

INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

GOSHEN 2 Williams Drive

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

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HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

Discuss the history of the building. Explain its associations with local (or state) history. Include uses of the building, and the role(s) the owners/occupants played within the community.

STATEMENT OF HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

The Williams House was built for John Williams (1755-1834) in 1779¹ very likely with the involvement of Captain Thomas Weeks (1735-1817), his soon to be father-in-law who was a Revolutionary War soldier and expert carpenter. Captain Weeks was possibly the single most

politically influential person in establishing the new township of Goshen, Massachusetts, as well as serving on the delegation to draft the constitution for the State of Massachusetts.⁸ During Goshen's first year as a new town (1781), the Williams House served as meeting house with Captain Weeks and John Williams serving in multiple local government positions. It also housed the functions of school house and Baptist meeting house until designated structures could be constructed. Captain Weeks served as the first documented school teacher in town, teaching at the Williams House.

Over the following years, John Williams proved himself to be a highly successful business entrepreneur, establishing many vital establishments required for the success of a fledgling community, including a blacksmith shop, general store, tavern, and inn. The store stayed in operation for 67 years, and for several of those years it was the only mercantile establishment within five miles of Goshen. In the early 19th century, the Williams House expanded to include the first post office and stagecoach stop with John Williams being appointed as the first postmaster for Goshen, succeeded by his son, Hinckley.

The Williams store was not only a source of vital goods to the community, but by the early industrial period it also provided a means of economic independence for women in the local area through its putting-out system and participation in the weaving, straw-plaiting, and palm leaf hat industry. As the Civil War was brewing in 1860, John Williams' granddaughter Clarinda Boardman Williams (1836-1920) married Lucius M. Boltwood (1825-1905) – his family being known for their involvement in establishing Amherst College (1821) and close connections with the family of Emily Dickinson and Ralph Waldo Emerson. Lucius M. Boltwood never made the Williams House his full-time residence; though he often did spend parts of summers there, spending a great deal of time in the upstairs library working on his genealogy publications.^{9, 10} He developed an extensive book collection in the process, which remained at the Williams-Boltwood House into the 21st century. Both the Williams' and the Boltwoods had established voices condemning slavery, and the Williams House is currently under investigation as having been a possible stop on the underground railroad, known to have been active in Goshen.¹¹ The final community contribution of the Williams House in the late industrial period would be that of a successful boarding house and summer destination for travelers into the early 1900's. With the exception of a short period during which the house was foreclosed upon, it remained under ownership and residence of this one family line for over 200 years until the death of John's great, great, great granddaughter Susan Babcock Clark (1931-1999). The property has remained vacant since that time, but still

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holds thousands of artifacts from its former occupants including hundreds of personal correspondence letters and log books giving first person accounts from the early inhabitants of the house and the town. At this time the Williams-Boltwood House is under ownership of the Williams-Boltwood House Trust, Inc, a 501(c)(3) organization working to preserve the building and the wealth of associated family artifacts. The property is under a restrictive deed with the goal of preservation, restoration and adaptation for a future use that allows community and educational access.

PRE-COLONIAL PERIOD

Very little is known about the presence of indigenous peoples on the land now occupied by the town of Goshen, Massachusetts. Although the Goshen area has been identified as a travel corridor for indigenous peoples, the only early artifact that has been verified is a stone gouge tapping maple trees.¹² No known documented accounts describe interactions between indigenous peoples and early colonial settlers in the Chesterfield Gore – now Goshen.

The original site of the Williams House north of Goshen's small, local burial ground places this structure in the vicinity of a large, intentionally constructed, underground structure described as a "tunnel" that significantly predates the colonial period. Although the initial purpose of the structure remains unknown, archeological review of the tunnel assesses it as having been likely constructed by early indigenous peoples.¹³

Williams family oral tradition holds that one could access the tunnel from the basement of the Williams home when it sat at its original location until the early 19th century.¹⁴ However, no documentation affirms this claim. Within the last 20 years, the tunnel has been barricaded by its owners for safety reasons. A previous pictorial and archeological study describes the structure as a stone lined, vertical shaft approximately 3 feet wide and 15 feet deep. Two stoned-lined and roofed tunnels extend horizontally from the bottom of the shaft, one traveling north, the other south.¹⁵ In the late 20th century the terminations of the two shafts collapsed. Whether or not John Williams' home was built near the tunnel access, he would have undoubtedly been aware of this intriguing structure.

