Standing along the north side of Mountain Road, St. James Episcopal Church sits on a small open lot bordered with large shade trees. Buildings associated with Miss Porter's School abut the property in all directions. The surrounding neighborhood which contains both public and residential buildings, is included in Farmington's local historic district and National Register district.
This Arts and Crafts-style church is U-shaped in plan due to several additions. Originally
the building featured the eastern section and two flanking enclosed entry porches, forming
a cross plan. The two porches, however, do not exist today. Later during the mid-twentieth
century, the center and west (a combination of shingle and fieldstone) sections were
added giving it its present U shape. Typical of the style are its gambrel roofs, fieldstone
surface, and small windows. The main entry is found on the south elevation of the original
building, where once two windows existed. Several gable-roofed dormers and twelve-over-
twelve sash are found throughout the church. Sitting on the roof of the original section
are a cupola and a wood cross.

18 ARCHITECT
Henry Hall Mason

19 HISTORICAL OR ARCHITECTURAL IMPORTANCE
The first Episcopal service in Farmington Village was held on October 5, 1873, after
Charles L. Whitman had asked the Rev. Edward R. Brown of the Unionville Parish to open a
mission here. This service was held in the Old Center District schoolhouse (no longer
extant), which stood on the site of the present Noah Wallace School. By late 1874 the
mission had 90 members and had moved its meetings to the second floor of the store on the
corner of Main Street and Mill Lane. Charles L. Whitman, an early and active supporter of
St. James’ Mission, died in 1886 and left $600 towards the erection of a “proper” church.
Under the direction of other strong supporters of the mission, including Charles S. Mason
and William A. Hooker, funds were raised to erect a church. In April of 1897 a plot of land
along the north side of Mountain Road was purchased from Eliza W. Rice (FLR 71:292).
Henry Hall Mason, the son of Charles Mason, was hired as the architect and builder. The
building was completed by late 1898 at a cost of $5267.74. The first service in the
new building was held in January 1899, and the church was consecrated the following
June. On June 2, 1902, the mission was formally reorganized as St. James Parish. The
first full-time rector was Rev. W.W. Ellsworth, who had resigned as rector at Christ
Church in Unionville. He left in 1900 and a number of different men held the position
of rector until 1908, when Rev. C.E. Robert came to Farmington. He remained until his
death in 1931. In 1910 an addition was made to the rear of the building which provided
a larger chancel and organ loft. A new parish house was added to the church in 1938 and
in 1957, the parish hired architect Edgar T. Glass to add a new parish hall the third
and final major enlargement. (see cont. pg.)

SOURCES
Farmington Land Records; Farmington Probate Records; Farmington Vital Records; Farmington
Cemetery Inscriptions, W.P.A., 1934; Avon Cemetery Inscriptions, W.P.A., 1934; 1853 E.M.
Brandegy, Arthur L. Farmington, Connecticut, The Village of Beautiful Homes. Farmington,
Conn.: Author, 1906.; Hurlburt, Mabel S. Farmington Town Clerks and Their Times (1645–1940).

PHOTOGRAPHER
Nathan Ainspan

DATE
4/86

VIEW
N

NEGATIVE ON FILE
17:35

NAME
Elizabeth R. Hart

DATE
4/86

ORGANIZATION
Greater Middletown Preservation Trust

ADDRESS
27 Washington Street, Middletown, CT

SUBSEQUENT FIELD EVALUATIONS
St. James Episcopal Church is architecturally and historically significant due to its excellent representation of the Arts and Crafts style and as the first Episcopal church in Farmington village.
OWNER'S NAME: CHURCH, ST. JAMES EPISCOPAL
1950—church and parish house

ADDRESS: 3 Mountain Road

DATE BUILT: 1898 FOR: St. James Episcopal Parish

ARCHITECT: Henry Hall Mason

MASTER-BUILDER: Henry Hall Mason

FORMER OWNERS:


ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

See history of church written by the Rev. Mark Brewster when cornerstone for parish house was laid in 1938.
The church was built on land acquired from Eliza Rice with a 75 foot front and a 240 foot depth, bounded as follows:

- North by Sarah Porter (land to the rear of 49 Main Street),
- East by Sarah Porter (site of the Memorial Studio pictured on page 192 of the Farmington Book),
- South by Mountain Road,
- West by Eliza Rice (site of 53 Main Street).

An additional piece purchased later was part of the Eliza Rice, later Sarah Gruman, property to the west.

March 21, 1974
The Farmington Magazine noted in its issue of April 1901, that "It is rumored that some day the Misses Cowles (of 130 Main Street) will decorate the walls of the Episcopal Church". The writer regrets that he does not know whether or not this was done.

The late Joan Hooker, daughter of the William A. Hooker previously mentioned, adds a homey touch when she brings back a memory of her childhood. She says:

"When I think of Farmington I think of St. James Church. Our dog and several others waited on the porch during the services, "Uncle Chuck", "Blarney Anthony" and others. They knew the service so well that during the last prayers they would stand up and shake their collars, and get ready to leave".

