Facing west onto Colton Street, the John Cole, Jr. House sits above a brownstone retaining wall. Open pastures border the property to the north and a religious retreat sits to the east and south. Colton Street is lined with both Colonial-period and modern dwellings, dating from the early eighteenth century to the present.
This interesting Colonial-period home is oriented gambrel-to-street and displays an unusual lean-to addition giving the roof a unique sloping "saltbox" appearance. The entry portico, a later addition, features slender classical columns and a gable roof. A one-and-one-half-story ell with end chimney and large gable-roofed dormer extends from the north elevation. Twelve-over-eight sash are exhibited throughout most of the house, although a number of six-over-six sash are featured. A rear ell and open frame porch have been incorporated onto the east elevation.

The first mention of a building on this lot is in 1683/84 when John Scovil sold John Cole, Jr., a four-acre parcel of land with a dwelling house for £46 (FLR 5:595). It appears that Cole (1667-1708) erected a new dwelling on the lot around 1700, because his inventory in 1708 listed a house and homestead worth £110 and part of an old house valued at £2 (HPR 1280). John Cole, Jr., the son of John Cole, Sr., an early Farmington settler married Mahitible Loom; in 1691 and raised seven children. John, Jr. willed the north half of the house lot to his eldest son, John III, and the south half to his youngest son, Matthew in 1708 (HPR #1280). In May of 1725 Matthew sold his brother, John, his rights in his father's estate (FLR 4:292). Three months later Thomas Porter purchased the four-acre parcel from Cole for £105 (FLR 4:295). Thomas Porter (1700-1726) was the eldest son of Deacon Timothy and Susannah (Bull) Porter. He died shortly after acquiring the house and it appears that the homestead was distributed to his siblings: Timothy, Louise, Esther, and Ebenezer Porter. Ebenezer (1702-1750) took up residency here in 1737 and received full title of the property (FLR 7:196). He lived here with his wife, the former Annah Porter and seven children. His probate inventory dated 1751 listed the four-acre homestead with dwelling house and cow house (HPR 4340). Ebenezer willed all his estate to his three youngest sons: Thomas, John, and Ebenezer (HPR 4340). It is not recorded how the estate was distributed, but appears that John took title of the homestead for in 1778 John Porter, Jr. sold the same four acres with buildings to Eneas Cowles for £160 (FLR 22:226). Eneas Cowles (1740/1-1809) was the eldest son of Thomas and Ruth (Newell) Cowles. In 1765 he married Esther Bird (1738-1784) and after her death married Phebe Dickerman (1754-1803) in 1784. Nine children were born to both marriages. (see cont. pg.)

Photographer
N. Ainspan
Date 4/86

View W
Negative on file 15:13A

Photographed by Elizabeth R. Hart Date 4/86

Compiled by Greater Middletown Preservation Trust

Address 27 Washington Street, Middletown, CT

Subsequent Field Evaluations


Threats to Building or Site

None known

Highways

Vandalism

Developers

Other

Renewal

Private

Deterioration

Zoning

Explanation

This interesting Colonial-period home is oriented gambrel-to-street and displays an unusual lean-to addition giving the roof a unique sloping "saltbox" appearance. The entry portico, a later addition, features slender classical columns and a gable roof. A one-and-one-half-story ell with end chimney and large gable-roofed dormer extends from the north elevation. Twelve-over-eight sash are exhibited throughout most of the house, although a number of six-over-six sash are featured. A rear ell and open frame porch have been incorporated onto the east elevation.

