The George Dunham House faces south onto Merriman Street at the corner of Lovely Street. Two large old trees stand prominently to the southeast and southwest, framing the house. To the rear tall pine trees line the northern boundary.
This Italianate-style, three-bay house exhibits numerous alterations that include a full-facade classical portico with fluted columns. The columns support a semicircular flat roof with an entablature, dentil course, and balustrade. An arched, central door with four raised panels and two lights is flanked by two full-story bay windows (modern additions). The second story features two paired windows and a center arched window of four-over-four sash. The east elevation features a two-story ell with a hip roof and one-story garage. Facing south off the first story of the ell is a small open porch with turned columns and stickwork. The west elevation displays full-length paired windows with bracketed window heads on the first floor and paired windows with bracketed sills on the second story. Paired eyebrow windows beneath the entablature encircle the house. Twin interior brick chimneys rise from the main block.

George Dunham was born in 1830 in Southington to Chauncey and Sylvia (Langdon) Dunham. At the age of 21 he left his father's farm to become a bolt header for Miller Bolt Works of Southington. George married Isabella Bradley of Meriden in 1853; she died three years later. In 1859 George acted as superintendent of Langdon's Bolt Works in Unionville. When Langdon died in 1860, George Dunham and Andrew S. Upson purchased the company, which in 1864 became the Union Nut Company (later the Upson Nut Company). In 1861 George married his second wife, Mary Jane Johnson (b. 1839/40, Farmington), daughter of Daniel and Harriet Johnson. The Dunhams had four children: Isabella B. (by Isabella Bradley), George M. (b. 1862), Edgar G. (b. 1867), and Clayton L. (b. 1870). In 1864 he purchased a 1 acre lot on Lovely Street from Eli D. Preston (FLR 60:112). In the spring of 1868 Mary purchased a 3/4 acre lot from Albert R. Nettleton, adjacent to the lot purchased by her husband (FLR 61:1). That fall the Dunhams took out a joint mortgage on the combined properties which states "with a dwelling house now being built" (FLR 61:58). In 1865 George invented the Dunham forged nut machine, one of several inventions. He also served as selectman and justice of the peace in Unionville. Over the years George and Mary sold strips of their lot to neighboring property owners. In 1918 upon George's death, Mary moved to Cleveland and quit-claimed the property to the Farmington Savings Bank (FLR 76:638).

The George Dunham House is historically significant due to its associations with George Dunham, a Unionville industrial entrepreneur and civil servant. Although the house has been severely altered, disguising its original historic appearance, it contributes to the streetscape.

This property was originally much larger (1.5 acres) and in two pieces until the Dunhams bought it. George bought 1 acre, lot A, from Eli Preston in 1864; his wife Mary Jane bought lot B, 0.5 acre, from A.R. Nettleton in 1868. See Map 1. Even though the property was legally in Mary Jane's name (59-453), the Dunhams took out several joint mortgages. The first one, dated Sept. 2, 1868, to Farmington Savings Bank, specifies "with a dwelling house
now being built” (61-58). So the house was built in 1868. Other mortgages were taken with FSB in 1869 (63-29), with George's brother Charles in 1876 (65-174), again in 1884 with FSB (53-385), and in 1886 with the Canton Trust Co. (68-215).

Map 1 -- 1868

A biography of George Dunham appears in "Illustrated Popular Biographies of Conn. 1891", p. 172 in the Farmington Room, Village Library. It is copied and included here.

GEORGE DUNHAM, UNIONVILLE: Inventor and Manufacturer.

