The Rev. Noah Porter House is located in the center portion of Main Street at the intersection of Main and Maple Streets, is bounded by the St. Patrick's Rectory and Church to the north and other historic houses to the south and east.
This building was originally built in the Federal style, but today it exhibits many characteristics of the Queen Anne style. On the brick facade are three bays and a Colonial Revival-style porch with a plain balustrade and pedimented gable roof. The third level made of clapboard boasts fishscales and a tripartite window with a decorative shell-like motif and surround. Dentils decorate the building's cornice and pediment. Six-over-six sash are found throughout the house except for the decorative sash in the gable end. Note the brick chimneys and addition off the west elevation.

The date of construction of this house is unclear, yet it is possible to draw some likely conclusions. In 1813 Deacon Noah Porter (1732-1818) wrote his will giving his sons Edward, Robert, and Noah (II) (1781-1860) two parts each of seven parts of his real and personal estate (FPR 7:405). Noah (II), who had graduated from Yale in 1803, had moved back to Farmington prior to his marriage to Mehitabel Meigs of Middletown in 1808. It is possible that Noah (II) erected this house on his father’s land which he did not own until his father's death in 1818. This may explain why there is no deed for the transfer of the property to Noah (II). It appears that the house was constructed shortly before his marriage (1808), two years after he was ordained minister of the United Church of Christ, Congregational, in Farmington. Rev. Porter’s service to the town included organizing the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions in 1810. His children: Samuel (1810-1901), Noah (III) (1811-1892), Giles (1815-?), Sarah (1813-1900), Elizabeth, and Maria were all well-educated and are known for their accomplishments. Noah (III) later became president of Yale College and Sarah founded Farmington’s female boarding school today known as Miss Porter’s School. Upon Rev. Porter’s death in 1860 this house passed to his daughters (FPR 13:372). Sarah later received full title to the property and upon her death it passed to her nephew Robert Porter Keep in 1900 (FPR 25:329). It remained in the Porter family until 1949 (FLR 103:429).

The house derives historical and architectural significance due to its association with the Porter family and is a good representation of the Federal/Queen Anne style.

The placard on the house states it was built 1805. The Board of Foreign Missions was organized here in 1810.

Address: Main Street & Maple Street

Date Built: 1808, for: Rev. Noah Porter

Architect

Master-builder: Addition, date unknown, by Nelson O. Keyes (Helen Keyes Deming)

Former Owners:

W. & E. Cook from Robert P. Keep, Conservator of Mary A. Gaddis, Inc., 8/10/1949, Vol. 103, p. 431; also from Dorothea K. Hale, Robt. P. Keep, Alice Avery Hunsaker & Melanie Avery, 8/10/1949, Vol. 103, p. 429; Robt. P. Keep et al from Sarah, Elizabeth Green & Maria Morgan Porter by inheritance; S., M., & E. Porter from their father Noah Porter by will, 9/27/1866, Vol. Prob. Rec. 13, p. 372; the inventory of the Est. of Noah Porter showed the house & bldgs. on Main St., $3000, small house & lot on Mountain Rd. $300., & lot in Pine Woods $200.; no record appear of transfer of land on which this house stands to Noah Porter. The land was probably owned by Solomon & Zenas Cowles. Later deeds record additions by N. Porter. In this house Rev. Noah Porter lived all of his married life. He had married Mehitable Meigs. Here his 7 children were born, including Miss Sarah, & Noah Porter, Pres. of Yale.

References:

"Farmington, Conn., 1906, p. 14, 16, 190
"Farmington Town Clerks, 1943", pp. 279-285
"Noah Porter Memorial"
"Baker & Tilden Atlas, 1869", p. 33 - 'Dr. Noah Porter Estate'
This house is pictured in the Farmington Book on page 16 as "The Dr. Noah Porter Place - Residence of the Misses Porter". It is shown on Baker and Tilden's 1869 Atlas as "Dr. Noah Porter Estate". It was built in 1808 for the Rev. Noah Porter and his wife Mehitabel Meigs in the year of their marriage, on land which is presumed to have been given him by Solomon and Zenas Cowles.

It was here, two years later, that an important meeting took place. The members of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions were named in June 1810, and met in September 1810 in this house. The most distinguished member of this board was ex-governor John Treadwell, of this village, who was elected president of the Missionary Society formed at that meeting, the first organized Foreign Mission in the United States.

Since this is the one house in Farmington now most firmly associated with the Noah Porter family, and occupied by that family for 110 years, we shall start here and go back to the earliest of his ancestors in Farmington, and begin with Robert Porter.

Robert Porter, whose date of birth is not known, came from England, the son of a non-conformist minister. He came to Massachusetts in the early 1630's, was one of the followers of Thomas Hooker to Hartford, was one of the earliest settlers of Farmington, and one of the "seven godly men" who established on the 13th day of October, 1652, the First Church of Christ in Farmington. He had his land recorded in 1655, was made a constable in 1656, and was one of the 84 proprietors of the town listed in 1672. According to the map on page xvi of "Town Clerks", and the explanation on page xviii, Mr. Porter's land was located where now stands the library of Miss Porter's School. It was purchased from William Heacox, or Hitchcock. His wood lot was the property now occupied by the house at 49 High Street.

