

Born in Groton, Massachusetts, in 1795, **Ralph Farnsworth** was the fourth child and third son of Major Amos Farnsworth and spent his early years working on his father's farm until he reached the age of twenty-one. Driven by a strong intellect and a determination to acquire a thorough education, he prepared for college at the Groton Academy in just eleven months and entered Harvard in 1817. He graduated among the top seven of his notable 1821 class, which included famous figures like the philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson and Josiah Quincy, the future mayor of Boston. Following his graduation, he taught school in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, earning such a strong reputation as an educator that Dartmouth College awarded him an honorary Master of Arts degree in 1825.

Farnsworth pursued his medical education under the tutelage of Dr. John C. Warren in Boston, completing his MD at Harvard Medical School in 1826, for which his thesis was awarded the prestigious Boylston Prize. That same year, he relocated to **Norwich, Connecticut**, to establish his medical practice, initiating a lifelong professional journey in the town. Physically robust, standing six feet tall and weighing nearly two hundred pounds, he possessed an immense capacity for continuous, dedicated work. Dr. Willard Parker famously described him as "several men in one" due to his outstanding mental and physical capabilities.

Over nearly five decades in Norwich, Dr. Farnsworth built one of the most successful medical practices in eastern Connecticut. Rather than being a routine physician, he actively integrated cutting-edge discoveries in medicine and general science to benefit his patients. Beyond his practice, he was a man of strong convictions and an active participant in public movements. He was an early, vocal opponent of slavery, arguing against it first within the Whig party and later as an ardent supporter of the newly formed Republican Party. His clear logic, kindness, and tender sympathies made him a trusted figure to whom Norwich residents of all backgrounds turned in times of trouble.

On November 25, 1828, Dr. Farnsworth married **Eunice Williams Billings** of New London, the daughter of Coddington Billings, Esq., and Eunice Williams Billings. Together, they raised a large family in Norwich, where all nine of their children were born: Coddington Billings, Walter W., Isabella S., William W., Charles, Noyes B., George E., Frederick, and Elizabeth R.. Tragically, only three of their sons—Coddington Billings, Charles, and Frederick—lived to maturity. The eldest son, Coddington Billings Farnsworth, followed directly in his father's footsteps, becoming a physician and succeeding Dr. Farnsworth's practice in Norwich.

Dr. Farnsworth practiced medicine in Norwich with unyielding enthusiasm until his death on July 16, 1875. His wife survived him by two years, passing away on September 26, 1877. Today, the couple lies buried together in the family lot at **Yantic Cemetery** in Norwich, where the family's deep-rooted connection to the town is permanently memorialized. Through his pioneering medical work, civic devotion, and his son Coddington's continuation of his medical legacy, Dr. Farnsworth left a profound and lasting mark on the Norwich community.