The first mention of a building on this lot is in 1683/84 when John Scovil sold John Cole, Jr., a four-acre parcel of land with a dwelling house for £46 (FLR 5:595). It appears that Cole (1667-1708) erected a new dwelling on the lot around 1700, because his inventory in 1708 listed a house and homestead worth £110 and part of an old house valued at £2 (HPR 1280). John Cole, Jr., the son of John Cole, Sr., an early Farmington settler married Mahitible Loom; in 1691 and raised seven children. John, Jr. willed the north half of the house lot to his eldest son, John III, and the south half to his youngest son, Matthew in 1708 (HPR #1280). In May of 1725 Matthew sold his brother, John, his rights in his father's estate (FLR 4:292). Three months later Thomas Porter purchased the four-acre parcel from Cole for £105 (FLR 4:295). Thomas Porter (1700-1726) was the eldest son of Deacon Timothy and Susannah (Bull) Porter. He died shortly after acquiring the house and it appears that the homestead was distributed to his siblings: Timothy, Louise, Esther, and Ebenezer Porter. Ebenezer (1702-1750) took up residency here in 1737 and received full title of the property (FLR 7:196). He lived here with his wife, the former Annah Porter and seven children. His probate inventory dated 1751 listed the four-acre homestead with dwelling house and cow house (HPR 4340). Ebenezer willed all his estate to his three youngest sons: Thomas, John, and Ebenezer (HPR 4340). It is not recorded how the estate was distributed, but appears that John took title of the homestead for in 1778 John Porter, Jr. sold the same four acres with buildings to Eneas Cowles for £160 (FLR 22:226). Eneas Cowles (1740/1-1809) was the eldest son of Thomas and Ruth (Newell) Cowles. In 1765 he married Esther Bird (1738-1784) and after her death married Phebe Dickerman (1754-1803) in 1784. Nine children were born to both marriages. (see cont. pg.)

Photographer
N. Ainspan
Date 4/86

View W
Negative on file 15:13A

Photographed by Elizabeth R. Hart Date 4/86

Compiled by Greater Middletown Preservation Trust

Address 27 Washington Street, Middletown, CT

Subsequent Field Evaluations


Threats to Building or Site

None known

Highways

Vandalism

Developers

Other

Renewal

Private

Deterioration

Zoning

Explanation

This interesting Colonial-period home is oriented gambrel-to-street and displays an unusual lean-to addition giving the roof a unique sloping "saltbox" appearance. The entry portico, a later addition, features slender classical columns and a gable roof. A one-and-one-half-story ell with end chimney and large gable-roofed dormer extends from the north elevation. Twelve-over-eight sash are exhibited throughout most of the house, although a number of six-over-six sash are featured. A rear ell and open frame porch have been incorporated onto the east elevation.

The first mention of a building on this lot is in 1683/84 when John Scovil sold John Cole, Jr., a four-acre parcel of land with a dwelling house for £46 (FLR 5:595). It appears that Cole (1667-1708) erected a new dwelling on the lot around 1700, because his inventory in 1708 listed a house and homestead worth £110 and part of an old house valued at £2 (HPR 1280). John Cole, Jr., the son of John Cole, Sr., an early Farmington settler married Mahitible Loom; in 1691 and raised seven children. John, Jr. willed the north half of the house lot to his eldest son, John III, and the south half to his youngest son, Matthew in 1708 (HPR #1280). In May of 1725 Matthew sold his brother, John, his rights in his father's estate (FLR 4:292). Three months later Thomas Porter purchased the four-acre parcel from Cole for £105 (FLR 4:295). Thomas Porter (1700-1726) was the eldest son of Deacon Timothy and Susannah (Bull) Porter. He died shortly after acquiring the house and it appears that the homestead was distributed to his siblings: Timothy, Louise, Esther, and Ebenezer Porter. Ebenezer (1702-1750) took up residency here in 1737 and received full title of the property (FLR 7:196). He lived here with his wife, the former Annah Porter and seven children. His probate inventory dated 1751 listed the four-acre homestead with dwelling house and cow house (HPR 4340). Ebenezer willed all his estate to his three youngest sons: Thomas, John, and Ebenezer (HPR 4340). It is not recorded how the estate was distributed, but appears that John took title of the homestead for in 1778 John Porter, Jr. sold the same four acres with buildings to Eneas Cowles for £160 (FLR 22:226). Eneas Cowles (1740/1-1809) was the eldest son of Thomas and Ruth (Newell) Cowles. In 1765 he married Esther Bird (1738-1784) and after her death married Phebe Dickerman (1754-1803) in 1784. Nine children were born to both marriages. (see cont. pg.)

