### Historic Resources Inventory

**Building and Structures**

**State of Connecticut**

**Connecticut Historical Commission**

**59 South Prospect Street, Hartford, Connecticut 06106**

(203) 566-3005

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**Identification**

1. **Building Name (Comma)**
   - Leila Dilworth Jones Memorial Library
   - Cowles, Elijah and Gad, Store

2. **Town City**
   - Farmington

3. **Street and Number (and or location)**
   - 54 Main Street

4. **Owner(s)**
   - Miss Porter's School, Inc.

5. **Use (Present)**
   - Library/Offices/Apartments
   - Store/Post Office

6. **Accessibility to Public**
   - Yes ☑ No ☐

7. **Style of Building**
   - Federal

8. **Materials**
   - Brick and foundation
   - Other (Specify)

9. **Structural System**
   - Load bearing masonry
   - Structural iron or steel

10. **Roof**
    - Material: Asphalt shingle
    - Other (Specify)

11. **Number of Stories**
    - 2½

12. **Condition (Structural)**
    - Excellent ☑ Good ☐ Fair ☐ Deteriorated ☐

13. **Integrity Location**
    - Original Site Moved

14. **Related Outbuildings or Landscape Features**
    - Barn ☐ Shed ☐ Garage ☐ Other landscape features or buildings (Specify)

15. **Surrounding Environment**
    - Open land ☐ Woodland ☑ Residential ☐ Scattered buildings visible from site

16. **Interrelationship of Building and Surroundings**
    - The Elijah and Gad Cowles Store faces east onto Main Street. Sited close to the road, it is bounded on three sides by historic residences belonging to Miss Porter's School.
**III**

This Federal-style building displays six bays and a gable roof. It recessed paneled entry way, stone lintels and sills, and enclosed fanlight highlight the building's dentil course located along the eave lines. The one-story addition, designed by architect Richard Kimball was erected in 1947 and blends in well with the main block. Six-over-six sash are found throughout.

### 19 HISTORICAL OR ARCHITECTURAL IMPORTANCE

In 1813 Seth Cowles and his three brothers Elijah, Jr., Gad, and Martin divided their property jointly owned through their father's successful mercantile business, Elijah Cowles and Company (FLR 37: 559). This deed gave Elijah, Gad, and Martin the "Liberty of erecting a store at the north corner of the garden" (today not existing). By 1818 Seth Cowles quit-claimed to Elijah, Jr. and Gad for $300 a small piece of land on Main Street---"being the same on which their brick store has been lately erected" (FLR 40:3). This statement dates the building to the years 1813-1818. Their store offered the products that Elijah Cowles and Company purchased from such faraway places as the West Indies and China, for the Cowles owned several ships that sailed from New York and New London. In 1826 Elijah, Jr.'s estate was divided between his sons James and Augustus (FPR 9:228). These brothers probably continued to operate the business and by 1850 divided several properties amongst themselves (FLR 51:259). James retained ownership of this brick store and four years later, in 1854, it passed to his son James L. Cowles, real estate and industrial entrepreneur in Unionville (FPR 11:269, 275). During and previous to his ownership the building was rented out and a pharmacy and post office, run by George Deming (1808-1872) was located here. Richard Henry (1818-1887) served as druggist and postmaster from 1872-79. Next, George D. and Richard H. Cowles purchased it for $1550 in 1865 and then the property was quit-claimed to Robert H. and Louise A. Cowles of Wallingford in 1888 (FPR 20:86). The Cowles sold it to Robert Porter Keep, headmaster of Miss Porter's School, Inc. in 1901. In 1943 it was deeded to Miss Porter's (see cont)

### SOURCES


### PHOTOGRAFER

Alex Paredes

### PHOTO VIEW

NW

### PHOTO NEGATIVE ON FILE

13:24A

### DATE

5/85

### NAME

Ruth A. Bedrosian

### DATE

2/86

### ADDRESS

27 Washington Street, Middletown, CT

### THREATS TO BUILDING OR SITE

- None known.  
- Highways  
- Vandalism  
- Developers  
- Other

- Renewal  
- Private  
- Deterioration  
- Zoning  
- Explanation

**HIST 6 NEWS 77 BACK.**
School. Today it serves as the Leila Dilworth Jones Memorial Library.

One of the street's most distinguished buildings, the Gad and Elijah Cowles Store remains one of a few brick commercial buildings remaining in Farmington's historic district. It exemplifies good characteristics of the Federal style and has historical associations with the Cowles family, operators of the prominent Elijah Cowles and Sons Company.
OWNER'S NAME: PORTER'S SCHOOL, MISS, INC.
1951- Leila Tilworth Jones Memorial Library
ADDRESS: 50 Main Street

