Mills, Edward M., House

Farmington
Unionville
Hartford

Mills, Edward M., House

90 Main Street

Vibert, Timothy J. & Chauvy, Laura

Residence

Residence

Transitional Greek Revival/Italianate

Brick

Fieldstone

Cobblestone

Cut stone

Balloon

Asbestos Siding

Wood Shingle

Stucco

Aluminum Siding

Concrete

Wood frame

Post and beam

Structural iron or steel

Gable

Hip

Roll

Asphalt

Tile

Slate

1861-1865

2

54 x 50

Excellent

Good

Deteriorated

Excellent

Good

Deteriorated

X

Yes

No

No

Yes

No

X

Yes

No

X

Yes

No

X

Yes

No

No

Yes

No

High building density

Bounded to the north by hilly wooded terrain, the Edward M. Mills house faces south onto Main Street. Located in a largely intact residential neighborhood, this dwelling is bordered by other historic dwellings dating from the early nineteenth century.
This four-bay, transitional Greek Revival/Italianate-style house was erected between 1861 and 1865. The facade exhibits a single-story, Italianate-style, wrap-around, open veranda. It appears that a first-floor window located to the left of the facade door has been removed. Two-over-two sash are found on the first floor, while the original six-over-six sash remain on the second floor. A flushboarded entablature extends around the house beneath the wide overhanging eaves. An integral, single-story ell extends from the east elevation.

The early history of this building is obscure. It is most probable that Edward M. Mills erected the house between 1861 and 1865. Stylistically this construction date is feasible, as similar dwellings along Lovely Street (see #126 Lovely Street and #132 Lovely Street) date from the same period. In January of 1861, Mills purchased from Joshua Brewer's portion of "the furniture manufacturing company of A.S. Mills and Company and a one acre parcel of land with buildings -- where I now reside" (FLR 54:448). A month later, Mills mortgaged the home lot for $1,000 to Amos Spencer, possibly replacing the older dwelling house at this time (FLR 58:211). In October of 1862, two months before his marriage, Mills sold the property to his fiancee, Angeline Z. Hill (1840-1868) for $500 (FLR 58:433). The Mills mortgaged the property again in 1863 and 1864, each time for $1,000 (FLR 58:527 & 60:190). The building is clearly standing in 1865, when it appears in a historic photograph of Unionville taken from Hillside Cemetery. Mills was born in Canton in 1834. His wife, Angeline was the daughter of Albert and Angeline E. (Tiffany) Hill, of Unionville. Angeline died in 1868, leaving her husband with three small children. Although she left no will, the title and ownership of the house went to Edward and the three children; Albert, Sarah, and C. Angeline. In 1870 Mills married Mrs. Alice Chidsey Woodford, a native of Mt. Morris, New York and they had a daughter, Harriet (b. 1870). The furniture factory was incorporated as the Union Cabinet Company in June of 1873, with Edward Mills presiding as president (FLR 62:245). He had purchased

Sources:
the remaining two-thirds of the furniture factory mentioned earlier from his father. Three months later, he declared bankruptcy and was ordered to sell all his personal estate to satisfy his debts (FLR 14:330). He lost the presidency of the company, although his wife continued to be a major stock holder. The factory went out of business in 1881 and was sold to the Union Nut Company. The house along Main Street was not included in the personal property that Mills was forced to sell and the family retained ownership for a number of years. In 1892 Mills, who had moved to Northampton, Massachusetts, to live with one of his daughters, and his three children from his first marriage sold the house to Lucy L. Tracy (FLR 70:336-337).

Merchant, Edward T. Thompson acquired the property in 1909 (FLR 77:269). A native of Avon, Thompson (1861-1915) operated a successful general mercantile business in Unionville for many years. In 1916, Thompson's wife, Nettie inherited the property (FLR 74:316) and remained in the house until 1930. Robert K. Vibert, one of Unionville's two Spanish-American War veterans, a longtime representative in the Panama Canal Zone of Unionville factories (which enjoyed a prosperous trade of their manufactured products in the Caribbean Area from around 1890 to 1930), bought the house in 1930, and three generations of Viberts have lived there. Vibert married Marjorie Monteith. It remains in that family today.

Relatively unaltered since its construction, the Edward M. Mills House is a good example of the transition from the Greek Revival style to Italianate style.
Built: Before 1865 --
1844, 1853, or 1861/2 ?

For: James & Augustus Cowles,
or Joshua Brewer, or
Edward M. Mills ?

