

Exploring Asylum Hill The “First Mark Twain House”

Nestled back behind a row of brick apartment buildings near the corner of Forest Street and Hawthorn Street is one of the earliest and most historic homes still standing on Asylum Hill. On the assessors map it is shown as 140 Hawthorn Street, but it is most visible from the



driveway entrance on Forest Street. Originally built by John & Isabella Beecher Hooker in 1853 it was most famously occupied by Samuel Clemens before he built his iconic home on Farmington Avenue. As such, it can be considered the “First Mark Twain House” in Hartford. The architecture varies significantly from most of the later Victorian homes that remain in Asylum Hill as they are generally considered to be built in the Queen Anne style while this home would be considered in the Gothic tradition.

The original residents of 140 Hawthorn Street were one of Hartford’s power couples. John Hooker, direct descendant of Hartford founder Thomas Hooker, was the principal developer of Nook Farm, the famous literary enclave that would become the home of Mark Twain, Harriet Beecher Stowe, and Charles Dudley Warner, while Isabella Beecher Hooker, half-sister of Harriet Beecher Stowe, was a national leader in the woman’s suffrage movement. 140 Hawthorn Street would remain an elegant single-family home well into the 20th century before being divided into eight apartments. Today it is part of the Carriage Place Apartments complex.