Set close to the west side of Waterville Road, the Robert Lawrence House stands on a small rectangular lot modestly landscaped. The surrounding neighborhood contains other historic buildings dating from the nineteenth and twentieth century. The Farmington Country Club golf course and Farmington River lie to the west.
17 OTHER NOTABLE FEATURES OF BUILDING OR SITE (interior and/or exterior)

Oriented gable-to-street, the Robert Lawrence House exhibits a three-bay facade with a side-hall entrance. The classical door surround displays modest pilasters supporting a denticulated frieze and modillioned pediment. One-over-one sash are featured throughout the house. A single-story shed-roof porch extends along the south elevation and a diminutive brick chimney has been added to the north side. Note the north elevation's bay window. A historic photo reveals that the dwelling once exhibited an ornate Victorian-period wraparound porch (removed in the twentieth century).

18 ARCHITECT

19 HISTORICAL OR ARCHITECTURAL IMPORTANCE

The early history of this building is difficult to ascertain. The first mention of a building on this lot is in 1898 when Robert Lawrence sold to his son Alexander "a quarter-acre of land with buildings" along the west side of Waterville Road (FLR 71:395). According to historians Lewis and Hurlburt, this house was moved in 1897 to its present location by the Lawrences from its original site on the north end of Main Street. Tradition asserts that Miss Sarah Porter in her quest to "beautify" the north end of Main Street, purchased this house in 1897 to make way for the Village Green. It is said she sold the dwelling for removal to the Lawrences for $25 (Prentise: 358-5). Robert Lawrence (1821-1912), a retired farmer, and his family lived at 5 Waterville Road. His eldest son Alexander (a.k.a. Sandy) was employed at Erastus Gay's general store, where he was the telegraph operator for Western Union. Shortly after Alexander took title to the house, his maiden sister Emeline opened a "hat shop" on the premises. For a number of years, many local women purchased their millinery at Miss Lawrence's shop. In 1910 Alexander sold the building to his daughter Jane W. Lawrence (FLR 77:305). Thirteen years later the house was sold to Charles Henderson, who rented the house to tenants (FLR 80:446). The building has passed through a series of owners since then.

Although the early history of this building is uncertain and it has undergone a number of recent modifications, it still contributes to the streetscape of Waterville Road.

SOURCES

OWNER'S NAME: TINGLEY, George M. et Ux.

ADDRESS: 7 Waterville Road

DATE BUILT: 1950

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

former owners: Tingley from Alice H. Selden, 6/13/1947, Vol. 10, p. 575; Selden from Charles Henderson 9/29/1944, Vol. 95, p. 255; Henderson from Jane Lawrence Linge 8/30/1923, Vol. 80, p. 446; Linge from her father Alexander Lawrence 4/11/1910, Vol. 77, p. 305; Lawrence, Alexander and William (his son) bought the old House for $25 when it stood on Main St (see "Farmington, Co..., 1906 p. 88, property of Mrs T.A. Finnegan) and was to be either moved or torn down in 1895 - and placed it on land of Alexander's father Robert Lawrence, where Miss Electa S. Lawrence's hat shop was located for many years - see p. 59 "Farmington, Conn. 1906". Information by William Lawrence. The house stood where? about half-way between the present Talcott and Taylor houses.

REFERENCES:
Baker & Tilden Atlas 1869 p. 33. "O'Brien"
The house at this address, pictured on page 59 of the Farmington Book as Alexander Lawrence's "Hat Shop", originally stood on Main Street, just north of what is now the Norwegian Gift Shop at 11 Main Street. Its last function on that Main Street site was as the home of the Maxwell family, who operated part of it as a saloon. In 1906, when the Farmington Book was published, the two houses pictured at the top of page 88 were on the site of the gift shop. The building housing the hat shop, although by 1906 moved to Waterville Road, had stood just to the left of those two houses, just north of them.

Julius Gay mentioned this house in a very indirect manner on page 22 of the Farmington Book when he said:

"Passing the house owned by Dr. Thompson and before him by James K. Camp, and two other buildings, we come to a house built or largely renewed in 1808 by Nathaniel Olmsted, goldsmith and clockmaker. Here for twenty years were made the tall clocks bearing his name, which still correctly measure time with their solemn beat. He removed to New Haven to be near his brother, Professor Denison Olmsted, and there died in 1860, most genial and lovable of men".

The house mentioned by Julius Gay as having been owned before Dr. Thompson by James K. Camp, was the house on the site of that presently standing at 15 Main Street. Where Mr. Gay follows that by "two other buildings", he means the two pictured on page 88.

