Located along the west side of Garden Street, the Henry Steinmetz House sits in a residential neighborhood comprising other historic dwellings built in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Part of the Miss Porter's School complex lies across the street to the east and the Farmington River is located to the west.
Built in 1911 the Henry Steinmetz House is oriented gable-to-street. The facade exhibits a single-story, Colonial Revival-style veranda adorned with classical columns resting on a solid, flared balustrade. Note the lattice-like skirt trimming the base of the porch. The porch has been partially enclosed with screens. The gable end features a small one-over-one sash and wide overhanging eaves. Double-hung, one-over-one windows with louvered shutters are displayed throughout the house. A small brick chimney rises from the center of the house. The small wood-framed garage which is located to the rear of the house originally sat at the front of the lot and served as a barber shop.

Henry Steinmetz erected this house in 1911 on land he had previously purchased from Frank Corbin in 1903 (FLR 71:623). Born in Germany, Steinmetz (1863-1929) was the son of Henrich and Wilhelmina Steinmetz. His wife was the former Ottony Maria Mercher (1877-1972) of Braunschweig, Germany. A barber by trade, Steinmetz operated a shop in Unionville with his brother John before opening his own barber shop on Main Street, Farmington, around the turn of the century. In 1921 he built a small barber shop on the front of his homelot along Garden Street, which was later moved off the street and converted to a garage. Active in the Democratic Party, Steinmetz also worked as a news reporter for the Farmington Valley Herald. In 1972 the property was willed to Steinmetz’s three daughters: Gertrude (b. 1898), Elsa (b. 1905), and Martha (b. 1912) (FLR 248:497).

The present owners purchased the house in 1976 (FLR 248:824).

Historically significant for its association with the Steinmetz family, this well-maintained, early twentieth-century home contributes to the overall historic character of Garden Street.


OWNER'S NAME: STEINMETZ, EST. HENRY

ADDRESS: 62 Garden Street

DATE BUILT: 1911 FOR: Henry Steinmetz

ARCHITECT: Henry H. Mason

MASTER-BUILDER: Henry O. Wilcox

FORMER OWNERS: None - land purchased by Henry Steinmetz from Frank L. Corbin, 7/3/1903, on Canal Street.

Mrs. Steinmetz states that this was the first house built by Mr. Wilcox.

REFERENCES:

OWNER: STEINMETZ, EST. HENRY

AS OF: 1950

PHOTO NO.

FOLDER NO.
62 Garden Street

Although the Steinmetz family was in Farmington in 1906, this house had not yet been built, so does not appear in the Farmington Book. The family was living at that time in what has been known as the Loomis house, designated by the writer as 829 Farmington Avenue, and pictured at lower left on page 112 of the Farmington Book.

When the Loomis family wished to occupy that house themselves, and the Steinmetz family had to vacate, they built this house on Garden Street, Mr. Steinmetz having been provident and purchased this house lot in 1903 from Frank L. Corbin. The actual builder of the house was Henry O. Wilcox of 157 Main Street, who built it in 1911. Mrs. Steinmetz has said that it was the first one he built, although he built others later.

Henry Steinmetz, born in Germany in 1863, had been a partner with his brother John in a barber shop in Unionville before setting up his own shop here in Farmington, before he was married. In all probability he rented space for his shop from Mrs. Dunphy. He was the village barber in 1906, and the Farmington Book has his photo on page 27, standing on front of his shop. It was on Main Street, standing to the west of what is now 19 Main Street, which stands back from the street, while the earlier houses were set right at the sidewalk's edge. Mr. Edward N. Deming, Jr., had another photo of him, inside his shop and with a customer, which Mr. Deming used on a calendar one year, one of many photos which he used for picturing old Farmington to later residents.

Mrs. Steinmetz was the former Ottony Mercker, born in Germany, who came to Farmington with the Hardy family of 27 Main Street on their return from a European trip. Here she met Mr. Steinmetz, and after stopping for a while in New Haven, she returned to Farmington and they were married.

When Noah Wallace purchased the house at 19 Main Street and wished to move and re-model it, Mr. Steinmetz obtained permission to build a shop on Garden Street, and built a small one near the sidewalk at the front of his lot. The family moved it to the rear after his death, and it now serves as the garage.

In addition to being the town barber, Mr. Steinmetz was news reporter for the Farmington Valley Herald, was in the real estate business, and was a very active member of the Democratic party, serving on the Town Committee. He was also very active in the successful movement to change the name of Canal Street to Garden Street, not long after they moved to this site.

Henry Steinmetz had a brother William living in New Haven, and when William's daughter Helen came to work in Hartford in 1921, she roomed here with her Uncle Henry and his family, later marrying William Delaney.

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Mr. Steinmetz died in 1929 at the rather early age of sixty-six. His widow, fourteen years younger than he, lived until the age of ninety-five, having died in March of 1972.

Mr. and Mrs. Steinmetz had three daughters, Gertrude, Elsa and Martha, all born in Farmington.

