

The Deming Store. Samuel Deming owned this store which in 1841 was on Main Street on the present site of the firehouse. He was a wealthy farmer and merchant, a Christian gentleman and a strong supporter of the anti-slavery cause. One of the three Farmington abolitionists responsible for bringing the Mendi to the town, he gave the use of part of the second floor of his store to house them while the carriage house was being built on Austin Williams' property. The room, only 18 x 20 feet, later became their classroom. For exercise they went outside on the street while they lived here. A free black couple, who ran a boarding house about 100 rods from the store, offered to cook for the Africans and provided a place to eat.

The second floor of the Deming Store became the classroom in May 1841 when the Mendi moved into their new quarters on the Williams property. Here they were divided into four groups according to ability. They continued their education, begun by Yale students during their imprisonment in New Haven. Sherman Booth, T. F. Fessenden and the Rev. Raymond were hired to tutor them, and sons of local abolitionists, including John Pitkin Norton, also volunteered. The three girls also attended classes; their lessons were reinforced with help from the families with whom they lived.