Owners

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James & Augustus Cowles
4-23-1844 Joshua B. Brewer
2-21-1861 Edward M. Mills
10-20-1862 Angeline Z. Hill Mills
5- 5-1868 Edward, Albert, Sarah, and
  C. Angeline Mills
10- 1-1892 Lucy L. Tracy
  see below
3- 8-1905 Hubert D. Tracy
8-24-1909 Edward T. Thompson
12-20-1916 Nettie E. Thompson
  no record
1- 8-1930 Robert K. Vibert
2- 9-1946 Ruthven, John, & Peter Vibert
10-21-1953 John W. Vibert
5-24-1965 Eileen H. Vibert

One cannot determine from town records when this house was built. The Assessor's card says ca. 1870, but that is too late. There was some sort of house on the property when it was sold to Joshua Brewer for $580 in 1844; it was described then as "the place which has been occupied by Ephraim Fuller" (48-507). It is not known if the house was this one or an earlier one. So its first possible construction date is ca. 1844. The 1853 map of Unionville shows a house at this site, and Joshua Brewer mortgaged
this property for $1030 that year (52-569); so its second possible construction date is 1853. When Brewer sold this property to Edward Mills in 1861, it was described as "the place where I now reside" (54-448). It is possible that this house was built in 1861/2 for Edward Mills, before he married Angeline Hill, to whom he transferred ownership just before their marriage. So the third possible date is 1861/2. The house was definitely built by 1865, because it appears in the picture of Unionville taken that year from Hillside Cemetery's hill. In that view this house is clearly visible as the second house on the northeast side of Main Street.

Whatever the construction date, this property was first owned by James & Augustus Cowles, who owned large chunks of land in downtown Unionville and were instrumental in building the water power system that led to the industrial development of the town.

The man to whom the Cowles brothers sold this property, Joshua Brewer, had been born in West Springfield, Mass., and was married to Harriet Paine (Payne), who came from Burlington. The first evidence of Joshua Brewer living in Unionville is that he became a voter here in 1837. Then in December 1842 he and Sidney Payne bought pew #35 in "the new Unionville meeting house" from the estate of Ambrose Hart (47-398). Joshua and Harriet's son Albert was born here in 1843. Where the Brewers lived before they bought this house in 1844 is not known. In 1849 Harriet Payne Brewer died, only 30 years old.

There are no town records to show what Joshua Brewer's occupation was before 1852. Pepper's history of Unionville in Hurlburt's "Town Clerks and their Times", p. 336, says that Brewer worked with Lambert Hitchcock making furniture. Pepper also lists the dates of Hitchcock & Brewer as 1844-1860, when they sold out to the Mills family. That is inaccurate. Brewer may have worked with Hitchcock, but Brewer did not own any part of the business until after Hitchcock's death in 1852. At that time, Brewer and Amasa Mills bought the cabinet-making machinery and fixtures formerly owned by Hitchcock (52-456). The new firm, A.S. Mills & Co., was owned two-thirds by Mills and one-third by Brewer. They operated in the factory where Hitchcock had been, a factory leased from James Cowles; it was located at what is now the southwest corner of South Main & Mill Streets.

In 1855 Joshua Brewer sold part of this house property to Truman Sanford; that land became the site of 100 Main Street, so refer to that write-up for subsequent history of that piece. See Map 1 below. Joshua Brewer sold both his one-third interest in A.S. Mills & Co. and this house to Edward M. Mills in February 1861. It is not known where Brewer moved, but one can guess that it was to a farm in the West District that he had purchased from Harvey Whittlesey in 1857. A birth record for a daughter of Joshua and his second wife lists his occupation in September 1861 as "farmer".
Edward Mills took mortgages in 1861 with Amos Spencer (58-211), Polly Mills (58-271), and Amasa Mills & Aaron French (58-272) to pay for his investment in A.S. Mills & Co. Then in October 1862 he put this house property in the name of his fiancee, Angeline Z. Hill, just two months before they were married. She was the daughter of Albert & Angeline E. Hill of Lovely Street. In 1866 Amasa Mills died, leaving his two-thirds of the business to his wife Sarah. That same year Edward Mills finally bought the land and buildings "known as the furniture factory" and "the furniture storehouse" from James L. Cowles for $5100 (60-399). From the deed description and the 1875 map of Unionville, the site of the storehouse can be pinpointed as northerly across the canal from the factory, at what is now the northwest corner of South Main & Mill Streets.

In 1868 Angeline Hill Mills died at the age of 28; she had no will, and there are no probate or land records showing the distribution of ownership of this house. From the later deed in 1892, one must assume that ownership passed jointly to her husband Edward and their three children - Albert, Sarah, and C. Angeline. Two years after her death, Edward married again, to Mrs. Alice C. Woodford.

In June 1873 the furniture manufacturing business was incorporated as the Union Cabinet Company, with Edward Mills as its President (62-245); of the 1000 shares outstanding, Edward held 286, Sarah Mills 244, and three members of the Woodford family owned 240. Sometime between June and September, Edward sold all but 90 of his shares. Then on September 24 he went into "insolvency", or declared bankruptcy (P14-330). The personal property inventory (P14-348) does not include this house but does mention the 90 shares of UCC stock and one other interesting item - 10,000 ft of 1-inch chestnut lumber, worth $150! It was ordered that all of his personal property be sold to help pay his debts. By July 1874, when the next annual report of Union Cabinet Co. was given, Edward Mills had been replaced by Corydon Woodford as President, and Mills' stock had been assigned to A. Sperry (62-304). The 1875 annual report (62-356) lists George Dunham as President of UCC, a post he held until 1881, when the company went out of business. The 1875 annual report also shows Alice Woodford Mills as owner of 120 shares; so one can infer that Edward Mills continued working in some capacity for the company. He bought some stock in 1878 but sold it the following year (62-528,582). Then in 1881 the Union Cabinet Company shut down its business; the factory was sold to the Union Nut Co. (65-557), and the warehouse was sold to Christian Georgia (65-616).