He was married twice. The first time was in 1644, to Mary Scott, daughter of Thomas Scott. She died in 1675 and sometime later he married Hannah Astwood Judd Freeman of Milford, Connecticut. One of his children was Sarah, born in 1657, who married Abraham Andrews (son of settler John Andrews) who moved to Waterbury and started the branch of the Andrews family into which Dr. Maurice Root of Farmington was to marry about 250 years later.

Thomas Porter, 1650-1718, third child of Robert, in 1678 married Abigail Cowles, daughter of John Cowles the settler. He was a professional tailor, and a deacon in the church.

Robert Porter, 1697-1782, seventh child of Thomas, was married in 1728 to Sarah Smith, 1701-1774.

Deacon Noah Porter, 1732-1818, third child of Robert, was a soldier in Capt. Patterson's Company in the French and Indian War. He was in the expedition against Crown Point in which a bloody but indecisive battle was fought at Lake George on September 6, 1755. His first wife, whom he married in 1764, was Mary Lewis, daughter of Nehemiah Lewis and Jerusha Gridley, who bore him two children and died in 1777. His second wife was Rachel Merrill, 1743-1809, of Bethlehem, Connecticut. She bore him three children.

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One of these children was Sophia, born in 1786, who married the Rev. Heman Humphrey of Fairfield, who later became president of Amherst College. Deacon Porter moved from his home on Main Street to Town Farm Road, later returned to live his last years in his son's home.

Julius Gay explains this move as follows: "Noah Porter lived his boyhood in the house of his father Robert, which stood where now stands the brick house of Francis W. Cowles (48 Main Street). The house was given to Noah by his father Robert on his marriage in 1764 and was occupied by him until 1781, when, after the birth of his son Noah, he moved to Town Farm Road. In 1809 he sold that house and came in to live with his son".

Mrs. Hurlburt explains the reason for his move on page 43 of "Farmington, Church and Town" as follows: "Sarah Porter, eldest daughter of the Rev. Noah Porter, later wrote that because of changing conditions in Farmington, brought on by growing trade and rapidly increasing wealth, old restraints and morals and manners were thrown off so that Deacon Porter was unwilling to expose his son Noah to these bad influences. Consequently he moved his family from the old homestead on Main Street to a farm on what is now Town Farm Road".

A small discrepancy may be noted between Mr. Gay's version of the location of the Porter homestead (on the site of 48 Main Street) and others which show it at the site of the Porter School Library (at 50 Main Street) but this appears to be of minor importance now.

Young Noah Porter, first child by the second wife of Deacon Noah, born in 1781, showed an aptitude for study, and after his primary schooling was tutored for Yale College by his pastor, the Rev. Joseph Washburn, with the definite aim of serving in the Christian Ministry. He won the highest rank for scholarship in his Yale class of 1803, and was their valedictory orator. He was examined at the Consociation held in the Farmington Church September 25, 1805, and preached his first sermon on Sunday evening, September 29. Everyone spoke highly of him and when news came of the death of Mr. Washburn on December 24, 1805, Noah Porter soon received, and accepted, a call to the pastorate, a post which he held with honor for sixty years, until his death.

Egbert Cowles, who attended church as an adult through Dr. Porter's sixty years of pastoral work, and who did some writing on Farmington history, said of him "It is within the bounds of truth that but few men possessed a more thorough knowledge of the true doctrines of the Bible than did Dr. Porter".

The Rev. Noah Porter was married in Middletown in 1808 to Miss Mehitable Meigs, daughter of Giles Meigs and Ann Pinto, and they moved into this house at 116 Main Street. Their seven children were the following.

(1) Samuel Porter, 1810-1901, never married. Six feet tall, well built and handsome, he received a degree from the Yale Divinity School but deafness from an early age prevented him from preaching. He became a professor at Gallaudet College, Washington, D. C., where he remained until within a few years of his death. He spent some of his summers with nieces in Nantucket, and died here in the house where he was born.

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(2) Noah Porter, 1811-1892, was married in 1836 to Mary Taylor, daughter of Nathaniel William Taylor, and became president of Yale College. Their three children were Martha Day Porter, Rebecca Taylor Porter, and Sarah Porter.

Noah Porter, D.D., LL.D., was graduated from Yale in 1831 and tutored for the next two years while at Yale Divinity School. He took the pastorate in New Milford the same year that he was married, and in 1843 became pastor at Springfield, Massachusetts. In 1846 he was called to a new chair of philosophy and metaphysics at Yale. Travels in Europe and studies in Berlin took up the years of 1853-54 and in 1871 succeeded Dr. Theodore D. Woolsey as president of Yale. He held this position until in 1886 he retired, and refused the offer by President Hayes to be Minister to Great Britain. He has been described as a frail man, modest, without comeliness, grace of bearing or pride of mien, with keen blue eyes, a fearless and kindly soul. His vacations were often spent camping in the Adirondacks.

His daughter Martha Day Porter, was his hostess abroad and in New Haven during his presidency of Yale. She was a classmate of Annie B. Jennings (Standard Oil Jennings), who sent birthday cakes to Martha's Aunt Sarah Porter. Daughter Rebecca Taylor Porter was a portrait painter who had studied in Paris and achieved repute for her portraits of famous people. She wore her hair in ringlets like George Eliot's. A stroke took away her ability to speak, several years before her death.

