

Connecticut Bank, Mill River Branch
227 Main Street
Southport
Fairfield County
Connecticut

HABS No. CONN-319

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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-319

CONNECTICUT BANK, MILL RIVER BRANCH

Location: 227 Main Street, Southport, Fairfield County,
Connecticut.

USGS Westport Quadrangle Map; Universal Transverse
Mercator Coordinates: 18.644080.4554790.

Present Owner
and Occupant: Franklin E. and Annis V. Vilas.

Present Use: Residence.

Statement of
Significance: The Connecticut Bank was built in 1833 and is one
of the earliest brick structures in Southport which
survives to the present day. Designed in the high-
style Greek Revival² manner of the early nineteenth
century, Southport's village bank is a modestly
scaled version of the classical plan and detailing
of Benjamin Henry Latrobe's Bank of Pennsylvania
(1798) and William Strickland's Second Bank of the
United States (1818), both in Philadelphia. In
1923 the interior was renovated for residential
use. Throughout its history, this 1830s structure,
virtually unchanged on the exterior, has blended
in with its residential and commercial surroundings.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1833. The January 1832 charter of the Connecticut Bank of Bridgeport contained a provision to the effect that within three months after it began business in Bridgeport the Bank must open a branch in Southport. In January 1833, the Connecticut Bank purchased the property at 227 Main Street in Southport and that year erected this brick structure.
2. Architect, builder: No information available.
3. Original and subsequent owners: The Connecticut Bank of Bridgeport purchased the property upon which the structure stands in January 1833. In July 1851, the Southport Bank was independently chartered and 227 Main Street was quit claimed to it on February 17, 1852. The Southport Bank

became the Southport National Bank on January 2, 1865. On May 19, 1903 the Bank went into receivership. It was re-organized and the name was changed to the Southport Trust Company, succeeding the defunct bank. Owners of this property after 1922 are listed in the following chain of title to the land. Records cited are in the Office of the Recorder of Deeds, Fairfield Town Hall, Fairfield, Connecticut.

- 1922 Deed, April 24, 1922, recorded in Volume 107, page 278. Southport Trust Company (by the majority of its Trustees, in dissolution) to Fairfield Trust Company.
- 1923 Deed, January 17, 1923, recorded in Volume 107, page 590. Fairfield Trust Company to Harold C. Weidlich.
- 1924 Deed, July 9, 1924, recorded in Volume 112, page 520. Harold C. Weidlich to James D'Attelo.
- 1942 Deed, November 12, 1942, recorded in Volume 194, page 321. James D'Attello to Edmond and Celia D'Attello.
- 1945 Deed, August 30, 1945, recorded in Volume 213, page 127. Ralph Garofalo, guardian of the estate of Celia and Edmond D'Attelo, minors, to William Dwight Whitney.
- 1949 Deed, January 1949, recorded in Volume 232, page 309. William Dwight Whitney to Franklin E. and Annis V. Vilas.
4. Alterations and additions: The Fairfield "Advertiser" recorded changes and repairs to the structure:
- July 8, 1887 "A new floor has been put in the National Bank."
- July 22, 1887 "The handsome new counter has been placed in the National Bank, and the space behind has been enlarged by pushing the counter forward. A coat of paint has been put on the walls and ceiling, and other improvements will follow."
- September 15,
1887 "The Southport National Bank is being painted."
- December 6,
1889 "The National Bank has put a pavement in front of their building."
- March 9, 1891 "The Southport National Bank building is receiving a coat of paint."

B. Historical Events and Persons Connected with the Structure:

The Connecticut Bank, Mill River Branch, was created as a branch under the charter of the Connecticut Bank of Bridgeport. The charter stated that within three months of the Bridgeport Bank's opening, a branch must be opened in Southport. The Connecticut Bank purchased the lot at 227 Main Street, and a board of managers was subsequently appointed. Jeremiah Sturgis and Jonathan Bulkley, both prominent men of the community, were appointed president and cashier, respectively. In July 1851 the bank became the Southport National Bank, a member of the National Banking System. Having gone into receivership in May 1903, the bank was reorganized, becoming the Southport Trust Company. As a result of a decision by a majority of the bank's trustees, the Southport Trust Company was dissolved and all financial dealings were merged into the Fairfield Trust Company.

