Situated on a small lot at the southern end of Farmington's historic district, the John Smith House faces west. The surrounding neighborhood comprises similar period houses.
This Colonial-period building has been extensively altered. Its original appearance probably included a center chimney, single centered entry door, and eaves which extended to the top of the second-story windows. Today the house exhibits a Colonial Revival-style porch supported by square posts and an enclosed base. Also found is a "saltbox" configuration that was added after 1906. Six-over-six sash are found throughout the building.

This house was built in 1742 by John Smith on land acquired from Joseph Root (FLR 6:403). John (b. 1709) may have been the son of Ephraim and Rachel (Cole) Smith. In 1745 John Hart purchased the lot with "mansion house and barn", shortly after his marriage to Anna Hall (FLR 7:255). Hart sold the house back to Smith in 1750-51 for £1400 (FLR 8:127). The next owner was Doctor Elisha Lord, who acquired the property in April of 1751 (FLR 8:151). He and his wife Elizabeth (Edgerton) Lord resided here until 1762, when they moved to Norwich, Connecticut. Elizabeth (Gould) and Stephen Dorchester bought the property from Dr. Lord in March of 1762 (FLR 13:109, 110). The Dorchester family lived here until 1786 when William Wadsworth purchased the house (FLR 27:100). The next owner, James Hunt acquired the property with dwelling and shop from Wadsworth in 1795 (FLR 31:194). Mr. Hunt operated a small hat shop on the premises. Wadsworth took title again in 1807 for $900 (FLR 36:24). Sidney Wadsworth bought the lot from his father a year later (FLR 36:11). Asa Darrow, Jr. of Plymouth, Connecticut purchased the house in 1810 and owned it until 1813 (FLR 37:112, 38:106). George Root acquired the property in November of 1813 (FLR 38:467). In 1834 Root mortgaged the land and house to Samuel Welton of Watertown, Connecticut (FLR 46:221). Although it is not recorded in the land records, Welton eventually foreclosed on the mortgage and sold the property to Jeremiah Wilcox in 1845 (FLR 49:40). The Wilcox family, who owned the adjoining properties to the north, may have used this house as a rental.

In 1867 Wilcox sold all his property to his wife Eliza through a third party (FLR 60:555, 556). Harriet W. Field inherited the property in 1881 as the only heir and (SEE CONT.)

granddaughter of Eliza Wilcox (FLR 66:205). Shortly thereafter, Henry M. Wilcox of Sandisfield, Massachusetts acquired title (FLR 66:144). Henry O. Wilcox, a carpenter, purchased the house in 1901 (FLR 74:76). He lived at 157 Main Street and leased this house. It was sold out of the family in 1910 (FLR 77:354). Members of the Root family owned and leased the property between 1915 and 1963. It was during their ownership that the house was moved back off the street and converted to a duplex.

Although altered from its original appearance, the John Smith House has historical associations with the early development of the south end of Main Street.
DATE BUILT: ca. 1700
FOR: Joseph Root

ADDRESS: 163 Main Street

ARCHITECT
MASTER-BUILDER

OWNER'S NAME ROOT, Est. L.C. & S.L.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION The house was moved back from the street ca. 1925 (S.L.R.) He does not know when roof was changed to extend over rear addition. The house has summer beams in each room & exposed framing with flare corner posts. S.L.R. says the old chimney was stone & laid up with mud.


REFERENCES: "Farmington, Conn., 1906", p. 99
"Farmington Town Clerks, 1943", p. 32
This house is pictured on page 99 of the Farmington Book as the residence of Mrs. Mary Carroll and Mrs. Sheldon Rice, and was one of the four buildings which made up the Wilcox property as shown on Baker and Tilden's 1869 Atlas.