(3) Giles Meigs Porter, 1815- , married, moved west, had a large family, probably in Minneapolis, and was considered rather well off. A neat beard all around his chin extended from ear to ear. The family never approved his moving west, nor could they understand why he would go. He did return for visits at rare intervals.

(4) Sarah Porter, 1813-1900, was the noted founder of Miss Porter's School. She was from the first an apt scholar, avid for knowledge. She was one of the few girls, if not the only girl, to attend the Farmington Academy, which was then headed by Deacon Simeon Hart, and she was his assistant by the time she was sixteen. By 1832 she was attending in New Haven the young ladies' school operated by Dr. E. A. Andrews, a lexicographer and distinguished latin scholar. She lived at that time with the family of Yale Professor Goodrich. This was her only schooling away from home. After this she taught in Springfield, Buffalo and Philadelphia, and finally, about 1843, she started her own school.

Her school began in an upper room in what was known as the "stone store", located on the site of the present parsonage at 96 Main Street. Thomas Cowles, father of Admiral W. S. Cowles, had an office there also, as did John Hooker, with whom Joseph Hawley, later to be an army general and U. S. senator, was reading law at that time. She started with local girls only, but at her father's suggestion took some girls from out of town also, renting rooms from families along Main Street.

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MPS Bulletin, Summer 1968 says "girls lived in Miss Porter's home on Main Street from 1843 to 1851". "Girls who did not live in town were boarded by Miss Porter at her home, as well as with families who lived nearby".
A moment might be taken at this point to mention another girls' school, to which Miss Porter's was in a way a successor. This was Miss Sally Pierce's School in Litchfield. It had been opened in 1792 by Sarah Pierce, youngest child of the first wife of John Pierce, a potter. She was educated in New York. By 1798 it had become well known and was in such good favor that prominent men of the town provided a new building and the school was called the Female Seminary. Brought to the girls were geography, history, chemistry, astronomy and botany, as well as music, dancing, singing, drawing, painting and embroidery. Some twelve to fifteen hundred students attended during its life. There may have been several from Farmington. One of them of whom we know, was Julia Cowles of Oldgate, who attended in 1797 and said "I like being here very well".

A new building was provided in 1827, and the Tapping Reeve Law School provided many prospective husbands. Miss Pierce gave up her participation in the school in 1833 and died in 1852. The school was designated as a "Normal School" in 1849, and ceased operation entirely in 1850.

To return to Miss Porter's School, the Farmington Seminary Association built in 1848 the building now known as the Science Building of Miss Porter's School, at 9 Mountain Road. See photo on page 193 of the Farmington Book. Miss Porter housed her school in this building for some years, not owning it however. She expanded and moved her classes into the old hotel on Main Street, the building now called "Main", sometime prior to 1850. In 1885 Miss Porter purchased from the Female Seminary Association one half-acre of land and the seminary building on it.

This hotel building, pictured on pages 15 and 190 of the Farmington Book, was erected in 1830 by Major Timothy Cowles, on land purchased by his father Col. Isaac Cowles in 1753. It is said that Seth Lee had once operated an inn on this very site. It has been reported that the flagstones in front of the building were brought on special flat cars from a quarry in Pennsylvania by John Deming, but this must have been much later, as freight traffic in 1830 was principally by canal. The hotel was built with the expectation of serving heavy passenger traffic passing through via the canal, but this never materialized, at least not to the extent of producing a prosperous business. Major Cowles and his wife appear to have mortgaged it to the state in 1833 for $30,000, and it was quitclaimed by the state to Mrs. Cowles in 1854.

Noah L. Phelps operated a tavern here for some years, the dates not being known for certain. We do know that the year 1832 was included however, as a committee meeting regarding a power-water shortage in Unionville was held here on October 13, 1832. Noah Phelps' wife, Phebe, was the daughter of Capt. William Avery Morgan, a well-known man of Groton, Salem and Lebanon. Later this was called the Union Hotel, and operated as such for the duration of the canal, which ceased its operations in late 1845.

As stated previously, Miss Porter began using this as her school prior to 1850, but occupying it as a tenant. Records show that she purchased it in 1866 from the heirs of Major and Mrs. Timothy Cowles.

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1040.
Some of the other houses and buildings which were acquired prior to 1906 are mentioned on page 195 of the Farmington Book. They were:

- Miss Adgate's Store
- the Library
- 50 Main St.
- Third floor of
- Dr. Wheeler's house
- "Colony"
- 59 Main St.
- Ward house
- "Ward"
- 56 Main St.
- Thompson house
- "Lathrop"
- 49 Main St.
- Francis Cowles house
- "Brick House"
- 48 Main St.
- Judge Rice house
- "New Place"
- 53 Main St.

The old Phoenix Manufacturing Company building at 120 Garden Street is pictured on page 196 as the Miss Porter's School laundry.

