Knibbs, John E., Farmstead
34 West District Road
Record No. 28347

Town/City Farmington Village Unionville County Hartford
Owner(s) Joseph & Kathleen Ruzbasan, 34 West District Road, Farmington, CT 06085

Agriculture/Subsistence: agricultural outbuilding; Domestic: single dwelling

Material(s) (Indicate use or location when appropriate):
- Clapboard
- Asbestos Siding
- Brick
- Wood Shingle
- Asphalt Siding
- Fieldstone
- Board & Batten
- Stucco
- Cobblestone
- Aluminum Siding
- Concrete (Type ________________)
- Cut Stone (Type ________________)
- Other ________________

Style of building Carriage barn, vernacular style
Date of Construction c. 1907

Structural System
- Wood Frame
- Post & Beam
- Balloon
- Load bearing masonry
- Structural iron or steel
- Other ________________

Roof (Type)
- Gable
- Flat
- Mansard
- Monitor
- Sawtooth
- Gambrel
- Shed
- Hip
- Round
- Other ________________

(Material)
- Wood Shingle
- Roll Asphalt
- Tin
- Slate
- Asphalt Shingle
- Built up
- Tile
- Other ________________

Number of Stories: 1 1/2
Approximate Dimensions Barn I: 30' x 20', Barn II: 15' x 12'

Structural Condition: Excellent Good Fair Deteriorated
Exterior Condition: Excellent Good Fair Deteriorated
Location Integrity: On original site Moved When? __________
Alterations? Yes No If yes, explain:

FOR OFFICE USE:
District: S NR If NR, Specify: Actual Potential
PROPERTY INFORMATION (CONT’D)

Related outbuildings or landscape features:

- Barn
- Shed
- Garage
- Carriage House
- Shop
- Garden
- Other landscape features or buildings: _______________________________________________________

Surrounding Environment:

- Open land
- Woodland
- Residential
- Commercial
- Industrial
- Rural
- High building density
- Scattered buildings visible from site

• Interrelationship of building and surroundings:

See continuation sheet.

• Other notable features of building or site (Interior and/or Exterior)

See continuation sheet.

Architect ________________________________ Builder John E. Knibbs

• Historical or Architectural importance:

See continuation sheet.

• Sources:


See continuation sheet.

Photographer  Kristen Young ________________________________ Date 10/23/2012

View Multiple Views ________________________________ Negative on File CTHP

Name Kristen Young and Todd Levine ________________________________ Date 10/31/2012

Organization Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation

Address 940 Whitney Avenue, Hamden CT 06517

• Subsequent field evaluations:

Latitude, Longitude: 41.744196, -72.883966

Threats to the building or site:

- None known
- Highways
- Vandalism
- Developers
- Renewal
- Private
- Deterioration
- Zoning
- Other ________________________________ Explanation ________________________________
• Interrelationship of building and surroundings:

This Carriage barn sits on 2.08 acres of land on the north side of West District Road. A driveway extends to the north off the road and leads to the south side of the Carriage barn (Barn I). The Farmhouse is to the southeast of Barn I, an Icehouse (Barn II) is slightly to the northeast of Barn I and a modern goat shelter (Barn III) is to the northeast of both Barns I and II. Barn I, II and the farmhouse are located in the center of the parcel and are surrounded on both the east and west sides by pastures for the horse and two goats to graze in.

The Farmhouse is a 2-story gambrel-roof house built in the early 20th century. The ridge-line runs north-south, perpendicular to West District Road.

Built in 1907, this small, L-shaped Colonial Revival-style dwelling is capped by a cross gambrel roof. The façade exhibits a small, open, classical porch with 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 façade window, a common characteristic of early twentieth-century vernacular architecture. (Hart)

The property is located in Unionville in the northwest corner of Farmington. West District Road extends to the east off Plainville Avenue (Rte. 177), which runs through the west side of Farmington from Plainville to Avon. The property is approximately three miles from the center of Farmington and approximately a mile from the border of Burlington to the west. It is surrounded by modern 20th century developments and residential neighborhoods.

