

Oliver T. Sherwood House
683 Pequot Road
Southport
Fairfield County
Connecticut

HABS No. CONN-295

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PHOTOGRAPH

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

HABS No. CONN-295

OLIVER T. SHERWOOD HOUSE

Location: 683 Pequot Road, Southport, Fairfield County,
Connecticut.

USGS Westport Quadrangle Map; Universal Transverse
Mercator Coordinates: 18.643640.4554725.

Present Owner
and Occupant: Frank and Charlotte Yahner.

Present Use: Residence,

Statement of
Significance:

The Oliver T. Sherwood house was designed by Westchester architect William W. Kent and erected in 1892. In keeping with contemporary stylistic trends, it is designed in the American Shingle style, characterized by uniform shingled surfaces, splaying roof lines with broken and intersecting gables, projecting bays and corner turrets, and usually a front veranda, warmly shadowed by wide, protective eaves. In addition, a token classical Palladian window often appears; in this case, the Ionic detailed tripartite window is at the western end of the front facade's main level. The over-all impression of this residence is that it is less formal and affectatious by comparison to earlier nineteenth century village residences, and of more modest, low-lying dimensions. Sherwood's long career as a respected bank financier ended with misfortune: he defaulted on a large sum of money as the Southport National Bank's cashier and spent his later life in Canada,

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1892. The Southport "Chronicle" reported on March 22, 1895, "It is understood that, weather permitting, ground will be broken for O.T. Sherwood's new house next week." On May 5, the newspaper noted continuing progress: "The frame of O.T. Sherwood's new house was raised last week."
2. Architect: William W. Kent (1860-1955). William Winthrop Kent was born in 1860 in Bangor, Maine, the son of Henry Mellen Kent. He received his secondary school-

ing at Phillips Exeter Academy, and collegiate training at Harvard College. After his graduation from Harvard in 1882, Kent entered the office of Boston architect Henry Hobson Richardson. During his apprenticeship with Richardson the young architect supervised the construction of the Hay-Adams House on Lafayette Square in Washington, D.C. Kent was associated with his brother Edward who had an architectural practice in Buffalo in subsequent years to his tenure with Richardson. Together, they designed the Jewish Temple, Beth Zion (1890), the W.O. Chapin Building (1908), and the First Unitarian Church (ca.1910), all in Buffalo. Upon Edward's death in 1912 - he was a victim of the sinking of the Titanic - William joined the New York architectural firm of Jardine, Kent & Jardine. Kent was one of the architects of the original plans for the New York Cathedral, St. John the Divine, as well as designing several of the first civic buildings in Bronxville, two Carnegie libraries, and several country houses in Westchester County and southern Connecticut. After he retired from active practice, Kent authored a biography of Baldassare Perizzi, sixteenth-century architect, and a book on the history of ornament. He lived to the age of ninety-five at his home at Orleans on Cape Cod until November 7, 1955.

An article which appeared in the Southport "Chronicle" on March 15, 1892 announced Kent's Sherwood commission. "Architect Kent of New York, from whose office were issued the plans for the new house of O.T. Sherwood has given the contracts for carpentry and painting to A.E. Dixon of Bridgeport; that of plumbing and tinning to Charles A. Wheeler of Southport. The cottage is to be of moderate size, of Colonial style of architecture. Mr. Kent is the supervising architect of Charles SooySmith's house at Green's Farms, and Mr. Sherwood's selection of plans from his office is proof that the new house will be all that can be desired architecturally. Mr. Dixon, the builder, is now completing the house of Lawyer H.N. Wakeman."

3. Original and subsequent owners: References to the chain of title to the land upon which the structure stands is in the Office of the Recorder of Deeds, Fairfield Town Hall, Fairfield, Connecticut.

1891 Deed, May 25, 1891, recorded in Volume 65, page 371. Sarah S. Black to Oliver T. Sherwood.

1904 Deed, February 9, 1904, recorded in Volume 75, page 221-22. Oliver T. Sherwood to Ellis S. Pepper, Receiver of Southport National Bank.

- 1904 Deed, August 9, 1904, recorded in Volume 75, page 357. Ellis S. Pepper, Receiver to Virginia B. Perry.
- 1927 Deed, June 8, 1927, recorded in Volume 127, page 456-58. Estate of Virginia B. Perry to J. Walter Perry.
- 1944 Deed, November 24, 1944, recorded in Volume 199, page 416. J. Walter Perry to Arthur G. and Margaret S. Hall.
- 1951 Deed, February 7, 1951, recorded in Volume 260, page 265. Arthur G. and Margaret S. Hall to Frank A. and Charlotte Yahner.

