HISTORIC RESOURCES INVENTORY
BUILDING AND STRUCTURES
HIST-6 NEW 5 77

STATE OF CONNECTICUT
CONNECTICUT HISTORICAL COMMISSION
59 SOUTH PROSPECT STREET, HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT 06106
(203) 566-3005

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Town No</th>
<th>Site No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>183</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

UTM: 
QUAD: 
DISTRICT: 
IF NR SPECIFY: 
Actual 
Potential

DIRECTIONS:

1. BUILDING NAME (Common) 
Health Center

2. TOWN CITY 
Farmington

3. STREET AND NUMBER (and or, location)
44 Main Street

4. OWNER(S) 
Miss Porter's School, Inc.

5. USE (Present)
Health Center/Housing

6. ACCESSIBILITY: EXTERIOR VISIBLE FROM PUBLIC ROAD
[ ] Yes [ ] No

7. STYLE OF BUILDING
Nineteenth-century vernacular with Gothic Revival influence

8. MATERIAL(S) (Indicate use or location when appropriate)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Clapboard</th>
<th>Asbestos Siding</th>
<th>Brick</th>
<th>Other (Specify)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

9. STRUCTURAL SYSTEM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wood frame</th>
<th>Post and beam</th>
<th>balloon</th>
<th>Other (Specify)</th>
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</table>

10. ROOF (Type)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gable</th>
<th>Flat</th>
<th>Mansard</th>
<th>Monitor</th>
<th>Sawtooth</th>
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</thead>
</table>

11. NUMBER OF STORIES 

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approximate Dimensions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

12. CONDITION (Structural)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Fair</th>
<th>Deteriorated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

13. INTEGRITY (Exterior)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>On original</th>
<th>Moved</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

14. RELATED OUTBUILDINGS OR LANDSCAPE FEATURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Barn</th>
<th>Shed</th>
<th>Garage</th>
<th>Other landscape features or buildings (Specify)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

15. SURROUNDING ENVIRONMENT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Open land</th>
<th>Woodland</th>
<th>Residential</th>
<th>Scattered buildings visible from site</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

16. INTERRELATIONSHIP OF BUILDING AND SURROUNDINGS

This house is sited on the west side of Main Street just south of Porter Road. Other historic residences, many of which belong to Miss Porter's School, Inc. are visible from the site.

(OVER)
This building is relatively modest when compared to the surrounding architecture. Void of any architectural details, the original cross-gabled roof and three-bay facade by 1906 featured a Colonial Revival-style front and side porch. Note the two-over-two sash and its paired brick chimneys.

In 1851 Edward Whitman (1792-1862) received title to two acres being the "south part of the homelot" from his siblings, Solomon and Nancy Whitman (FLR 50:494). Edward married Almir Olmstead and raised five children. Edward died in 1862 and his inventory lists this house valued at $2,000 (FPR 13:176, 12:346). His daughters inherited his estate and in 1868 daughter Elizabeth Morton (b. 1826) quit-claimed the house to Margaret McCorde (b. 1829) "being the homestead lately occupied by us". Gay had married Grace Fessenden Cowles in 1867; their daughter Mary was born in 1871. Some sources say that this house may have burned making the present house's construction date 1872; however, there is no documentation to support this belief. Upon the death of Grace (Cowles) Gay, the estate was sold to Mrs. Laura D. Barney (FLR 74:306) for $15,500. Elizabeth V. Keep purchased it from Barney in 1916 (FLR 77:623) and shortly thereafter it was willed to Miss Porter's School (FPR 74:337). (see 7 Mountain Road for the history of Sarah Porter and Miss Porter's School.)

Although architecturally modest the Edward Whitman House is important for its historical associations with the Whitman and Gay families.

**Sources**


**Photograph**

N. Ainspan

W

16:18A

4/86

**Photographer**

**Date**

**Negative on File**

**View**

**Name**

Ruth A. Bedrosian

2/86

**Address**

27 Washington Street, Middletown, CT

**Compiled by**

Greater Middletown Preservation Trust

**Organization**

**Address**

**Subsequent Field Evaluations**

- None known
- Highways
- Vandalism
- Developers
- Other
- Renewal
- Private
- Deterioration
- Zoning
- Explanation
OWNER'S NAME: PORTER'S SCHOOL, MISS 1950-dorm. "Gay"