On this same page, the top photo, with Dr. Wheeler's house on the left and a group of Miss Porter's girls in the center, is entitled "Posing for Brother". Russell Lee Jones, in his "Memories" explains this as follows: "Each year in the fall and spring, Brother Aldrich as he was called by Miss Porter's girls, would set up his photograph car which he had drawn over from New Britain by a yoke of oxen, and there it would remain on the little green for weeks at a time to be well patronized by some of the town's people, but mostly by the school girls. It was at that time when tintype photographs were in vogue. Brother Aldrich was an affable little bearded man whose fingers were always black from the constant developing of the tintypes". Miss Joan Hooker remembers him also. She said "He always called us Sister, so we always called him Brother". Residents who do remember him, say that his shop was usually set up close to the sidewalk on the east side of Main Street about opposite the Savings Bank.

Alice Porter Avery, the daughter of Miss Porter's niece Elizabeth Porter Keep and a former student at the school, writes of Miss Porter as quoted in the following three paragraphs.

"Sarah Porter was a person not easy to describe. She was small and slight, not handsome, but of such worth and dignity that anyone in her presence never forgot her.

"She was a profound scholar and an incredible teacher. Her own enthusiasm and intelligence seemed to carry the pupil along ..... Her greatest gift to the girls I believe was the awakening in them of a fervor and interest in religion, and in the serious importance of each day in our short lives .... A mother of a schoolmate of mine (who had also been a student here) said 'Of course Miss Porter did everything with us. She led us on horseback when we went on expeditions, and she knew all about every girl' ".

"She lived at the school during most of her adult years, and moved down to the Porter Homestead only for the last few years. Even in these final years she read her Greek Testament before breakfast. After breakfast she drove up to the school. Mr. Janes, whom she somehow got from Vermont (see photo of his house on page 20 of the Farmington Book) came for Miss Porter every morning, driving a buggy with the top turned back, with a white horse called Charlie. She came home at noon and after a rest in her beautiful bedroom on the top floor overlooking the meadows, she came down to the sitting room even more beautifully dressed than her sisters. When callers did not come there was reading aloud, and sewing by those who were not doing the reading".

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Miss Porter wished to provide an attractive entrance to Main Street in Farmington, so she bought, and had removed, four houses which stood on its east side near Farmington Avenue, and created in their place the little park-like green which is presently on that site. Two of these buildings are pictured at the top of page 88 of the Farmington Book. Miss Porter's voice was probably the strongest influence used in preventing the railroad from entering Farmington Village, and later in keeping the trolley tracks out of Main Street. She believed in maintaining the beauty of the Village, and her school still follows her example, by preserving the houses and grounds of the school and keeping the houses well painted and the grounds well cared for.

The following is quoted from the Farmington Book, following a statement regarding the "absolute and unqualified respect" which the students had for Miss Porter:

"Miss Porter died, in her 87th year, on February 17, 1900. Her funeral, held on February 21 in the historical Congregational Church in Farmington, was a memorable occasion. The ample audience room and broad galleries were completely filled with the town's people, the pupils of her school, and former pupils who came from many parts of the country to do her honor."

Her body was borne from the church by the president of Williams College, professors of Columbia, Yale and Harvard, a former treasurer of Yale, and D. Newton Barney of Farmington.

Her two sisters continued their residence in the old homestead, Elizabeth Green Porter, and Maria Morgan Porter. A short time later their niece, Elizabeth Porter Keep, 1851-1910, Mrs. George W. Avery, was induced to come to Farmington and lived with her aunts. Mrs Avery's daughter said "The aunts were dear but formidable, and the house ran with precision". The Avery girls spent many of their vacations here.

(5) Rebecca Anne Porter, 1818-1892, married John Robinson Keep, 1810-1884. A separate account of the Keep family genealogy and also of the lives of John Robinson Keep's own family and descendants, will be found on separate pages later.

(6) Elizabeth Green Porter, 1822-1908, never married, and lived out her life in this house. She had been hurt in a runaway carriage accident and was obliged to use a cane thereafter. She was an excellent needlewoman, an avid reader, and a lover of the garden and flowers. She looked for perfection in all her associates and was very critical of any lack of it, making her a difficult person to love, but her two sisters surmounted this difficulty. When all the sisters lived there, Elizabeth was so stiff and formal that she scared the children. It is said that when grand-nephew Robert Porter Keep was to be taken visiting there as a child, and was told to kiss Aunt Elizabeth, he said "I will kiss Miss Maria, and let HER kiss Miss Elizabeth".

(7) Maria Morgan Porter, 1824-1918, was the housekeeper and doer of endless kindnesses. Neighborhood children were recipients of some of these. She often invited them in for cookies and Miss Lillian Mansfield remembers her teas. Miss Maria (pronounced Mar-eye-a, with accent on the 'eye') admired the Janes's maltese cat (from across the street), and thought him smart to climb her vines, but when he caught song-birds she was right across the street to protest.

February 21, 1971.

1042.
The following remembrance of the Porter sisters is taken from a pamphlet by Mary Twitchell Blakely, widow of the Rev. Quincy Blakely who was pastor of the Congregational Church, 1905 to 1937. She says:

"Miss Elizabeth and Miss Maria Porter held special places in the Village. They were daughters of Dr. Noah Porter, the minister of the old church for sixty years and for that reason had position, but they too had a place of their very own making. They held Court, as it were, in their old home, which had so much to tell of the past. Mothers dressed their children in their best and took them to call -- a real event in the life of the young, and that yearly experience made a great impression upon the young.