DATE BUILT: ca 1813-18 FOR: Elijah and Gad Cowles
Addition & remodelling 1947 as a library

ARCHITECT: Architect for addition Richard A. Kimball


REFERENCES: "Farmington, Conn., 1906" pp 14, 15. "drug store erected between 1813 and 1818 by Elijah and Gad Cowles " and 'Miss S. J. Adgate's S Store.'

ALSO Cowles, Robert H. & Louisa A. Cowles from James L. Cowles a Passway north of the Brick Store belonging to said Robert H. & Louisa A. Cowles, 5/12/1890, Vol. 69, p 159: Cowles, James L. as residuary legatee of his father James Cowles all real estate 3/5/1859, Vol. 11, p 283, Prob. Rec.: The Inv. of the Est. of James Cowles included the Brick Store and Lot, $1200. ALSO Cowles, James from the estate of his brother, Augustus Cowles vby will his "store of goods" 3/18/1854 Prob. Rec. Vol. 11B p 182: Cowles, James and Augustus DIVISION AGREEMENT 2/24/1851, Vol. 51, p 259: James to have the lot and building formerly the General George Cowles Place, 12 acres, etc.: ALSO the Brick Store and land and a part of the Horse shed and land being 1/2 of the yard in front of said horse shed bounded n. on land of Francis W. & John E. Cowles, e. on highway, s. on Gad Cowles half part of said Brick store & w. on Augustus Ward: Cowles, James & Augustus from the Estate of their father Elijah Jr., by will, 2/7/1826, Vol. 9, p 228 Prob. Rec.: Cowles, Elijah and Gad from Seth for $300 a small piece of land on Main St., on which their brick store has been lately erected, the whole is 54' in width front & rear & 64 1/2' in length easterly & westerly on each side 7/17/1818, Vol. 40, p 3: Cowles, Elijah, Jonathan, Seth, Gad, and Martin in an Agreement of Division 7/24/1813, Vol. 37, p 559 agreed.
as follows concerning this land: Seth Cowles to have the house he now occupies for a lot with all bldgs., theron except the Ston Horse House & land running to its garden fence south & west to the west side of said horse House with liberty to Elijah, Gad, and Martin to erect a Store on the corner of the garden 54 feet front beginning at the north corner of the garden fence and to extend south & west as far as the red fence on the said Elijah, Gad & Martin paying him 800 dollars, the aforesaid lot bounded n. on Samuel Root, e. on hghy., s. on Chauncey Deming, w. on the river. The interest, if any, of Martin does not appear again. The Former Owners: Estate of Gad Cowles showed in the inventory that he owned the south half as a dwelling and 1/2 of the north half in common with Cowles Bros., see Vol.15, p 686,1873 Prob.Rec. Cowles, George D. from Horatio A. Cowles an undivided half (1/2 of the north half) of land on Main St., adjoining the house of Augustus Ward, n. on heirs of Martin Cowles, s. on A. Ward, containing the brick store formerly occupied by Gad Cowles & James & Augustus Cowles with the addition built in the rear, the interest hereby conveyed being 1/2 of the int. of Gad Cowles descended to me as one of his heirs. Vol.52, p 39. Cowles, George D. from Elijah Cowles same des. being 1/2 of the half of Gad Cowles, 11/7, 1849, Vol.52, p 50: Cowles, Elijah, Sr., lived where now stands the "Ward House" and left his five sons, Elijah, Jonathan References: Seth, Gad and Martin his real estate. His son Elijah, father of James and Augustus, lived with his sons across the street in the old Whitman house where "New Place" now stands and Seth took the homestead
James and Augustus lived in the "Whitman house" until they acquired the General George Cowles place where James later lived. They were in business together. Martin evidently did not go into the store with his brothers as was intended in the division agreement. The estate of Gad Cowles went to his brother Elijah 1846 Vol. 11, p 14, 23, 24. The estates of Gad and Martin Cowles were involved for many years in the French Spoliation claims. Cowles, Elijah and Jonathan from Noah Porter, all that Town (sic. land) lying under a Store occupied by Elijah Cowles and Co. 3/21/1797, Vol. 31, p 473: evidently a previous store about where this one now stands, but no description.