ADDRESS: 44 Main Street & Porter Road

DATE BUILT: ca 1872 FOR: Grace Cowles Gay & Erastus Gay

ARCHITECT: Plans by William Gay, father of Erastus Gay

REFERENCES: "Farmington, Conn., 1906" p. 90

Baker & Tilden Atlas 1869, p. 33 'E. Whitman Est.'
Mrs Ernest Hyde (Ruth Gay) Cady stated (k950) that the Whitman house, bought by her father Erastus Gay, burned and later the large barns back of the house burned. She also said that her mother, Grace (Cowles) Gay always had wished she could have made the plans for her own house. The house built for Erastus Gay on plans by his father William, was built about the same year as the Richard Gay house. According to an old diary in the possession of Mrs Cady, Caroline B. Gay wrote "Erastus moved into his new house October 3, 1872".

Grace F. Cowles married Erastus Gay 11/7/1867. They lived in the Edward Whitman house before they bought it, but when they were first married, lived in the present H.B. Carey Jr. house.

The old Robert Porter homestead stood approximately on the sites of the "Gay" and "Brick" houses.
44 Main Street

This house is pictured in the Farmington Book on page 90 as the residence of Erastus Gay. The house which stood on the site when the Gays bought the property is noted as "E. Whitman, Est." in the Baker and Tilden Atlas of 1869.

The land at this site appears on the map on page xvi of Mrs. Hurlburt's "Town Clerks", to have belonged originally to Thomas Webster, who was the fifth governor of Connecticut, serving from 1656 to 1657. Thomas Webster later sold to John Standley, although the latter's house stood a little to the south. Thomas Webster died in Northfield, Massachusetts in 1686.

The land and the old house which stood on it at the time, were purchased by Erastus Gay on October 23, 1871, from J. H. and Margaret McGorkle, consisting of two acres and "the homestead lately occupied by us". Mrs. McGorkle, the former Margaret Whitman, had inherited it from her father Edward Whitman. A brief genealogy is given in the following paragraphs.

The first Whitman to come to Farmington was the Rev. Samuel Whitman who became the third minister here in 1706. He was provided with a parsonage at Pequabuck Meadows, probably the same house in which the Rev. Roger Newton had lived, on the site of the present house at 145 Main Street. In 1710 he built his own home on the east side of Main Street, just north of Mountain Road, the house pictured on page 25 of the Farmington Book. Mr. Whitman's wife was Sarah Stoddard.

Solomon Whitman, 1710-1803, learned the trade of shoemaker, but never followed it. His wife was Susannah Cole. He inherited property from the forty acres which had first been allotted to his father, obtained other property, some of which was the land on which this house stands, built the house which previously stood on this site, farmed his property, and on his 90th birthday made a pair of shoes to show that he had not forgotten his trade. He served as Town Clerk from 1766 to 1790, and from the year 1772 lived in the house next north of this site.

Solomon Whitman, 1743-1801, was educated to be a civil engineer. He inherited much of his father's property. He married Mary Thomson, daughter of Abel Thomson and Ruth Gridley. He was a man of good judgement, successful and highly esteemed. He lived in the house his father had built, and his son Solomon lived in the house next north, mentioned also in the paragraph above, where sits No. 36 Main Street at the present time.

This Solomon was a civil engineer, or surveyor as usually termed at that time. He inherited from his father extensive property which he managed with great judgement, was most highly esteemed by all, and was a leading man in this his native town. He died of smallpox, December 23, 1801. As stated above, he stayed on in what had been his father's property, at 44 Main Street, and left it to his son Edward.

November 25, 1971
Children of Solomon and Mary Whitman were:

Almira 1773-1830 unmarried
Susannah m. Seth Cowles, see 56 Main St.,
Polly m. George Washington Hawley, son of Rufus Hawley of Nod, the present Robert August house on Old Farms Road, Avon,
Lemuel m. Emily Case, see 7 Waterville Rd.,
Samuel m. Catherine Carruthers of Ohio.
Nancy 1787-1830 unmarried, see 36 Main Street,
Solomon 1789-1861 see 36 Main Street,
Edward 1792-1862 m. Almira Olmstead, see below,
Fanny m. Seth Tillotson, see Town Farm Rd.

Edward Whitman, 1792-1862, was a farmer and inherited and occupied his father's homestead. His wife was Almira Olmstead, possibly the sister or daughter of Nathaniel Olmstead, the clockmaker mentioned by Julius Gay near the top of page 22 of the Farmington Book. They had five children:

Frederick twins, born 1827,
Francis
Ellen Mary born 1832
Elizabeth born 1826
Margaret born 1829

Nothing is known of the twins.