The Farmington Book states that the talk given by Julius Gay, and quoted above, was given on May 1, 1905. Actually it was given in May 1, 1895. The latter date is confirmed by Mr. Gay when he said on page 10 of the Farmington Book" --- "A few steps down the hill westward brings us to the house built by Colonel Fisher Gay in 1766 and 1767". He was referring to the Col. F. Gay house pictured on pages 209 and 210. This had been converted to a country club after 1895, and was burned down in 1901, so had Mr. Gay spoken of it in 1905 he could not have used the present tense as he did.

Nathaniel Olmsted, as we find from "Early Silver of Connecticut and its Makers", written by George M. Curtis and published in Meriden in 1913, was also a silversmith. He was born in East Hartford in 1785, learned his trade of Daniel Burnap of East Windsor, and married Mr. Burnap's niece, Philedia Burnap. According to "Shop Records of Daniel Burnap", edited by Penrose R. Hoopes, and published by the Connecticut Historical Society, Mr. Burnap was also a clockmaker and "perhaps the greatest native-born clockmaker", who trained Ely Terry.

Nathaniel moved to New Haven in 1826 to be near his brother, Professor Denison Olmstead, and in 1827 sold the Farmington residence, which had also housed his shop. Professor Olmstead died in May 1859. He had been a Professor of Natural History and Astronomy and was eulogized by a 32 page discourse in the Yale Chapel on May 20, 1859, by Theodore D. Woolsey, president of Yale at that time.

August 18, 1971

1835.
Note -

Although it is stated on the previous page that Nathaniel Olmsted moved from Farmington to New Haven, later information given by Kenneth Roberts, an authority on clockmakers and earlier a resident of Farmington, indicates that Mr. Olmsted may not have gone directly to New Haven.

Mr. Roberts has unearthed a letter from Mr. Olmsted, dated April 24, 1829, at Brooklyn, New York. It was written to Samuel Terry in Bristol, and told that at the time he was making a clock using a mechanism that Joseph Ives had developed. Mr. Ives had left Bristol for Brooklyn about 1821, in a bankrupt state, and Mr. Olmsted perhaps worked with him in Brooklyn.

Mr. Roberts also mentions the fact that Joseph Ives was born in Farmington, although in the Bristol section of Farmington, Bristol not having become separately incorporated until 1785, and Joseph Ives having been born on September 22, 1782.

As of January 15, 1973, Mr. Roberts was completing his manuscript on another clock book, and the final chapter, entitled "Clockmaking in the Neighboring Towns" will include Farmington, in case anyone should be looking into that subject.

January 25, 1973
Nathaniel Olmsted opened a shop in New Haven and here he continued his work as silversmith but did not make clocks. After his death in 1860 the business was continued by his son George. His son's ad in the New Haven Directory of 1864 shows him at 266 Chapel Street, a dealer in clocks and fine watches, and repairer of the same, plus chronometers. He also mentions “Silverware of all kinds, and spectacles, opera glasses and jewelry of all kinds, made to order”. Since the clockmaking was discontinued so early, anyone who finds a Nathaniel Olmsted clock now, may find that it is a real treasure. Sugar tongs, teaspoons, dessert spoons, sugar shovel and mustard ladle --- all these have been displayed in museums and collections, but no mention has been noted regarding a clock on display.

Mr. Olmsted had purchased this house, on its earlier site of course, in 1808. In the sale of the property on October 20, 1827, to Augustus Bodwell, he states "the place lately occupied by me", and including land and buildings.

Augustus Bodwell was a fairly large landowner in Farmington for many years, having owned various properties, so it is difficult to determine where he lived. He owned 3 Waterville Road from 1808 to 1819, and may have lived there. His wife was Elizabeth and they were living here in Farmington for several years, and he died probably just prior to 1870. Mrs. Hurlburt mentions him on pages 161 and 162 of "Town Clerks" when she tells of his appointment to the committee to look into the possibility of locating a Methodist Church on Meeting House Green. A son, George Bodwell, was executor of his estate, and in 1870 was selling its property.

Mr. Bodwell had sold this particular property, several times noted as having about a quarter acre of land, on March 31, 1831, to Lemuel Whitman.

Lemuel Whitman, who purchased this property on March 31, 1831, was the son of Solomon Whitman and Mary Thompson of Farmington, and was born in 1770. He was a graduate of Yale and of the Tapping Reeve Law School of Litchfield, where he was a classmate of John C. Calhoun. He was married in 1820 to Emily Case of Canton, born in West Simsbury, the daughter of Elisha Case and Delight Griswold.

In 1823 Lemuel Whitman was elected to be Farmington’s (and the Congressional district's of course) representative to the 18th Congress, serving from 1823 until 1825. The trip to Washington took him from Tuesday morning until Saturday’s sunset.