On page xvi of Mrs. Hurlburt's "Town Clerks" this site appears to be in parcel No. 50, whose first owner according to the listing on page xix was John Warner. Mr. Warner, whose own residence was on property which he owned across the street, lived about where 164 Main Street now stands, the property of Mr. and Mrs. William Hoppin. Mrs. Hurlburt speaks of John Warner as follows, on page 377 of her book:

"John Warner was 20 years of age when he arrived in New England on the INCREASE in April 1635. He was a soldier and served in the Pequot War. He was an original proprietor and settler in Farmington and joined the First Church here on March 15, 1656/7, was made a freeman 1664 and in 1673 went to view Mattatuck (Waterbury) with the intention of settling there. However he died in Farmington in 1679. His home in Farmington was next south of the John Roate place and is now owned by Anne Burr Lewis and occupied by Mr. and Mrs. William Hoppin, Jr. John Warner's first wife is unknown, his second marriage was to Ann, daughter of Thomas Norton of Guilford, and at his death he left a widow, Margaret. His children named in his will were Daniel, John, Thomas and Sarah who married William Higson and remained on the ancestral estate. His homestead as recorded January 1674 was part of Samuel Willis' home lot, indicating that Willis had lived there before removing to Mattabeset (Middletown)."

Library records show this house to have been built ca 1700 by Joseph Root, born ca 1656, son of John Root and Mary Kilbourn, earliest of the Root family in Farmington. Joseph Root was married twice. His first wife was Elizabeth Warner of Middletown (John Warner's daughter?) by whom his children were born. His second marriage was in 1727 to the widow of Samuel Smith, the former Ruth Porter, daughter of Thomas Porter. His children were:

- Elizabeth 1692-1777, died unmarried,
- Mary 1694-1760, married 1713 to Jonathan Lee,
- Joseph 1699-1751

Joseph Root, Sr., died in 1739.

Joseph Root, Jr., 1699-1751, inherited the property upon his father's death in 1739. He was married in 1726 to Hannah Wadsworth, who bore all his children. She died in 1741 and he married widow Dorothy Andrews. Children of Joseph, Jr., were:

- Mary 1727-1797, died unmarried,
- Felix 1730- m. David Sherman,
- Ezeziel 1732-1735,
- Abigail 1734-1807,
- Joseph 1738-1783,
- Ezekiel 1741-

August 21, 1972
John Smith, who purchased the property on January 26, 1743, is not identified. One John Smith was born here in 1701, the son of Samuel, and one was born in 1709, the son of Ephrim. One married Abigail Wadsworth in 1728, and one married Abigail Merrill in 1733. One of these is possibly the John Smith mentioned.

John Hart, son of Deacon John Hart, purchased on May 30, 1747. Deacon John Hart had lived in the house at what is now 80 Main Street. John Hart Jr., was born in Kensington, and was living in Canaan in 1740, seemingly one who moved quite often.

Another John Smith purchased in 1750, giving as his home a town in Connecticut, the name of which can not be read, a six letter word beginning with G, but not Goshen, and in the County of Hartford.

Elisha Lord, who purchased on April 24, 1751, was Dr. Elisha Lord, who was married in 1751 to Elizabeth Edgerton. They were the parents of a daughter Sadie. When Dr. Lord sold the property he gave his address as Norwich, New London County.

Stephen and Elizabeth Dorchester were the purchasers on April 19, 1762, a couple with five children. It was this Stephen Dorchester whose name appears on the house at 117 Main Street, although he only owned that house for the period of a few days, in 1784.

The William Wadsworth who purchased this house in 1787 is perhaps the same William who in 1790 is thought to have built the house across the street, now known as 164 Main Street. If so, he was William of the 5th generation, and more detail will be found in the account of 164 Main Street.

James Hunt, the purchaser on April 13, 1795, appears to have been a hatmaker, as a statement has been made that from 1795 to 1807 this was known as the "James Hunt Hatting House". That may not have been the residence however, as the property included a shop when Mr. Hunt purchased it. In the 1807 sale as hatting house was mentioned as included.

The purchaser on November 13, 1807 was said to have been William Wadsworth, Jr. There was a William, a son of the one noted above, born in 1781, but he died in 1807. When George Root purchased on July 16, 1827, the seller of the property was Sidney Wadsworth, son of William of the 5th generation.

