



ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION:

Describe architectural features. Evaluate the characteristics of this building in terms of other buildings within the community.

PLAN AND FRAMING:

Although there is very clear, first-person documentation of the original structure being built in 1779¹ and utilized by the town over the following two years² as a meeting place, it is unclear what the exact configuration of this structure was, as dendrochronology shows the oldest component of the structure remaining extant today was built c.1795³ – sixteen years following the initial construction. Only one beam in the existing structure has been located that predates 1779. Conjecture based on the historic structure investigation in progress at time of this writing identifies that the initial 1779 structure was likely a one-story, gable roofed dwelling with a north-south ridgeline orientation. (see Fig. 2)

The second phase of construction c.1795 – which is the extant primary structure at this time – was erected as a two-story, single-pile, gable roofed, timber-framed structure with a central chimney and rear lean-to, forming an ell with the original 1779 structure. The third phase of construction included a larger rear ell replacing the one-story 1779 structure c.1805. The fourth phase was the addition of a two-story store to the west end of the 1795 house and enlargement of the one-story rear lean-to extending halfway across the back of the store addition (c.1813). Finally, was the removal of the one-story rear lean-to and erection of a much larger one-story, saltbox-like lean-to in its place c.1821. The c.1795 house and c.1805 rear ell sit over full cellars, while the store and rear lean-to to the west do not have excavated cellars. Major framing members (posts, girts, plates, sills, and some roof framing elements) were hewn; floor joists were mill-sawn (with a water-powered reciprocating sash saw), except in the flooring of the ground floor where some joists were rounded logs cut flat on the upper face to receive flooring. The only framing members visible in the rooms are cased posts; the large, hewn, horizontal framing members are covered by the lath and plaster ceilings attached to the bottom of the beams and joists.

The east, west, and south walls of the c.1795 two-story dwelling are constructed with studs tenoned into mortises cut in the horizontal beams (sills, girts, plates) and diagonal braces in the corners rising from the posts to the girts and plates. The north wall of the dwelling is plank-framed, with two story 2-inch-thick planks nailed into sills, girts, tie beams, and plates. The store, erected against the present west gable-end of the house is a two-story, timber-framed, gable roofed structure. On the ground floor it consists of one large room; the second floor originally was also one large room and used to store merchandise, but in the late 19th- early 20th century it was divided into several smaller rooms. The south (front) wall of the store is stud-framed, but the west and north walls are plank-framed. No planks, studs, or siding were applied to the east wall of the store frame, as it was

built against the existing west wall of the house. The west-, north-, and east walls of the present north ell and the north and west walls of the present one-story rear lean-to are also stud-framed.

EXTERIOR:

The Williams-Boltwood House is a south-facing, two-story, timber-framed structure. Its current exterior form reflects the Federal-era improvements to the enlarged structure occurring after its relocation to the present site c.1812. Its current configuration reflects the various additions and alterations that would have been completed after 1821. Certainly, the configuration changes were complete by 1834 when John Williams composed his will and described the various portions of his house he bequeathed to his widow and surviving adult children. These included the two-story, center-chimney, single-pile, gable-roofed dwelling house (which dendrochronology dates c.1795³); the two-story rear (north) ell erected flush with the east gable end of the original house and forming a large L-shape with a hipped roof along what is now Route 112 on the east and Williams Drive on the south (c.1805³); the two-story, timber-framed, gable-roofed store erected against the west gable-end of the original house and continuing its roofline to the west gable end of the store (c.1813³); and the two-story “saltbox” lean-to erected on the north side of the store and extending eastward to the north ell and creating a rectangular footprint for the entire structure (c.1821³) (see Fig. 2). Later additions off the northwest corner of the structure created a connected structure (c. 1840³) consisting of a woodshed, workshop, and ice house. This connecting structure linked the house to a carriage barn that had been built five years previously (c. 1835³). The entire structure is clapboarded and currently painted white. The roof over the dwelling house, store, and north ell is corrugated metal; the roof over the “saltbox” lean-to is asphalt shingle. Presently, four brick chimneys rise through the roof: one to the east of the central passage of the original house; a second through the roof of the north ell; a third through the roof of the store just west of the house/store junction; and a fourth through the lean-to roof north of the store.