The Mills family sold this house to Lucy L. Tracy in 1892 (70-336), the deed says that Edward was "of Northampton, Massachusetts", so perhaps he lived there with his daughter Angeline and her family. The only town record of note for the Tracy family was in 1893, when the minutes of a town meeting refer to a road to be built starting opposite the Tracy house on Main Street and to go to the canal - this would be Elm Street.
In 1909 the Tracys sold the house to Edward T. Thompson, the owner and proprietor of "Thompson's store", on the southeast corner of South Main & Water Streets. That building had originally been built by the Cowles brothers for use as a warehouse for goods shipped on the canal. A biography of Edward Thompson appears in "Commemorative Biographical Record of Hartford County", p. 718; it is copied and included at the conclusion of this narrative.

When Edward Thompson died in 1915, ownership passed to his wife Nettie, who owned it until 1930. The Viberts have owned it since then; in 1969 they sold a piece of the land to Prosper Vicino, who then built the duplex house which is now 82 Main Street. See Map 2 below for the present size of the property.

Map 1 - 1855

Main St

Map 2 - 1969

Main St

EDWARD T. THOMPSON is a leading merchant of Unionville, whose success in life is due to his own energy and the high ideal which his lofty and laudable ambition placed before him. Success in any walk of life is an indication of earnest endeavor and persevering effort—characteristics that he possesses in an eminent degree.

A native of the county, Mr. Thompson was born in Avon June 11, 1861, and is a son of Amon Thompson, who was also born there. The grandfather, Alson Thompson, was at one time one of the most prosperous farmers of Lovely street, Avon. He married Miss Sally Hart, of that town, and to them were born four children: Mary, deceased wife of a Mr. Peck; Amon; Sarah, deceased wife of John A. Merriman, of Unionville; and Emeline, wife of Charles Merriman, of Litchfield, Connecticut.

Amon Thompson has spent all his life in his native town, engaged in agricultural pursuits, and now resides on the old David Hawley farm. He married Jane Woodruff, a daughter of Moses Woodruff, of Avon. She died in 1858. They had five children: Jennie, deceased; Emma, wife of Edwin B. Perkins, of Litchfield; George, deceased; Edward T., our subject; and Levi, wife of Dr. H. H. Ferris, of Litchfield.

In the public schools of Avon Edward T. Thompson acquired a good practical education. At the age of sixteen years he began his business career as a clerk for C. T. Georgia, in Unionville, and remained with him for four years. During the following four years he was similarly employed by A. S. Hart & Co.; then followed the carpenter's trade in Litchfield for about a year; and later clerked in the grocery store of C. S. Bunce, on North Main street, Hartford, for two years. Subsequently he had charge of the circulation of the Hartford Telegram for two years, and at the end of that time came to Unionville, where he was engaged in the grocery and fish business in the Merriman block for five years. For two years he worked for L. Sauer, in the meat business, and during the following three years was in the employ of M. C. Woodford, whom he succeeded in business March 28, 1899. He carries a large and well-selected stock of staple and fancy groceries, notions, etc., and is building up an excellent trade. At his present location his father's cousin, Marcus Thompson, was engaged in the general mercantile business for over thirty years. Socially Mr. Thompson is a member of the Ancient Order of United Workmen. He was married, in Avon, to Miss Nettie Rexroth, of Canton, Conn., and they have two children: Lucile and George Edward.
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Genealogy

Joshua B. Brewer: b. ? in West Springfield, Mass.; d. ?
Harriet Paine Brewer: b. 1818/19 in Burlington; d. 5-5-1849
second wife - name unknown
child: Albert J., b. 10-14-1843; see 132 Lovely Street

Edward M. Mills: b. 1833/4 in Canton; m. Angeline Z. Hill 12-24-1862;
m. Alice C. Woodford 2-5-1870; d. ?
Angeline Z. Hill Mills: b. 1839/40, dau of Albert & Angeline E. Hill;
d. 5-5-1868
Alice C. Woodford: b. ?, d. ?
children: Albert H.
Sarah Maria, b. 10-17-1866
C. Angeline

Lucy Adams Tracy: b. 7-17-1830 in Norwich; d. 2-15-1920
John Tracy: b. ?, d. ?

Edward T. Thompson: b. 6-11-1861 in Avon, son of Amon & Jane
Woodruff Thompson; d. 11-15-1915
Nettie J. Rexroth Thompson: b. ? in Canton; d. 2-13-1941
children: Linda Lucile, b. 7-11-1891
George Edward, b. 4-6-1895