

Austin Perry House  
712 Harbor Road  
Southport  
Fairfield County  
Connecticut

HABS No. CONN-300

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CONN,  
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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

HABS No. CONN-300

## AUSTIN PERRY HOUSE

Location: 712 Harbor Road, Southport, Fairfield County,  
Connecticut.

USGS Westport Quadrangle Map; Universal Transverse  
Mercator Coordinates: 18.644050.4554750.

Present Owner  
and Occupant: William and Therese Cargill.

Present Use: Residence.

Statement of  
Significance:

The Austin Perry house is a highly stylized classical Greek design of the 1830s. A symmetrical and balanced composition, the correctly detailed Doric cornice and bold proportions of the Corinthian order, and the carved anthemion motif ornamenting the gable pediment and delicate Adamesque window cornices create a stunning visual image which is representative of Southport's unique beauty, natural and built. Erected upon a flat, open site facing Mill River Harbor, the Perry residence is symbolic of the early nineteenth-century seaport economy which supported villagers' wealth and cultivated their taste in fashionable residences. The Perrys were a prominent family in the community. ?

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: Circa 1830-40. The house was mortgaged in 1841, indicating that it was constructed and occupied.
2. Architect, builder: No information is available regarding the architect or builder of this particular house, but a residence in Fairfield at 536 Old Post Road built ca.1825 by Daniel Dimon is nearly identical in exterior design and details. The similarity between the two houses' carved anthemion scroll ornamenting the front gable pediment and the gable cornice are particularly striking.
3. Original and subsequent owners: The land upon which the structure stands was given to Austin Perry by his father, Walter Perry, before his death in 1831. Walter Perry had acquired the land from his father Peter. Following is the chain of title to the land after 1840. Records cited are

in the Office of the Recorder of Deeds, Fairfield Town Hall, Fairfield, Connecticut.

- 1841 Deed, September 21, 1841, recorded in Volume 46, page 162. Austin Perry to Delia Perry.
- 1845 Deed, November 1, 1845, recorded in Volume 48, page 228. Delia Perry to Austin Perry.
- 1856 Deed, January 11, 1856, recorded in Volume 51, page 560. Austin Perry to O.H. Perry.
- 1856 Deed, January 12, 1856, recorded in Volume 52, page 37. O.H. Perry to Austin Perry.
- 1876 Deed, July 7, 1876, recorded in Volume 60, page 416. Quit claim, Roger Averill and Mary Austin to Charles C. Perry.
- 1926 Deed, May 20, 1926, recorded in Book 122, page 550. Estate of Charles C. Perry to John H. Perry.
- 1926 Deed, August 9, 1926, recorded in Book 123, page 48. John H. Perry to Hoyt Ogden Perry.
- 1951 Deed, February 28, 1951, recorded in Volume 261, page 271. Hoyt Ogden Perry to Thomas C. McCobb.
- 1958 Deed, December 5, 1958, recorded in Volume 386, page 454. Frances M. McCobb to Sanford N. Agnew.
- 1963 Deed, May 29, 1963, recorded in Volume 452, page 26. Sanford N. Agnew to Gregory B. Smith.
- 1965 Deed, March 9, 1965, recorded in Volume 482, page 172. Gregory B. Smith to William S. Cargill and Therese R. Cargill.
4. Original plan and construction: The original frame structure was rectangular with a projecting two-story central portico. Twentieth-century additions at the rear of the house have created a cross-shaped plan. For a more extensive description of the structure see Part II, Architectural Information.
5. Alterations and additions: The Southport "Chronicle" reported on September 1, 1869 that "The dwelling of the late Mrs. Austin Perry has been newly roofed, and the fences rebuilt - improving very much this fine village residence."

A two-story ell section has been added at the rear of the house within the past forty years.

B. Historical Events and Persons Connected with the Structure:

Austin Perry (1798-1864) was born in Southport, the son of Walter Perry, a wealthy Southport ship-owner and merchant. Austin was one of ten children born to Walter and Elizabeth Sturges Perry.

C. Bibliography:

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

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

Fairfield County Probate Records, Probate Court, Fairfield  
Town Hall, Fairfield, Connecticut.

