Located on a small open lot, the William Nevins House sits close to the east side of Main Street in the north end of the Farmington Historic District. Bordering the property on all sides are other historic dwellings some dating from the seventeenth century.
This Greek Revival-style building features a two-bay facade, an unusual configuration not often found in Farmington. The doorway has been enclosed with a small porch with a flat roof. Note the heavy pediment and corner pilasters, the only existing characteristics of the Greek Revival style. The original sash have been replaced with modern aluminum windows and several modern additions are found at the rear of the building.

William S. Nevins built this dwelling around 1840 on a parcel of land he acquired from the heirs of Ebenezer and Issac Gleason (FLR 44:269). Little is known about Nevins, except that he sold "his homelot and buildings" to Samuel Burgess in 1843 for $1450 (FLR48:397). In 1849 Burgess sold the property to Miss Clarrissa K. Jones and her sister Miss Belinda Jones. Both were the daughters of Samuel and Almira (Gridley) Jones. George Langdon owned the property for a short time between 1881 and 1884 (FPR 17:180, FLR 68:80). The next owner was Nelson O. Keyes (1847-1931) a carpenter from New Hampshire. He, his wife, the former Laura Arthur Chamberlin, and their daughter resided here for many years. In 1938 Helen (Keyes) Deming inherited the property from her parents' estate (FLR 92:162). She was the wife of Henry Deming, whom she married in 1906. Their son Arthur K. Deming and his family own the house today.

Although relatively modest, this house contributes to the streetscape.
OWNER'S NAME: DEMING, HELEN K.
ADDRESS: 21 Main Street
DATE BUILT: 1843 FOR: William S. Nevins

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION: Mrs. Helen K. Deming says the house was built by Samuel Burgess.

ARCHITECT: William S. Nevins (or Burgess)
REFERENCES: "Farmington, Conn., 1906", p. 90
This house is pictured in the Farmington Book on page 20 as the "Residence of Nelson O. Keyes". It is shown on Baker and Tilden's 1869 Atlas as "Misses Jones".

This property is shown on page xvii of Mrs. Hurlburt's "Town Clerks" as having originally been owned by Samuel Steele, who is shown as owning the land on which presently stand houses numbers 19, 21, 23, 25 and 27 Main Street. She speaks of Mr. Steele on page 372 of the same book, as follows:

"Samuel Steele who removed to Wethersfield in 1685 was the only living son of John Steele at the time of his father's death in 1665, another son John having died in 1653. Under the terms of his father's will, Samuel Steele had confirmed to him the house and tenement given him at the time of his marriage to Mary Boosey".

Some say that this house at No. 21 was built by Samuel S. Nevins in 1843 and sold by him in the same year to Samuel P. Burgess, others say it was built by Mr. Burgess. All that is known of Mr. Burgess at the moment is that he died in 1881.

This house is built with heavy planks under the sheathing of the outside walls, different construction than most, but perhaps the custom at that period in time.

Mr. Burgess transferred title to Belinda Jones in 1849. She was the daughter of Samuel Jones and Almira Gridley. Her sister was Clarissa K. Jones, who died prior to the year 1881, while Belinda died in August 1883.

The property was purchased from the Jones estate by Nelson O. Keyes in 1884. Nelson Keyes, 1847-1931, had been born in Warren, New Hampshire, the son of Ezra Keyes and Julia Clough. Nelson Keyes' wife was the former Laura Arthur Chamberlain, daughter of Jedediah Chamberlain and Jeannette Arthur. Both Mr. and Mrs. Keyes were of Scottish descent. Their only child, Helen Julia Keyes, was born in Farmington, in the Colt farmhouse pictured on page 140 of the Farmington Book, where they lived for a time.

Nelson Keyes and his wife had been brought to Connecticut by Samuel Colt, Jr., who had noted his skill as a carpenter and hired him to build what Mr. Colt needed on the farm on South Road. Miss Sarah Porter liked his work also, and employed him on the school buildings, several of which she had altered by additions after she had acquired them.

Mr. Keyes supplied lumber and labor to the Town of Farmington, as stated in the Town Report, 1884-85.

Mr. Keyes went into business on his own and perhaps built the shop which is pictured on page 147, which also housed George Leopard's blacksmith shop on the ground floor, the woodworking being done upstairs.

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Mr. Keyes advertised in the Farmington Magazine in 1901 as "Carpenter and Builder", and in his time built several homes in Farmington, including the Julius Gay house at 36 Main Street.

