

Mrs. Benjamin Pomeroy House
658 Pequot Road
Southport
Fairfield County
Connecticut

HABS No. CONN-298

HABS
CONN,
1-SOUPO.
11-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20243

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

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CONN,
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MRS. BENJAMIN POMEROY HOUSE

Location: 658 Pequot Road (northwest corner of Pequot Road and Center Street), Southport, Fairfield County, Connecticut.

USGS Westport Quadrangle Map; Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates: 18.643620.4554800.

Present Owner and Occupant: William N. Wallace.

Present Use: Residence.

Statement of Significance: The Pomeroy house was designed by the locally prominent architects Lambert & Bunnell and erected 1868-69. Patterned in the nineteenth-century Second Empire style, the handsome facade is symmetrical about a projecting three-story central pavillion and dominated by a profusion of details, of bold and delicate proportions. Clusters of expertly carved square colonnettes support the porch's extended flat roof; bracketed modillions receive the weight of the deep, roll molded cornice. A mansard roof covered with a multicolored slate surface and rounded dormers top the composition. Mrs. Benjamin Pomeroy, the wife of one of Southport's industrious and wealthy shipping merchants, built the residence for herself and her daughters. It remained within the family until 1946.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1868-69. The Southport "Chronicle" of May 1868 reported that "Mrs. Benjamin Pomeroy is about to erect a large and elegant dwelling near the site of the present one." On May 15, 1869 the "Chronicle" announced that "Mrs. Benjamin Pomeroy's new dwelling will soon be completed, and will be one of the finest, if not the finest, residence in the village." Noting the residence's distinctive beauty, the "Chronicle" recorded on August 1, 1869 the completion of Mrs. Pomeroy's new home. "The elegant residence of Mrs. Benjamin Pomeroy, now finished and occupied by her, is an ornament to the street . . . and a great credit to the builders, Messrs. Jelliff & Northrop . . . No need to go abroad for our builders - we have those that excelled, at home."

2. Architects: Lambert & Bunnell.

Henry A. Lambert and Rufus W. Bunnell were a Bridgeport architectural firm who designed buildings in Southport during the 1860s and 70s. Their work here included the Moses Bulkley House (Conn-299), the Mrs. Zalmon Wakeman House (Conn-297), the Southport Congregational Church (Conn-311) and the Mrs. Benjamin Pomeroy House. According to Bunnell, for a considerable period during the latter part of the nineteenth century, he and Lambert were the only architects practicing in the Bridgeport area. In 1881, two items in the Bridgeport "Standards" newspaper listed Lambert as practicing alone, which indicated that the partnership had dissolved.

3. Original and subsequent owners: The following is a chain of title to 658 Pequot Road, the lot upon which the structure stands. References are in the Office of the Recorder of Deeds, Fairfield Town Hall, Fairfield, Connecticut.

- 1859 Deed, April 26, 1859, recorded in Volume 53^{1/2} page 162. Wallace Sherwood to Benjamin Pomeroy.
- 1866 Will, December 28, 1866, Benjamin Pomeroy gave the property to his wife, Mary J. Pomeroy.
- 1899 Deed, July 1, 1899, recorded in Volume 70, page 306. Mary J. Pomeroy to Brooks H. and Mary T.P. Wells.
- 1921 Deed, March 10, 1921, recorded in Volume 105, page 30. Brooks H. Wells to Mary F. Pomeroy Wells, Mary Pomeroy Wells, Pauline Pomeroy Wells, Dorothy Pomeroy Wells, Josephine B.W. Browning.
- 1946 Deed, April 11, 1946, recorded in Volume 207, page 637. Estate of Mary F.P. Wells to Pauline P., Mary P. and Dorothy P. Wells and Josephine Browning.
- 1946 Deed, Mary 10, 1946, recorded in Book 209, page 298. Pauline P. Wells and Conservatrix of Estate of Mary P. Wells to Jessica H. Frost, one-quarter interest. Pauline P. Wells' Estate to Jessica H. Keene Frost, three-quarters interest.
- 1952 Deed, June 17, 1952, recorded in Book 280, page 76. Estate of Jessica Keene Frost to Caroline Knowlton Lipscomb.
- 1959 Deed, September 30, 1959, recorded in Book 399, page 176. Caroline Libscomb Knowlton to William N. Wallace.

4. Builders, suppliers: Jelliff & Northrop, Southport builders and lumber suppliers, did the construction work for Mrs. Pomeroy's house.
5. Original plan and construction: The over-all character of the Pomeroy house as originally constructed is quite similar to that of the Mrs. Zalmon Wakeman residence, 418 Harbor Road (Conn-297), which was also designed by Lambert & Bunnell and erected in 1871. Each is really a remarkable design, patterned in the nineteenth-century Second Empire style.

The facade of the Pomeroy house is symmetrical about a projecting three-story central pavillion and dominated by a profusion of three-dimensional details, of bold and delicate proportions. Supporting the raised front porch with its extended flat roof are clusters of carved square colonnettes. Bracketed modillions receive the weight of the deep, roll molded cornice. On the first level, the main entry of arched double doors topped by a recessed upper panel is flanked on either side by full-length windows which are protected by segmentally-arched drip moldings. The porch's cornice detail is repeated around the main cornice, articulating the eave of the straight mansard roof. Rounded dormers with twin round-headed windows pierce the roof's multicolored slate surface.