One of Lemuel Whitman’s daughters, Louisa Sarah Whitman, 1827-1879, married Lucius Cowles, son of Egbert Cowles and Sophie Woodruff of what is now 85 Main Street. Capt. Lucius Samuel Cowles, 1821-1887, was a merchant in Farmington until 1850, lived later in both Galena and Freeport, Illinois, perhaps a neighbor of Ulysses S. Grant in Galena, but both Capt. and Mrs. Lucius Cowles died in Farmington, Capt. Cowles dying in 1887.

August 18, 1971
Another of the daughters of the Hon. Lemuel Whitman, Susan Jane Whitman, married Lucius Buell of Sheldon, New York. Mr. Buell was later in business in Madison, Indiana, and then in Cincinnati, Ohio. After his death Mrs. Buell returned to her home state of Connecticut, living in Hartford with her son Henry A. Buell. She lived there from 1863 until 1888, but died in Walla Walla, Washington, in 1892.

After his service in Congress the Hon. Lemuel Whitman lived in Farmington, buying this house in 1831, perhaps even renting it earlier from Mr. Bodwell. He was involved in many legal and research projects, as well as holding an occasional elective post. Mrs. Hurlburt states that he served on at least two town committees. On November 19, 1832, it was on a committee to report of the propriety of erecting horse sheds on Meeting House Green, and his committee made exhaustive research, with a result favorable to construction.

Mrs. Hurlburt commends highly the work of this committee. On Page 148 of "Town Clerks" she says:

"On April 1, 1833, Mr. Hooker recorded what was undoubtedly the first history of Farmington. The committee, appointed to report on horse sheds, consisted of Lemuel Whitman, Ozem Woodruff and Asa Hawley. They traced with great patience and care the right of the public to the land always known as Meeting House Green".

It took up three pages in Mrs. Hurlburt's book, just to record the text of the committee's report, and there is probably not much doubt but what the Hon. Lemuel Whitman had done most of the research and writing of this report.

On November 18, 1833, Mr. Whitman was appointed to be a member of the same committee as Mr. Bodwell, the one mentioned on the previous page, to advise on locating a Methodist Church on Meeting House Green. The report was favorable.

Mr. Whitman's daughter, Mrs. Susan Buell, wrote a very interesting account of her father's life, for inclusion in the published Whitman genealogy. That account is available in the Farmington Room of the Village Library, on page 516 of the book, and makes interesting reading.

Mr. Whitman died on November 13, 1841, and his widow, Emily Case Whitman, sold this property in May of 1854. After 1865 she lived in Hartford, dying in 1888.

Samuel P. Burgess, purchaser of this property in 1854, is not mentioned by Mrs. Hurlburt in "Town Clerks", therefore could not have been involved in civic affairs to any extent. His wife was Rosena, and they lived in Farmington at least through 1858, but not in the house apparently, as he sold this in the same year of purchase, in 1854. Mr. Burgess died here in 1881.

August 18, 1971
Ambrose A. Hull was the purchaser in 1854. He and his wife, Jane L. Booth, had been married in 1850. Their daughter was Anna B. Hull. Several young patients of the smallpox hospital were of the name of Hull, but no mention has ever been seen in regard to Ambrose. He and his wife sold this property in the December of 1858.

Of Henry French, purchaser of the house in 1858, nothing at all is known by this writer. He sold it in 1865.

Patrick Maxwell was the purchaser on November 6, 1865. He and his family lived in the house and operated part of it as a saloon. Patrick died in 1894, but his children continued its operation until in June 1897, when the property was sold by his daughter Bridget to Miss Sarah Porter. This was the first step taken by Miss Porter to beautify the entrance to Main Street by clearing a space so that a Village Green could be established. Miss Porter is said to have sold the house for twenty-five dollars, and it was purchased by Robert Lawrence. He and his son moved it to its present site at 7 Waterville Road, and Alexander Lawrence took title to it on December 16, 1898.

The Maxwell family, Thomas, Bridget, Richard and Henry, moved to 25 Main Street, which Bridget purchased, and they resumed the saloon business in a building on the north side of Farmington Avenue, just east of the Farmington River and right near the east end of the covered bridge. Henry Maxwell was killed in an auto accident in Berlin in 1906, and Richard died in 1917. Thomas and Bridget moved, possibly to Granby, in 1920. Bridget later returned to live with her aunt, Catherine, widow of Dennis Ryan of Middle Road.

When Sarah Porter purchased the house and a quarter acre of land in 1897, it was bounded on the north and east by Timothy McCarthy, on the south by M. O'Brien and on the west by Main Street, as it had been bounded when deeded to Mr. Maxwell in 1865.