Ellen Mary Whitman married Edward Forbes and removed to New Mexico.

Elizabeth married Dr. William G. T. Morton, best known for his discovery in 1846 of anaesthesia. This claim was disputed by three other doctors, including Dr. Wells of Hartford, but according to the published Whitman Genealogy, Dr. Morton's claim was upheld, and he holds the honor of the discovery. He was of Charleston, Massachusetts, and they lived in the Boston area, although he died in New York City in 1868.

Margaret was married on October 3, 1855 to James H. McCorkle and they had three children:

Ellen Whitman McCorkle,
Elizabeth McCorkle and
James H. McCorkle, Jr.

Upon Edward Whitman's death in 1862 he left this property to his three daughters, all married by that time, although preserving life use of the house for his widow Almira.

The sisters Ellen and Elizabeth lived elsewhere, and it was the sister Margaret and her husband James McCorkle who sold this property on October 18, 1871 to Erastus Gay and his wife Grace F. Cowles.

November 25, 1971

Note: See more regarding Elizabeth McCorkle in the account of "New Place", the house at 53 Main Street.
There is no record of where the McCorkles lived after this sale. Mrs. McCorkle died in 1881. James McCorkle re-married, but died in 1882.

Erastus Gay and Grace Fessenden Cowles had been married on November 7, 1867. They are said to have lived for a time at 16 Main Street, possibly renting rooms from the Winships, who were the owners and still living at that time. The Gays moved into this old Whitman house upon its purchase in October 1871 but the house burned soon afterward.

Mrs. Gay, the former Grace F. Cowles, was the daughter of Francis Wintrop Cowles and Mary Lewis Root, of the house next south of this property. The Francis Cowles house is now officially known as 48 Main Street, to Miss Porter's School it is known as "Brick".

Erastus Gay's father William designed the new house for his son and daughter-in-law, the latter of whom always wished that she had been allowed to design it herself. They moved into the new house on October 3, 1872, less than a year after their purchase of the property. The barns to the rear burned some time after they had moved into their new house.

Mr. Gay spent much of his time at the store, see photos on pages 12 and 210 of the Farmington Book, which he had purchased from his father in 1869. He did serve as Town Treasurer in 1884 and 1885, a post his father had held for many years, and during the year 1885 was clerk and treasurer of the Farmington Fire Society. Mrs. Hurlburt mentions in "Town Clerks" some other civic responsibilities he had accepted. In June 1888 he was on a committee to select a site for the new Town Hall and in 1889 was appointed to a committee asked "to devise some way in which the debt of this town can be placed at a lower rate of interest". He was chairman of at least two special town meetings. In June 1892 it was to vote on building a "lock-up" and in May 1894 to grant a right-of-way to the Hartford and West Hartford Electric Railroad Company through the town. He was elected State Senator in October 1896.

For diversion he became a member of the Comet Band, organized in 1876 by Robert Treadwell.

Erastus Gay and Miss Sarah Porter were good friends, and being in the state legislature she called upon his aid in preserving Farmington, especially its Main Street, from encroachment by the Trolley Line, and took up with him other matters for the good of Farmington. She told Mr. and Mrs. Gay that if their daughters needed any courses that her school could offer, to send them along to whatever classes would benefit them. They were not officially enrolled as students, but they did get the desired instruction.

November 25, 1971
Erastus Gay and his family were important and well-respected people in Farmington. Their daughters attended Miss Porter's School, see previous page, and all married well. Russell Lee Jones, in his "Memories of Boyhood", says:

"Mr. Gay was always immaculately dressed and would come to the store with silk stovepipe hat and white tie".

Mr. and Mrs. Gay had eight children who lived to adulthood, after one who died in infancy. They were the following.

Mary Cowles Gay, born 1871, was married in May of 1896 to John Wallace Banks of Hartford, son of the Rev. John Banks of Guilford. Mr. Banks rose to be Judge of the Superior Court, and later of the State Supreme Court.