LATE COLONIAL / EARLY FEDERAL PERIOD: 1760-1780's

John Williams:

John Williams (1756-1834) and his younger brother Jonah (1765-1824), two of the nine children of John and Rhoda (Crowell) Williams of Middleboro, Massachusetts, were among the early settlers of the area west of Northampton Massachusetts. They moved to Williamsburg in 1773¹⁶ where the Williams family is documented as having a residence. The local economy was primarily agriculturally based; however, a few local mills were successfully operating in the area by the late 1700's.

Approximately two years after the Williams family relocated to Williamsburg, the Revolutionary War began. By 1777, General John Burgoyne from the British army was marching concerningly close to western Massachusetts. The descendants of John Williams contend that Williams served in the Revolutionary War in the Battle of Saratoga in the fall of 1777 under the command of Captain Thomas Weeks.¹⁷ Their belief is supported by archival material reporting that – for this one battle – every able-bodied man in the area was called upon to fight against the advance of General Burgoyne, leaving only the women and infirmed in the Gore to bring in the crops in the fall of that year.¹⁸

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Following the Battle of Saratoga, John Williams is reported as living in the Gore¹⁹ likely moving north from Williamsburg in 1778.¹ In 1779, Williams purchased three contiguous parcels of land from Gad Lyman,²⁰ Lemuel Lyons,²¹ and Nehemiah May.²² Williams went on to purchase several other parcels of land in the years 1784, 1794, 1800, and 1803. In total, the Williams homestead grew to 400 acres.²³ By the time of his land purchase in 1779, John Williams is established as a blacksmith practicing his trade in the Gore.¹⁹ By the time the extant house was built c.1795, John Williams was no longer blacksmithing, although his account books show he maintained his shop where he employed young men to make nails and other ironwork. No further blacksmith work is recorded beyond his 1787 account book.

In May of 1780, John Williams married 18-year-old Mercy Weeks (1762-1855), the daughter of Captain Thomas Weeks, (1735-1817) – thought to be John’s previous commanding officer during the Battle of Saratoga. There may have been some degree of urgency of this wedding, as their first child was born seven months later. As a young man, John Williams established multiple businesses that were essential to the emerging community of Goshen, including a blacksmith shop, general store, tavern, inn, post office and stage stop. He also established the Baptist church, giving his property for building both the church house and parish house. John Williams served in multiple town government positions including sealer of weights and measures, town treasurer, and justice of the peace.²⁵ John and Mercy had 14 children; four died in childhood. Several of their children would become highly successful and wealthy as adults.²⁴ Both John and Mercy resided in the Williams House until their deaths.

Construction of the Williams House:

The land John Williams purchased was ideal farmland with an abundance of fields and natural spring water. The southernmost area of this land parcel was positioned at the intersection of two local roads, one falling more or less in line with the present Route 112 (Cape Street) and the other being an unnamed military-post road, first established in 1758. A survey by Selectman John Grant in 1795 showed that the military-post road was once the path used to transport troops from Boston to Albany during the French and Indian War, close to the current Route 9.^{26,27} This road was also one of the routes upon which Burgoyne and his troops were marched to Boston after his defeat at the Battle of Saratoga.^{28,29}

The land was at a higher elevation than local communities to the south and east. At over 1400’, this land stood higher than Williamsburg at 530’ and far above the 190’ elevation in Northampton. Higher, relatively flat elevations were strategically desirable locations for farms, homes and meeting houses.³⁰ The three initial parcels of land purchased by John Williams surrounded the town’s small burial grounds which held 24 souls at the time of Williams’ purchase.³¹ Based on grave marker dates, the site was likely first designated as a cemetery c.1776.