"Miss Elizabeth was a bit awesome and autocratic, but a great person -- a real scholar from her vast reading, and it was almost a liberal education to know her and be her friend. Miss Maria was the Martha of the family -- a bit subdued by her sister's greatness, but she came into her own at Miss Elizabeth's death.

"The Parson and I had some rare experiences of close relationship with these two remarkable women. They felt a certain responsibility regarding the young minister -- a successor of their father -- and watched over us very tenderly.

"Miss Martha called up the Parsonage almost every morning to ask what I was giving the Parson for breakfast. It was hardly ever the right thing, and often she would say in a discouraged tone "Put on your coats and come down for breakfast with us" and we almost always went, for their commands were of the royal kind.

"They had, at the brick house, the proverbial chicken and ice cream dinner once a week, and we were always invited. The Parson had an unbelievable fondness for ice cream. Miss Maria discovered that weakness and would keep close watch of his fast disappearing dessert, and say to Hulda, "Pass Mr. Blakely's plate", and then turn to me and say in a stage whisper, "I don't see how he can possibly eat so much".

"A case of scarlet fever, acquired by our handmaiden, made us, at Miss Maria's insistence, members of their family for two weeks.

"Those days stand out as very precious ones in our life's history. Miss Maria and Miss Elizabeth were always driven down the village street at ten o'clock in the morning, and we all checked our clocks at that time".

1043
Maria often took odd dishes and other things across to Mrs. Janes, asking if she would 'care' for them, as the sisters did not need them any more. She worked all too hard her more than 80 years for all around her. She loved little jokes, and was a dear sister to "Aunt Lizzie" all her days.

A neighbor of that time (and very young at that time too) said "Three Porter sisters lived here, and a brother Samuel, with a huge ear trumpet".

Mrs. Truman Sanford, formerly Helen Wadsworth, remembers the times before Miss Sarah's death, when she would receive huge birthday cakes from a former pupil Anna Jennings, and would ask the neighbor children to share it, giving them also a candy rosebud each.

After the death of the last Porter sister, Miss Maria, in 1918, it is not known who lived here. The house was used as a girl's dormitory for some short period, but was too far from "Main", making supervision difficult, so this was soon given up.

During the early part of World War II, some families of the faculty of England's Oxford University professors, their wives and children, lived here. The Keeps and some of the other townspeople aided in their support. When England became safer, after the end of the heavy air raids, they were returned to England.

A family by the name of Parks lived here sometime in the late 1940's. Mrs. Parks was a former Porter girl. They moved to Long Island.

Mr. and Mrs. Warren Cook and family moved in here as tenants in 1950, later purchased the house. They modernized it to some extent. There formerly was a well, under what is now the south porch. Water was pumped from here to a large metal tank on the third floor from whence it flowed by gravity, supplying water to the first and second floors.

In 1960 the 150th anniversary of the 1810 mission society formation was celebrated here, with Mr. and Mrs. Cook as hosts. A visitor from Japan gave them seeds of the trees, which are still in evidence, especially visible on the north side of the house. Mrs. Cook died shortly after 1960 and Mr. Cook sold the house back to Miss Porter's School, and very properly, as should be under its ownership.

Mr. and Mrs. Charles S. Knowles, of the faculty of Miss Porter's School, occupy the house at present, and have for some years.

February 21, 1971

The Oxford University families mentioned above were:
Mrs. Burn, wife of the Professor of Pharmacology, and four children, plus one extra girl,
Mrs. Clapham, Ph. D., Math Dept, University College, whose husband was Botany Professor, and their two sons, and
Mrs. Goodwin, lecturer on Biology, Chelsea Poly-Tech, whose husband was lecturer in French History, and their two sons.
Warren L. Cook was born in Beacon Falls, Connecticut, in 1903. His wife's maiden name is not presently known, Elizabeth Diefendorf.

When first married the Cooks lived in an apartment in West Hartford, but moved to Farmington in 1938, renting the house at 199 Garden Street. Their son Robert Lowe Cook was born during their residence in that house.

They particularly remember their residence there, as it was where they first heard of the bombing of Pearl Harbor. Having heard the first report of the attack in the morning, after which no further news was given, they took a ride out to the home of the John G. Lees on Old Mountain Road. There they could not even convince the Lees that there HAD been an attack! Mr. Cook was to be reminded vividly of this attack 24 years later, when his son, then a captain of engineers stationed at Scofield Barracks in Pearl Harbor, photographed the Koli-Koli Pass, through which the Japanese planes had descended on that fatal day. The cloud cover and weather conditions were almost precisely the same as on December 7, 1941, and revived his memories of the fateful day.

The Cooks moved from Garden Street to what is now the Corner House, during which residence their daughter Elizabeth was born.

After that they lived next door at the Deacon Richards house at 10 Main Street until it was sold in 1943.

In 1943 they rented from Mr. Morrell the former Hugh Chesney house at 28 Main Street, which they occupied until it was sold in 1950 to the Farmington Avings Bank.

It was at this time that they moved in 116 Main Street, renting at first, but buying very shortly thereafter. Mr. Cook worked for Travelers Insurance Company for 39 years, retiring around 1968 from his position as Secretary of the Casualty Underwriting Department. Mr. Cook was very active in Farmington's civic life and was one of the founders of its Chamber of Commerce. He also was one of the most active members of the hard-working Exchange Club, which was his chief interest in his retirement years.

