as "Sunny Bank -- Residence of Arthur L. Brandegee". In Baker and Tilden's 1869 Atlas it is designated as "J. R. Smith".

The house is said to have been built by John Reed Smith in 1858 on land purchased from Samuel Deming. It is believed that Mr. Smith was a carpenter. The Sanfords, present owners of the house, have noted a pane of glass that is in the house and has the figure 1858 scratched plainly in it.

John Smith died in 1884 and Ann Smith inherited.

Sarah Ann Farnham, of Brooklyn, New York, inherited in 1887 and she sold in that same year on April 15 to Fanny Langdon.

Mary L. Loesch, also known as Maria Lucinda Loesch, born in 1833 in North Carolina, daughter of Charles H. Loesch, lived here with Miss Langdon, and was a teacher at Miss Porter's School.

Miss Langdon died sometime in the mid 1890's but Miss Loesch continued living here until her own death, which was on March 7, 1906. Mrs. Mary E. Dow of Miss Porter's School was the executrix of Miss Langdon's will, and sold the property in 1906 to Arthur L. Brandegee.

Arthur Latimer Brandegee was the fifth Brandegee to have purchased property in the village of Farmington, and he purchased next door to his brother Charles, who was at that time Town Clerk of Farmington.

An explanation is perhaps called for at this point, as the Brandegees were all from Berlin, Connecticut, which had been for many years a part of Farmington. With that in mind one can easier appreciate Mrs. Hurlburt's remark on page 305 of "Town Clerks", when she says of Charles Brandegee: "When Charles Brandegee came to Farmington in 1894, to make his home, he was actually returning to the home of his ancestors". He had spent many years in the Western states before moving here.

Arthur L. Brandegee was the son of Dr. Elishama and Florence (Stith) Brandegee, and had been born in Berlin, Conn.

As Mrs. Hurlburt says on page 306 of "Town Clerks":

"Members of the Brandegee family all had a touch of genius. Robert Brandegee who lived on High Street was a famous artist, his portraits occupying places of honor wherever they are shown. Arthur Brandegee, another brother of Charles and son of Dr. Elishama Brandegee, wrote several books on flowers and ferns of New England. Townshend Brandegee went west as a civil engineer and laid out many western towns in Colorado, naming one of them Florence in honor of his mother and sister who were named for Florence, Italy. Townshend studied botany and science and in his later years occupied a room at the University of California in recognition of his publications on plants".

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"On his (Townshend's) 80th birthday he was tendered a luncheon at which a book was presented to him, made up entirely of letters of appreciation of his scientific work, from scientist friends all over the country. His sister, Miss Emily S. Brandegee, only surviving member of the immediate family, now has the book in her keeping. Miss Emily Brandegee published several papers which she had read at various times before the Daughters of the American Revolution in Berlin, and has long been actively interested in maintaining an excellent library in Berlin". End of quote.

Arthur Brandegee's wife was the former Grace Lord, the sister of the wife of his brother Robert, of 36 High Street.

Arthur's most important role in Farmington life was as co-publisher of the book "Farmington, Connecticut, Village of Beautiful Homes", which the writer, who uses that name very often, calls "The Farmington Book". Co-publisher with him was Eddy N. Smith, whom the writer has not yet been able to identify. Very few of the articles in the book were written especially for it, the book being primarily a compilation of many interesting articles which had already been written, more of them probably by Julius Gay than by any other one person. The book has some 250 and more photographs of Farmington houses and Farmington scenes. It has been very popular and guarded jealously by those who own it, and truly a collector's item now. Some have criticised it for the barren look resulting from most of the photos having been taken in winter, but that was done to have a clear view, unobstructed by foliage. A look at 141 Main Street, pictured on page 98 as the property of Jesse Moore, will show how foliage tends to hide the appearance of the house. A resident of West District has said that Lucius F. Dorman was one of the salesmen taking pre-publication orders for the book.

Not much has been learned of Arthur Brandegee except what has been told by Mrs. Hurlburt, quoted on the previous page. It seemed to some that he was very talented but never able to find himself, and always searching for some unknown goal. He did not stay in Farmington very long, as he sold this house in 1911 and moved away, perhaps to Massachusetts.

Purchaser in 1911 was Alfred A. Pope, owner of Hillstead, who really purchased it for his daughter Theodate. She needed housing for her architects and draftsmen who were working for her in her field office at Underledge.

One of Miss Pope's architects, and one who lived here in this house, was Lee Atwood. He helped her with the early plans for schools, perhaps even for the beginnings of those for Old Farms School, but it has been said that they had a disagreement and that he left here sometime prior to 1926. He had purchased this house from her, then Mrs. Riddle, in 1920, but he left perhaps two or three years later and rented the house.

The tenant was Clara Preston Eyers, who rented for the use of her husband, Walter Eyers and herself and their family, later purchasing the house in 1926.

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1477.
Walter Eyers was born in Michigan, the son of William Eyers and Anna Gribble, who had come separately to the United States as teen-agers, their parents having emigrated from England in the latter half of the 19th century. William Eyers became a mining engineer employed in the iron mines of northern Michigan. He built a model of a walking beam steam engine to show the type of machinery used in the iron mines at Humboldt, Michigan.

