**Christensen, Otto, House**

**Christensen, John R. and Beatrice**

**Residence**

**Christensen, Otto. House**

**Colonial Revival**

**ca. 1920**

**Sited on the north side of Pearl Street, this house faces east towards Main Street. It is surrounded by tall trees and houses of similar age.**
Facing away from Pearl Street, this house is oriented gable-to-street with its main entry on the east elevation. Sheathed in clapboard on the first story and wood shingles on the second story, the house features three bays and a small Colonial Revival-style entry porch supported by classical columns. Note the center brick chimney and six-over-six sash found throughout the house. Its cobblestone foundation is a typical characteristic of many of Farmington's early twentieth-century buildings.

In 1923 Otto Christensen purchased a piece of land along Pearl Street from Ottilie D. Mason (FLR 80:391). Ottilie was the widow of Henry D. Mason (d. 1922). Christensen and his wife Jensine were originally from Denmark and moved to Farmington in 1907. Christensen was first employed by Henry Mason until 1916 and later worked for Winchell Smith and Newton D. Barney in 1920. After Mason's death, his wife sold a small woodworking shop to Christensen. He moved the building to its present location on Pearl Street. Some sources date the shop's construction around 1897; however, it is impossible to determine as it was remodeled by Frank Jones after Christensen's purchase. It still remains in the family today.

Although moved from its original site, the Otto Christensen House is historically important due to its association with the early development of Pearl Street.

Sources:
DATE BUILT: 1858 FOR: Chauncey Rowe (inf. T.D. Mason)
Mason says the date is on a board?

ARCHITECT
MASTER-BUILDER

FORMER OWNERS: Christensen bought the land from Ottilie D. Mason, 50x90 ft. north side of Pearl St., 4/26/1923 Vol. 80, p 391. He also bought at the same time, the workshop of Henry H. Mason, Farmington architect, builder and craftsman, who had died Dec. 1922. Christensen had worked for H.H. Mason for 12 years since his arrival in this country. T.D. Mason thinks the building was formerly a barn back of "the brick house (now Mabel Mason Wells) and Uncle Chauncey Rowe probably built it."

REFERENCES:
This house is not pictured in the Farmington Book as it was a shop when that book was published. It has been in existence longer than the Farmington Book however, was owned by a well known man, was converted to a residence by another, and now owned and occupied by a well known and well respected Farmington couple.

Some have thought that this building perhaps was originally a barn, built perhaps around 1858 in the rear of Chauncey Rowe's house, now 118 Main Street, but it has now been pretty well established that the old Rowe barn was dismantled and moved piece by piece by Thomas Dickinson Mason to Diamond Glen, where the Mason's owned property and two houses, and pastured their cattle. See 118 and 122 Main Street for more on the Mason family.

This shop building was sold in 1923 by the widow Mrs. Henry Hall Mason, to Otto Christensen, who had worked many years for Mr. Mason. Mr. Christensen purchased a little land on Pearl Street, just to the rear of 122 Main Street, and it was to that lot that he moved the shop building.

Otto Christensen had been born in Denmark, and he and his wife, the former Jensine Jensen, and their son Christian, had come to Farmington in November 1907, and had taken up residence at 17 Main Street, where Mrs. Christensen's brother-in-law and sister then lived. They were Martin Salmonsen and the former Johanna Jensen. Mr. Salmonsen's name is mis-spelled on page 27 of the Farmington Book where he is noted as "Martin Solomonson". The Christensens lived in that house, following Miss Mattie J. Radcliff's occupancy, from November 1907 until sometime in 1910.

From 1910 until 1916 the Christensen family, now with two children as John Robert Christensen was born at 17 Main Street, lived at 169 Main Street, which was just a four-room house then, and owned by Mrs. Albert Hart of 7 Maple Street, who sold the house in 1916 to Atter Rosenberg.

In 1916, Mr. Christensen, now employed by Winchell Smith, moved with his family to 180 Garden Street, to the large house which had formerly been the home and property of Gustave Wollenberg, who moved to the property south of the Old South School.

In 1920, then employed by Newton D. Barney, the Christensens moved to what was known as the Hial Chidsey house, on the site of what is now 30 Garden Street. There the Christensens lived in the front section of the house, the rear being occupied by the Chrisoulis family, Mr. Chrisoulis being at that time the chef for the Farmington Country Club.

For a year or so, in 1921 and part of 1922, the Christensens lived in the south end of the two-family house at 163 Main Street, owned by the Root family across the street. Jacob Cooper, who worked for the Roots, occupied the other half, and when it became necessary in 1922 to vacate this rental so that Cooper's brother-in-law could occupy it, the Christensens took up temporary residence in H. H. Mason's woodworking shop at the rear of 118 Main Street for about two months.