Historical records show that John Williams wasted no time and built a home northwest of the cemetery the same year he purchased the land, selecting the location to be on the unnamed military-post route running through his land. An early logbook found in the Williams House is inscribed in the inner cover with the following; “*John Williams his book Come to live in Chesterfield Gore November the eighteenth seventeen hundred & seventy eight and got to live in his house in year seventeen hundred seventy nine*” confirming that his first house was finished and inhabited in 1779.¹

Town of Goshen Established:

The Gore was incorporated into the town of Goshen on May 14, 1781, following considerable effort by Captain Thomas Weeks. The first town meeting was held in the home of John Williams on May 28th of that year.³² Multiple town meetings continued to be held at the house for over one year, including the first *annual* town meeting on April 1, 1782. Williams

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received payment of “one pound” for the use of his home for town meetings during this first year.³³ Note: there was a second “John Williams” living in the Goshen area at this same time. The John Williams who owned this property was referred to as “Squire” John as he would serve the community in a variety of positions.³³ The other John Williams was referred to as Carpenter John.

The Store:

Early in his career, Williams worked as a trader alongside John James.³⁴ Williams’ logbooks show the two men were working in partnership as early as 1781. John Williams then went on to operate his own independent business as a trader/storekeeper, with log books showing his store was in operation by 1786 and was highly successful. Hiram Barrus records the store generated a revenue equivalent to \$1000 annually during the first two years of operation³⁶ (although Williams was dealing with the currency of pounds not dollars at that time.) His surviving account books for the period between 1786 and 1806 document his early storekeeping business, of which sales of liquor made up a significant percentage of his trade, in addition to produce, lumber and other building materials. Late 18th century newspaper advertisements from the Hampshire Gazette in Northampton describe a wide range of items sold in the Williams store including shad and mackerel, salt and flour, hardware and scythes, paints, china, crockery and glassware, boots and shoes, silk bonnets and trimmings and corn by the bushel.³⁷

The Tavern:

Taverns were very popular in the late 18th century, especially along the post roads. John Williams took advantage of this locational opportunity, opening the Williams Tavern in 1786 on or about the same time that he had opened his store. His was not the only tavern in town with at least two other known establishments from 1785-1791; however, their tenure was short.³⁸ Williams tavern was certainly the most successful tavern in Goshen, remaining in operation for over 50 years. The tavern was leased to Edwin Carpenter in 1837 but remained open for only 4 years under that management, closing circa 1841.^{39,40}

The Baptist Church:

Unlike his father-in-law, John Williams was a Baptist – at a time in which *not* belonging to the Congregational church was seen as unacceptable by many in Goshen and could prevent one’s participation in public office for the town. In 1809, John Williams formed the Baptist church⁴⁰ and was a pillar of the congregation, holding services in his store from 1809 to 1823. For these sabbath services, the store would be vacated and “set with benches” so that it “could accommodate a fair congregation”.⁴² Construction on a formal Baptist church house began in 1822⁴¹ on the southern portion of Williams’ property on what is now called Cape Street. Williams also had a parsonage constructed on his property near the church. The last service held in the Baptist church house was for the funeral of Mercy Weeks Williams in 1855.⁴¹ The church building was used for non-religious purposes after that, until it burned on July 4, 1874.⁴³ Following the fire, the Williams family constructed a large barn on/near the church site. Although now under separate ownership, both the barn and parsonage remain extant.

LATE FEDERAL PERIOD / EARLY INDUSTRIAL PERIOD: 1780-1870

The Post Office and Stage Stop:

John Williams built the first physical postal office in town.⁴⁶ This tiny, extant post office, built c.1813³ occupied a dedicated space within the newly constructed Williams store. The post office remains fairly intact today with some of its original artifacts such as the postal scales, mail logs and government documents appointing John Williams as Goshen’s

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first postmaster in December of 1816.⁴⁴ John held the office of postmaster for 13 years. His son Hinckley Williams (1806-1888) formally succeeded John as postmaster in September 1830⁴⁵ and continued in the position until 1853, when he retired, when the post office function was moved to the center of town.

