Set back from the east side of Main Street, the Sarah Brandegee Barney Memorial Library faces west onto the Meeting House Green. Directly to the southwest is the First Church of Christ, Congregational, and to the northwest is the Sarah Porter Memorial. Church Street runs along the southern boundary of the property and the Noah Wallace School abuts the library on the northeast. This small collection of public buildings lies in the heart of Farmington's historic district.
This two-and-one-half story, Neo-Classical edifice exhibits a three-bay, gable-to-street center block with two lower wings at each end. A large modern addition extends from the southern elevation. The facade exhibits a full-height open portico with four large Doric columns supporting an entablature with triglyphs, metopes, and guttae. The fully pedimented gable end is embellished with large modillion blocks. Four brick pilasters are symmetrically placed along the facade. The large central doorway exhibits an ornate semi-circular fanlight and delicate fluted pilasters supporting a pulvinated frieze with a projecting cornice. Eight-over-eight sash appear on the second floor. The matching wings display simple pilasters supporting an entablature with a dentil course. The northern wing retains its single story bow window.

Stephen B. Lawrence

It is unclear when the first actual library was organized in Farmington. In 1785 six young men formed the Monthly Library, which later changed its name to the "Library in the first society of Farmington. This early public library was supported by subscriptions collected from its members. Books were kept in the home of the present librarian and members met on Sunday evenings to exchange greetings, discuss general topics, and pay dues. Over the years the name of the organization changed several times. In 1855 the Village Library Association moved into the Town Record office and was opened to all "responsible" citizens with a small subscription. The idea of a free public library did not appear in Farmington until the late nineteenth century, when Miss Julia Brandegee opened the Tunxis Free Library on Farmington Avenue. At the turn of the century, the Village Library and Tunxis Free Library joined their volumes and moved into the new Town Hall along Main Street (no longer extant). By 1917, the library's collection had grown to such a size that a new building was needed. The present library was erected between 1917-1919 by wealthy lawyer, Danforth N. Barney, in memory of his mother Mrs. Sarah Brandegee Barney. Since its completion, the library has been owned and operated by the Farmington Village Green and Library Association. During the early twentieth century, the library received a number of large endowments to help maintain the premises.

The Sarah Brandegee Barney Memorial Library is a well-preserved example of an early twentieth century Neo-Classical-style public building. It contributes to the character of Main Street.
OWNER'S NAME: FARMINGTON VILLAGE GREEN & LIBRARY ASS. LIBRARY

ADDRESS: 71 Main Street - Meeting house Green

DATE BUILT: 1917 FOR: Village Library

ARCHITECT: Stephen B. Lawrence

MASTER-BUILDER:

FORMER OWNERS: None - built through the generosity of D. S. Barney as a memorial to his mother, Sarah Brandegee Barney. Endowed by Mrs. Barney.

REFERENCES: "Farmington Town Clerks" 1943, pp. 211-284
The subject of libraries in Farmington seems to go back, officially, to 1795, when Deacon Elijah Porter was named by a committee composed of Martin Bull, John Mix and Isaac Cowles, to be the librarian. A former library had been organized in 1785, but no records are found regarding it.

Of course there were private, individual libraries, and Julius Gay tells us of one of these on pages starting with 197 of Farmington Papers, but those we shall not be able to list.