B. Bibliography:

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

Fairfield County Deed Records, Office of the Recorder,
Fairfield Town Hall, Fairfield, Connecticut.

2. Secondary and published sources:

Southport "Chronicle," May 1868; December 15, 1868; May 15,
1869; August 1, 1869; March 19, 1900.

Prepared by Jan E. Cigliano
Staff Historian
Historic American
Buildings Survey
January 1979

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The Pomeroy house was designed by locally prominent architects Lambert & Bunnell and erected 1868-69. Patterned in the nineteenth-century Second Empire

style, the facade is symmetrical about a projecting three-story central pavillion and dominated by a profusion of details, clusters of carved colonnettes, bracketed modillions, roll molded cornices, drip moldings and recessed carved panels. Rounded dormers with round-headed windows pierce the roof's multicolored slate surface.

2. Condition of fabric: Excellent.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: The original three-story section is square with a projecting porch on the first level, and measures 45' (three-bay front) x 40'. A two-story ell addition to the rear measures 29'-6" x 20'-6".
2. Foundations: Rubble stone faced with pressed, square cut granite blocks.
3. Wall construction, finish, color: Wooden clapboarding painted white.
4. Structural system, framing: Wooden balloon-frame construction.
5. Porches: A one-story porch with a projecting central section extends across the front facade. The flat roof is supported by clusters of square carved colonnettes which form slender round-arched openings. The deep cornice is trimmed with bracketed modillions under the eave. There is a small entrance porch at the rear.
6. Chimneys: Two tall chimneys with dentiled caps are symmetrically placed in relation to the front facade.
7. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: The front entry consists of double doors set into a stilted segmental-arched frame with a recessed panel over the doors.
 - b. Windows: First floor windows on the front are full-length two-over-two double-hung sash with wide jamb surrounds and projecting segmentally-arched lintels. Second-level openings are of regular proportions. The windows at either side of the projecting pavillion are framed in a similar manner as the first floor windows. The center opening consists of two stilted segmental arched windows with molded jamb surrounds and an expansive arched lintel. The double round-arched third story windows are set into ornately carved round-headed dormers. All openings on the side elevations have double-hung sash windows set into segmentally arched openings with projecting molded sills and architraves.

8. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: Mansard roof covered with gray slate shingles.
- b. Cornice, eaves: Deep, roll molded projecting cornice supported by bracketed modillions.
- c. Dormers: Three dormers on the front with segmentally-arched broken pediments and decorative brackets, filled with two narrow, arched windows. Two dormers on each side elevation are plainer though of similar design, with arched broken pediments and stilted arched window openings.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans:

- a. First floor: Central hall plan with a parlor on each side, and a study and dining room flanking the stair hall at the rear.
- b. Second floor: Four corner bedrooms; partition walls correspond to those on the first floor.

2. Stairways: Main stairway in the central hall is trimmed with finely turned newel and balustrade.
3. Flooring: Two-inch square parquet flooring in the stair hall and west parlor; five-inch boards are in all other rooms.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: All surfaces are plaster with heavily molded cornices at the ceiling. Heavily molded baseboards and chairrail trim the first floor rooms.
5. Doorways and doors: The main parlors on each side of the central hall have sliding doors. All other rooms are fitted with heavy wooden paneled doors with brass hardware. Framing the doorways are roll molding surrounds forming stilted segmental archways.
6. Decorative features and trim: Marble fireplaces with continuous roll molding and scrolled key stones are in the principal first floor rooms. Less decorative marble fireplaces are in second floor bedrooms.
7. Mechanical equipment:
 - a. Lighting: Electrical fixtures.
 - b. Heating: Central hot air system.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The Pomeroy house is located on the corner of Center Street and Pequot Road, and faces southeast.
2. Historic landscape design: A slate walk extends from Pequot Road to the front door of the carriage house.
Two hitching posts remain in front of the house, and an elaborate cast-iron fence encompasses the property along Center Street.
3. Outbuildings: The Pomeroy Carriage House (Conn-310) is to the rear of the main house.

Prepared by John G. Waite,
Project Supervisor
David T. Van Zanten,
Team Historian
Historic American
Buildings Survey
September 1966

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey in cooperation with the Southport Historic District Commission, several members of whom provided the necessary funds. The project was completed in the summer of 1966 under the general direction of James C. Massey, then the Chief of HABS; Ralph Schwarz of the Ford Foundation; and Architect John C. Waite (Columbia University); with assistant architects Christopher Benningers (Harvard University), Richard Haines (University of Kentucky) and Andrew Craig Morrison (University of Michigan), at the HABS Field Office in Southport, Connecticut. The data was prepared and edited in HABS Washington office in December 1978 by Jan E. Cigliano, staff historian. Photographs were taken by HABS staff photographer Jack E. Boucher in September 1966.