William Gay, born 1873, worked in his father's store as clerk and delivery man. He is pictured three times in the Farmington Book, a popular young man of the town. On page 78, well known as "Bingo" Gay, he is on the store delivery wagon with his young friend and admirer Jack Rourke, now of West Hartford. On page 151 he is a prospective traveler to Hartford, waiting for the trolley, and on page 207 is pictured as second selectman of the town. In 1911 he married Mary Emo of Diamond Glen, or Hatters Lane, daughter of Robert Emo and Rose Pentalov. They had one son. After his father sold the store, believed to have been shortly after the fire which almost destroyed it, William operated it for a brief time, then moved with his family to Springfield. Neither William nor his wife lived long after that, and his son is said to have been cared for by one of William's sisters.

Ruth Holmes Gay, born in 1875, was married in 1900 to Ernest Hyde Cady. They lived in Hartford until 1928, when they came to Farmington to live at 24 Main Street, the old home of Mrs. Cady's grandparents. Mr. Cady died in 1962, his widow in 1966. See more regarding the Cady family in the account of 24 Main Street.

Harold Gay, born 1877, died in Farmington in 1912, an engineer, according to records.

Alice Gay, born 1879, was a pupil of Mrs. Edward Porritt of 117 Main Street while she attended Miss Porter's School. She has been described by Joan Hooker, who lived during the 1890's in Oldgate, as "beautiful Alice Gay, who chaperoned our rides and picnics". She was married in 1903 to John Platt Cheney of the textile Cheneys of Manchester.

The next three pages will tell something of their lives and of their children.

November 25, 1971
Alice Gay, born in 1879, was married in 1903 to John Platt Cheney, born in Manchester, Connecticut, in 1868, the son of James W. Cheney and Harriet Woodbridge. James had worked his entire life, probably from the age of twelve or thirteen, for Cheney Brothers.

John Platt Cheney was a graduate of Yale's Sheffield Scientific School in 1890, having majored in chemistry. He too, worked for Cheney Brothers, became head chemist, and was in charge of the dye house, handling the dyeing and hand printing of the thread and fabrics.

Mr. and Mrs. Cheney had a fine life with their children, who were four, and all: born within a period of five years, thus having fairly mutual interests. The children all attended Manchester's public schools and the parents took them on camping and fishing trips and they played together. Manchester in the earlier years of the 20th century was not too different in character from Farmington.

The John P. Cheney house was known to be the oldest existing house in Manchester. It had been built by Benjamin Cheney and was deeded to his son Timothy "in the 30th year of the reign of our 'severen' Lord, George the Second of Great Britain - 1757". In 1943 they sold this house and moved to Farmington, living in a part of the Earl Deming house at 4 Mill Lane.

In 1948, their son Benjamin acquired and remodeled some apartments in Manchester and induced them to return. In 1956 they heard of a house available in Farmington, a very comfortable house converted from a barn in the rear of the Mary K. Ely house on Waterville Road, and they came to Farmington again, renting this house. Here they lived very happily until Mr. Cheney's death in May 1959, at the age of ninety.

In November 1959 Mrs. Cheney moved into the rear apartment of the Elm Tree Apartments on Farmington Avenue. Mrs. Cheney has lived here since that time. It is a very attractive apartment and has what amounts to its own yard and flower garden, which she thoroughly enjoys. Mrs. Cheney suffered a fractured hip in the 1930's and it has given her much trouble, but she has indomitably resisted its effects, and has never been entirely immobilized.

Children of the John Platt Cheneys are:

Carolyn, who married Derrance C. Brensen,
John Platt, Jr., " " Marie Tener,
Benjamin, " " Sarah Mallery,
Alice Gay, " " Maxwell Moore.

Derrance Brensen has been an insurance actuary, later served with the Social Security Board in Washington, D. C. They reside in Bethesda, Maryland. Their children are Derrance, Jr., and Alice Gay.

John Platt Jr., employed by Cheney Brothers, was for many years superintendent of conditioning and testing of fabrics, determination of their strength and durability, especially in parachute fabrics. Have always lived in Manchester, now retired, no children.

August 8, 1972

Note: Mrs. John Platt Cheney died Feb. 17, 1974 at the age of 95.
Benjamin Cheney, a 1930 Yale graduate in Liberal Arts, went into the insurance business and has been in it continuously, except for a four-year interlude during World War II. He chose service in the Coast Guard and spent thirty-eight out of forty-two months of service in active sea duty, a lot of it in the Philippine and other South Sea waters, handling supplies and ammo for General MacArthur's forces.