After Mrs. Cook's death, his children already away at school, Mr. Cook purchased and occupied a smaller house on Elizabeth Road, until it was necessary for him to go into Brightview Convalescent Hospital in the early 1970s.

Mr. Cook's son is married and living in Waitsfield, Vermont.

Mr. Cook's daughter Elizabeth Jeanette Cook is a graduate of Oxford School and Connecticut College for Women and has a B.S. in Nursing from Columbia University, 1968. She is a registered nurse, a member of the Honor Society of Nursing, and just prior to her marriage was working in the Burlington, Vermont, Medical Center Hospital. She was married in early 1970 to Charles Baird Morgan, Jr., of Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania, a graduate of Trinity College and Wharton's School of Business Administration. They reside in Pittsford, Vermont.

Warren L. Cook died on August 3, 1973, in a Middlebury, Vermont, nursing home, and was buried in Riverside Cemetery here.

August 13, 1973
1045.

John Meigs, 1612-1672, Born in England, married there in 1632 to Tamazine Fry of Weymouth, came to America with his father. A tanner and a currier and probably a shoemaker. Lived in East Guilford, Conn., owned some property in New Haven.

John Meigs, 1641-1713, born in East Guilford. Married first to Sarah Wilcoxson of Stratford. Married second to Lydia, widow of Isaac Crittenden. A cooper, moved to Killingford, returned to East Guilford.


Return Meigs, 1708- Married first, Elizabeth Hamlin, who died 1762. Married second, widow Jane Doane. Lived in Middletown, Lt. of train band. One of his 13 children by his first wife was Return Jonathan Meigs, Governor of Ohio, 1810-1814.

Giles Meigs, 1744-1824 Married first, Experience Allen Married second, Ann Pinto Captains of militia, 3rd Conn. Regiment, War of the Revolution.

Mehitable Meigs Daughter of the second marriage, married the Rev. Noah Porter in 1810 in Middletown.

March 4, 1971
The Keep Genealogy

The first of the Keeps appearing in this record was John Keep, born in Longmeadow, Mass., in the 1640's. He married in 1663 Sarah Leonard of Springfield. They had six children. In 1676, while Mr. Keep was walking with his youngest son Jabez, both father and son were killed by Indians.

Samuel, 1670-1755, John's son, was born in Longmeadow and lived with his grandmother Leonard after his father's death. In 1685 he married Sarah Colton, 1678-1754, and settled in Longmeadow Valley on a farm. A great flood practically destroyed the settlement so it was moved to higher ground. He helped found the town of Brimfield in 1700.

Samuel, 1700-1761, Samuel's son, born in Longmeadow, was married in 1736 to Mary Colton but she died the following year. In 1738 he was married to Sarah Beman.

Samuel, 1739-1823, son of the 2nd Samuel, was married in 1767 to Sabina Cooley. He served twice in the war, a few days in 1775 and a month in 1777. He was a thriving farmer, "much regarded for his practical sagacity".

Samuel, 1774-1849, son of the 3rd Samuel, was married in 1800 to Anna Bliss, 1771-1834. He also was a farmer, and noted to be of great mechanical skill.

John Robinson Keep, 1810-1884, son of the 4th Samuel, studied for the ministry, and his first post was the newly formed Congregational Church in Unionville. He was married in 1842 to Rebecca Anne Porter, 1818-1892, the daughter of the Rev. Noah Porter of Farmington, and the sister of Sarah who founded Miss Porter's School. The Rev. John R. Keep became pastor at Franklin, New York, in 1842, then served at Warren, Conn., from 1844 to 1851. At this time his health failed and he gave up the ministry. In 1854 he was invited to teach at the American School for the Deaf in Hartford, and was highly successful in this work. He had two books published, "First Lessons for the Deaf and Dumb" and "School Studies". The Keeps had four children.

(1) Robert Porter Keep, 1844-1904, born in Farmington
    Married in 1878 to Margaret Vryling Haines
    Three children born of this marriage

    Married in 1897 to Elizabeth Vashti Hale
    No children born of this marriage (see next page)

    Drowned in Farmington River during 1st year at Yale

(3) Mary Keep, 1849-1874, born in Warren, Conn.

(4) Elizabeth Porter Keep, 1851-1910, born in
    Married in 1884 to Dr. George Whitfield Avery
    She was his second wife. He had a daughter, Helen
    Shipman Avery, 1877-1948, by his first wife.

    Three children were born of his second marriage.

A separate account of the Avery family genealogy and also of the lives of Dr. George Avery's own family and descendants, will be found on separate pages later.

February 21, 1971.
Robert Porter Keep, 1844-1904, born in Farmington, was a
graduate of Yale and tutored there for two years after he was
graduated. From 1868 to 1870 he held the post of U. S. Consul to
Greece, whose language he had mastered at Yale. After giving up
this assignment he stayed in Europe for a while, gaining knowledge,
and tutoring wealthy American boys. He later taught Greek at the
Williston Academy in East Hampton, Massachusetts. In 1878 he mar-
rried Margaret Vryling Haines of Elizabeth, New Jersey. They had
three children:

Robert Porter Keep (see next page)

Dorothea Keep, born in 1884, was married in Farmington
in 1913 to Robert Lee Hale, son of Matthew Hale and
Mary Lee. She attended Miss Porter's School from 1901
to 1904, and was a member of the first Board of Di-
rectors for the school when it was incorporated in 1943.