One George Root purchased in 1827. It was difficult to find a George Root (an uncommon name in the Root genealogy) of the correct age to have owned this property. The one selected was George, the son of Reuben. His ancestry, briefly, is:

John Root, 1608 and wife, Mary Kilbourn,
Stephen Root ca 1651 and wife Sarah Wadsworth,
Timothy Root, 1681 and wife Margaret Seymour,
Jonathan Root, 1707 and wife Ruth
Amos Root, 1740 and wife Lydia Webster,
Reuben Root, 1770 and wife Hannah George,
George Root, ca 1800.

August 22, 1972
1250.
George Root, born in Southington, first married Susan Payne and later Temperance Bronson. George and his family later lived in Waterbury. The children are listed as follows, no birth dates having been given:

- Reuben H. married Laura Penfield
- George W. married Susan Deming
- Jane A.
- Edward T.
- Henry B.

George Root borrowed nine hundred dollars from Samuel Welton of Watertown, and on August 18, 1834, signed a deed transferring title to Samuel Welton, a deed which was to become effective one year from that date if he had not by then repaid the nine hundred dollars. It appears that he did not repay.

Samuel Welton on June 9, 1845, giving his address as Carlinville, Illinois, sold the property to Jeremiah Wilcox. Mr. Wilcox, son of Robert, died in 1896. See more regarding the Wilcox family in the account of 157 Main Street.

The Wilcox ownership lasted a long time, but it is thought that this house, since they also owned and occupied the one at 157 Main Street, was probably used as rental property. It is noted in the 1906 photo in the Farmington Book, that two tenants occupied it at that time. Those named were Mrs. Mary Carroll and Mrs. Sheldon Rice.

Mary Carroll could have been the former Mary Loughrey, who in 1875 married John Carroll. They had a daughter Mary and a son John T. Carroll, who in 1905 married Nellie (Helen E.) Morrissey. Their two children were Bernard and Mary Gertrude.

Mrs. Sheldon Rice, Hannah, was the sister of Zachary Taylor. Their parents had been Stephen Taylor and Lois Gladding. Why only Mrs. Rice is mentioned here is not known. Sheldon Rice, son of Levi Rice and Mary Hak, lived until 1918, Mrs. Rice died in 1923.

By 1910, when the property was next sold, it was owned by H. O. Wilcox, who sold to Daniel Janes.

A statement has been made that the William Chidseys lived here for a time, perhaps even before living on Farmington Avenue, where they lived in 1906. See photo of their house on page 112.

Daniel Janes in 1910 sold to Elizabeth V. Keep, widow of Robert Porter Keep. Perhaps this was merely as an investment, but it is also possible that she may have wished to use it for Miss Porter School's employees. She sold it in 1915 to Lewis C. and Samuel L. Root.

The Root family used it to house some of their employees when needed for this purpose. In the early 1930's, partly to make work for some of their employees, they moved this house back from the street and converted it to a duplex. Of their employee families, two who lived here were those of Jacob Cooper and John Workhoven, brothers-in-law.

August 22, 1972

1251
Around 1932 Miss Van Steinberg and Miss Osborn, teachers retired from the Boston School of Domestic Science, lived here. Miss Isabelle Osborn, born in Harwinton in 1866, daughter of Henry Osborn and Frances E. White, died in October, 1934.

Ann McCahill and her mother, formerly of the Adna Hart house on South Road, lived here for a time, moving from here to a house on Garden Street, half of which they purchased.

James Collins and his family too, presently living at 9 Maiden Lane, lived here from 1939 to 1964. See the sketch of 9 Maiden Lane.

August 22, 1972
Joseph Harris and his family lived in this house from 1939 until 1964. Joseph Harris was born in Farmington, during his family's residence at 30 Mountain Road. This house is pictured in the foreground of a photo on page 169 of the Farmington Book, the former home of William Parsons showing in the same photo, to the rear.

Joseph worked all through High School at Mansfield's store, pictured on page 93 as the store of F. L. Scott, its former owner. He was graduated from High School in June, 1922, and continued work at the store until the next spring, when he was employed by Phoenix Insurance at Elm and Trinity streets in Hartford. It is difficult now to believe that the pay could be $13.50 per week --- but it was, and Joseph left there in January 1925 to take employment with Mr. Kremendahl at his drug store which was in the old home of Gay's store north of what is now the Corner House Restaurant.