George Dunham was born at Southington, April 7, 1830. His early life, up to the age of twenty-one, was spent in hard work upon his father's farm, with the exception of a few months' schooling each year until he was eighteen, when he finished with one term at Lewis Academy in Southington. As soon as he became of age he went to work at Miller's Bolt Works in Southington, heading bolts by hand for about a year and a half (this was before any machines for heading were invented). He then worked for about two years at East Berlin and Southington on Timman's machines. After that he was employed by the Miller Bolt Works to make tools for threading bolts and nuts. He worked at this business, having charge of the finishing department in addition a part of the time, until 1859, except in dull times, when, the factory being closed, he turned to farming and such outdoor work as could be had. In February, 1859, he went to Unionville as superintendent of Langdon's Bolt Works. In something more than a year from that time Mr. Langdon died, when, in connection with Mr. A. S. Upson, he purchased the business. He made improvements upon nearly all the machinery then used, many of these improvements being still in use. In 1863 he invented what is now called the Dunham forged nut machine, which was highly successful, and up to this time has not been superseded for this class of work, either here or in England. Having at this time no knowledge of drafting, this machine was built without drawings, the inventor carrying all the details in his head. Since then he has invented a number of machines, mostly automatic, for cheapening the product by doing several different things in one operation. Included among them is a machine for making brass tips for pocket rules; also for making brass rolls for rule joints, a bolt-header, a paper-bag machine, a hot-working quadruple nut machine, a cold-press nut machine which makes a nut complete from the bar cold, and one for finishing nuts cold, a mechanical motion, and several others of simpler construction. He has been interested in nearly all the new business enterprises of the village, a director in most of them, president of some, and secretary and treasurer of others. He is now manager of the Dunham Nut Machine Company. He has held a number of offices within the gift of the town, including that of selectman for several years and justice of the peace since 1875. He held the office of clerk and treasurer of the Unionville Ecclesiastical Society for more than twenty years, and is a member and deacon of the Congregational church. In politics he is a strong republican. Mr. Dunham is a man of decided energy and determination, great perseverence and thoroughness in his work, and of strict integrity, quiet and self-possessed in manner. He takes great interest in the growing of fruit, of which he has a large variety; and his chief recreation in summer is in pruning and caring for it.

Mr. Dunham married Miss Isabella Bradley of Meriden in 1853, who died in 1856, leaving one daughter. In 1861 he married Miss Mary J. Johnson of Unionville, his present wife. Three sons are the result of this marriage.
George Dunham was born at Southington, April 7, 1830. His early life, up to the age of twenty-one, was spent in hard work upon his father's farm, with the exception of a few months' schooling each year until he was eighteen, when he finished with one term at Lewis Academy in Southington. As soon as he became of age he went to work at Miller’s Bolt Works in Southington, heading bolts by hand for about a year and a half (this was before any machines for heading were invented). He then worked for about two years at East Berlin and Southington on Tinman's machines. After that he was employed by the Miller Bolt Works to make tools for threading bolts and nuts. He worked at this business, having charge of the finishing department in addition a part of the time, until 1859, except in dull times, when, the factory being closed, he turned to farming and such outdoor work as could be had. In February, 1859, he went to Unionville as superintendent of Langdon's Bolt Works. In something more than a year from that time Mr. Langdon died, when, in connection with Mr. A. S. Upson, he purchased the business. He made improvements upon nearly all the machinery then used, many of these improvements being still in use. In 1863 he invented what is now called the Dunham forged nut machine, which was highly successful, and up to this time has not been superseded for this class of work, either here or in England. Having at this time no knowledge of drafting, this machine was built without drawings, the inventor carrying all the details in his head. Since then he has invented a number of machines, mostly automatic, for cheapening the product by doing several different things in one operation. Included among them is a machine for making brass tips for pocket rules; also for making brass rolls for rule joints, a bolt-header, a paper-bag machine, a hot-working quadrupie nut machine, a cold-press nut machine which makes a nut complete from the bar cold, and one for finishing nuts cold, a mechanical motion, and several others of simpler construction. He has been interested in nearly all the new business enterprises of the village, a director in most of them, president of some, and secretary and treasurer of others. He is now manager of the Dunham Nut Machine Company. He has held a number of offices within the gift of the town, including that of selectman for several years and justice of the peace since 1878. He held the office of clerk and treasurer of the Unionville Ecclesiastical Society for more than twenty years, and is a member and deacon of the Congregational church. In politics he is a strong republican. Mr. Dunham is a man of decided energy and determination, great perseverance and thoroughness in his work, and of strict integrity, quiet and self-possessed in manner. He takes great interest in the growing of fruit, of which he has a large variety; and his chief recreation in summer is in pruning and caring for it.