Edward Haines Keep, born in 1886, died in 1893 in Farm-
ington, of scarlet fever.

In 1885 he became principal of Norwich Free Academy. After
the death of his first wife he married Elizabeth Vashti Hale of
Elizabethtown, New York. No children were born of this marriage.
His nieces, the Avery sisters, came under his care after their father's
death and their mother's serious illness.

Robert Porter Keep was named in Miss Sarah Porter's will to
be co-trustee, with Senator Wallace S. Allis, to be in joint control
of her estate and of school policies. Miss Porter died in Feb. 1900.

In 1903, three years after her death, and after three years
of confusion and disruption at the school, Mrs. Dow, who had been
co-principal with Miss Porter, left the school. Mr. and Mrs. Keep
then came down from Norwich to take direct charge of it. Mr. Keep
was able to borrow money to operate the school, and had gotten to-
gether a distinguished faculty, but he died on June 3, 1904. His
widow became the head of the school and operated it successfully,
built up its enrollment and its properties, but she died very
suddenly on March 28, 1917. Her stepson, Robert Porter Keep, was
called to take over the school.

March 4, 1971

Mrs. Mary Elizabeth Dow, mentioned above, born on February 7,
1842, died on January 8, 1942. Her photo appears on page 160 of the
Farmington Book.
Robert Porter Keep, Jr., 1882-1967, born in East Hampton, Massachusetts, was a Yale graduate as had been his father. He was married to Rose Anne Hardy Day, 1883-1965, daughter of the Rev. Charles Orrin Day and Mary Hull, of Andover, Massachusetts. Mr. Keep taught at Phillips Academy of Andover, where he was head of the German Department. He was very successful there, and it was with great reluctance that he was released to come to Farmington after the death of his stepmother. Mr. and Mrs. Keep had no children.

They came here in 1917, and perhaps lived their first years here in "New Place", the house which his stepmother had built on Main Street just north of Mountain Road. In 1926 they purchased the house at 47 Main Street from one of Mrs. Keep's acquaintances, Gertrude Cowles, who had met Rose Anne Day years earlier, possibly as a schoolmate at Abbott Academy, a neighbor of Phillips, as Miss Cowles had attended Abbott.

Mr. Keep was appointed to the position of Headmaster and both he and his wife devoted all their time to the school until his resignation in 1943. It was as early as 1939 at least, that Mr. Keep began to make preparation for his relief, and chose the year 1943, as it was the hundredth anniversary of the formation of the school. Since there was no successor available in the Keep or Porter families, it was his decision to form a corporation and a Board of Directors, or Trustees, to determine policies for the school and to select and hire its headmasters.

Mr. and Mrs. Keep continued their residence in the house "Next Door" as it was called then, and kept up a deep interest in the school and in its students until their deaths in 1967 and 1965 respectively.

Their house is now the property of Miss Porter's School. It has been converted to a dormitory for twenty girls and a faculty couple to live with them. At the present time the faculty couple is Mr. and Mrs. Bob Archibald, very charming and able. See 47 Main St.

March 4, 1971
The Avery Genealogy

Christopher Avery, of Devonshire, England
married in 1616 to Margery Stephens
he left his wife in England and came to America with his
son James, and sometime prior to 1642 owned land at
Gloucester. Probably a weaver by trade.

Capt. James Avery, 1620-1700, came to America with his father
married first, in 1643, to Joanna Greenslade,
made second, in 1698, to Abigail, widow of Joshua Holmes.
In 1656 he built "Hive of the Averys" in Groton.

Married in 1675, Abigail Cheseborough.
He worked as carpenter.

John Avery, 1683-1762, New London.
Married in 1705 to Sarah Denison.
He was a farmer at Stony Brook.

John Avery, 1706-1762? Groton.
Married Lydia Smith.
Moved to Franklin, Conn.

David Avery, 1746-1818, Norwich.
Married in 1782 Hannah Chaplin.
He was very active in the Revolutionary War.
Was a chaplain but shouldered a musket when needed.
Was the first historian of the Groton Avery family.

David Avery, 1787-1875, Wrentham, Massachusetts.
Married in 1832 Rebecca Brown Morgan.
Was a farmer, lived most of the time in Jewett City.

Dr. George Whitfield Avery, 1835-1893, Hampton, Conn.
Married 1872 Lydia Leffingwell Shipman
After her death he married Elizabeth Porter Keep.

March 4, 1971
The Dr. George Whitfield Avery Family

Dr. George Whitfield Avery, 1835-1893, Hampton, Connecticut.

He was a graduate of Yale Medical School. Prior to graduation he served with the Union forces during the Civil War, and was known as "surgeon", although he had not completed his studies. He was in New Orleans at least part of the time during the war, and there passed through two epidemics of yellow fever.

He was married in 1872 to Lydia Leffingwell Shipman, who was the mother of their daughter Helen Shipman Avery, 1877-1948.