Photographer
N. Ainspan
Date 4/86

View W
Negative on file 15:13A

Photographed by Elizabeth R. Hart Date 4/86

Compiled by Greater Middletown Preservation Trust

Address 27 Washington Street, Middletown, CT

Subsequent Field Evaluations


Threats to Building or Site

None known

Highways

Vandalism

Developers

Other

Renewal

Private

Deterioration

Zoning

Explanation
Anson Cowles inherited the house from his father's estate in 1810 (FLR 6:322). He was the eldest child of Eneas' first marriage and was a shoemaker by trade. Anson and his brother Ira were partners in the importing firm of Anson and Ira Cowles. In 1807 he married Sarah Olds and they had three children, two who lived to adulthood. Anson died in the West Indies in 1812 while on a voyage with his brother. The homestead was distributed to the widow Sally (Sarah), son Cyrus, and daughter Sarah (FPR 6:64, 160). In 1843 Ira Hadsell acquired the property from the heirs of Anson Cowles (FLR 48:414). Hadsell presumably rented out the property and in 1849 sold the house and surrounding land to Richard O. Connell (FLR 49:508). Three years later in 1853 Curtiss Porter purchased the property for $1025 (FLR 52:507). He sold the "Cowles Place" to Joseph H. Colton of New York City in the spring of 1854 (FLR 53:185). Mr. Colton from whom Colton Street takes its name, was the superintendent of the Hammond Gun Shop along Zack's Brook. He later erected a larger house to the rear of the older house and resided there until 1861 when both were sold to Austin F. Williams (FLR 57:171). Anna M. Treadwell, the wife of Robert B. Treadwell bought the place known as "Colton Hill" in 1872 (FLR 64:127). In 1890 Margaret V. Hamilton of Fort Wayne, Indiana, acquired "Colton Hill" from Mr. Treadwell (FLR 69:162). In 1902 Lewis A. Storrs acquired the property and used the large house as a summer residence, renting this older building, known as "The Gate House" (FLR 71:563). Since 1910 the property has passed through numerous owners.

One of the oldest dwellings standing along Colton Street, the John Cole, Jr. House is architecturally notable for its gable-to-street orientation and state of preservation. The building's many additions demonstrate the changing needs of various owners during the previous 285 years.
This house is pictured on page 130 of the Farmington Book as "The Colton Place, Residence of Mrs. Hattie M. Stinhour". It appears on Baker and Tilden's 1869 Atlas as "A. F. Williams, Trustee".

Mrs. Hurlburt's listing on page xx of "Town Clerks" shows it as #72 on her map of page xvi, original owners being Nathaniel Cole, 1722 John Rev, and Thomas Cowles.

Mrs. Hurlburt wrote this house up in 1948 for the Colonial Dames' Society, as the Bissell-Wilson house, noting it also as "The Gate House". She shows construction to have been before 1713 and for Dr. John Cole, whose son Nathaniel acquired full title from other heirs and in 1719 sold to John Rev, who in turn sold to Thomas Cowles in 1742. Title passed to his son Eneas, born in 1741, who was first married in 1765 to Esther Bird, 1738-1784, daughter of Samuel Bird and Eunice Wadsworth. His second marriage was to Phebe Dickerman, 1754-1803, daughter of Joseph Dickerman and Lois Perkins. Thomas Cowles was a private in Capt. Bidwell's first company, Col. Fisher Gay's 15th Regiment, in the Revolutionary War.

From Eneas Cowles title was passed to his son Anson, whose date of birth is not presently known to the writer. Anson Cowles was married in 1807 to Sarah Olds. He was a shoemaker, living on his father's homestead. He was in business, perhaps an importing business, with his brother Ira, under the name of Anson and Ira Cowles. The three children of Anson Cowles were:

- Ruth, born 1808, died in the same year,
- Sarah, born 1809, married Amos Brama of West Htfd.,

Anson Cowles died in 1812 in the West Indies, where he had gone with his brother Ira. His widow, in 1827, married John Thomson, a widower with five children. She bore him one more, Nancy Catherine Thomson, in 1828. Nancy was married in 1852 to George N. Whiting, a widower, who in 1875 purchased what was later to become the John Rourke house west of what is now the Corner House.