Walter Eyers studied for the insurance business at Armour Technical Institute in Chicago, and first worked in that line in that city. From there he went to San Francisco, then was transferred to Hartford for the Phoenix Insurance Company. Here, through mutual friends, he and Clara Preston met, and later were married.

Clara Victoria Preston was born in Hartford, daughter of Miles Barbour Preston who was mayor of Hartford for a period in the early 1900's. Her mother, Nellie Fenetta Dole, had been born in the United States, but her mother's mother had been born in England. Her father, originally of Simsbury, was a descendant of Jonathan Barbour, one of Simsbury's earliest settlers. At the time that Clara was born her father was sheriff in charge of the Seyms Street jail, and residing there. Clara was never able to refute the accusation: "You were born in jail!".

It is always interesting to the writer to be able to note connections with the early residents of Farmington, and here is one with Deacon Samuel Richards of 10 Main Street, a very noted man in his day. The connection is the following, and very complicated.

The mother of Nellie Fenetta Dole, mentioned above, was the former Clara V. Blasdale. Clara Blasdale first married Fred Dole, and to that marriage was born Nellie Fenetta Dole. After the death of Fred Dole, his widow married Francis H. Richards, great-grandson of Aaron Richards, born 1749, the brother of Farmington's well-known Deacon and Captain Samuel Richards, veteran of the Revolutionary War. No children were born of this marriage. Francis Richards was an intriguing man, an inventor in the early 1900's, who had taken out nearly as many patents as Thomas Edison, a fact verified by several newspaper articles. The first of the Richards family in this country probably arrived in the Boston area around 1620, and came to Hartford with the Rev. Thomas Hooker. See 10 Main Street for more on the Samuel Richards family.

Mr. and Mrs. Walter Eyers lived in Hartford when first married, but a doctor told them that it would be much better for the health of their son and eldest child, William, if they moved to the country. They found this house at 18 Mountain Road available for rental, and took it, renting from the earlier-mentioned Lee Atwood. They liked the house, the location, and the country air of Farmington, so they purchased in 1926.

The Eyers family made some alterations to the house. They added the present dining room, they closed up one door to the kitchen, they added a bedroom over the dining room, and they enlarged an upstairs hall, making another bedroom. When the Eyers children were young there was a building to the rear thought to have been John Smith's work shop. It was torn down and a garage built when they bought a car in 1933.

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1478.
Mr. Eyers had continued his work with Phoenix Fire, and had made almost a second career of searching for and finding books and periodicals on genealogy and history relating to Farmington, with the intention of someday writing along that line. He was not to live to accomplish this however. He died in April of 1934, as the result of a back injury suffered in a fall.

Mrs. Eyers continued her residence here until 1952, when she took an apartment at 23 Main Street. She became curator of the Farmington Museum, and moved into its upstairs apartment in 1954. She continued as its curator until after the 1960 300th anniversary of the Whitman House, converted to Museum. Mrs. Eyers then retired and moved to the Elm Tree Inn, or rather, to the Elm Tree Apartments, where she was living when she died in 1966.

The Eyers' first-born child is William Walter Eyers. His wife is the former Jean Bailor, a girl whom he met in California, but through Farmington acquaintances, while he was in military service. Jean has roots which extend back to Connecticut however, as it was from New Haven that her maternal ancestors set out to cross the plains to California in the days of the prairie schooners. William and Jean lived in both the San Francisco and Los Angeles areas after they were married and until 1967. Then they moved to Chicago, where he was an engineer with Midwest Consulting Engineers of that city. They presently reside in Potomac, Maryland, Mr. Eyers a consultant in Washington, D. C., for the U. S. Government. Their three children are:

- Charles, at University of Oregon,
- Betsy, in High School, and
- Thomas, in grade school.

Daughter of Walter and Clara Eyers is Clara Victoria Eyers, always having been known as June. She attended Farmington's grade schools, Chaffee School in Windsor, received her BA from Smith College and a Masters in Social Work from Columbia University.

Her husband is Robert Wadsworth Sanford, son of Truman Sanford and Helen Wadsworth of 103 Main Street, Farmington. He attended Farmington grade schools, Phillips-Andover Academy, and is a Yale graduate. They became acquainted as neighbors and schoolmates and were married in 1950. They lived in the second floor apartment at 8 Mountain Road from 1950 until September 1952, subleasing from Ruth Scudder who had moved to Florida. In 1952 they took up residence here after Mrs. Eyers had taken an apartment at 23 Main Street.

Robert Sanford has succeeded his father in the management of the Sanford and Hawley Lumber Company, an old and well-known and reliable firm in Unionville, and he works hard to keep this reputation for the business. His wife and sons work for it too, although not full time. See more regarding the Sanford family, and the Sanford-Hawley Lumber Company, in the sketch of 103 Main Street.

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The Robert Sanfords have three children, Frank Wadsworth Sanford and the twins, Robert Preston and Edmund Eyers Sanford, all still in their teens.

Robert is an excellent persistent student, but primarily interested in mechanical and technical fields, motors, electricity, photography, anything that has moving parts.

Frank wrote a history of Sanford and Hawley, Inc., which appeared in the "Lure of the Litchfield Hills".

Edmund is presently writing a school paper on early industry in the Farmington area.

The Sanfords have one of the shingles from the old Congregational church roof, painted with a Farmington scene -- possibly the work of a Miss Porter's School girl, under the tutelage of Robert Brandegee.

April 20, 1974