The listing of public Farmington libraries, or rather of their librarians, made up by Julius Gay, and given out to the public in his discourse delivered on September 30, 1890, is as follows, the writer however having added the residence of the librarian, and the location of the library, when known:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Librarian</th>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Residence</th>
<th>Library site</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elijah Porter</td>
<td>1795-1812</td>
<td>117 Main Street</td>
<td>117 Main Street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capt. Luther Seymour</td>
<td>1812-1814</td>
<td>19 Main Street</td>
<td>19 Main Street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elijah Porter</td>
<td>1814-1826</td>
<td>118 Main Street</td>
<td>118 Main Street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selah Porter</td>
<td>1826-1835</td>
<td>9 Colton St.</td>
<td>9 Colton St.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simeon Hart</td>
<td>1835-1836</td>
<td>93 Main Street</td>
<td>93 Main Street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rufus Cowles</td>
<td>1836-1839</td>
<td>White Oak</td>
<td>Academy Bldg.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rev. William S. Porter</td>
<td>1839-1840</td>
<td></td>
<td>Academy Bldg.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abner Bidwell</td>
<td>1840-1853</td>
<td>16 Main Street</td>
<td>Academy Bldg.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simeon Hart</td>
<td>1853-1853</td>
<td>93 Main Street</td>
<td>93 Main Street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austin Hart</td>
<td>1853-1855</td>
<td>93 Main Street</td>
<td>Old Stone Store</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chauncey D. Cowles</td>
<td>1855-1856</td>
<td>87 Main Street</td>
<td>Town Records Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James R. Cumming</td>
<td>1856-1860</td>
<td></td>
<td>Town Records Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julius Gay</td>
<td>1860-1868</td>
<td>36 Main Street</td>
<td>Town Records Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William E. Hart</td>
<td>1868-1869</td>
<td>45 High Street</td>
<td>Town Records Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas Treadwell</td>
<td>1869-1882</td>
<td>92 Main Street</td>
<td>Town Records Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas L. Porter</td>
<td>1882-1882</td>
<td>25 Main Street</td>
<td>Town Records Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miss Julia Brandegee</td>
<td>1882-1890</td>
<td>763 Farmington Ave.</td>
<td>Farmington Ave.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Timothy Root</td>
<td>1890-1917</td>
<td>158 Main Street</td>
<td>Town Hall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Timothy Root</td>
<td>1917-1919</td>
<td>158 Main Street</td>
<td>Present site</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helen M. Scarth</td>
<td>1919-1924</td>
<td>11 Main Street</td>
<td>Present site</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alice K. O'Connor</td>
<td>1924-1928</td>
<td></td>
<td>Present site</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Academy Building, mentioned above, stood on the east side of Main Street on, or a little west, of the present Porter Memorial Building. The old stone store stood on the site of 96 Main Street, and the Town Records office stood east of the Porter Memorial, where the Parish church office now stand.
Most of the librarians listed are mentioned extensively in sketches of the houses in which they have lived. Exceptions to this are those whose residence was not known to the writer, or who lived out of the village area.

Rufus Cowles falls in the latter category. He was the son of Phineas Cowles, and had been born in 1779 in "Farmington Plains", now Plainville, and continued living there, in what was then the White Oak district. He served as Deacon of the church, was selectman, Ensign in the 15th Conn. Militia in 1808, and his service to the library ended when the library was re-organized on February 18, 1839. He had been married in 1800, to Rachel Moss, died in 1858.

William S. Porter is believed by the writer to have been the Methodist minister, the Methodist church having been built in Meeting House Square around 1834, but where his home was is not known, nor his family history.

James R. Cumming was Principal of the Middle District School, but that is all the writer knows of him.

Mrs. Quincy Blakely, whose husband had been the Congregational minister, the Parson, as she called him, from 1905 to 1937, published a small pamphlet in 1954 entitled "32 Years of Farmington from the Parsonage". Her remarks on two of the librarians are as follows:

"Miss Brandegee was a picturesque figure in Farmington, ample in body, mind and spirit. Her interest in the young was very marked; she wanted all the children to have food for their minds as well as for their bodies.

"For some years Mrs. Newton Barney, another person vitally interested in children, with Miss Brandegee, gave a Christmas party in the Town Hall for all the village children. It was a gala party with a huge Christmas tree and a live Santa Claus. There were presents for everybody -- sweaters for school wear, pockets full of candy and nuts, and a good book for each child. Miss Brandegee had an interested watchful eye on the library to the end of her life.

"When we came to Farmington, the Village Library was in the lower back room of the Town Hall, open three afternoons and evenings a week. It was presided over by Mrs. Timothy Root (the former Lillian Sperry), a remarkable woman, whose wisdom and guidance gave to Farmington reading habits that have meant much through the years. Mrs. Root was not a trained librarian, but a born one, an omnivorous and discriminating reader with a real gift for selecting books for old and young, which developed a standard of reading that has been characteristic of the Farmington Library. She always had a welcome for young and old (especially children) and the library was the center for general exchange of chatty news".