The south elevation of the Williams-Boltwood House (see Fig. 3) includes the c.1795 dwelling house occupying the eastern two-thirds of the structure, and the store/post office to the west. The house has a roughly-symmetrical five-bay fenestration pattern with a central, two-leaved doorway topped by a single row of transom lights and with an open, one-story pedimented porch with side bench seats attached to the façade (see Fig. 4). This elevation contains thirteen windows. The windows on both the ground floor and second floor have 12/12 sash, but the windows on the ground floor of the house have been altered, with newer box frames, molded cornices removed, 7 x 9 inch panes of glass, and positioned several inches lower on the wall, while the second-floor windows retain their joined window frames and sash with 6 x 8 inch panes. Most glass throughout the house is hand blown and in excellent condition. The two-story store/post office section is three fenestration bays wide containing a wide Dutch door flanked by large 36-paned windows – 18/18 sash on the west, and two side-by-side sliding sash on the east, the latter opening into the post office section of the store. The second floor of the store has two 12/12 sash windows with 6 x 8 inch panes of glass in the south elevation, with no window over the central doorway on the ground floor. The windows on the house and on the second floor of the store have louvered shutters; the ground floor windows of the store have solid shutters which can be secured with period metal bars. The cornice and other architectural trim on the south elevation are stylistically consistent across the entire elevation, with the exception of the later altered ground floor windows of the house and the pilastered Federal-style frontispiece around the store entry. However, it is clear from surviving physical evidence that the store addition was constructed after the dwelling house portion was enlarged, (see Fig. 3) with the erection of the north (rear) ell and the finishing and trimming-out of those two structures in a uniform manner.

The east elevation of the structure (see Fig. 5) includes the original two-story, former west gable-end of the dwelling house, occupying the south half of the elevation; and the two-story, gable-roofed north ell occupying the north half of the elevation. The joining of these two gable-roofed sections required the formation of a hipped-roof junction in the southeast corner of the combined structure. This east elevation contains six fenestration bays, with the first three from the south – two windows and a doorway on the ground floor and three windows above on the second floor – within the former gable end of the original dwelling house, and the final three windows on each floor within the north ell.

The doorway on the east elevation is surrounded by a frontispiece topped by a triangular pediment supported by pilasters (see Fig. 6). The seven-panel door is topped by a single row of transom lights. The eleven windows on the east elevation – five on the ground floor and six on the second floor – are of three types. The first four windows on the ground floor from south to north have 12/12 sash containing 7 x 9 inch panes of glass and, like those on the south elevation, were altered during the mid-to-late 19th century by replacing the heavy joined window frames with box frames, lowering and widening the entire window assembly several inches, installing the new sash with larger panes, and removing the molded cornices over the windows. Only the northernmost window, containing 9/9 sash with 6 x 8 inch panes retains a joined window frame and the molded cornice over the window opening. On the second floor, all of the six windows retain their joined frames and 6 x 8 inch window panes; the first five windows from the south have 12/12 sash; the northernmost window, like the window below on the ground floor, has 9/9 sash with 6 x 8 panes of glass. These narrower windows at the north end of the elevation open into small secondary and service rooms – the ground floor room was originally a pantry, and the second-floor room was a small bedroom. It is clear that the clapboards and the architectural trim of this elevation were all applied at the same time, as no seams or discontinuities in the moldings and trim boards are evident.