The library card states that in 1843 John Thompson and his wife sold the Colton Street house to Ira Hadsell.

Mrs. Hurlburt tells of Ira Hadsell that he was named on November 26, 1847, to be a member of the committee to meet with the Ecclesiastical Society regarding the construction of a new town house, or record office. That building was later built, and was the building pictured on page 93 of the Farmington Book, and also appears on page 204 as the background for the photo of Town Clerk Charles Brandegee. Mr. Hadsell was elected selectman and as a member of the Board of Relief, on October 3, 1859.

February 13, 1974
Ira Hadsell may not have lived here. He was owner at different times, and seller, of several Farmington houses, and the writer believes he dealt in real estate as a business. This house he sold in 1849 to Richard and Eliza O'Connell. They in turn sold to Curtis Porter in 1852.

In 1854 it was sold to Joseph Colton. Mrs. Hurlburt tells of him on page 158 of "Town Clerks" as follows:

"The Hammond gun shop on Zack's Brook made firelocks for soldiers in both the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812. It was here that Mr. Colton, who built on Colton Street in Farmington, learned his trade and superintended the work".

Mr. Colton later built for himself the house pictured on page 130 of the Farmington Book as "The property of Lewis A. Storrs, Residence of Curtis C. Cook". Sometimes spoken of as "Colton's Folly", it may have been the reason that the Gate House was taken over by "Austin F. Williams, Trustee" in 1866, perhaps as trustee in bankruptcy.

The later Harold Risley, born in Farmington, who lived from childhood in Unionville but always kept close touch with Farmington, has stated that his grandfather and grandmother, Charles and Viola Palmer Blakesley, lived in this house for some years. They had been married in 1849 by Henry J. Fox, Methodist Minister. Mr. Blakesley died here. That may have been during the trusteeship of Mr. Williams, and later the ownership of Robert B. Treadwell.

From the time of Mr. Colton's construction of his larger house on the hill, both that and this smaller one were for many years under the same ownership.

Purchase by Robert B. Treadwell was in 1873. Robert Treadwell, the son of Thomas Treadwell and Camilla M. Bryan, had been born in Albany, New York. His father had been born in Farmington, taken by his parents to Albany as a child, and was reared and pursued a successful business career there. See 92 Main Street, where he lived after returning to Farmington.

Robert Treadwell's wife was the former Anna Maria Williams, whom he had married in 1859. She died in 1892.

Mr. Treadwell sold this Gate House in 1890 to Margaret V. Hamilton, who is unknown to the writer.

Lewis A. Storrs purchased from her in 1902. He purchased the upper house also, "Colton's Folly", using it as a summer home. He perhaps rented this house, or possibly used it as housing for his grounds man.

The resident in this house in 1906 is stated in the Farmington Book as Mrs. Hattie M. Stinhour. Whether she worked for him or was a tenant is not known.

February 13, 1974

122.
Curtis C. Cook purchased from Mr. Storrs in 1910, but also is not known to the writer. Henry W. and Olive I. Kyte purchased from him in 1911, also unknowns, and Harold Douglas purchased in 1912.

Harold Douglas was mentioned in the Hartford Courant of October 4, 1914, as "the well-known commercial artist of Hartford".

The large house on the hill was destroyed by fire around 1920, and during the ownership by Mr. Douglas, who lived in that house, although he owned this one also.

The Richard M. Bissell family had already made arrangement to purchase both properties, prior to the fire, and they went ahead with the purchase, living in the house at 130 Main Street, at that time the property of Mrs. Riddle, while a new house was built for them above the Gatehouse.