After Lydia's death he married Elizabeth Porter Keep, 1851-1910, and their marriage resulted in three children: Mary Elizabeth Avery 1885-1962, Alice Porter Avery 1887-1966 and Melanie Avery 1891-1955. Dr. Avery practiced medicine in Hartford and he and his family lived on Garden Street.

Mary Elizabeth Avery was sent in 1895 to Norwich, to live with her uncle, Robert Porter Keep, and his second wife, Elizabeth V. Hale. There she attended Norwich Free Academy of which her uncle was principal. Mr. Keep's daughter, Dorothea, one year older than Mary, also attended her father's school. Dorothea went from there to Miss Porter's School, and Mary accompanied her in her second year.

Sometime after Dr. Avery's death, which was in 1893, Mrs. Avery became ill, and finally too ill to care for the household and the children. After this happened the other two girls, Alice and Melanie, were also sent to Norwich to live in their uncle's home.

All three of the Avery girls eventually attended Miss Porter's School, their uncle's widow Elizabeth being in charge of the school during part of their attendance. Robert Porter Keep had come here from Norwich in 1903, but his death in 1904 left his widow to operate the school. Mary finished at Vassar in 1808, studied in Paris two years and then one year in Munich. Alice attended music school in Boston, then was with her sister Mary for the year in Munich. All this time they were spending their vacations, and in fact making their residence, at the Porter Homestead in Farmington, as was their mother. She had been induced, around 1900 or so, when she had made considerable recovery from her illness, to come to Farmington and live with her aunts, Elizabeth and Maria, Miss Sarah Porter having died in 1900. Mrs. Avery's daughter Alice commented on the residence here, saying "The aunts were dear but formidable, and the house ran with precision".

Melanie finished Vassar in 1913, then studied at the Sorbonne in Paris. She taught Rhythmic Expression in Chicago and Cleveland and returned to Farmington in 1938. Here she became alumnae secretary and also served as housemother at one of the school dormitories, and thus was again associated with Miss Porter's School. She died in 1955. A plaque near the front door of "Main" expresses the appreciation of Miss Porter's girls for her long period of service to the school.

March 4, 1971
Families of the Avery sisters, Mary and Alice, on this and the following page

Mary Elizabeth Avery, 1885-1962, Vassar 1908, who studied in Paris, 1908-1909, and in Munich 1910-1911, was married to Houston Lowe Gaddis, of Cleveland, Ohio, and of Grosse Ile, Michigan. They were divorced in 1929. They had two children:

Mary Lowe Gaddis, 1917- , Radcliffe married in 1937 in the Keep house at 47 Main Street, to Kermit Roosevelt, Jr, son of Kermit Roosevelt and Belle W. Willard. He later was president of Kermit Roosevelt Associates, a consulting firm, and of Roosevelt, Anders and Bergen, an engineering firm. Children:

- Kermit Roosevelt III, a lawyer, NYC
  m. Linda Cross, later divorced
- Jonathan Roosevelt, a lawyer, Washington, D. C.
  m. J. Barlow
- Anne Cooper Roosevelt, Washington, D. C.
  a student
- Mark Roosevelt, Washington, D. C.
  a student

Elizabeth Porter Gaddis, 1918- teacher, Warrenton, Pa. married in 1942 in Hume, Virginia, to Peter Sterling Hitchcock, son of Charles W. Hitchcock and Mary Sterling, president of Nettleton Steel Treating Company, Cleveland, Ohio. Children:

- Mary Elizabeth Hitchcock
  m. Ens. Robert Thomas Vacca, USNR
- Peter Sterling Hitchcock
  student, University of Denver
- Christopher Philip Hitchcock
  student

as of ca 1968
Alice Porter Avery, 1887-1966, Porter School 1904-1908, studied at Music School, Boston, 1908-1909, and at Munich 1910-1911, was married in 1911 to Lt. USN Jerome Clarke Hunsaker, born 1886, in a ceremony here at the Porter Homestead in Farmington. Lt. Hunsaker, later an aeronautical engineer, designed the lighter-than-air airship Shenandoah, was Naval Attache at London, Paris, Berlin and Rome, and headed the Department of Aero-Engineering at MIT from 1933 to 1951. Their children were:

Sarah Porter Hunsaker, 1912
married in 1937 to Davis Swope, son of Gerard Swope and Mary Hill of Ossining, New York.

David Avery Swope, born Mt. Kisco, N. Y., Harvard and Columbia, a lawyer
Dorothea Hale Swope, born Dayton, Ohio, student, Lake Forest College

James Peter Hunsaker, 1915
married in 1942 to Frances Bowles Lowell, the daughter of Alfred P. Lowell
Daphne Lowell Hunsaker, born in Boston
James Peter Hunsaker, born in Annapolis

Jerome Clarke Hunsaker, 1915
married in 1943 to Elizabeth Blake, the daughter of Benjamin S. Blake and Ruth Field
Melanie Avery Hunsaker, born Boston
Jerome Clarke Hunsaker, born Boston
George Avery Hunsaker

Alice MacLaurin Hunsaker, 1922

Anthony Edward Bird, born London
Nicholas Arthur Bird, born London
Sarah Porter Bird, born Beaconsfield.

as of ca 1968