• Other notable features of building or site (Interior and/or Exterior):

Architectural description:

Inventory of structures (C – contributing, NC – non-contributing):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Structure</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Farmhouse</td>
<td>c. 1907</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carriage barn (Barn I)</td>
<td>c. 1907</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Icehouse (Barn II)</td>
<td>c. 1907</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barn III</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>NC</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Carriage barn I:

This is a 1 ½-story 30’ x 20’ three-bay, four-bent gambrel-roof Carriage barn whose ridge-line runs east-west, parallel with West District Road. A shed-roof addition that is approximately 22’ x 12’ is attached to the north eave-side of Barn I, connecting Barns I and II. Barn I is clad in clapboard siding with wood shingles in the gable ends and gable-roof dormer. The roof has asphalt shingles. The shed-roof addition has board-and-batten siding with a metal roof.

Exterior:

The main entry is centered on the south eave-side of Barn I and consists of a double-height exterior-hung sliding door with trim that is reached by a concrete ramp. A six-over-six double-hung window with trim is to the east of the entry. A gable-roof wall dormer with returning cornices projects through the eave of the roof, just above the entry. A six-pane window with trim is set within the dormer.

A pass-through door is to the north of center on the east gable-end of Barn I. To the north of the door is a six-over-six double-hung window with trim and to the south is a two-over-six double-hung window with trim. In the gable-attic is a two-pane window with trim and a single-pane window with trim. The addition extends past the east gable-end of Barn I and attaches to the west eave-side of Barn II, connecting the two barns. An open bay and an exterior hung-sliding door with trim are found on the south side of the addition. A shed-roof hood with asphalt shingles protrudes over the open bay and sliding door.
Attached to the north eave-side of Barn I is the shed-roof addition, which encompasses this entire side of the barn. An exterior-hung sliding door is located near the west corner of the addition. No other features are found on this side of the barn or addition.

A fieldstone foundation is visible on the west side of the addition and on the west gable-end of Barn I. The rest of these sides are blank.

**Interior:**

The main entry opens into a large open space with concrete flooring. In the west bay of Barn I, the area is open to the roof, allowing for hay storage to be piled high while the other bays have a loft floor. The framing is not all post-and-beam and not all balloon framing either. It is clear this barn was built during a transitional phase in the early 20th century, c. 1907. The bents are made of heavy timbers with mortise and tenon joints, pegged together with tree nails. Lighter timbers are also seen with nails. Circular sawn marks are seen on the lumber throughout the barn. The frame at the loft level consists of an approximately 3’ high knee wall which the rafters of the roof spring from. Purlin plates are located at each change of pitch in the roof. The rafters meet at the ridge with a ridge-board and the roof deck is constructed of wood planks.

A wall made of wood planks separates the east bay of Barn I with the middle and western bays. The east bay was designed as a groomsman’s room with built in cabinets, plaster walls and wood plank floors. A door in the west wall of the room leads to the middle and western bay of Barn I. A curved staircase along the north wall leads to the loft above the eastern bay of Barn I. The loft has wood plank floors and walls.

**Icehouse – Barn II:**

This is a 1 ½-story 15’ x 12’ gable-roof Icehouse whose ridge-line runs north-south, perpendicular to West District Road. Barn II is connected to Barn I by an addition that is attached to the north eave-side of Barn I. Barn II is clad in clapboard siding and has an asphalt shingled roof.

Two open bays are found on the south gable-end of Barn II. In the gable-attic two two-pane windows with trim flank a pass-through door. A pass-through door is just south of center on the east eave-side, with two side-hinged doors just to the north, one on top of the other. A louvered vent is located in the gable-attic of the north gable-end of Barn II, and the shed-roof addition is attached to the south half of the west eave-side.

The interior of the ice house has now been modernized with Tyvek home wrap and slick panels to create a meat processing room. The open bays in the south side of Barn II, and the connecting addition have a mix of heavy and light timbers, also showing the transitional phase of the early 20th century. In the loft are wood plank floors and walls. The rafters meet at the ridge with a ridge-board and a few collar ties, and the roof deck is constructed of wood planks.

- **Historical or Architectural importance:**

Applicable Connecticut State Register Criteria:

1. Associated with the lives of persons significant in our past;
2. Embodying the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction.

This is an intact complex including a gambrel-roofed Carriage barn and an Icehouse, both excellent examples of their types preserved on their original site. This property also is connected to the Dunne Family, a well-known family in the Town of Farmington. Dr. Dunne delivered numerous babies in the area and many residents were patients of his. His wife, Antoinette, was a prominent woman in politics in the State of Connecticut. Furthermore, a member of the Dunne Family still resides on the property today.