The parish house, adjoining the church to the west, was started in 1938, and at that time the Rev. Mark Brewster wrote a history of the church, which the writer has not encountered, but which undoubtedly should be read.

A long-time member of the church provided the writer with the following list of pastors of the church over its one hundred and more years, which include the missionary society:

1873-1878 *Rev. Edward R. Brown
1878-1879 *Rev. William Lusk, Jr.
1880-1885 *Rev. Allan E. Beeman
1885-1886 *Br. Rev. Edward H. Coley
  Retired Bishop of Central New York
  *Rev. Charles L. Pardee, D. D.
  Retired Secy. House of Bishops
1886-1888 *Rev. Richard C. Searing
1888-1890 *J. Lanier, Deacon  *S. W. Derby, Deacon
  *Rev. Mr. Shepherd (in interim)
  Retired Prof, General Theological Seminary, New York City
  and Sub Dean
1890-1891 *Rev. F. B. Whitcome
1891-1893 *Rev. G. W. Griffith
1893-1895 *Ven. Dr. J. S. Horton (Cheshire)
1895-1900 Rev. W. W. Ellsworth
1900 Rev. Frederick S. Penfold
1900-1901 Rev. Herman Lilienthal
1901 Rev. Cranston Brenton, part year
1901-1905 Rev. E. B. Dean
1905-1907 Rev. H. C. Munro
1908-1931 Rev. C. E. Roberts
1932-1942 Rev. L. M. Brewster
1943-1953 Rev. R. L. Harding

In 1948, seventy-five years after the Mission held its first meeting in Farmington, the article reproduced on the following page appeared in the Hartford Times.

March 21, 1974
Special to The Hartford Times

Farmington—On Oct. 5, 1873, in the hall of the district school in Farmington 13 courageous men and women met to hold the first service and found St. James Mission, which, after 75 years, has become St. James Episcopal Church.

Wednesday evening, 130 men and women gathered in the parish house to commemorate this anniversary, with one of the first Mission’s charter members, Mrs. Henry H. Mason, one of the guests.

Back in 1873, in a village of rugged Puritanism and intolerance, the Episcopal church was not regarded in a friendly light. Nevertheless, the records of the first services find the membership increasing, an altar built formed and a Sunday School started, under the direction of Deaconess Potter, who with the untiring efforts of such men as the Rev. E. R. Brown, the first rector, Charles L. Whitman, Charles S. Mason, Henry H. Mason and William A. Hooker worked unceasingly until today St. James Church is an independent, flourishing parish.

UNTIL 1898 services were held in a room over the village grocery store, which had been converted into a chapel. The store, which stood at the corner of Main St. and Mill Rd. is now on Mill Rd. In 1898, Henry H. Mason built the present church.

Working on the theory that greater harmony and beauty could be obtained by using materials taken from the locality where it was to stand, Mr. Mason used Farmington fieldstone and native cypress for all the woodwork within the building. The wooden pews were put together with hand-made pegs and the lectern, made of applewood, he hand-carved himself.

The altar in St. James Church always holds much interest for visitors. Designed by Mr. Mason and Robert B. Brandegee, noted Farmington artist, it is surrounded by panels, depicting famous members of the Episcopal Church. Mr. Brandegee also painted the mural over the altar, showing Christ and the fishermen. This painting, according to Mr. Mason’s daughter, Mrs. John L. Ingram, was in strict keeping with Mr. Mason’s ideas of what should fill that space—“it could be nothing too finished or too bold in outline and color, but a picture which would blend and recede into imaginary distance, a suggestive thought for each one who looked at it, rather than a completed mural which would be too overpowering in so small a building”.

THE CORNERSTONE was laid in 1898 and on Jan. 22, 1899, the first services in St. James Church took place. On June 2, 1902, St. James parish was organized and the first meeting was held on June 28 of that year.

As the parish grew, additions were necessary and the present sanctuary choir and the organ was installed. At this time, the Rev. Charles Edward Roberts was the rector, and it was through his untiring efforts that the organ was made possible. Father Roberts was a rare musician and those who remember him will also remember how he would slip on to the organ bench to play the offertory himself. He introduced many of the unknown but beautiful hymns and chants, which today are well loved; he taught the children to sing the English carols long before they became popular. Today, his daughter, Mrs. Stuart E. Phelps, is the organist.

In 1938, after many money-raising events, the long-hoped-for parish house was built, adjoining the church. The Rev. L. Mark Brewster was rector at this time, and the parish house was dedicated on June 4, 1939, the cornerstone being laid the previous November, just 65 years after the first meeting in the hall of the district school.

ST. JAMES CHURCH is today under the leadership of the Rev. Roman L. Harding, and is the strongest and most prosperous it has ever been. Again, in the words of Mrs. Ingram, “it is a far cry from the small group gathered in the chapel over the general store, to the thriving organization with church building, parish house and plans for a new rectory in the not-too-distant future. The 18 souls who had the vision and the courage to make the initial move and all those who followed them and built on their foundation a strong and prosperous parish, must be our inspiration for the future. For it is well to remember that nothing that we have or can ever hope to have can be attained except through hard work, faith in God, and devotion to the Church.”