The former Clare Phelps, now Mrs. Arthur R. Bray, who lived at 12 Colton Street in her youth, says:

"Helen Scarth had her Farmington Book Shop in the Gatehouse when I lived there, and I worked there on a part-time basis. I also worked in the bookshop when it was located across from the Corner House".

The Gatehouse was probably used by the Bissells as a guest house, but for some five years in the late 1920's and early 1930's it was occupied by Mrs. Mary Gaskell, formerly a resident of Minnesota, and a sister of either Mr. or Mrs. Bissell. She had a permanent companion with her, as she had been handicapped by a stroke.

After Mrs. Gaskell's death it was occupied until 1938 by the Hector Prudhomme, now of Canton Center, Mrs. Prudhomme being the former Ann Carolyn Bissell, daughter of the Bissells who owned and occupied the large new house above.

Mr. Prudhomme is Hector Charles Prudhomme, Jr. His father was of Belgian birth, of the same name, and his mother was the former Nora Peart, an Irish girl.

The Prudhommes had been married in 1928 and moved to New York where he was employed by the banking firm of Murphy and Company. He is bilingual, so after a year or so he was sent to Paris to open a branch there. France soon went off the gold standard, making business with them difficult, so the Paris office was closed and he was sent to London, where they stayed for a couple of years. Mr. Prudhomme then accepted employment with the Connecticut Bank and Trust Company of Hartford. After the Gatehouse had been somewhat enlarged for their use -- kitchen modernized -- one bath and a utility room added, and a two-story ell added to the west side of the house, the Prudhommes moved in here, occupying it until 1938, when they bought the 100-acre property where they now reside.

February 13, 1974
Mr. Prud’homme entered the United States Foreign Service just a few years later, was in West Germany some three years, then was assigned to Washington, D. C. He joined the International Bank then and was assigned to Paris, after which he returned to Washington. They were away some twelve years, and rented the Canton Center property for that period. Mr. Prud’homme entered the field of education later, and as of 1971 was in Administration at the University of Hartford. As of May 1971 the Prud’homme children were:

Hector Peart Prud’homme, living in New York. His wife is the former Erica Childs, niece of the TV cooking instructor Julia Childs,

Anthony Prud’homme, living in London, England. His wife is the former Rachel Childs, Erica's sister,

Richard Bissell Prud’homme married Sarah Anderson of Richmond, Virginia, where they now reside.

Hector C. Prud’homme was mentioned in a newspaper article of November 11, 1972, as Senior Vice-President of the University of Hartford, having been main speaker at the Memorial Service for Roland F. Lecarbeau, former Dean of the Samuel I. Ward Technical College.

Mrs. Hector Prud’homme, MPS 1918-1921, was noted in the Hartford Courant of February 27, 1972, as a very active member of the Hartt Opera-Theater Guild.

Richard Merwin Bissell, Sr., of the large house above, died in 1941. His widow continued living in the large house, but usually spent winters in Washington, D. C., where her son and daughter could usually be found.

The writer has no information as to who occupied the Gatehouse from 1938 until 1948, but in that latter year it was sold to Walter O. Wilson.

During the first year of the Wilson's ownership Mrs. Hurlburt made up her study of the house for the Colonial Dames Society, as mentioned in the third paragraph of this sketch. She said that the construction of the Gatehouse was not particularly heavy. The fireplace was 56 inches wide. The domed brick oven in the old kitchen was all original, but the brickwork facing it, and that fireplace, are new and recent. The heavy end beams on the long side of the house, of the second story, were 10" square, and cased. Casings, walls, floors and ceiling were not original. An old well and brownstone wall were on the premises. Mrs. Prud’homme states that the stone wall formerly extended for the full length of the property along Colton Street.

January 23, 1973
Residents in this house from 1948 were Mr. and Mrs. Walter O. Wilson and family. They had come to Farmington in 1942. Mr. Wilson had spent his summers in Connecticut since childhood, and had become very desirous of living in this state. In 1958 they rented the house at 158 Main Street, the old Root homestead, but owned at that time by Wilmarth S. Lewis. Two years were spent there, and then the Wilsons moved to the Hart house at 80 Main Street, the house which had been so well restored, and at that time was owned by Mrs. Wilmarth Lewis. They occupied that from 1944 to 1948, and then this house at 23 Colton Street became available for purchase so they bought it and settled down. Mrs. Wilson lived here until 1970, although Mr. Wilson had died in September 1955.