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Mrs. Blakely continues:

"Differences of opinion regarding books were discussed before the open fire, sometimes heatedly, and many a worthwhile Book Review was unconsciously given in those days of visits to the Library."

Dr. Maurice Root also, on page 7 of 158 Main Street, tells "that his love of reading was the result of his mother's work at the library" as she brought all new books home to familiarize herself with them, and read parts out loud to the family.

Mrs. Hurlburt tells on page 284 of "Town Clerks" of the building of the new library on its present site:

"In 1909 Mr. D. Newton Barney made plans to build a memorial library. Land where the library now stands was purchased and cleared of its age-long accumulation of buildings, and in July 1917, upon the completion of the present beautiful building, the Farmington Village Green and Library Association acquired the library and the park. The library was named 'The Sarah Brandegee Barney Memorial Library' in memory of Mr. Barney's mother. Mr. Barney gave at that time sufficient shares of stock to endow and maintain the library. The former library, known as the Village Library Company, with $5000 to its credit, turned this money and its books over to the new institution, and Mrs. Timothy H. Root continued in her position as librarian, serving in all, twenty-nine years. A legacy of $3000 was received from the estate of F. A. Ward, and Mrs. Charles Whitman left $1000. Whitney Palache established a fund in memory of his son James Palache who was killed in World War I in France, the income from the fund to be used for the purchase of historical books, or to promote the study of history."

When the library is ultimately razed, sometime in the far distant future, a piece of sage advice may be found on the top of the concrete foundation at the northwest corner, reading "Live on woodchucks and save money", put there by one of the workmen, not a local man, but who did marry a Farmington girl and live here a few years thereafter.

Miss Alice K. O'Connor is given a tribute by D. Newton Barney in his "Foreword" to the book "Farmington Papers", published by him in 1929. Part of it reads as follows:

"As the years went on these pamphlets naturally became scattered and complete collections were difficult to procure. In the summer of 1928, the late Miss Alice K. O'Connor, Librarian of the Village Library, originated the idea of publishing all of these papers in one volume. To the friends whom she consulted this seemed an admirable thought, and encouraged by their approval she undertook the arrangement and publication of the collected essays. At this time she was facing a serious ordeal, from the cause of which she never recovered, but nevertheless she attended to all the details of seeing the book to press."

May 8, 1974
Mr. Barney continues:

"Later when she was courageously confronting a desperate situation she read the proofs. It would have been a great satisfaction to her and to her many devoted friends could she have lived to see the completed work issued. It is hoped that this little book will serve not infrequently to recall bright memories of her unselfish life". D. Newton Barney. January 2, 1929.

That book, although entitled "Farmington Papers", is better known as "Gay Papers", as all the contents are the texts of discourses which he gave at meetings of the former Library Association, and very interesting to students of Farmington's history.

Librarians following Miss O'Connor and preceeding Miss Hyatt are known to the writer only by name.

They were:

1929
Mrs. Mary E. S. Root,
1929-1949
Miss Ruth D. Scudder,
1949-1950
Miss Eugenia Henry,
1950-1951
Miss Alberta Singelyn,
1951-1953
Mrs. Evelyn H. Allen,
1953-1954
Miss Louise Griffith
1954-1960
Miss Kathleen Ainey

May 28, 1974

Ruth Scudder became Mrs. Harvey Wooster. As of 1967, living in Winter Park, Florida, she was in charge of the medical library of the Winter Park Hospital.

Alberta Singelyn, who had lived in the apartment on the second floor of the Farmington Museum, was living in Harper Woods, Michigan, and

Mrs. Allen was in Holicoing, Pennsylvania.

Miss Griffith was killed, along with her companion and the library's great friend Mrs. John H. Thompson, in an airplane accident over Ireland in 1954.

Miss Hyatt advanced the library's scope probably more than any other one librarian, and increased its value to the community by providing many more services than it had before. She came just at the time that a new wing was added to the south end of the library building, a welcome addition, as more room had certainly been needed.

Miss Hyatt was very good to this writer. She put his daughter-in-law on the track of a "Farmington Book" which was for sale, and was presented to him as a 1967 Christmas gift, and by being interested in his research project, and providing the use of the library's tape recorder to cover interviews, was quite instrumental in obtaining material for the production of "The Prentice Collection". It is hoped that its eventual value to the community will prove her aid to have been given to a worthwhile project.