The location of the Williams House on the military-post road was vital to the post office operations. Prior to the arrival of the stage to Goshen, there was no formal postal transport system for mail. Various citizens from the community would pick up the mail when they traveled to Northampton on personal errands or business, and deliver the mail upon their return.⁴⁷ The first official stage driver carrying mail is believed to have been A.C. Streeter, who operated a stage from Cummington to Northampton.⁴⁷ It is unknown when this service first started. Goshen's formal stage delivery was certainly in operation by 1838 out of the Williams House⁴⁸ although it was likely running much earlier than this, as there are multiple store ledger entries in the 1794-1801 logbooks listing credits to customers for "tickets" being returned.⁴⁹ Williams family correspondence confirms the stage was still in operation as of 1913.⁵⁰

The stagecoach was a common mode of transportation in New England in the late 18th century and throughout the 19th century, especially for communities such as Goshen that would not ever have rail service.⁵¹ By 1815, stage routes were well established from Boston to Albany, although it is not known when the military-post road on which the Williams House was located was first used for the Boston-Albany stage service.

In 1893 Clarinda Williams had special stepping stones constructed that would allow her elderly mother, Elvira Armenius Wright Williams (1808-1899), to climb up into a carriage.⁵² These two large, stable, flat-topped stones remain extant near the front door of the Williams-Boltwood House (see Fig. 30) and are believed to have been used by stage travelers as well as by members of the Williams and Boltwood families.

Relocation of the Military-Post Road:

The military trail from Boston to Albany was created in 1758.⁵³ This unnamed road would eventually become Massachusetts Route 9. In 1826, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts rerouted the unnamed Albany-Boston military road (which by this time was also a post road) moving the new route away from the Williams House.⁵⁴ This event would have significant adverse impact on the multiple successful businesses conducted by John Williams, which by the early 1800's included the post office, stagecoach stop, store, tavern, and inn.

Perhaps aware of the plans to reroute the road, c.1821 John Williams physically relocated his house, store, post office, tavern, and inn approximately 1000 feet to its current location south of the cemetery. He purportedly used oxen and log rollers to achieve this major undertaking as was common in the early 19th century.⁵⁵ The new location kept the Williams House and businesses on the post road in its new location, positioned at the convergence of two major town roads – which are now Route 9 and Route 112. In this new location, the Williams structure with its multiple businesses was referred to as Williams Corner.

Hinckley Williams:

Hinckley Williams (1806-1888) was the youngest of John and Mercy Williams' children. John was 50 years old at the time of Hinckley's birth and Mercy was 44.⁵⁶ Hinckley was the only son who remained in Goshen as an adult. Although not nearly as successful, Hinckley followed in his father's footsteps in managing various enterprises including the farm,

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store, tavern, inn, stage stop, and post office. In 1833 Hinckley married Elvira Armenius Wright (1808-1899) from Derry, NH.⁵⁷

John Williams died the year after Hinckley and Elvira married, leaving Hinckley owner of the property and businesses.⁵⁸ John Williams' will also bequeathed rooms in the house to his widow and several of his daughters (Hinckley's sisters) who remained unmarried or were widowed. Hinckley's older sister Sally remained unmarried and was described as an invalid. She was provided with the use of two upstairs rooms in the northeast corner of the house as well as access to "the necessary room" in the basement and one of the wells.⁵⁸

Hinckley and Elvira had four children: unnamed infant (b. and d.1833), Clarinda Boardman (1836-1920), Hinckley Wright (1844-1864) and Sarah Russel (1850-1879) also known as "Kitty".⁵⁶ Their oldest daughter, Clarinda Boardman Williams would be the only sibling to survive past early adulthood. The 1850 census shows that the Williams household included Hinckley and Elvira, Hinckley's mother Mercy who was 87, daughters Clarinda (13 years old) and infant Sarah, and son Hinckley (5 years old). Also living in the house at that time were Sara Larabee (13 years old), Charles Horie (23 years old) and Robert Barrus (51 years old). These latter occupants were domestic and farm employees.