C. Bibliography:

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

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

2. Secondary and published sources:

"Banks in Southport," Southport Savings Bank, Southport, Connecticut, n.d.

Fairfield "Advertiser," July 8, 1887; July 22, 1887; September 15, 1887; December 6, 1889; April 9, 1891.

Hurd, Hamilton. A History of Fairfield County, Connecticut. Philadelphia: J.W. Lewis & Co., 1881.

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

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: Built in 1833, the Connecticut

Bank is one of the earliest brick structures in Southport which survives today. The temple form, Greek Ionic order of the portico columns and masonry construction are characteristic of early nineteenth century formal Greek Revival architectural. In 1923, the interior was renovated and adapted for residential use.

2. Condition of fabric: Good. The interior has been altered for residential use.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: The structure is two stories with a partially exposed basement, rectangular in shape and measures 25'-8" (three-bay front) x 38'-3".
2. Foundations: Random ashlar sandstone, eighteen inches thick.
3. Wall construction, finish, color: Brick laid in Flemish bond on the front (west) facade, and common bond on other facades.
4. Structural system, framing: Load bearing brick walls, spaced 25 feet apart, with perpendicular wooden joist framing.
5. Porches, porticos: Two-story portico on front (west) elevation extends across facade and is 6'-6" deep. Four wooden fluted columns with four-sided Ionic capitals rest on double plinth bases. There is wooden plank flooring and brick and wooden steps of recent construction. Walk leading to porch is laid in sandstone slabs. A recent porch of cinder block construction is at the rear of the building.
6. Chimneys: Three-foot square brick chimney sits on ridge at rear.
7. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: Off-center front entry doorway is framed with plain wooden molding and sandstone lintel. The door at the rear (east) elevation is of recent date.
 - b. Windows: Windows at the street facade's main level are one-over-one light double-hung sash. All window openings have sandstone sills and lintels, and are flanked by operable shutters. There are four window openings on the south elevation, two on the north elevation, and one on the east.
8. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: Ridge roof with gable pediment facing west toward the street. Covered with asphalt shingles. A semi-elliptical fan light ornaments the gable pediment.
- b. Cornice, eaves: Ionic entablature with plain architrave and frieze and simply molded cornice.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans:
 - a. Basement: Full basement extends under entire area of main section.
 - b. First floor: First floor is now divided into four corner rooms: dining room, living room, kitchen, and den-study.
 - c. Second floor: Access to upper level is by an enclosed staircase at the northwestern corner. The floor is divided into four corner rooms with a bathroom installed in the northeastern corner. The front and back rooms on the south side are separated by a large fireplace.
2. Stairways: Enclosed wooden steps with an eight inch run and eight inch rise, leads to second floor.
3. Flooring: Original floors are two-inch, random length oak planking. Asphalt tile presently covers the dining room floor.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: Most walls have paper over plaster covering. A few original partitions have tongue-and-groove boarding with bead moldings. Ceilings are plaster covered.
5. Doorways and doors: A few doorways are framed by molded trim with carved corner blocks. All doors are of recent construction.
6. Decorative features, trim: Windows are framed by a molded corner block trim. Paneled wainscoting is in the front room and dates from the late nineteenth century.
7. Mechanical equipment:
 - a. Heating: Central heating system.
 - b. Lighting: Electrical lighting system.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The structure faces west onto Main Street, thirty degrees from due north.
2. Historic landscape design: A walk laid in three-inch square sandstone slabs extends from the street to the front porch.
3. Outbuildings: None.

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 C. 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.