**Historical background:**

John E. Knibbs purchased this property from John P. and Francis Lewis in the early 1900s. As John E. Knibbs was a builder by trade, he built both the house and Barn I c. 1907. A year later, John E. Knibbs gave the property to his
wife, Florence (Root) Knibbs. In 1920, Florence Knibbs sold the property to Michael Wittchen, Jr. Michael Wittchen, Jr. and his wife Nancy lived on the property for three years until they sold it to Dr. Edward P. Dunne in 1923.

Dr. Edward P. Dunne was a well-known physician in Farmington who started his own practice and delivered many babies in the area. He also served as Medical Examiner of Farmington and Director of Health in Burlington. His wife, Antoinette (Von Sudsburg) Dunne was one of the first women to be elected to the State Legislature. The Dunnes had seven children, one boy and six girls. Their youngest daughter, Kathleen, acquired the property with her husband, Joseph Ruzbasan, in 1965. They currently own the property.

It is assumed based on visual evidence, that Barn I was originally a Carriage House. When the Dunne family acquired the property, the barn was used to house hay and a dairy cow. The ice house was used as such, with the south portion used for storage. Dr. Dunne used the addition connecting Barns I and II to house his cars and other vehicles. The barn continues to remain in active agricultural use, as it stores hay for the animals on the property.

**Architectural significance:**

This is an intact example of a gambrel-roof carriage barn with early 20th century construction consisting of heavy timbers typical of post-and-beam framing and lighter timbers typical of balloon framing. It still sits in its original location, with many of the original materials having been well maintained. The Icehouse is a typical example of its type with two doors (one above the other) found on the east eave-side. The top door was used as access to the ice after the ice house was filled.

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Sources (continuation):

Photographs and field notes by Kristen Young - 10/23/2012.
Interview with Kathleen and Joseph Ruzbasan - 10/23/2012, 34 West District Road, Farmington, CT.

Map resources:
Parcel ID: Map 0046/Lot 36
Aerial views from:
Historical aerial photography and maps accessed on 10/31/2012 at UConn MAGIC:
   http://magic.lib.uconn.edu/mash_up/1934.html
   http://magic.lib.uconn.edu/historical_maps_connecticut_towns.html.

Print and internet resources:
Connecticut State Library online: iconn.org or http://www.cslib.org/iconnsitemap/staff/SiteIndex.aspx#directories
1. Location map of 34 West District Road, Farmington, CT - from https://maps.google.com/ - accessed 10/31/2012.


4. Site map of 34 West District Road, Farmington, CT – base image from https://maps.google.com – accessed 10/31/2012.
5. Southwest context view of Barn I and the farmhouse, camera facing northeast.

6. Northeast context view of Barn I at left, the addition and Barn II, camera facing southwest.
7. Southwest context view of Barn III at rear and Barn I, camera facing northeast.

8. South gable-end (main façade) of the farmhouse, camera facing north.
9. West gable-end and south eave-side of Barn III. Note the pastures and goats in front and to the right of the barn. Camera facing northeast.


12. East gable-end of Carriage barn I, camera facing west.
13. South side of the addition and south gable-end of Icehouse (Barn II), camera facing northeast.

14. South side of the addition and south gable-end of Icehouse (Barn II), camera facing northeast.
15. East eave-side of Icehouse (Barn II), camera facing west.

16. North gable-end of Barn II and north side of the addition, camera facing south.
16. North gable-end and west eave-side of Barn II at left rear; north and west sides of the addition and west gable-end of Carriage barn I. Camera facing southeast.

17. West side of the addition and west gable-end of Barn I, camera facing east.
18. Interior view of the southwest corner of Barn I. Note the heavy timbers and lighter timbers creating a frame that is a hybrid of post-and-beam and balloon framing. Camera facing southwest.

19. Interior view of the west gable-end of Barn I. Note the light timber braces, the ridge-board at the ridge and the wood plank roof deck. Also note the purlin plates at the change of pitch in the roof. Camera facing west.
20. Interior view of the northeast corner of Barn I. Note the heavy timbers with mortise and tenon joints and tree nails. Camera facing northeast.

21. Interior view of what was once the Icehouse (Barn II). Camera facing northwest.
21. Interior view of the southeast corner of Icehouse (Barn II). Note the light timbers and heavy timbers used in the frame. Camera facing southeast.

22. Interior view of the rafters, ridge-board and collar tie in Icehouse (Barn II). Camera facing south.