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1635.
The Christensen's next residence was in the then two-family house at 80 Main Street, the other half being occupied by Nathan Fuller and his family.

Otto Christensen had earlier worked some eight years for Henry Hall Mason when the Christensens first came to Farmington, and when Mr. Mason was more active in the carpentry and cabinet making and construction business. Otto Christensen had been principally a farming man, but he was also a good carpenter. Mr. Mason was a very clever mechanic, carpenter, cabinet maker, and a real artist in his work. Otto Christensen enjoyed working with him, and the enjoyment had been mutual.

After Mr. Mason's death in December 1922 Mr. Christensen purchased from his widow, Ottilie D. Mason, this shop in which he had worked many years. The shop, believed to have been built around 1897 or 1898, was moved 60 feet to the lot which had been purchased from Mrs. Mason, and turned ninety degrees from its original position, so that the former west end now became the south end of the house, and nearest to Pearl Street. A long stairway on the outside had led to the second floor where the cabinet work had been done.

The renovation and remodeling of the shop, the conversion to a house, was done by Frank Jones, whose father was a West District builder. After building other houses in this area Frank Jones moved to Canton in the 1930's. The remodeling was done during 1923, and completed in time for occupancy in March of 1924, the family having lived at 80 Main Street while this work was going on.

The Christensen house, now known as 2 Pearl Street, was the first that they had owned, after 17 years of moving from here to there, and they were certainly glad to be settled. Mr. Christensen worked his later years for the cemetery association, taking care of Riverside Cemetery until his retirement around 1961. Mrs. Christensen had died in 1950, Mr. Christensen living until 1964.

The Christensens left two children, Christian, who had been born in Denmark, and John Robert, who had been born at 17 Main Street. Both boys started work early, delivering papers, helping people with chores, taking all sorts of jobs prior to high school, and working all during high school with Mr. Judatzin his garage.

Christian married Mildred Thomson and has lived his adult life in Plainville, employed as salesman for Adams Aircraft. Their children are:

Norman L. Christensen, Mequon, Wisconsin,
David R. Christensen, Mendham, New Jersey, and
Ruth C. Kelley, St. Cloud, Minnesota.

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John R. Christensen was graduated as a Mechanical Engineer by Rhode Island State College, now Rhode Island University, in 1931. Jobs were difficult to find in 1931, especially engineering jobs. John sold heating equipment, Timken-Detroit oil burners, and American Radiator boilers, etc, for a time, but taking employment with the Farmington Savings Bank after a few years.

John Christensen was married in 1942 to Beatrice Rogers of Plainville, daughter of Myron E. Rogers who came to Plainville from Willington as a small boy, and later started the Rogers Bakery on Whiting Street in Plainville, formerly part of Route 10. His son now operates this bakery. Mrs. Rogers was the former Ella Manchester. The Rogers family lived in the fine old colonial house on Red Stone Hill, built by Samuel Hooker around 1796. Mrs. Rogers was bedridden during her last eighteen years, cared for during this period by Miss Harriet Waterman of West District, an 1895 graduate from Hartford Hospital's School of Nursing. When Miss Waterman died in Farmington in February 1970 she was the eldest graduate of the school, having been 98 at the time of her death. Mrs. Rogers died in 1939, Mr. Rogers in 1958. Beatrice Rogers Christensen (Bee) is also a graduate of the same school of nursing.

John enlisted in the army in 1942 and came out of Officer's Training School at Camp Davis, North Carolina, as a Lieutenant in the Coast Artillery, an automatic weapons officer. A list of his various places of service would make an interesting travel tour. One of his first assignments was most interesting to this writer, as it was at Boeing Field, in Seattle, while the writer was just a mile away, at the Boeing Aircraft plant, trying to figure out the cost of a B-17, and never did! After Boeing was considered out of danger from attack by Japanese aircraft, he and his wife played golf at Fort Sheridan, Illinois, while waiting for the next assignment. This was to Appalachicola, Florida, and then came New Guinea and Leyte, where he just missed the landing of General MacArthur. John's hands had become infected with Jungle Rot in New Guinea, and it became so bad that he was sent in July, 1945, to Lovell Hospital at Fort Devens, Massachusetts, from where he was discharged as First Lieutenant in February, 1946.

Upon his return John resumed work at the Farmington Savings Bank, and was there until 1954. Having had some exposure to real estate, through mortgage work at the bank, he went into the real estate business with Deming and Luscomb in 1954, and is still with them, and still enjoying the work.

Both Mr. and Mrs. Christensen are very much a part of Farmington's civic and church activities.

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