Mr. Cheney was in the insurance business for many years on Lewis Street in Hartford, operating with his partner as Morrissey and Cheney. His partner, by the way, was Gerard Morrissey, son of Farmington's Dr. M. J. Morrissey, general practioner here for several years before specializing in dermatology in Hartford. Mr. Cheney is now retired but he and his wife continue to enjoy many activities.

Mrs. Benjamin Cheney is the former Sarah Mallory, born in Cooperstown, New York, the daughter of Henry Mallory and Margaret Ussher, and graduate of Katherine Gibbs' School of Boston. Her mother was the daughter of Frederick Ussher, an engineer, the builder of many Hudson River bridges, who died in 1926. Henry Mallory in his later years took up watercolor painting, and the Cheneys have several of his well executed paintings in their living room, some being landscapes showing the Cooperstown area.

The Benjamin Cheneys lived in Manchester until 1957, when they bought their present home at 74 Mountain Spring Road from Elizabeth K. Smith. Their three children were:

Henry Mallory Cheney,
Sally Cheney, who lived only six years, and
Alice Gay Cheney.

Henry, a graduate of Marvelwood School, Cornwall, was married in September 1971 to Sherry Lynn Crowder, graduate of Roanoke Valley Hospital School of Nursing, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Albert Crowder of Roanoke, Virginia. They now reside in Berlin, Germany, where he is with the U. S. Army Security Agency. Alice has just finished her first year at Masters School in Dobbs Ferry, New York.

Alice Gay Cheney was married in 1933 to Maxwell Moore, an architect. They lived in New Haven, Kensington and West Hartford, before moving to Farmington to live. Here they arrived in 1941 and purchased the house at 22 Main Street. In 1950 they sold that house and moved into one which Mr. Moore had designed, and which was built for them, the house now designated as 1 Mountain Spring Road. Their children are:

Benjamin Cheney Moore, of Boston,
Alexander Moore, Providence, R. I.,
Gay, now Mrs. H. G. Phillips, New York, and
Martha, now Mrs. Ralph L. Maddry, West Hartford.

See sketch of 22 Main Street.

Alice Cheney Moore died in 1969.
We now return to the children of Mr. and Mrs. Erastus Gay.

Frank Winthrop Gay, born 1881, moved away from Farmington, was said to have been living in Jackson, Michigan, rumored to have become wealthy, and reported to have died in 1953.


Carolyn Bement Gay, born in 1884, was married in 1907 to Walter Cowles Booth, a lawyer of New York City, born in Danbury in 1884. To the writer it seems quite interesting that two old families of Main Street should have been joined in the person of Walter C. Booth, and that he now married back into Main Street again.

The two great-grandfathers of Walter C. Booth were, on his paternal side, Zenas Cowles of 148 Main Street (Oldgate), and on his maternal side, Deacon Samuel Richards of 10 Main Street. Two grandparents were Grandmother Emily Cowles on his father's side, and Grandfather Dr. John Richards on his mother's side. His own parents were David Belden Booth and Julia Ann Richards. Carolyn Gay Booth died in 1909 shortly after the birth of her daughter Ann. Ann Booth married Andrew Gordon of Farmington. A daughter Mary was born in 1934 but died at the age of one year, and her mother died soon after. The Gordons had resided during Mrs. Gordon's life, first in the Whitman House on High Street, now the Farmington Museum, and later at 80 Main Street.

Walter Cowles Booth died in West Hartford on December 23, 1971.

Erastus Gay sold the store property on January 28, 1910, thought to have been shortly after the fire which had almost completely destroyed it, to Harry C. Ney, who built, or rebuilt, on the site. Erastus Gay, born in 1843, died in 1912. Grace Cowles Gay, his widow, born one year later than he, died in 1915.

The record on the library card for this house indicates that Laura D. Barney, wife of D. Newton Barney, took title to this property in 1915, and it was deeded to Elizabeth V. Hale Keep in 1916. She was the widow of the first Robert Porter Keep, and was in 1916 headmistress of Miss Porter's School. She died in 1917 and in 1919 the title was passed from her estate to the possession of Miss Porter's School, the present owner. It has been in use as a girls' dormitory since 1916, known as the Erastus Gay house. It appears to have been changed very little, at least in outside appearance, from its original design.

August 8, 1972

This house has been endowed, through a "70's Fund" gift, by Mrs. Pamela Trowbridge Trimingham. This will assure its preservation and maintenance.

September 7, 1974