March 21, 1974
In 1950 the following appeared in the Hartford Times of September 2:

Churches You Know: St. James, Farmington

The English rural architecture of St. James Episcopal Church in Farmington is rare in New England. The church proper, constructed of local fieldstone, was designed by Henry Hall Mason and built in 1898.

Before that time Farmington Episcopalians worshipped in a hall over what was then the post office and general store.

The interior is of cypress with superstructure of Georgia pine. The pews, made with hinges to facilitate cleaning beneath them, have scooped out seats put together with wooden pegs.

Mr. Mason made the lectern himself of applewood from his own orchard.

The altar is distinguished for its 13 panels depicting the early church fathers as portrayed by Charles Forster who then lived in Farmington. A mural over it was executed by Robert Brandergee.

The modern parish house was built in 1939.

March 21, 1974
The Rev. Roman Liberato Harding, rector here for the ten years from 1943 to 1953, resigned due to ill health. He had been born in Washington, D.C., was graduated from Seabury Divinity School in Illinois in 1917, was ordained to the priesthood in 1918 in Washington, D.C. After his ordination he held numerous pastorates in New York State.

The Hardings had a son, John K. Harding, last known to have been in Silver Springs, Maryland.

They also had a daughter, Ann Harwood Harding. Born in 1929, she was 14 when her parents came to Farmington. A graduate of Oxford School, and of Katherine Gibbs Secretarial School in New York, she was from 1949 to 1953 secretary to the Headmasters of Avon Old Farms School. She later moved to Colorado Springs, Colorado, where she was Secretary of Fountain Valley School, and Assistant to the Headmaster. She died on February 24, 1971, in Colorado Springs.

After leaving Farmington the Rev. Mr. Harding served for three years as Chaplain of Armsmear Home in Hartford, one year as Assistant to the Rector at Good Shepherd Home, and three years as Chaplain of the Church Home of Hartford. He returned to Washington, D.C., in 1964, and died at his home there in March 1973, at the age of 86. He had served as Episcopal Archdeacon of Hartford from 1950 to 1954, while he was rector in Farmington.

At the St. James Church Vestry meeting of March 12, 1972, a committee of three was appointed to facilitate the communication between the lay leadership, the vestry and the clergy. This committee was made up of George M. Williams, Jr., Gordon W. Adams and Francis C. Cady.

Mr. Philip Hewes, formerly of the house on Talcott Notch Road owned now by John DeKoven Al sop, but presently of Waterville Road, Avon, has written a comprehensive history of the St. James Parish and its predecessor, the Mission, and it was published in 1973, the Centennial Year, the celebration of which began on September 28.

A newspaper article regarding the anniversary and Mr. Hewes' book is reproduced on the following page.

March 21, 1974
St. James Episcopal Church
To Celebrate 100th Anniversary

By ANNE DEMEUSY

Against this background, clouded by Darwinism, a depression that followed the Civil War, and a decline in population that meant fewer people to convert, two men held the first service of St. James Parish on Oct. 5, 1873, in a one-room schoolhouse.

One was the first rector of the church, the Rev. Edward R. Brown. The other was Charles L. Whitman, who Hewes describes as a prominent member of the community “notwithstanding the fact that he was a Democrat and an Episcopalian.”

The schoolhouse, across the street from the present church site, faced its Congregational neighbor, the First Church of Christ, established 221 years before in 1652 by the son-in-law of Thomas Hooker, Hartford’s founder. It was the only church in Farmington until the 19th century.

There were 70 on hand for that first service 100 years ago, and $29.31 was collected. Today, the congregation numbers more than 600, and the annual budget alone is nearly $70,000.

The growth and prosperity of the church reflects the hard work and faith of its early congregations, which at times dwindled to less than a dozen. Whitman had accumulated $600 by the time he died in 1895, for a building “whose walls he doubtless often saw in faith,” a church clerk recorded.

With this base, and by hauling fieldstone to the site, St. James, which met for more than a quarter of a century in a room over a village grocery store, finally had a home of its own.

Several additions have since been made, including the most recent, a $150,000 expansion which doubled the size of the facility. A 1910 addition was built for a different reason. Hewes says it was needed “to attract our share” of a population explosion that hit the town, at a time when it was still a “doubtful advantage to be an Episcopalian.”

Today, a staff of clergy serves the parish, including the fulltime rector, the Rev. Roger William Smith, who, incidentally, finally solved a problem perplexing the congregation for 70 years.

Church records detail heated arguments over the purchase of the church rectory, in 1904. It seems it was consistently in poor repair, and rectors often complained that the coal bin was empty and the roof leaked. The church once considered hiring an unmarried rector so he wouldn’t need a house. When Smith arrived in 1961, he simply purchased his own home and finally solved the problem.

March 21, 1974