Hinckley was an entrepreneur who expanded the product line and operational system of the store, bringing new industry to the area, even embarking on a career of producing washing machines.⁵⁹ Sadly, he also incurred significant debt, taking out multiple mortgages between 1836 and 1860.^{60,61,62,63,64,65}

In 1852 his financial situation looked dour. Hinckley attempted to avert foreclosure on the homestead by deeding the property to his brother, John Williams, Jr. (1789-1879) who lived in Ashfield.⁶⁶ This attempt was unsuccessful however, and in 1853, Utle Bank foreclosed on the property (which was by this time in the possession of John Williams, Jr).⁶¹ Not until 1860 is it recorded that Washburn Hattil took possession of the property from John Williams, Jr.⁶⁵

By 1853, each of the business that had been started by his father were closed, and Hinckley had ceased his service as postmaster.

At this point, Hinckley drops off any formal records for several years. He is absent from the 1860 US census, while his wife, children, and invalid sister Sally are documented as living in Derry, New Hampshire without him. Hinckley's absence from any national or state public record corresponds to the period in which he is documented as traveling to Ohio and Kentucky following his purchase of a patent for the newly invented *Clemet* washing machine in 1858.⁵⁹ Little else is known about the details of this purchase nor what he did with the patent. Likely, Hinckley experienced some degree of success with the *Clemet* washing machine, because in 1864 he was recorded as buying back 100 acres of his land (which was by this time owned by Samuel House) for \$600. At the time of this buy back, one acre of his original property had been taken by the town to enlarge the cemetery and two acres were owned by the Reservoir Company.⁶⁷ In 1877, Hinckley purchased back the remaining property lost in foreclosure from his son-in-law Lucius Manlius Boltwood for \$5,000.^{68,69}

Hinckley's family had relocated back to Goshen as of 1864, where his only son, Hinckley Wright (1844-1864) was killed instantly after being kicked by a horse he was leading from his father's field.⁷⁰ He was 20 years old at the time of his death and a recent graduate of Amherst College. Hinckley and Elvira's daughter Sarah Russel (1850-1879) remained unmarried and worked as a teacher. Historian Barrus described her as "a woman of more than usual attainments and ability."⁷¹ Sarah returned from traveling abroad in India where she had contracted tuberculosis. She was sent to Colorado Springs, known for its cool, dry air, to recuperate from her illness, as was a common treatment practice for treatment of "consumption" for those who could afford it. Sadly, Sarah succumbed to her illness and died in Colorado in 1879.⁷¹

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Hinckley appears on the 1870 US census in residence at the Williams House and is described as a farmer, worth \$6500. He was 63 years old at this time, living with his wife who was 60 years old. Also residing in the Williams House at this time were Sally, Hinckley's 87-year-old invalid sister; Rufus Simpson (65-year-old farm laborer); and Hannah White (74 years old). This would have been quite an elderly household. In 1870, Hinckley again attempted to divest of the entire homestead, advertising the sale of "300 acres, the two houses, with running water as well as thirty head of stock".⁷² The property did not sell. By the time of the 1880 US census, the household still residing at the Williams homestead included Hinckley and Elvira and two farm laborers – James Matheson (21 years old) and Willie Godfrey (18 years old). The 1880 Agricultural Census for Hinckley Williams showed that he owned 50 acres tillage, 150 acres meadow, 100 acres woodland and 15 "other". His livestock included 30 sheep, 25 poultry, 3 horses, 4 oxen, 6 milch cows, 6 "other", and 6 calves. The household produced 1,000 pounds of butter that year. According to the Town of Goshen tax assessments, the farm was valued at \$6000. That year he spent \$400 on farm labor.

Hinckley lived in the Williams House until his death in 1888. Elvira would reside there 10 more years until her death in 1899. Hinckley's sister Sally passed away in the house in 1870 at nearly 88 years of age.

The Store Under Management of Hinckley Williams:

In March of 1824, John Williams sought to lease out the store.⁷³ Within two months, the store was leased to Samuel W. Hall & Co. who advertised a wide range of imported fabrics.⁷⁴ It appears that Hall was in partnership with Hinckley's older brother, John Williams, Jr. (1789-1879) of Ashfield; however, this new partnership was short lived and "dissolved by mutual consent" in March of 1826.⁷⁵ D.W. Graves, and E.W. Town also leased out the store at some point; however, specific dates are unknown.