Mr. Dunham married Miss Isabella Bradley of Meriden in 1853, who died in 1886, leaving one daughter. In 1861 he married Miss Mary J. Johnson of Unionville, his present wife. Three sons are the result of this marriage.
In addition to the biography, the town records give a picture of Mr. Dunham’s business activities. He and Andrew Upson did indeed form Upson & Dunham after Dwight Langdon’s death in 1860; however, when the business was incorporated in 1864 as the Union Nut Co., George Dunham was only a small stockholder. So apparently Andrew Upson bought out Mr. Dunham’s interest in that business. In 1866 the Cowles Paper Co. was incorporated with Lucas Richards and George Dunham as controlling stockholders and President and Secretary, respectively. In 1872 Richards and Dunham were made trustees of the 50% Munson family holdings in Delaney & Munson, another local paper manufacturer. George Dunham was also President or the Union Cabinet Co. from 1875 to 1881, even though he was only a small stockholder in that firm; it was owned by the Mills and Woodford families. There are no records in Town Hall of the Dunham Nut Machine Co. There is one interesting record, a sale of “metal shaving dies”, patent no. 1,121,003, and a machine to operate them; it is dated Feb. 1, 1917, and the sale was from George Dunham to Charles Osborne (78-630). One wonders if this was one of Mr. Dunham’s patents. Mary Jane Dunham was the daughter of Daniel and Harriet Johnson; see 99 Lovely St. for more information about that family.

In 1916-17 the Dunhams sold three strips of land from the eastern edge of the property to John Fioretti and James Lodge (77-625,635,668). George Dunham died May 9, 1918; four months later, Mary Dunham, "now of Cleveland, Ohio" quit-claimed the remaining property to the Farmington Savings Bank (76-638). In 1921 the bank broke the property into two pieces, selling one lot to Earl G. Parsons (79-310) and the larger lot plus house to Alvina Pine (79-312); see 118 Lovely St. for further history of the Parsons piece. Map 2 below describes these transactions.

Map 2 -- 1921

Alvina Pine owned this house until her death in 1936, when it passed to her three children (74-700). They sold it to Franklin Barrows, and when he died it passed to his widow Eliza; in 1946 she quit-claimed it to Melvin Roberts, reserving life use of the premises for herself. She died in May 1949; in 1950 Roberts sold a piece of land on the east side of the lot to Robert and Ruth Anderson (104-367). Then he sold the remaining property to Catherine Jones. She sold another small rectangle, 30’x40’, to the Andersons in 1951 (127-57), reducing the property
to its current 3/4-acre size. See Map 3 for these transactions.

Map 3 -- 1951

Genealogy

George Dunham: b. 4-7-1830 in Southington, son of Chauncey & Sylvia Langdon Dunham; m. Isabella Bradley 1853; m. Mary Jane Johnson 5-9-1861; d. 5-9-1918

Isabella Bradley Dunham: b. ---; d. 1856

Isabella B. - b. --- (lived in Plainville in 1918)

Mary Jane Johnson Dunham: b. 1839/40 in Farmington, daughter of Daniel & Harriet Woodruff Johnson; d. --- (after 1918, probably in Cleveland)

George M. - b. 8-7-1862, m. Eva Merriman 6-27-1883 (in N.H. in 1918)

Edgar G. - b. 1867/8, m. Mary M. Hitchcock 9-27-1893 (in Cleveland in 1918)

Clayton L. - b. 4-4-1870, m. Emily G. Hitchcock 4-28-1892 (in Cleveland in 1918)