Alexander Lawrence himself lived in the Lawrence house at 5 Waterville Road, just south of this, permitting his sister Emeline C. Lawrence to occupy this house which his father had had moved from Main Street. She operated this shop formany years and Farmington women purchased from her, as told by Mary Twitchell Blakely, widow of the Rev. Quincy Blakely, in these words:

"The village milliner was a very important person. We all paid her a visit each season, and looked forward not only to acquiring a new hat, but learning of her shopping trip to the big city of New York, and her exciting experiences there. We all wore pink roses on our summer hats, and feathers with big ribbons on our winter hats, feeling that the last word in headgear had come to town, and with Miss Emeline's artistic touch we were wearing hats far more attractive than could be found even in New York. That conviction brought us great relief and we never questioned Miss Emeline's creations".

Title to this property passed in 1910 to Jane Lawrence Lange, of Pachogue, New York, probably Alexander's daughter. She sold it in 1923, to Charles Henderson. It is believed by this writer however, that Miss Emeline may have continued here until her death in 1926.

1837
August 18, 1971
Some tenants remembered to have lived in this house during Charles Henderson's ownership are the following.

Raymond W. and Grace H. Hale and their son, who in 1946 purchased the house at 143 Main Street, which they had been renting for some time prior to purchase. They are thought to have lived here six or seven years.

John and Susan Godfrey when first married, Susan having been the sister of Charles Henderson's wife. They moved to Hartford soon after their residence here. Mrs. Godfrey worked as a physio-therapist in Hartford.

Anne McCahill, chief operator of the local telephone exchange, and her mother, lived here for a time, either before or after they had lived at 163 Main Street.

The Seldens may have rented the house for a time before their purchase.

September 14, 1973
Mr. Henderson, grounds and greens supervisor for the Farmington Country Club, had purchased this house as an investment, for rental purposes, and he held it until 1944, when he sold it to Alice E. Selden.

The Seldens were John Charles Selden, born in Plainfield, New Jersey, and the former Alice Hoyt, born in Danbury, and their daughter Elizabeth Savage Selden. Mr. Selden was in the engineering department of Pratt and Whitney, East Hartford. The Seldens owned this property from 1944 until 1947. It has been the understanding of the writer, through conversation with Mrs. George Tingley, that the Tingleys, although they did not purchase this until 1947 (from Mrs. Selden), that they had lived here continuously from 1926 until the date of Mr. Tingley's death in 1956. Where the Seldens lived is not presently known, but they did live in Farmington.

George Markham Tingley, born in Newington, was the son of Edward A. Tingley and his wife Helen Markham, noted in the Farmington Book on page 130 as residents at 12 Colton Street. Mrs. George Tingley was the former Alice E. Damp of Ryde, Isle of Wight, England, who had come to America, to the United States, at the age of 15. George Tingley was a chauffeur for many years for the Elm Tree Inn. Mrs. Tingley was a practical nurse, and for many years cared for the Germans as they successively became too ill to care for themselves. Mr. Tingley died in 1956. Mrs. Tingley lived here four more years, then sold the house and moved into an apartment next door at 5 Waterville Road. Both the Tingleys had had a great fondness for flowers, and had a beautiful flower garden in front of the house at 7 Waterville Road.

The Tingleys had one child, George Edward Tingley, whose wife is the former Isabelle Chapman, daughter of an old sea captain of Mystic, Connecticut. They presently reside on Ridgeview Drive, at the extreme eastern edge of Farmington. They have three children, Tyler, Andrew and Anne. Tyler, elder of the three, a graduate of Kingswood School and Howard University, was in 1970 a teacher at Kingswood. The elder Mrs. Tingley, after selling her home, and having lived in the apartment at 7 Waterville Road for a few years, moved to her son's home, occupying an apartment fixed up for her there. As of April 1970 however, she was being cared for in the Plainville Convalescent Hospital.

Mr. George Markham Tingley had purchased the house at 7 Waterville Road in 1947. He died in 1956, but it was not until 1960 that title was officially passed to his widow, Alice E. Tingley. That was on August 26, and on September 13, 1960, she sold it to Dorothy L. Provost.

Myra L. Trombley was purchaser on February 25, 1965.

Charles E. and Sarah S. Goodwin of Miami, were purchasers on July 24, 1967. Nothing is known of any of these owners.

Douglas E. Merrifield and Dr. Francis X. Romaniello purchased on September 5, 1968, and are believed to be the present owners. Dr. Francis X. Romaniello, DDS, is listed in the 1972 telephone directory as having an office at 37 Webster Street, Hartford.

July 3, 1973

1841.