It is unclear whether Hinckley Williams was significantly involved in the operations of the store with his brother and Hall in 1826, regardless, ownership of the store officially passed to Hinckley Williams in 1828.⁷⁶ He advertised that he had taken the store "*recently occupied by his father.*"⁷⁷ County records in 1828 have Hinckley as replacing John Williams as the owner/proprietor of both the tavern/inn and the store. No other inns or retail establishments were registered in Goshen that year.⁷⁶ The following year (1829), John Williams again shows up as the proprietor of record for the tavern/inn, and Hinckley remained recorded only as a retailer. In 1830, the county records list Hinckley as a tavern/inn holder, but no store or retailer are recorded. In fact, no Goshen retailer was registered for several years, although advertisements in a Northampton based newspaper clearly showed the store was in operation.

The store continued to offer a vast array of items for sale including men's and women's boots and clothing articles, as well as millinery and dress patterns that would have been of particular interest to women in the area who were looking for income opportunities. Hinckley Williams expanded the store's inventory, purchasing from both Boston and New York.^{78,79} Two of Hinckley's brothers – Seth and John, Jr. – operated stores in Cummington and Ashfield, respectively. Hinckley's account book from 1836–1840 indicate much mercantile collaboration between the three stores.

Like many rural shop keepers, Hinckley would take local products such as produce, dairy, (butter and cheese), and hemlock lumber in exchange for goods sold in the store. He also developed a putting-out system, seeking production services from local women such as seen with his 1833 advertisement announcing his "*wish to purchase 1000 pairs of first-rate woolen knitted socks – for which a liberal price will be paid*"⁸⁰. The putting-out system was especially valuable for women as it allowed home-based, economic livelihood. By the mid 1840's, the Williams store was participating in the region's important palm leaf hat industry. Hinckley Williams kept "*constantly on hand a supply of first-rate Palm Leaf to*

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*put out to braiders.*⁸¹ Palm leaf braiding was a lucrative endeavor for women in the rural hilltowns, allowing them to earn substantial income working out of their homes to transform the raw palm leaves into braided hats.⁸²

In 1849, Hinckley advertised a desire to rent out his store and noted that this arrangement could include the house and the garden. It is not clear whether an actual tenant was located.⁶⁵ Sadly, despite being the only store within five miles⁸³ the Williams store was not successful enough to cover the debt Hinckley had incurred. The store formally closed its operations at the time of foreclosure in 1853 after having been an important economic hub of the Goshen community for 67 years.

Clarinda Williams:

Clarinda Williams (1836-1920) was the oldest daughter and only surviving child of Hinckley and Elvira Williams after her sister's death. She graduated from Charlestown Female Seminary and was employed as a schoolteacher at the Goshen District School in the 1850's.⁸⁴ Williams family tradition holds that Clarinda met her future husband, Lucius Manlius Boltwood when Lucius seriously injured his ankle as the result of a stagecoach accident which occurred near the Williams' inn and tavern. Their romance sparked as he convalesced at the Williams inn where Clarinda tended to his injuries.⁸⁵ Emily Dickinson penned a letter to "Dear Mrs. Boltwood" offering condolences for her son's injury related to a carriage accident – possibly referring to this incident.⁸⁶ In 1860 Clarinda William and Lucius Manlius Boltwood were married.

Lucius Manlius Boltwood:

Lucius Manlius Boltwood (1825-1905) was the son of Lucius Boltwood Esq. of Amherst. In 1843 he graduated from Amherst College, an institution that his father, Lucius Boltwood, Esq. had been instrumental in helping to develop. Lucius Boltwood, Esq. was a prominent financier in law practice with Edward Dickinson (father of Emily Dickinson). Emily Dickinson corresponded with the Boltwood family though no evidence suggests she visited the house in Goshen.⁸⁷ Lucius Manlius Boltwood continued his education, and in 1847 graduated from Andover Theological Seminary. By 1856 he was established as a law partner with his father.⁸⁸ In addition to law, Boltwood was intensely interested in both politics and genealogy, publishing an extensive work covering the genealogy of selected families in Western Massachusetts and Connecticut (*History and Genealogy of the Family of Thomas Noble, of Westfield, Massachusetts*) as well as extensive research into his and his wife's family genealogies. Other vocational pursuits included serving as a librarian for Amherst College, assistant Librarian of Congress, postmaster for Amherst during the Lincoln administration and a Massachusetts state senator in 1859-69.⁸⁹ Lucius Manlius Boltwood was many things, but one of them was not a farmer. As a result of his various occupations, Lucius Manlius and Clarinda never permanently resided at the Williams-Boltwood homestead although they spent summers there with their five children; George Shephard (1861-1940), Lucius (1862-1931), Charles Wright (1867-1945), Fanny Haskins (1870-1962), and Elvira Wright (1872-1941).⁹⁰ Lucius Manlius built up an extensive library at the Williams-Boltwood House that remains today with over 2,000 books, some dating to the 1600's.

