Knibbs, John E., House

Farmington

34 West District Road

Ruzbasan, Joseph S. and Kathleen

Residence

Colonial Revival

Wood Shingle

Cobblestone foundation

Balloon

Gambrel

Roll Asphalt

1 1/2

14 x 43; 14 x 20

14 Related Outbuildings or Landscape Features

Barn (2)

Shed

Garage

Other landscape features or buildings (Specify)

Carriage house

Shop

Garden

Surrounding Environment

Open land

Wood-land

Residential

Scattered buildings visible from site

Commercial

Industrial

Rural

High building density

Located on a well-shaded lot along the north side of West District Road, the John E. Knibbs House stands in a heavily populated early twentieth-century residential neighborhood. A small, open field, used for grazing horses, lies to the east of the house.
Built in 1907, this small, L-shaped Colonial Revival-style dwelling is capped by a cross-gambrel roof. The facade exhibits a small, open, classical porch with a simple balustrade, heavy entablature, pedimented gable end and slender columns resting on cobblestone piers. The gambrel end is highlighted by a tripartite window with projecting cornice. The eastern ell features a modern, bay window and hip-roofed dormer. A single-story bay window is found on the west elevation. Note the decorative upper sash in the facade window, a common characteristic of early twentieth-century vernacular architecture.

A builder by trade, John Edward Knibbs constructed this house in 1907 on a one acre parcel of land he purchased from John P. and Francis Lewis (FLR77:96). Knibbs (b. 1873) was the son of James and Ellen (Collins) Knibbs, both natives of England. His first wife was Florence E. Root (1868-1920), daughter of Arville A. and Evelyn (Sanford) Root of Southington. In 1908 Knibbs quit-claimed the house to his wife through a third party (FLR 76:152-153). It is recorded that Knibbs was responsible for erecting the addition to the "Old Stone Schoolhouse" along Copper Mine Road in 1912, when the building served as St. Simon's Chapel. Shortly before her death in 1920, Florence Knibbs sold the house to Michael Wittchen, Jr. (FLR 80:173). John Knibbs later married Margaret (Weicks) Adams from New York City in 1926. Michael Wittchen, Jr. (b.1892) purchased the property at the time of his marriage to Nancy Lamont (b. 1892), a school teacher from West Hartford. They resided in the house until 1923 when it was purchased by Dr. Edward P. Dunne (FLR 80:474). Dr. Dunne (1888-1964) served as one of Farmington's leading physicians for many years. He was born in Collinsville to Patrick and Margaret (McNamara) Dunne in 1888. As a young boy he was educated at local schools and later attended Holy Cross College and the College of Physicians and Surgeons of the University of Maryland, where he graduated in 1916. After Dunne came to Unionville in 1917, he opened a private practice and also served as medical examiner of the town of Farmington and as director of health for the town of Burlington. He was an active member (see cont. pg.)
of many civic organizations including the Chamber of Commerce, Farmington Mutual Benevolent Association and Tunxis Hose Company No. 1. In 1917 he married Antoinette Von Sudsburg of Baltimore and they raised a son and six daughters. Mrs. Dunne was one of the first women representing the Democratic Party in Connecticut to be elected to the State Legislature, and was also an active community leader. The house today is owned by Dunne's youngest daughter, Kathleen and her husband, Joseph Ruzbasan (FLR 179:552).

An excellent example of early twentieth-century architecture, the John E. Knibbs House is historically significant for its association with Dr. Edward P. Dunne and his family, prominent Unionville citizens.