Surrounded by large pines and shrubs, the James W. Halsted House faces east onto Garden Street. The Miss Porter's School's athletic fields are located across the street to the east and the bordering neighborhood contains similar nineteenth- and twentieth-century, single-family homes.
The original appearance of the James W. Halsted House is hidden behind numerous additions and alterations. A 1906 historic photograph of the house shows a simple two-story, two-bay, gable-to-street dwelling with few architectural embellishments. Additions include: the "flared" extension of the gable roof on the north and south elevations, the large, shed-roof dormer on the south elevation, and the large ells to the rear. The single-story, hip-roofed projection on the facade exhibits a small, enclosed, Colonial Revival-style entry porch enhanced with decorative fanlight and classical columns. Six-over-six sash are featured throughout the house.

In October of 1879 James W. Halsted purchased a one acre piece of land bordered to the east by the highway and to the west by the Farmington River from Mary L. R. Cowles (FLR 65:427). There is little historical information available concerning Halsted except that he was born in Farmington in 1845 and is recorded as being a "blackman" or "mulatto". A laborer by trade, he was married to Lucinda Brewster (b. 1834), a native of Norwich. Farmington during the mid-nineteenth century had a large abolitionist population and was a major stop on the Underground Railroad, so it is not surprising that Halsted was able to buy land and build a house in this period. In 1892 John Hagstrom bought the house for $400 (FLR 68:613). A native of Sweden, Hagstrom (b. 1860) was employed as a gardener/florist. In 1887 he married Mary A. Ryan (b. 1857) of Farmington. Mary Hagstrom received the property from her husband in 1919 (FLR 76:666) and sold it a year later to famous playwright, Winchell Smith (FLR 80:211). He acquired the property to house his employee, Arthur Wentworth Hall (1873-1945), the estate manager for the Winchell Smith Estate. In 1934 Hall purchased the house from Smith's estate (FLR 74:60) and it remained in the family until 1944.

Although it has been significantly altered, this house is historically significant for its association with its first owner, James W. Halsted.

Sources:

Photographer:
Alex Paredes

Date: 5/85

Negative On File: 1:23

Compiler:
Greater Middletown Preservation Trust

Address: 27 Washington Street, Middletown, CT

Threats to Building or Site:
X None Known

Other

Renewal

Private

Deterioration

Zoning

Explanation
OWNER'S NAME CRUIKSHANK, EARLE O. & SALLY M.
1950-res.

ADDRESS: 72 Garden Street

DATE BUILT: ca. 1880 FOR: James W. Halsted

ARCHITECT

MASTER-BUILDER


REFERENCES: "Farmington, Conn., 1906", p. 110. ('Residence of John Hagstrom.')
This house is pictured on page 110 of the Farmington Book as the residence of John Hagstrom.

Library records and Mrs. Hurlburt's notes indicate that this house was built in or near 1880, for James W. Halsted, on land purchased by him on October 23, 1879, from Mary L. R. Cowles. The writer has determined that this Mary Cowles was the former Mary Lewis Root, born 1812, but in 1879 the widow of Francis W. Cowles who had died the year previous. They had lived at 48 Main Street.

Nothing is known of Mr. Halsted.

The house was sold on October 13, 1892, by James E. Halsted to John Hagstrom. Mr. Hagstrom's wife was the former Mary Ryan, and they had three sons and two daughters. The names of Edward, Donald and Frank have been mentioned, and a daughter Alice. As to Mr. Hagstrom's occupation, oldtimers say "He jobbed around".

Mary Hagstrom inherited some time prior to 1920, and on November 19 of that year she sold to Winchell Smith.

Mr. Smith purchased this house for the use of Arthur W. Hall, who worked for Mr. Smith, probably managing for him the grain and feed business on Farmington Avenue which presently houses the McCallum Motors Supply Company, 1371 Farmington Avenue. Mrs. Hall, Bessie Lee Hall, is said to have been an artist, employed by Sage Allen in Hartford. Mrs. Hurlburt's records show that the Halls built the large recreation room to the rear.

Winchell Smith died in 1933 and the Halls purchased the house from his estate on September 7, 1934. The building at 70 Garden Street has been under the same ownership as this house at #72, at least through 1952. Mrs. Hall used the smaller building as her studio, then later they made a residence of it, calling it the "Little House", and lived there, perhaps renting #72 to others.

The Halls sold both houses in 1944 to Earle O. and Sally M. Cruikshank, who used the larger house as their home. They had perhaps rented it prior to purchase, as they lived there for "about 34 years". They made some changes from time to time, and this house eventually consisted of nine rooms and three baths.

The daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Cruikshank, Sally Lou, married Rodney Southwick Chase, formerly of 164 Main Street, and she and her husband remodeled #70 Garden Street and lived there for some time, later selling to Mr. and Mrs. W. Bruce Ashworth, and themselves moving to West Hartford.

Mr. and Mrs. Cruikshank sold this house in 1973 to Mr. and Mrs. John Bernard, and moved to Farmington Woods, Avon, Connecticut.

December 28, 1973