2. Secondary and published sources:

Fairfield Historic District Commission. Final Report:  
Establishment of Historic Districts in Greenfield Hill  
and Southport. Fairfield: 1966.

Southport "Chronicle," September 1, 1869.

Prepared by Jan E. Cigliano  
Historian  
Historic American  
Buildings Survey  
December 1978

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The Austin Perry house is a highly stylized classical Greek design of the 1830s. The composition of the symmetrical five-bayed facade is correct in detail and bold in proportion. A two-story Greek Doric portico is supported by four fluted columns with Roman Corinthian capitals carved in an acanthus leaf pattern. All principal window openings are topped with a delicate Adamesque cornice. As originally designed, the interior was laid out on a classical central hall plan.

2. Condition of fabric: Excellent.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: The five-bayed structure is two stories

with attic and partially exposed basement. The original structure was rectangular with projecting central portico; an addition was added at the rear within the past forty years, and now measures 40' (southeast front) x 60'.

2. Foundations: Rubble stone masonry faced with finely cut stone blocks.
3. Wall construction, finish, color: Front facade is covered with flush butt-boardings, five-inch wide; four-inch wide flush butt-boardings is on the exposed bays of the front facade. This difference may indicate that the end bays were added at a later date than the original construction. Horizontal clapboards cover all other facades.
4. Structural system, framing: Timber mortise-and-tenon frame construction.
5. Porches, porticos, stoops: Two-story, three-bay Greek Doric portico with Roman Corinthian details on front (south-east) elevation. Four fluted columns support an entablature of two fascias, a smooth frieze, and a plain Greek Doric cornice. The fasciaed architrave and frieze are separated by an angular cyma recta and filet molding. The parts of each column - base, fluted shaft, and Corinthian capital carved in an acanthus leaf pattern - are correct in detail execution though overly bold in proportion. The diameter of the columns is greater in proportion to the height. A carved anthemion scroll motif ornaments the gable pediment. Wooden steps framed by masonry balustrades extend across the front and lead to the porch of wooden board flooring. The portico sits on the wooden porch. A masonry terrace of recent date extends along the southwest elevation.
6. Openings:
  - a. Doorways and doors: Main entrance is in front center bay. The original four-paneled door with angular Greek cyma recta molding is in place. A three-light transom and side-lights with wooden panels on the lower half frame the doorway. All other doors are of recent date.
  - b. Windows: Windows on the five-bayed front facade are six-over-six light double-hung sash. All principal openings are framed by a plain sill and jamb, and a lintel composed of a two-inch fascia, a cyma recta and filet molding, a six-inch smooth frieze, and a deep angular cornice. Of delicate proportions, the lintels are essentially an eighteenth-century composition.

7. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: Cross-gabled roof covered with wooden shingles.
- b. Cornice, eaves: A more attenuated cornice than that which articulates the portico gable is carried around the principal mass. The roof line cornice is identical to the window heads, proportioned to a greater scale.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans:

- a. First floor: Originally laid out in a central hall plan with four corner rooms. The plan of the main level has altered because of later additions to the rear.
- b. Second floor: Central hall plan with four corner rooms. A recent addition to the rear has altered the lay-out.

2. Stairways: The original staircase in the main hall rises twelve steps in a straight run, then turns in a semi-circular curve. Spindled balusters terminate in a finely carved newel of foliage and leaf patterns.

3. Flooring: All floor coverings are of recent date.

4. Wall and ceiling finish: All walls are either papered or noticeably altered from their original finish. In the main stairhall and west parlor, the original baseboard of flat fascia boards topped with a projecting thin filet are in place. The original ceiling cornices remain in the second-floor stairhall and east bedroom.

5. Doorways and doors: Most of the doors are the originals. They are paneled and framed by molded surrounds with carved corner blocks of deeply cut acanthus rosettes.

6. Mechanical equipment:

- a. Heating: Central heating system.
- b. Lighting: Electrical wiring system.

D. Site: The structure faces southeast towards Mill River harbor, erected upon an open, flat plot of land.

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 architect 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.