Richard Cowles death in the Civil War is noted twice in the Vital Records, once as 1862 and once as 1865.
The building on this site at present houses the Leile Dilworth Jones Memorial Library, the library of Miss Porter's School. The south portion was built between the years 1813 and 1818 by Elijah and Gad Cowles as a store, the north portion being added in 1947 as part of the remodeling which converted it to the library. It was shown on the Baker and Tilden Atlas of 1869 as "Store, P. O. and Res. G. D. Cowles and Bro." It is pictured on page 15 of the Farmington Book as Miss S. J. Adgate's Store, consisting at that time of the south portion only, of the present building.

Mrs. Hurlburt writes on page 365 of "Town Clerks" of the original settler on this property, as follows:

"William Hitchcock, or Hicock, with many various spellings, was an original proprietor and settler, but died soon. His land was sold before 1665 to Robert Porter, being recorded March 1665 in Porter's name. It was a parcel on which a dwelling house stood with barns, gardens and orchards containing five acres divided by the town highway running from the north to the southend of the town. John Lee lived just south and John Standly lived next north. This land has remained in the Porter family since that time. It is the part of the Porter School now occupied by the brick school store and apartments."

She also writes on page 369, regarding the second owner of the property, giving the following information, although not in these exact words.

Robert Porter was one of the seven who founded the first church here in October of 1652. He was married in 1644 to Mary Scott, daughter of Thomas Scott. Robert lived on land where now stands the brick store and apartments of the Porter School. His daughter Mary was born February 24, 1646, one of Farmington's first recorded births. His son John, a tailor, died at age 23. His son Thomas, born 1650, was a tailor and continued his brother's business.

Thomas Porter married Abigail Cowles, daughter of Samuel Cowles and Abigail Stanley, and inherited his father's property. William, son of Thomas, was married in 1711 to Mary Smith, daughter of Joseph Smith. Thomas gave him the woodlot at the corner of High Street and Mountain Road. William probably built on it the house similar to the Whitman House. This house which he built stood on the site of present 49 High Street, and was later the tavern of Joseph Porter which burned in 1886. See note in Farmington Book on page 155.

Thomas Porter also had a son Robert, born in 1697, who married Sarah Smith, born 1701. Robert Porter inherited this property. Robert's son Noah was Deacon Noah Porter, of whom Julius Gay speaks as follows: "the house was given to Noah by his father Robert on his (Noah's) marriage in 1764, and was occupied by him until 1781, when after the birth of his son Noah (the Rev. Noah) he moved to Town Farm Road."

January 20, 1972
Robert Porter in 1728 married Sarah Smith, who had been born in 1701, and they had six children:

- Rhoda
- Robert
- Noah (later Deacon)
- Sarah
- Abigail
- Robert

Deacon Noah Porter, born in 1732, had five children by his two wives, Mary Lewis and Rachel Merrill. These children were:

- Edward
- Robert
- Noah (the Reverend)
- Son
- Sophia

The Reverend Noah Porter, father of Miss Sarah, was the first child of the second wife.

March 31, 1973
The genealogy of the Porter family in America, to this point, is briefly as follows:

Robert Porter
m. (1) in 1644 Mary Scott,
(2) ca 1676 Hannah Judd Freeman
Robert Porter had come to America in the early 1630's and to Hartford with the Rev. Thomas Hooker

Thomas Porter 1650-1718
m. Abigail Cowles

Robert Porter 1698-1782
m. Sarah Smith 1701-1774

Deacon Noah Porter 1732-1818
m. in 1764 Mary Lewis, who died in 1777
m. later, Rachel Merrill 1743-1809

Rev. Noah Porter 1781-1866, the first child of his father's second wife. This is the Noah Porter who was pastor here from 1806 to 1866, and who was the father of Miss Sarah Porter. See more regarding the family in the account of 116 Main Street.

All of the above mentioned Porters lived in this same house until in 1781, when Deacon Noah Porter moved with his family to Town Farm Road.