4. Builders, suppliers: The Southport "Chronicle" followed closely the progress of the construction of the Sherwood residence. In so doing, builder and suppliers were mentioned. The following items are from the Southport "Chronicle."

- July 12, 1892 "J.H. Flood & Co. have finished priming at O.T. Sherwood's new house, and will put on the second coat of paint as soon as Carpenter Dixon finishes his work."
- August 2, 1892 "C.A. Wheeler will in a few days resume the plumbing of O.T. Sherwood's new house."
- August 16, 1892 "C.A. Wheeler, who is putting in a huge Richardson & Bagniton furnace at the new house of O.T. Sherwood, is also set up one at Mrs. H.T. Bulkley's; those two are the largest in town."

B. Historical Events and Persons Connected with the Structure:

Oliver T. Sherwood was the cashier of the Southport National Bank. In 1903 he was charged with defaulting on bank notes after he had illegally left town. The "Chronicle" reported on May 18, 1903: "O.T. Sherwood, A Defaulter - Southport National Bank will have to bear the Loss of Over \$100,000 through the Late Cashier's Operations. Off on a train on May 12 for NY and not seen since - \$150,000 shortage -" On June 22, 1903, the whereabouts of fugitive Sherwood was related to the "Chronicle": "O.T. Sherwood in Canada - A NEW YORK Business Man Says Sherwood is There - thinks charge Against Him Is Not in Extradition treaty; has no fear that the authorities will be able to find him." In 1904, Sherwood's property in Southport went into receivership and was sold under the auspices of the National Bank.

C. Bibliography:

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

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

2. Secondary and published sources:

New York "Times" November 7, 1955, 29:2.

Southport "Chronicle," May 23, 1891; March 15, 1892; March 22, 1892; April 5, 1892; May 5, 1892; July 12, 1892; August 2, 1892; August 16, 1892; April 21, 1902; May 18, 1903; June 22, 1903.

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

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The Sherwood residence was designed by Westchester County architect William W. Kent and erected 1892. In keeping with contemporary stylistic trends, it is designed in the American Shingle style. The structure is characterized by uniform shingled surfaces, splaying roof lines with broken and intersecting gables, projecting bays and a front veranda, warmly shadowed by wide, protective eaves. A classical Palladian window ornaments the front facade's western end.
2. Condition of fabric: Good.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: This irregular L-shaped structure is two-and-a-half stories with partially exposed basement and measures 44'-6" (northwest front elevation) x 50'-6" deep.
2. Foundations: Boulder facing over rubble stone masonry.
3. Wall construction, finish, color: Wooden shingles, now stained brown.
4. Structural system, framing: Timber frame construction.
5. Porch, portico, veranda: A one-story porch extends across the northwest (front) facade, and, in a curved projection, wraps around the front half of the side elevation. A semi-elliptical gable pediment, reminiscent of late eighteenth-

century Connecticut doorways, is over the front entry door. Slender wooden Tuscan columns support a plain Tuscan entablature and low-pitched splaying roof. A masonry parapet encompasses the porch area.

6. Chimneys: Tall brick double chimney with original corner fin projections rises above the southwest octagonal bay. A brick chimney on the northeast side and one on the southwestern end have been recently rebuilt.

7. Openings:

- a. Doorways and doors: Front entry door has plain flat wooden surround with projecting fillet, smooth fascia and delicate cornice overhead. A doorway at the rear is of recent date.
- b. Windows: Window surrounds on the principal facade are identical to that of the front doorway. Most of the major double-hung sash windows have the original sash and mullions which are laid in a diagonal pattern in the upper window. A Palladian window ornaments the front facade's western end. The large center window is flanked by thin Ionic pilasters, narrow double-hung windows with mullions laid in a diamond pattern on the top half, and a second pair of Ionic pilasters. The wing sections are topped by a simple Ionic cornice. A semi-elliptical leaded fanlight with molded surround crowns the center of the whole composition. At the front gable's third story an unadorned tripartite oriel window rests on a projecting molded base and is supported by four corbelled consoles,

8. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: Broken gable roof covered with asphalt shingles.
- b. Cornice, eaves: A simply molded Tuscan cornice with a plain fascia is carried around the house.
- c. Dormers: A large gabled dormer opens onto a balcony at the second floor of the northeast elevation.

- C. Site: The structure faces northwest, sited thirty feet back from Pequot Road.

Prepared by 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 G. Waite (Columbia University); with assistant architects Christopher Benninger (Harvard University), Richard Haines (University of Kentucky) and Andrew Craig Morrison (University of Michigan), and architectural historian David T. Van Zanten (Harvard University), 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.