Gertrude Steinmetz lived at home and worked in Hartford for the Travelers Insurance Company until her retirement in 1963. She cared for her mother at home until the last year and a half before her mother's death, when her mother had to be placed in a convalescent hospital in Avon, needing more care than could be given at home.

Elsa Steinmetz studied for teaching, at Beaver College in Gladestown, Pennsylvania. She ran a private kindergarden in Wethersfield for a time. She later taught kindergarten pupils in Bloomfield, in Winsted, and at the Vine Street School in Hartford. She left school teaching when in 1938 she married John James Joyce. He had been born in Avon, attended grade schools there and High School in Simsbury, after which he was graduated from Bentley College in Waltham, Massachusetts. After graduation he worked for the Hartford accounting firm of Hadfield, Rothwell, Soule and Coates, later becoming a partner. In 1944 they merged with Ernst and Ernst. Mr. Joyce retired as partner and consultant, in 1963. He was on the rationing board in Avon during the years of World War II, and on the Board of Directors of the Avon Visiting Nurses Association when first organized.

Mr. and Mrs. Joyce lived in Avon and New Hartford, now reside in Farmington. Mrs. Joyce has been a Cub Scout Den Mother, a member of Democratic Town Committees and of the Hartford Symphony Auxiliary, Democratic Registrar of Voters, and Sunday School teacher at Avon and Farmington.

The Joycees have two sons, Stephen and James. Dr. Stephen John Joyce is married to the former Katrina Currens. They and also James Henry Joyce presently live in Boston.

Martha Steinmetz, a graduate of the Hartford Hospital School of Nursing, took employment with Honolulu's Milo Memorial Hospital around 1938. She was night supervisor there on Sunday, December 7, 1941, the "Day of Infamy". She was the first nurse to volunteer for service at the blood bank in the Queens Hospital in Honolulu, and joined the Army Nursing Corps on December 11. She lived the war years in Honolulu, and in all spent eight years in Hawaii.

Claude Newton Holwill, Jr., born in China, a graduate of Kent School in Connecticut, who had worked ten years with Air Reduction in New York, was also at Honolulu during the raid on Pearl Harbor. He was then with Hawaiian Gas Products, the Hilo branch manager, and drove a truck to Pearl Harbor that day with medical oxygen for the burn cases. He worked at Pearl Harbor during the war years, helping with the raising and repair of ships of war.

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Upon asking the Holwills for more information on Mr. Holwill's family background, Mrs. Holwill gave the writer the following information, which he quotes verbatim, seeing no opportunity of improving or clarifying it. She said:

"Claude's grandfather was Ernest Goodrich and he adopted the name of Holwill, so went by the name of Ernest Goodrich Holwill. Claude stems from the Goodrich family. He is a direct descendant of Major Butler Goodrich whose father was one of the first settlers of Wethersfield, Connecticut. The Major went to Pittsfield, Massachusetts, and was one of the early settlers in Pittsfield. He built the family homestead at 823 North Street during the late 1700's or early 1800's, and it has remained in the family until the Berkshire County Historical Society purchased it in 1963. It is called Goodrich House, and open to the public. Claude spent his summers in that house with his grandmother while attending Kent School.

"Claude Newton Holwill, Sr., Claude's father, was born in Canton, China, the son of Ernest Goodrich Holwill. He was educated in Pittsfield and Brookline, and attended Harvard in the class of 1904. In his sophomore year his father received a nomination from the late Sir Robert Hart to the Imperial Chinese Maritime Customs. At his death he was second ranking commissioner in the service, and the only American holding that office. He was honored by both the Chinese and Italian governments. During the Communists' outrages in 1927 he kept his office running.

"Claude Newton Holwill, Sr., was married in Peking to Miss Katoo de Luca, daughter of the Italian Minister to China and Indo-China, in 1907.

"Claude Newton Holwill, Jr., was born in Chin-Wang-Tao in 1909. He lived in Chin-Wang-Tao, Antung, Ichang, Shanghai, and Harbin, China, before attending Kent School with his older brother, the late John Anderson Holwill.

She also says: "Our daughter Katoo was named after both her grandmothers, Katoo Ottony Holwill. Ottony was my mother's name, and I have never heard or known of anyone with these names."

Martha and Claude were married in Honolulu in 1942, and their daughter Katoo Ottony Holwill was born there during the war. After a couple of years in Farmington in the last half of the 1940's, during which their daughter Roxannne Marjorie was born in Hartford, they moved to Seattle, Washington. Mr. Holwill has been employed there by Boeing Aircraft since 1954 as a welding consultant, in quality control, manufacturing development, and specifications and standards. He plans to retire in December of this year. Mrs. Holwill started work in 1954 with Group Health Co-op, the first prepaid medical plan in America, and retired last year.

The Holwill girls are both married. Katoo is Mrs. Roger Sherrard. They live in Tacoma, Washington, with young Wade Newton Sherrard. Roxanne is Mrs. Roger Plichta. They live in Jonesboro, Georgia, with tiny Andrea Irene Plichta.