After the Reverend Noah Porter was married, in 1808, he and his wife lived in the house at 116 Main Street, and in his later years Deacon Noah Porter came from Town Farm Road to live in his son's house.

Although Deacon Noah Porter left the house on Main Street and moved to Town Farm Road in 1781, he perhaps did not attempt to sell it immediately, but he perhaps did rent it, because when he gave title to Elijah and Jonathan Cowles on March 21, 1797, the deed read in part: "all the land lying under a store occupied by Elijah Cowles and Co." Whether Elijah Cowles had moved the old house, or had converted it to this store, is not known, but the writer leans to the belief that the latter was the case. He believes also that this may have been later moved across the street to the site of the present house at 47 Main Street. See account of that house.

In any case, sometime during the period from 1813 to 1818, the south portion of the present building on this site was built by Elijah and Gad Cowles, as another store building, the old one probably having been too old and inadequate for their use. On July 7, 1818, Elijah and Gad Cowles, for $300.00, received title to the land "on which their brick store was lately erected".

From 1818 until 1888 and perhaps even later than that, the property passed through many ownerships, whole and partial.

January 20, 1972
Names of the various title holders mentioned are; James and Augustus Cowles, brothers, James L. Cowles (son of James Cowles), Horatio A. Cowles, George Deming Cowles (son of Gen. George Cowles), Richard Henry Cowles (brother of George Deming Cowles), and Robert H. and Louisa Cowles (children of George Deming Cowles).

The Cowles Genealogy gives the following information regarding the last four mentioned above.

George Deming Cowles, 1808-1872, engaged in the drug business, was postmaster 1841-1872. His two children were Robert Henry Cowles, born 1833, and Louisa Augusta Cowles, born 1841.

Richard Henry Cowles, 1818-1887, died unmarried, was a druggist, was postmaster 1872-1879.


Louisa Augusta Cowles, unmarried, died in 1906.

It would appear that perhaps both George Deming Cowles and Richard Henry Cowles, brothers, operated drug stores in this building, and perhaps handled the mail here also, succeeding Solomon Whitman as postmaster. Mr. Whitman, who had lived at 36 Main Street, had been postmaster, probably between the terms of Deacon Richards and George Deming Cowles. The actual handling of the mail during Mr. Whitman's term was handled by his sister Nancy. See Farmington Book page 14.

It has been stated by Adrian Wadsworth, Sr., telling of the great fire of 1864, that one of the houses destroyed by the fire stood about on the site of, or perhaps just to the south, of the present house at 100 Main Street. He spoke of that as being a private family dwelling owned and occupied by George D. and Richard Cowles, druggists. They perhaps then moved into quarters above the store at 50 Main Street, since Baker and Tilden designate it in 1869 as "Store, P. O., and Residence." They were perhaps co-owners until the death of George Cowles in 1872.

The son and daughter of George Cowles, Robert H. and Louisa A., inherited at least a quarter interest after their Uncle Richard's death in 1887, and perhaps owned the whole property by 1901, as on December 23, 1901, they passed title to Robert Porter Keep.

Miss Sarah Adgate is stated in the Farmington Book as being the owner (or at least the operator) of the store in 1906, operating it as a drug store. Robert Porter Keep, Jr., and his sister Dorothea Keep, received title by quit-claim from their step-mother in 1906, having probably inherited from their father. Robert Porter Keep, Jr., later became headmaster of the school in 1917, and his sister became a director when it was incorporated in 1943. They passed title to the school on September 29, 1943.

January 21, 1972

George D. Cowles is said to have died in Northampton, Mass.
The Rev. Quincy Blakely was Congregational minister in Farmington from 1905 to 1937, and his wife became quite well acquainted of course, with many of the town's people. In 1954, nine years after "the parson's" death, she wrote of her memories of Farmington, published as a pamphlet entitled "Thirty-two Years of Farmington from the Parsonage". In it she mentioned the following regarding Miss Adgate:

"Miss Adgate, the village pharmacist, was an unusual woman, a graduate of Wellesley, a very buttoned-up person, always doing for others, especially children. But for grown-ups seemingly she had no interest. It was impossible to do her a kindness.

"I remember one little incident that was characteristic. I was making jelly one day and thought Miss Adgate had no time for such domestic duties, so I put four glasses into a little basket and sent it down to her. The basket was brought back to me with the message that she didn't care for Mrs. Blakely's jelly!

