Located on the west side of High Street, the Eva R. Shafter House sits on a small landscaped lot with semi-circular driveway. Surrounding homes date from the early eighteenth century to the present and are represented by the Colonial, Georgian, Federal, Italianate, and Neo-Classical styles.
This asymmetrical Queen Anne-style home features classical detailing. Note the intersecting cross gables and exterior brick chimney. An ornate classical, single-story porch is found on the south elevation and is embellished with slender classical columns, turned balustrade, and modillion course beneath the eaves. The one-over-one windows display a decorative upper sash, and the dormer window features diamond patterned sash. Large modillion blocks are found on the underside of the overhanging eaves. Another common characteristic of the Queen Anne style is the half-timbering exhibited in the gable ends.

The Eva R. Shafter House is one of the few examples of the Queen Anne style found in Farmington village. Historically the house is notable for its affiliation with the Shafter and House families.


Photographer: Nathan Ainspan  Date: 4/86
View: W  Negative on file: 17:16

Compiled by: Elizabeth R. Hart  Date: 17:16
Organization: Greater Middletown Preservation Trust
Address: 27 Washington Street, Middletown, CT
OWNER'S NAME: HOUSE, HERBERT C.

DATE BUILT: 1902

FOR: Miss Eva R. Shafter

ADDRESS: 32 High Street

ARCHITECT

MASTER-BUILDER

FORMER OWNERS: H. C. House from Eva R. Shafter, Sept. 13, 1919, Vol. 72, p. 122

Eva R. Shafter purchased the land from Isaac F. Miles, 11/7/1901 - 2 1/2 acres of land - no house. Vol. 71, p. 533.

REFERENCES: "Farmington, Conn." 1906, p. 157, 158.
This house is pictured on page 157 of the Farmington Book as the residence of Miss Eva Shafter. It was built in 1902 on land which she had purchased in 1901 from Isaac F. Miles, or more likely his heirs, since he died in 1880.

Nothing is known of Miss Shafter except through hearsay. She is said to have had short, curly gray hair, one of the first in Farmington with a "bob". One, who knew her, said: "She was a divil! She bossed everybody". Often called "Bobby Shafter", she was one of the first women in Farmington to drive her own car, and when she took it down the street, the children took to the fences. A Miss Potter was her companion, had meetings for the neighboring girls, served them tea in the attic. One former neighbor, a child of course at that time, remembers Eva Shafter as the widow of an admiral, who had served with distinction, probably in the Spanish American War.

Mr. DeParolis took care of the grounds for her.

How long Miss Shafter lived here is not known. Dr. William O'Meara's father is said to have purchased her car.

Franklin P. Kearney, presently of New Hartford, recalls that his parents and their family rented this house from about 1914 through 1915.

The house was purchased from Eva Shafter in 1919 by Herbert Crosby House, the younger of the House brothers of the Charles W. House and Sons Company of Unionville. He had earlier lived in Brooklyn, New York. Mrs. House was the former Lillian Speed, the daughter of Roland P. Speed and Alice Nunn.

It is a matter of record that Herbert C. House had leased the Carrington house on Colton Street for two years from September 1, 1913, but it is not known where they lived from 1915 until 1919, when on September 23 they purchased this house, but it seems quite possible that they may have rented it for the four years prior to purchase.

The House's daughter was Edith Constance House, a year old when they purchased here.

Mr. House's father, Charles W. House, Sr., died in 1906, and the three brothers, Everett T. House, Charles W. House, Jr., and Herbert C. House were the principals of the company until 1921. Charles, Jr., died then, and Everett T. House, manager of the company, died in 1932. At that time Herbert C. House purchased stock from Everett's widow, and controlled the business from then on. See 11 Mountain Road for more regarding the House business.

Mrs. Herbert C. House died in 1939.

Their daughter Edith was married one month after her mother's death, to Gustave Edward Escher, Jr. They lived in Westport, Conn., but were later divorced, and Mrs. Escher was reputed to have been living in Europe.

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Herbert C. House was married in 1940 to Mildred Archer. Mr. House was General Chairman of the Farmington War Effort during World War II. Mrs. House was in charge of surgical dressings for the Red Cross war effort. The surgical dressing room was in "Brick House", at that time, and a December 1944 report in the Farmington Valley Herald stated that 60,000 2x2 dressings and 27,000,000 4x4's had been made during a three month period.

Mr. House died in 1957 and his widow inherited this house.

Palmer S. McGee, Jr., and his wife Elizabeth R. McGee purchased this property from the estate of Mildred A. House, widow of Herbert C. House, in 1961.

Palmer S. McGee, Jr., born in Roaring Spring, Pennsylvania, is a 1943 graduate of Dickinson College, Carlisle, Pennsylvania, a graduate of the U. S. Military Academy at West Point, and a 1955 graduate of the Yale Law School. He is a partner in the law firm of Day, Berry and Howard of Hartford, Connecticut. Mr. McGee served in the Connecticut General Assembly during the 1959 and 1961 sessions as representative from the Town of Farmington. Since 1961 he has been a corporation counsel for the Town of Farmington. In 1970 Mr. McGee sought the Republican nomination for U. S. Senator from Connecticut, but was unsuccessful.

Elizabeth R. McGee is the former Elizabeth Replogle, daughter of George B. and Ruth Williams Replogle. She also was born in Roaring Springs and is a graduate of Juniata College, Huntington, Pennsylvania. The McGees' three children are:

Elizabeth, 1968 graduate of Smith College, presently working in Washington, D. C.,

Scott, 1970 graduate of Amherst College, married to Catherine Connor of Woodstock, Vermont, and attending Catholic University Law School in Washington, D. C., and

George M., a freshman at Dean Junior College in Franklin, Massachusetts.

Mr. McGee told the writer of two incidents relating to this house which are interesting to Farmingtonians. They are quoted, slightly shortened. "In 1961...we completely renovated the kitchen...a 1900 kitchen. One of the carpenters...was Mr. Harris, who for a long time had lived in Farmington. Many people referred to him as Doctor Harris as on his billhead...under his name he carried the term "House Doctor". ... He mentioned one day that he remembered building our house. Mrs. McGee looked at him with amazement, since she knew...that the house...had been built some 60 years earlier..... The next day he brought in pictures of the house under construction...and among the crew was a young fellow who was Mr. Harris at a much earlier age. He was serving as apprentice". The second incident was that Miss Shafter had summoned contractor Richard Jones from Hartford to discuss progress of construction. He came out from the discussion smiling broadly, as he had talked Miss Shafter into the additional work of having the lovely dentine molding built around the ceilings of each of the downstairs rooms!

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