It will be noted in the photo on page 147 that a sign appears on the building reading "McCormick Harvesting Machinery", for whom he was the local dealer. He also sold fertilizer and some other farm supplies. Some time prior to the building of the Village Library the area there was cleared of other buildings. The old Jane Griswold house, also shown on page 147, was moved to 32 Mill Lane, "Tucky" Deming's barns were either torn down or moved to 8 Mountain Road, the old horse sheds were moved farther up Church Street, and Nelson Keyes moved his shop down to the rear of his house at 21 Main Street. There it still stands, quite a bit to the rear, and east of his barn. The front of the building has been changed somewhat, and another building has been attached to its rear. Otherwise it presents much the same appearance, but too far to the rear to be seen from Main Street. A huge screwdriver is still in the shop, one which was used to drive the large screws holding schoolroom desks to the floor.

Helen Keyes was a day student at Miss Porter's School, her father paying the tuition with work done for the school. She became a schoolteacher in Farmington, as shown in the 1906 photo on page 38 of the Farmington Book, with the children of Grades 2 & 3. She can be remembered also as working on roofs with her father, getting the shingles on before the rain would come.

Miss Keyes was married in August 1906 to Henry Deming, 1874-1955, the son of Chauncey Deming and Ellen Maria Hart of what is now the house at 80 Main Street. As a youth Henry had been employed by the Farmington Creamery, which Henry's son Arthur states was located on Waterville Road just north of the paddle tennis court. By the time of his marriage Henry was employed by Pope-Hartford, in Hartford, so the newly married couple moved to Hartford and lived on Sigourney Street. After about three years there he accepted an offer by his father-in-law and went into business with him in carpentry and construction. Together they built a second house on Mr. Keyes' house lot, to the rear and a little to the right of the existing house, but quite close to it. Mr. and Mrs. Henry Deming made this their home.

A family member who lived in the Keyes' house was the sister of Mrs. Keyes, Mrs. James Chapman, the former Jennie Chamberlain. Mr. Chapman was a Civil War veteran, a large man, with beard and goatee. They moved to the West, lived in Iowa for some time, then settled in Shelbyville, Illinois. From there they visited in Farmington every few years, and after the death of Mr. Chapman in the mid-1920's Mrs. Chapman came here to live with her sister.

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Nelson Keyes died in 1931 and Mr. Deming took over the business which his father-in-law and he had operated. In 1932 Mr. and Mrs. Deming, their children then in college, moved over into the main house with Mrs. Keyes and her sister. At this time Mr. Deming moved the house in which he and his family had been living, to Deming property at 4 Mill Lane. It was rented out then, and Walter Griswold was a tenant for a time. It is now the home of Henry Deming's son Earl and his family. Henry Deming also built three other houses down Mill Lane. Number 10 was built for the Robert Smiths. The houses at 14 Mill Lane and 99 Garden Street were built for rental. Number 14 is now occupied by Mrs. Alexander J. Smith, tenant and 99 Garden Street is now the home of Henry Deming's son Arthur and his family.

Mrs. Chapman died in 1935 and Mrs. Keyes in 1938.

Henry Deming kept active in his work for many years after his father-in-law died, and although he probably did not carry a full schedule in his later years he lived until he was 81, dying in 1955.

Mr. Deming's sons Arthur and Earl still have the old 1935 pickup truck which Mr. Deming used in his work, and it still works for the family, and also on many community projects when needed. Its most recent use was to help get ready for the open house at the fire station on Main Street. The boys still make frequent use too, of their father's old shop in the rear of 21 Main Street. The tools are old but serviceable and there is plenty of odds and ends of lumber to work with.

Mrs. Henry Deming outlived her husband by eleven years and died in 1966 at the age of 91. She and her husband had two children. As previously mentioned, Arthur, the elder lives at 99 Garden Street and Earl at 4 Mill Lane. They jointly own the house at 21 Main Street which has been rented to the John J. Skahill family since September 1965, Mrs. Deming not having lived there during her last year or so. See next page for Arthur Deming, 4 Mill Road for Earl.

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Note regarding 14 Mill lane, first paragraph of this page: Helen Williams Faulkner Smith, widow of Alexander Jessup Smith, died at Geri-Care Convalescent Home on November 25, 1973.

December 8, 1973
Arthur Keyes Deming, the elder son, is a graduate of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and also holds a Master's degree in mechanical engineering. It was during his work for the advanced degree that he met the girl who was to be his wife, Marion Christine Bailey of Dedham, Massachusetts. She is the daughter of Alexander William Bailey (it has been changed from the old Scottish "Baillie") and Elizabeth Sutherland. Her father was a former carriage builder in Boston, who became a builder of special truck bodies. Her family lived in the Roxbury-Dorchester section, later in Dedham. Marion studied in night schools, both art and secretarial work. Arthur and Marion were married in July 1940.