An article in the Hartford Times told of Miss Hyatt, reproduced in part as follows:

Ruth Hyatt, head librarian for 13 years, came to Farmington about the time a new wing was added to the Village Library. The Farmington Village Green and Library Association had taken over operation of the Unionville Library two years before. Since she came here, hours have been expanded and services increased to meet the demands of a growing community.

The Farmington facility was still a village library when she became a town resident in 1961, Miss Hyatt said. The library was small and not very well attended by residents.

Today the library provides "big Library Services" and "is much too crowded," said Miss Hyatt. "Both library buildings are far too small and generally inadequate to meet the community's needs," she believes.

She also said the Village Library is feeling the squeeze despite it being a poor location. It should be closer to the main traffic area in town, Miss Hyatt believes. It is close to an elementary school and church but not in a place that people can reach easily on foot. It would be difficult, she admits, to find a more suitable location because Farmington doesn't have a real community center.

One way she made use of the library more convenient was by increasing the hours of operation to include Saturdays and rescheduling so that branches are open Monday instead of Friday nights.

Additional programs have been arranged for children and they are given more individual attention, according to Miss Hyatt, something the school system is now attempting to do.

The atmosphere in the library has also been changed. Librarians no longer demand absolute quiet of patrons. They don't encourage loud conversations but quiet discussion is possible.

Miss Hyatt took the status of Librarian Emeritus on August 1, 1973, and served from then until December 31, 1973, as a consultant to Barbara Gibson, who is now Head Librarian. Miss Hyatt retired from the library on December 31, 1973.

May 8, 1974
Miss Hyatt came to Farmington on January 1, 1961, from Fitchburg, Mass., where she had been Head Librarian at the Public Library for 16 years. A graduate of Boston University and Pratt Institute of Library Science, Miss Hyatt held positions in New York City, Hartford and Greenwich as Branch Librarian prior to her Fitchburg appointment.

When Miss Hyatt first came to Farmington, one of the most urgent problems was the overcrowding of the West End Branch. For 8 long (and sometimes exasperating) years, she urged and encouraged committees and town officials to correct the situation. Much to everyone's delight, in February, 1969, her efforts culminated in the opening of the new branch library in the former school of Memorial Methodist Church.

The growth of the libraries under Miss Hyatt's guidance can be seen in other areas also. The staff in 1961 included 2 full-time and 10 part-time employees. Today, 10 full-time and 11 part-time trained personnel offer assistance to patrons. The budget has increased almost five fold, from approximately $36,500 in 1961-62, to $173,000 in 1973-74.

In 1964, at Miss Hyatt's instigation, the Library-School Council was formed to further the cooperation of schools and libraries and to develop effective communication between them. This Council continues to offer to school and town librarians, administrators and board members a forum to promote fuller understanding, discuss problems and exchange ideas to the profit of both institutions and the students they both serve.

We are grateful for the 13 years in which our up-to-date librarian has constantly encouraged the residents of Farmington to take advantage of all that the Library can offer them.

The Farmington Village Green and Library Association has maintained its strong interest in the growth of the library and its services. Mr. Austin D. Barney was its President for many years, and very strong in its support, and his interest and influence has greatly aided the provision of funds. Lucius M. Whitaker, Jr., who followed him, will try to take his place, and will succeed, altho people will not very soon forget Mr. Barney.

Friends of the Village Library have aided greatly also, and we cannot forget that the Farmington Town Council is the backup provider of funds, has been aware of the needs, and has been as generous as they consider possible, and has the library's future in mind. This does not mean that the citizenry as a whole can fail to keep up their interest also, else the library will not be what it should.

Mrs. Barbara H. Gibson succeeded Miss Hyatt as Head Librarian on January 1, 1974.

May 8, 1974

Mrs. Gibson is the former Barbara Heald Hamilton, daughter of Howard Heald Hamilton and Margaret Charlotte Townsend. Her husband is Ralph Hurlburt Gibson, Jr., head of the firm of Gibson Associates, acoustical consultants.

