**Historic Resources Inventory**

**Connecticut Historical Commission**

59 South Prospect Street, Hartford, Connecticut 06106

(203) 566-3005

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**Site No. 341**

**Building and Structures**

**Town** Farmington

**Village**

**County** Hartford

**Street and Number** 4 Porter Road

**Owner** Boudreau, Kenneth L. and Judith A.

**Use** Residence

**Style of Date of Construction** Colonial Revival 1900

**Exterior Visible from Public Road** Yes

**Interior Accessible** No

**Material**

- Clapboard
- Wood Shingle
- Board & Batten
- Aluminum Siding
- Brick
- Asbestos Siding
- Concrete Siding
- Fieldstone
- Stucco
- Cobblestone
- Wood Shingle
- Asphalt Siding
- Roll Asphalt
- Tin
- Wood Shingle
- Asphalt shingle

**Structural System**

- Wood Frame
- Post and Beam
- Balloon
- Other (Specify)

**Roof Type**

- Gambrel
- Hip
- Flat
- Mansard
- Monitor
- Round

**Number of Stories** 2½

**Approximate Dimensions** 20 x 39; 33 x 21

**Condition** Excellent

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Located along the northeast side of Porter Road, the Almira Brittain House sits to the rear of the Julius Gay House at 36 Main Street. The Miss Porter's School tennis courts lie to the south and other historic early twentieth-century dwellings abut to the north. The surrounding neighborhood is located in both Farmington's National Register and state-enabled local districts.
This ornate Colonial Revival-style house was built in 1900. The facade, which faces east away from the road, exhibits an open porch with a solid balustrade supporting classical columns and a decorative pedimented gable. Other classical embellishments include quoins and the elaborate modillion course beneath the eaves. Of particular note is the interesting double eyelid dormer found on the east elevation. The small, enclosed porch with quoins and geometrically-designed balustrade on the south side is a later addition. A two-story addition with an eyelid dormer and an exterior brick chimney has been incorporated onto the north elevation. Some original sash remain. The two interior, corbelled brick chimneys are original.

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**CONSTRUCTION**

This house was erected for Mrs. Almira Brittain in 1900 on land leased from her brother-in-law, Julius Gay (FLR 73:284). (Her sister Maria married Julius Gay.) The lease stipulated that the lot was to be used for residential purposes only and Mrs. Brittain was "authorized" to erect a dwelling house on said lot. Furthermore, upon her death, the house and lot were to revert to Mr. Gay. According to historians Hurlbut and Lewis, the architect was Charles O. Whitman of Hartford and the masterbuilder was R.F. Jones. Born in Cleveland, Ohio, Almira Brittain (1840-1920) was the daughter of Mervin and Caroline (Grouptel) Clark. She was the widow of George S. Brittain, who is said to have owned extensive farms in the mid-west. It appears that Mrs. Brittain did not spend much time in this house, for in 1906 Russell L. Jones was the occupant. Maria C. Gay inherited the property from her husband upon his death in 1918 (FLR 74:393). The house and lot were later quit-claimed to the Gays' daughter, Florence (FLR 76:652). In 1921 Frederick Miles acquired the house and may have resided here with his sister, Miss Sarah Miles (FLR 76:652). Sarah Miles, a nurse, inherited the house in March of 1923 and sold it a month later to Frank P. Gilligan (FLR 74:389, 79:603). The Gilligan family owned the property until 1971.

This interesting Colonial Revival-style house makes a significant contribution to Farmington's historic character and is historically notable for its association with the Gay family.

**SOURCES**

This house is pictured on page 146 of the Farmington Book as the residence of Russell L. Jones, property of Julius Gay.

The house was built in 1900 by R. F. Jones for Julius Gay, to be the home of Mrs. Brittain, wife of George S. Brittain, and the daughter of Mervin Clark and Caroline Guptil. She was the sister of Maria, Julius Gay's wife. Mrs. Brittain, seldom seen in Farmington, is reputed to have been the owner of large farms, principally for the raising of corn, in the middle west.

Mrs. Brittain probably spent much time away from Farmington as her interests covered a wide range. This was probably what made it possible for Russell Lee Jones having been renting it in 1906 from Julius Gay, who always retained title to the property. See more in regard to Russell L. Jones, a great lover of Farmington, in the story of 11 Mountain Spring Road.

Mrs. Brittain died in Farmington on December 4, 1920, her residence being stated at that time as Maiden Lane, as reported by Mrs. Samuel McCutcheon. Mrs. McCutcheon, the former Meta Brittain, was either the daughter or adopted daughter of Mrs. Brittain, and at the time of her own death in August 1969 the oldest alumna of Miss Porter's School, being 92 at the time of her death.

Meta Brittain, born in 1877 in Jersey City, is rumored to have been an actress at one time, under the management of Samuel McCutcheon, later her husband. Mr. and Mrs. McCutcheon had a son, Mervin W., and they lived in New Britain where Mr. McCutcheon was employed by the North and Judd Company. After his death she came to Farmington. Mrs. McCutcheon was very active in the First Church of Christ Congregational in Farmington, for many years was supervisor of Christian Education there, and well known as a leader in that field. She never lived on Porter Road after her return to Farmington, living for a time on Maiden Lane and later on Mill Road. In 1969 her son was living in Genrnville, Massachusetts, having a wife, two children and a grandson.

This house on Porter Road was occupied for a time by Harry Whaples before he moved to 49 High Street, date unknown however.

Mrs. Julius Gay inherited it from her husband, and Miss Florence Gay inherited it from her mother, and Miss Gay sold it in 1921 to Frederick Miles.

Mr. Miles had sold 37 Main Street the previous year, leaving himself and his sister Sarah and his brother Alexander without a home, and he perhaps purchased this for the use of all three of them, and he always liked to call Farmington his home. He was a traveling salesman however, and after the death of his mother in 1914, he had spent more time perhaps with his brother's family in Glastonbury than he had spent in Farmington. His brother Edward always kept a room reserved for him.

December 20, 1973
Frederick Miles died in June 1921 and the title passed to his sister Sarah, a practicing nurse. She may have lived here for a time, and perhaps also her brother Alex, but she sold the house in 1923.

The purchaser in 1923 was Frank P. Gilligan. The writer has no knowledge of the Gillgans other than that Mrs. Gilligan was the former Catherine Daly, born in Windsor, Connecticut, and having lived in Hartford prior to having moved to Farmington. Mr. Gilligan died sometime prior to the 1960's and Mrs. Gilligan on December 10, 1973.

The writer has the name of D. M. Merrifield as possibly the present owner of the house.

Regarding the history of Porter Road, it was opened on May 7, 1870, and named at that time Charpentier Avenue. This was for the Charpentier family, who at that time owned the house at 60 Garden Street. They used this, first a lane, as their access to Main Street and to Miss Porter's School, where they worked. Mrs. Charpentier was the French teacher, and before and official name was given to the street it was often called "Madame's Way".

In 1875 it was voted to extend the street east to High Street, but no action was taken on this. In 1891 the subject was again brought up and a different route was suggested for the extension to High Street, to enter High Street near 26 High Street, but no action ever resulted from this either.

The date of changing the name to Porter Road is not known by the writer, but in the 1908 Town Directory it was still shown as Charpentier Avenue.

December 20, 1973