The Boltwood family often entertained guests at the Goshen home. There is speculation that one such guest may have been Ralph Waldo Emerson who was a first cousin once removed from Lucius M. Boltwood. (Lucius Manlius' mother and Ralph Waldo Emerson were first cousins).⁹¹ There is record of correspondence between Emerson and the Lucius M. Boltwood family.⁹² Family descendants state that Emerson would visit the Williams-Boltwood House as a guest when he was preaching in the area.⁹³ Documents have not yet been located to substantiate this claim.

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In 1895 Lucius Manlius Boltwood and Clarinda relocated their family from New Haven Connecticut to Grand Rapids Michigan where Lucius Manlius managed large tracts of land for his father.⁹⁴ They continued to travel to New England to spend summers at the Williams-Boltwood House when possible.⁹⁵ Tax information published in 1906 showed that Clarinda Williams Boltwood was the fourth highest tax-payer in Goshen behind J.C. Tomlinson who owned a huge mansion in town, the Mill River Reservoir Company and George P. West.⁹⁶

LATE INDUSTRIAL PERIOD: 1870-1929

The Summer Inn and Boarding house:

The tavern and hotel/inn had closed in 1841.⁹⁷ Over the next three decades, the hilltowns, with their higher elevation and cooler temperatures were becoming popular as a summer destination for residents of larger cities in the Connecticut River valley who wished to escape from the hot and humid summer weather. Seasonal lodgers were “heading to the hills” for the summer months. By 1870, Goshen had become recognized as a desirable summer destination,⁹⁸ a popularity that peaked in the 1890’s.⁹⁹ Hinckley Williams capitalized on this growing interest and expanded the function of the Williams House to include summer boarders. Goshen had many desirable features to offer, including the abundance of recreational opportunities offered by the many lakes and ponds in the area as well as comfortable lodging options. The Williams House was particularly desirable with its close access to boating and swimming, a large ice house, and spacious overnight accommodations. Lower Highland Lake, only 500’ to the west, offered recreation during the summer as well as provided a plentiful source of ice-harvest to fill the sizable ice house.

The Williams House, with its multiple upstairs rooms from the previous inn, the tavern, and parlor space downstairs, was easily adapted to meet the needs of summer and long-term boarders. By 1870, Hinckley Williams was advertising that “*a rare opportunity is afforded for taking families from the cities to board during the summer. More than twenty persons could be accommodated.*”¹⁰⁰ The Williams House became part of this economic boon of seasonable visitors to the community.

After Hinckley and Elvira passed away, their daughter Clarinda Williams Boltwood inherited the property (1899).¹⁰¹ The property then became known as the Williams-Boltwood House. As the Boltwood family had relocated to Michigan four years prior, they rented the property to the Henry Boardman Dresser (1849-1931) family.

Alice Montgomery Pierce Dresser:

Henry Dresser was a local farmer. His wife, Alice Montgomery Pierce Dresser (1856-1934) had previously assisted with the care of elderly members of the Williams family. After Hinckley’s death, Alice carried on the boarding house function, limiting boarders to the parsonage when the Boltwoods visited during the summer.