Walter Otis Wilson was born in Chicago, the son of Walter Herbert Wilson and Mary B. Otis. He served with the Red Cross in World War I, and later became a stock broker. His work while they lived in Farmington was with Travelers Insurance Company. Mrs. Wilson, the former Marion Curtis, was born in Chicago, the daughter of Charles Chauncey Curtis and Adaline Louise Miller. Mr. Curtis was part owner and manager of the Fine Arts Building, South Michigan Avenue, Chicago. She was a professional social service worker.

The Wilsons had two children, Marion A. Wilson, who has followed a secretarial career, first in Boston, presently in Washington, D. C., and David O. Wilson, who was a World War II casualty in December 1944.

Mrs. Wilson, due to serious illness, vacated this house in February 1970, sold it later that year, and presently resides in Washington, D. C., from where she wrote on November 24, 1970.

Purchaser on October 1, 1970, from Hartford National Bank, acting for Mrs. Wilson, was Harriet K. Maxwell. It is not known by the writer that she ever occupied the house.

She sold it on March 2, 1971, to Lee S. Greenwood II and his wife Pamela S. Greenwood.

January 23, 1973
**OWNER'S NAME:** Wilson, Walter O. & Marion  

**ADDRESS:** 29 Colton St.  

**DATE BUILT:** ca 1725  
**FOR:** Thomas Cowles Jr  
**possibly 1680 for Thomas Scovel vol 5, p.595**

**ARCHITECT**  

**MASTER-BUILDER**  

---

**FORMER OWNERS:**  
- Douglas from Henry W. & Olive  
- Kyte, 18 acres & bldgs, 8/22/1912, vol. 77, p. 432  
- Kyte H.W. from Curtis C. Cook, 7/20/1911, vol. 78, p. 235  
- Cook from Lewis A. Storrs, 6/1/1910, vol. 1 p. 213  
- Storrs from Margaret V. Hamilton, 6/10/1902, vol. 71, p. 563  
- Hamilton from R.B. Treadwell, 7/3/1890, vol. 69, p. 162  
- Treadwell from A.F. Williams, Tr. 11/26/1873, vol. 64, p. 127  
- Williams from Joseph H. Colton, 10/19/1866, vol. 57, p. 171  
- Colton from Curtis Porter, 3/21/1854, vol. 53, p. 185 (over)  

**REFERENCES:**  
- "Farmington, Conn. L906" p. 130
"6 acres known as the Cowles Place": Porter from Richard & Eliza O'Connell 10/12/1852 vol. 52 p507: O'Connell from Ira Hadsell 4/7/1849. vol. 49, p. 509, bounded north on land of Timothy Cowles south on land of Samuel Deming: Hadsell from John Thomson and Sarah (O'ds) Cowles) Thomson his wife and heirs of Anson Cowles (Sarah was first the wife of Anson Cowles) 6/24/1843, vol. 48 p44: Anson Cowles by inheritance from his father Eneas Cowles who died 1809: Anson Cowles died 1812 in the West Indies leaving widow Sally children Cyrus and Sarah (Sally in estate) Eneas from father Thomas Jr by will: Thomas Jr from Thomas Cowles by will: Thomas Cowles from John Cowles by inheritance: John Cowles from John Scovel 4 acres & house 2/29/1683 Vol. 5, p. 595.

Eneas Cowles gave his son Anson by will the north home lot with all buildings north on Deacon Martin Bull. Eneas was born 1740 and Thomas Cowles Jr probably lived here before he purchased the middle part of the Cowles home lot on Main St in 1748 from Nathaniel. This house is similar in architecture to others in Farmington built in the 1680's and 1690's. It has been greatly added to.