Arthur Deming started his post-college working life with the American Blower Company in Detroit, then was with Frigidaire which transferred him to Boston. He was in the army reserves in 1940 and went into active duty in December of that year, as Post Ordnance Officer at Fort Devens. Later he was Ordnance Officer for Boston's harbor defenses and spent somewhat over a year in the Philippines --- six years in all in active service. Back to civilian life he was with Hartford Empire in the glass container business, and in 1950 went with Hamilton-Standard in Windsor Locks, where he presently serves as staff mechanical engineer.

Mr. Deming was for many years a member of the Prudential Committee of the Farmington Congregational Church, and was the one who in 1953 discovered water damage to the main uprights of the steeple tower. The damage was still repairable however, thanks to its early discovery. See Hartford Courant, October 3, 1954.

The Demings have three children: Laura, Elizabeth & Nancy.

Laura Sutherland, a graduate of Bates, has a Master's from Clark University, Worcester, in Math. She was married to Frederick Albert Stevens, has a son Floyd Alexander Stevens, is now divorced. She and her son live in Jefferson, Massachusetts, and she teaches Math at Wachusetts Regional High School.

Elizabeth Sandra, a graduate of Drew, majored in German and studied one year in Munich University. She has a Master's in German literature from Middlebury, which included a year's study at the University of Mainz. She has taught at Tufts, now teaches German at Massachusetts College in Salem, Mass., while she takes courses in Remedial Reading at Boston University.

Nancy/has a degree from New York University in History of the Arts. She just finished a summer course at Catherine Gibbs and is now employed on a research grant to provide background needed by judges for proper sentencing of prisoners. She also is studying for the position of para-legal aide for attorneys with small staffs.

Mrs. Deming has been employed for some ten years in the office of Miss Porter's School, in the fund raising department. She is also starting to capitalize on the investment in the study of art some years ago.

September 6, 1972
The house at 21 Main Street has been rented since September 1965 by Mr. and Mrs. John Skahill and their family.

John Joseph Skahill was born in Manchester, Conn., the son of John Joseph Skahill and Mary Lee, both of whom died when he was quite young. His elder sister Mary, an employee of the Travelers for many years, took over the family and reared the younger children. The Skahills were of Irish descent.

Mrs. Skahill, the former Helen M. Lennon, is the daughter of William F. Lennon and Helen V. Mulvey of Willimantic. The LennoRs came to America from England and were in America at least by the early 1700's. One John Lennon of Norwich was a soldier in the Civil War. Several generations of them have been in the monument business, as was Mrs. Skahill's father, and a large gravestone in Cambridge carries on it several generations of the Lennon family.

Both Mr. Skahill and Miss Lennon came to Hartford, he to work at Aetna Insurance Company, and she to attend Secretarial School and work at Day, Berry and Howard. They met at a Block Island picnic and were married in Hartford. They moved to Farmington from Troutwood Drive in West Hartford, where they had lived several years. Their children are: Nancy, Carolyn, Barbara, John and Joan.

Nancy Lee, who attended Marjorie Webster in Washington, was graduated from Southern Connecticut State College. She met her future husband in New Haven while he was a student at Yale. He is Commander Timothy Bryan, a reserve officer now after ten years in the Navy, and is a salesman of mutual funds. They lived in Farmington (or rather she did) while he was in Viet Nam, now reside in East Greenwich, Rhode Island, with their small son Michael E. Bryan.

Carolyn Marie has attended Tufts, the University of Lausanne and the University of Munich. She worked for a time in Geneva, Switzerland, now studies Economics at the University of Connecticut.

Barbara Louise attended Hartford College for Women and was graduated from the University of Connecticut. She is now married to Lewis Paparazo whom she met in California. They lived for a time in Amherst, Massachusetts, have recently moved to Wendell, Mass. Mr. Paparazo is employed in the family construction business and Barbara teaches in a grammar school.

John David, graduate of Farmington High School, attends Central Connecticut State College.

Joan Marie, graduate also of Farmington High School, will enter Hartford College for Women later this month.

Mr. Skahill is a Claim Adjuster for Aetna Insurance Company. Mrs. Skahill is interested in weaving, even has her own loom, but plays quite a bit of golf too.

September 7, 1972