May 28, 1974
The Story of Barbara Gibson

YOU WILL WANT TO MEET HER

Mrs. Barbara H. Gibson, the new librarian joined the staff of the West End Branch Library on September 1st. She is happily enthusiastic about the prospect of working in Unionville and looks forward to developing the already growing library.

Mrs. Gibson was born in Concord, New Hampshire and lived in Massachusetts for a number of years. She and her architect husband have a charming house in New Hartford. Located somewhat off the beaten path, they pursue their gardening pleasures—hers is flowers and his is vegetable—with the aid of an exuberant lady "Lab" who greets the couple each evening with an enthusiastic welcome.

Other interests of Mrs. Gibson include painting, sewing, writing and reading. She regularly reviews children's books for the School Library Journal and also writes poetry.

Her past five years have been spent in charge of the Curriculum Laboratory at the Central Connecticut State College. Previous library experience includes working as an assistant in the Wheaton (Ill.) Public Library and in the libraries of Drew University and M.I.T.

She received an AB from Wheelock College and her MLS at Southern Connecticut State College.

Mrs. Gibson has a warm and sparkling personality. Do come in to the West End Branch and make her acquaintance.

BARBARA GIBSON NEW HEAD LIBRARIAN

On August 1, 1973, Mrs. Barbara H. Gibson became Head Librarian of the Farmington Libraries. After serving as Branch Librarian at West End from September 1970 to November 1971, she then became Coordinator of Services for Children and Young Adults, and Assistant Librarian at the Village Library.

Mrs. Gibson holds a B.S. degree from Wheelock College and an M.L.S. from Southern Connecticut State College. Before coming to Farmington, she was Curriculum Laboratory Librarian at Central Connecticut College's Elihu Burritt Library.

One of the new library services which Mrs. Gibson has instituted is the loaning of 16mm films. Since December, when circulation of films began, 3,121 viewers have enjoyed the films in the monthly packet, and use of this new service is growing every month. Mrs. Gibson serves on the executive committee of the Town and Gown Film Circuit which provides the films.

Mrs. Gibson enjoys her job thoroughly and believes that the library, working in close cooperation with other community agencies should serve the information needs of all members of the community. She views information as including all kinds of media—films, recordings, tapes as well as print materials, and sees the library meeting cultural needs through special programs, concerts, lectures, etc.

In her free time, Mrs. Gibson enjoys gardening and needlework, skiing, tennis, hiking and biking. She and her husband Ralph, who is an architect, live in New Hartford in a charming house which Ralph designed six years ago.
Barbara Gibson seems to the writer to be very capable, and he believes that the Farmington Village Library will be in very good hands under her direction.

The writer is sorry that he cannot write on the increasingly important Unionville Branch of the Village Library, which already exceeds the main library in some services, but the branch should really have a story of its own, and the writer is not prepared to write even as much of it as he did of the Farmington Library.

Raymond K. Brooks won his July 1961 "Book of Golden Deeds" award for his work in promoting its growth, and in later years Miss Hyatt and many others brought it into a full sized and well stocked and well managed library.

The following tells a little bit of its beginnings:

The West End Library Association
Unionville, Connecticut
Founded January 24, 1902 / incorporated, September 2, 1914
In Memory Of
Original Directors and Officers
Charles G. Bill, President
Rev. W. S. Manship, Vice President
Robert E. Zink, Secretary
Fred J. Broadbent, Treasurer
William A. Hitchcock
Dr. Michael J. Morrissey
Lucius B. Pond
Rev. William H. Redding
George E. Taft, Secretary
June 26, 1902 - March 19, 1918
First Librarians
Elizabeth Hogan Heafey
September 12, 1902 - May 16, 1915
Elizabeth M. Bridgeman
May 19, 1915 - March 29, 1946
Donors
Carnegie Foundation - Nathan D. Bill - Theresa H. Dronfield
And others whose thoughts and efforts aided in maintenance of the library.

The acquisition of this building for the West End Branch of the Village Green and Library Association was made possible by
AUSTIN DUNHAM BARNEY
in memory of his parents
D. Newton Barney and Laura Dunham Barney
who strongly believed in the importance of a community library.