The James L. Cowles Rental House faces north onto Perry Street. It is surrounded by buildings similar in scale. The Farmington River lies to the south.
This nineteenth-century vernacular-style, two-family house is oriented ridge-to-street. Its gable roof is accented by a full-length open porch along the front facade. It boasts little detail with the exception of the eight-over-eight sash. Two chimneys extend from the roof.

In 1854 James L. Cowles, Unionville’s industrial entrepreneur, sold this ½ acre lot and dwelling house to William Platner and Samuel L. Porter (FLR 53:222). Owners of the Platner and Porter Company, manufacturers of fine writing paper, they rented this two-family house to their employees. It is difficult to pinpoint the actual date of the house’s construction, however, it appears on the 1853 map and several of its interior features such as the large center chimney and beehive oven, suggest it may have been built in the early 1800s. Franklin Chamberlain, (1821-1896), a lawyer and real estate investor from Hartford, purchased the building in 1878 for $2000 (FLR 62:524). Upon Chamberlain's death in 1896, it passed to his heirs, who sold it to Joseph A. and Angela Gagnon (FLR 74:313-14). Since that time it has changed ownership once, and remains in the Cook-McCusker family.

The James E. Cowles Rental House is historically significant as the oldest residence on Perry Street.

Sources