The Connecticut Pharmaceutical Association opened a College of Pharmacy that fall in an old Yale College building. Mr. Kremendahl, one of the committee that had formed the school, offered to let Joseph work three days per week and attend school the other three days, and these were full days, whether working or attending school. He drove back and forth from Farmington to New Haven, and often worked until 10 PM after getting back to Farmington.

Mr. Kremendahl had purchased Miss Adgate's stock of drugs in 1922, the stock of her store which she had operated many years at 50 Main Street, without owning the building however. The drugs were moved to the former Gay's Store, while the stationery, which he also purchased, he kept at the old site, for sale to the girls of Miss Porter's School.

Joseph Tofani started working for Mr. Kremendahl in 1924, and both he and Joseph Harris then worked for him until 1937, when Mr. Tofani purchased the store himself. Mr. Harris continued working there until 1945, for Mr. Tofani, but the latter sold to Al Roy and in 1948 Joseph Harris left there and took employment with a drug store in New Britain. Around 1953 he returned to Farmington and opened the Elm Tree Pharmacy here. This move was probably brought about by Dr. Bunnell's development of Brick Walk lane and the adjacent area as a new shopping center.

Joseph Harris was married in 1927 to Astrid Benson, the daughter of John Benson and Ann Borjeson of West Hartford. Their first residence after marriage was in the lower half of the house on Farmington Avenue belonging at that time to Harry Loomis. It is pictured at the top of page 112 of the Farmington Book. It was located slightly to the rear of his other house, and situated near the present site of the Farmington Avenue Cleaners' shop at the entrance to the Epicure shopping area. Martin Loomis and his wife lived in the upstairs apartment at that time.

Mr. and Mrs. Harris had nine children, one of whom died in infancy. The surviving eight are named on the following page.

December 15, 1973
The Harris children:

Joseph, whose wife is the former Marie Gelinas of Plainville. They live in Vernon and have four children.

Ronald Jay married Jane Norton of Forestville, where they and their four children presently live. He is manager of the Specter Terminal in Farmington.

Joan Ann, whose twin brother Gerald did not survive infancy, married Robert Rogers of Plainville. They and their three children live in Farmington, Robert being a pharmacist employed in New Britain.

Astrid Elizabeth is married to engineer David Johansen, and they and their four children live in Avon.

Patricia is the wife of Weston Barnes, formerly of Avon. They have two children and live in Bristol, Mr. Barnes being a tobacco salesman.

Nancy Ellen is married to Bert Wright, formerly of East Hartford. They live in Glastonbury where Mr. Wright is an auto mechanic. They have four children.

Andrea Jean works in the Children's Department of the West Hartford Library's Faxon Branch in Elmwood.

Anna Susan is a secretary with the Glastonbury School System.

The Joseph Harris family moved in 1939 to the house at 163 Main Street, owned at that time by the Root family of 158 Main Street across the street. It is a two-family house. The other side of the house was occupied at that time by Mr. Renberg and family, Mr. Renberg an employee of the Root orchards. James Collins and his family, who now live on Maiden Lane, moved into the house after the Renbergs left, Mr. Collins also being employed by the Roots.

Upon Samuel Leonard Root's death in 1963 it was decided to sell this house, so in 1964 the Harrises moved to the house which they presently own and occupy, on Scott Swamp Road, the "only red and white house there".

Mr. Harris continued the operation of the Elm Tree Pharmacy until 1971. At the time of speaking with Joseph Harris, and obtaining much of the information given on this and the previous page, it was May 1971. Mr. Harris was at that time in the process of liquidating the stock of his pharmacy, and planning to discontinue the business and to retire by June 30. The last few years, since his son who had helped him had gone into other business, had been very hard-working years, and Mr. Harris expected to take things much easier after June 30. He expected of course to work some of the time, but he also had some plans for traveling, for which they had never had time previously, and plans to enjoy a much more leisurely life.

December 15, 1973

/2/24/
The house was sold on February 11, 1963, by the estate of Samuel Leonard Root, to Gaston J. Frechette and Byron J. Treado.

On February 13, 1963, it was purchased by Frank E. and Florence D. Cilento.

December 15, 1973