By 1903, she was advertising the availability of rooms in both the homestead and the parsonage.¹⁰² Alice ran her business as the sole proprietor, following the historical pattern of women-managed boarding houses. She expanded the summer inn to accommodate both summer and year-round lodgers and provided an especially valuable resource to single parents who needed lodging and assistance caring for and feeding their children while they worked.¹⁰³ In 1910 she was living in the Williams House with two adult children, and Irish farm laborer and four boarders.¹⁰⁴ Although Henry was still alive at this time, he is no longer residing at the Williams-Boltwood House. By 1920 Alice Dresser had six boarders, five of whom

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were children between the ages of 9-14.¹⁰⁵ Dresser was known to board orphans who had no extended family to care for them.^{106,107} She was an industrious woman, not only operating the boarding house but also running a successful poultry farm with over 300 chickens in 1910.¹⁰⁸ The boarding house was last documented as being operational in 1928 when Henry Packard and his three children moved out.¹⁰³ No further documentation of the boarding house appeared on the 1930 US census.

1930-Present

Upon Clarinda's Death in 1920, ownership of the house transferred to her oldest daughter, Fanny Haskins Boltwood (1870-1962).¹⁰⁹ Although Fanny resided in New Haven, Connecticut and Grand Rapids Michigan, she continued to spend the summers in Goshen, accompanied by multiple family members.¹¹⁰ By 1930, Fanny moved into the Williams-Boltwood House as a full-time resident, eventually joined by her younger sister, Elvira Wright Boltwood (1872-1941).⁹³

The two unmarried Boltwood sisters became the gracious and somewhat eccentric residents of the Williams-Boltwood House and were well known throughout Goshen. The sisters kept cows, lambs, pigs, and chickens on their property as well as a "heavenly garden with elegant vegetables."¹¹⁰

In 1959, Fanny Boltwood sold 269 acres of land to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts for \$8,130 for the purpose of adding land to the Daughters of the American Revolution (D.A.R.) State Forest.¹¹¹ The park was a major attraction for western Massachusetts, offering camping, boating and fishing, as well as being the first D.A.R. forest in the United States to be used as a wildlife sanctuary. Fanny Boltwood also donated additional land to the Town of Goshen to enlarge the size of the cemetery.

After Fanny Boltwood's death in 1962, the property was inherited by her niece, Ruth Babcock (1894 – 1992), (daughter of Fanny's brother, George Shephard Boltwood).¹¹² Over subsequent years, with the exception of the family residence and the surrounding two acres of land, all of the remaining property, including the detached barn, and the parsonage were sold. Boltwood and Babcock family members continued to spend summers at the Williams-Boltwood House. Although living spaces in the house were modernized, many areas of the house remained relatively untouched. The store was closed off from general use with merchandise remaining on the shelves. Antique furniture pieces previously used by the Williams and Boltwood families remained in use throughout the house. The copious collection of books remained in their undisturbed state surrounding Lucius Manlius Boltwood's study desk upstairs in the library. During the late 20th century, many in town described the house as looking like a museum with multiple historic artifacts.¹¹³

Ruth Babcock and her daughters Virginia Babcock (1920-2010), and Susan Babcock Clark (1930-1999) continued to spend summers at the Williams-Boltwood House. Virginia had served in WWII as part of the Women's Army Corp.¹¹⁴ Susan Babcock eventually took up full-time residence in the house, where she passed away in 1999. Virginia moved in for a short time following her sister's death, then moved back to Seattle where she died in 2010. Throughout this time the children and grandchildren of Alice Dresser continued to serve as personal care attendants and property caretakers for the elderly Babcock sisters.¹⁰⁶

Following the death of Ruth and her daughters, the remaining Babcock heirs wished to donate the property to the Town of Goshen given the extremely rich local history of the house. In 2009 the Williams-Boltwood House (WBH) Trust, Inc, a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation was formed for the purpose of preserving the house and plethora of artifacts left in the dwelling. The house sat dormant for decades as the extended land court legal process proceeded. In 2021 the Town of

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Goshen sold the house at auction, placing a restrictive deed on the dwelling that prevented it from being dismantled or moved. The property was purchased by the collaborative effort of several private individuals committed to preserving the history of the house. In February of 2022 ownership of the property was officially transferred to the WBH Trust with the agreement that the trust would pursue restoration of the building, management of the artifacts and development of a historic cultural and community center.