"We all understood her, were amused by her frankness, and loved her, but wished she would let us do more for her in her lonely life. She loved the children of the village and they loved her. Doing for them was her greatest joy. She had a parrot which she adored, and she was a very picturesque figure bicycling down the village street with the parrot on her shoulder. We felt Farmington lost a very great deal when she gave up the drug store and went back to her old home in Vermont".

Another Farmington resident said of her: "Any one who complained to Miss Adgate of a cold, got a little codeine on his tongue".

March 31, 1973
Miss Sarah Jane Adgate appears never to have owned the store building, may have taken over its occupancy and operation any time after 1887, which was the year in which Richard Henry Cowles had died. Miss Adgate operated it until 1922, owning the stock but not the store. She was a graduate pharmacist, and this was the only drug store in Farmington for some time. For friends she would also gladly prescribe remedies, if they had not the time to consult a doctor. Her hair pulled back tight, her spectacles way down on her nose, her bright green parrot "O'Pshaw" on her shoulder, she was a familiar sight to everyone in the village. The parrot rode her shoulder even when she was on her bicycle delivering prescription drugs. During the 1918 "flu" epidemic the doctors would often prescribe whiskey for their patients, but Miss Adgate made the final decision as to whether they would get it or not. Her ad in the Farmington Magazine of 1901 called hers "The Farmington Drug Store" and mentioned such wares as Films, Banjo Strings and Hot Water Bags and "a courteous parrot in attendance". She was often cross with the children but treated them well and they made May Baskets for her. She was friendly with everyone, but intimate with none, and covered up her kind-heartedness very well. Dorothy Hart remembered packages of goodies sent to her at Northfield Seminary. She often gave the children candy and Robert Smith recalls that she gave him his first sled. It has been said that she adopted a boy from Town Farm Road named William Gleck, not confirmed. She lived in quarters in the north side of the store at street level, moved to Vermont after she sold her stock in 1922.

In addition to Miss Adgate's apartment on the lower floor, there were two apartments upstairs, and members of the staff of Miss Porter's School lived there. Robert Smith's parents lived there when they first came to Farmington and worked for the school. Mr. and Mrs. John A. Spear lived here from 1946 until 1948, while they were waiting for the Wilsons to vacate the house at 80 Main Street, which became their home for many years.

Miss Adgate sold her stock to Frank Kremendahl in 1922. He took the drugs and most of the other stock, to what was formerly the Gay Store, north of the Corner House on Main Street, which he rented from Harry C. Ney and purchased from Mr. Ney in October 1925. He left here the stationery and school supplies and some toilet articles for the Porter School girls to buy, and Mrs. Kremendahl took care of this small business. A large room on the ground floor was now called the "Adgate Room", a sitting room, usually used by the school's girls for small social gatherings.

In 1947, when the building became the library for Miss Porter's School, the small stock of goods for sale to the school girls was moved to the basement. The Kremendah1's having ceased their participation in this activity several years previously.

January 21, 1972

From 1947 until 1960 this little store in the basement was operated by Mr. and Mrs. A. Joseph Tofani, and called "The School Supply Store". By 1960 the girls had much more freedom and could visit public local stores.

February 15, 1973
The conversion of the building to a library was financed by a gift from Mr. and Mrs. William Larimer Jones of Sewickley, Pennsylvania, and named the Leila Dilworth Jones Library in honor of their daughter. Leila Jones had attended Miss Porter's School from 1941 to 1944, and had completed a four-year college preparatory course in those three years. She had gone on to Vassar College, and after three years there had been killed in an automobile accident. This library was donated by her parents as a fitting memorial to her life. Leila's mother, the former Augusta Day Hall, had been a student here and was an upper class student at the time of Mrs. Elizabeth Keep's sudden death in 1917. Miss Hall, as an upper class girl, was a great help during the change of principals due to her calm leadership of the younger girls.

The re-modeling of the building was begun in 1947, and was completed early the next year. It was dedicated on February 11, 1948, and Mrs. John Philippides was the first librarian.

In 1963 the library was enlarged, a one-story addition was built on the north side, almost doubling the size of the library, but the upper floor was left unchanged.

January 21, 1972