The north elevation (see Fig. 7) consists of the north gable end of the two-story ell addition, which occupies the east one-third of the elevation, and a one-story lean-to with its roof descending from and continuing the plane of the north slope of the roof of the two-story store, resulting in a long saltbox-like roof extending westward to the west end of the structure. A small roofed and enclosed projecting porch was added in the late 19th– early 20th century at the far western end of the north elevation, providing sheltered access to the connected buildings and carriage house off the west end of the house/store complex. A doorway with side lights but no transom lights opens into the lean-to from the enclosed porch, providing the only entry into the building from the rear yard. This elevation contains eleven windows – five in the north gable end of the north ell, and four in the north wall of the lean-to. The two ground-floor windows in the north wall of the north ell have been altered – like most of the other ground floor windows – from 9/9 sash to 12/12 sash with larger panes of glass, new box frames, and removed molded window cornices. The two 9/9 windows on the second floor retain their 9/9 sash, joined frames, and molded cornices. The 6/4 sash window in the ell attic retains its joined frame, but did not have a molded cornice. Of the four remaining windows on the north elevation of the rear lean-to, there is one reused 9/9 pane sash in a new frame lighting a pantry; two modern 6/6 windows of different sizes lighting a former kitchen; and a window with 12/12 sash and a joined frame lighting a small bedroom in the northwest corner of the structure.

The west elevation (see Fig.8) has the clapboarded gable-end of the store to the south and rear lean-to to the north. This elevation contains seven windows – four in the store and three in the lean-to. The 12/12 sash of the northern-most ground floor, lean-to window has 6 x 8 inch panes of glass, while the two remaining lean-to windows on the ground floor and attic each have a 6/9 sash with 6 x 8 inch panes. The gabled-end windows to the south on the ground floor and second floor of the store have 12/12 sash with 6 x 8 inch panes, but the window in the garret has a 6/6 sash with 7”x9” panes.

The foundation of the entire house is dry-laid fieldstone with an excavated earth floor basement under the dwelling house and north ell, and crawl space under the store and rear lean-to. The siding throughout is sawn clapboard fastened with wrought nails, with exposure in the range of 4-4½ inches, much of which appears to be original.

The roof, originally wooden shingles, is now covered by a pieced-together collection of metal over the south slope of the roof covering the store and house, and the east and west slopes of the roof covering the north ell. Asphalt shingles cover the north roof slopes of the house, store and the lean-to. The entire roof is in need of repair, especially in the valleys where rooflines from different structures were joined. Four chimneys, irregularly placed, remain visible above the roof-line. A fifth central chimney from the phase 2 (c.1795) construction was removed c.1860. Cuts to the woodwork and ridgepole in the attic give evidence that a chimney once stood immediately north of the extant northeast chimney as well as a large stone foundation remaining at the northeast corner of the structure. This chimney was likely removed c.1860 when stove flues were erected.

INTERIOR:

Investigation suggests that the original construction included two primary rooms downstairs (east and west) and two primary rooms upstairs on a matching footprint (see Fig. 2), with a central chimney with four fireplaces rising between the rooms. Of the four originally built fireplaces, only one paneled chimney breast wall assemblage remains in place, minus the applied mantelpiece. All others were removed when the central chimney was taken down during the middle decades of the 19th century. In two rooms, mantelpieces were applied to the walls for decorative effect after the central chimney and fireplaces were removed. It is not yet clear if these mantelpieces were original to the house. Surviving physical evidence indicates that a one-story rear lean-to and a one-story gable roofed ell were integral features of the house at its original pre-1821 location, later replaced when the present two-story north ell and rear lean-to were erected during very late 18th century or early in the 19th century.

Several internal features in the house including surviving hardware and construction techniques further demonstrate multiple phases of construction and remodeling spanning across the late 18th century through the 19th and early 20th centuries. These features include both wrought-, machine-cut-, and modern wire nails; forged- and cast-iron hinges and latches; mortises observed in framing elements in several parts of the house that were cut by pod augur and by screw-lead auger; and the practice of scribe rule and square rule framing methods appear in different parts of the structure. (see Fig. 9) John Williams' surviving account books in possession of the Williams-Boltwood House Trust document his working as a blacksmith at the time his house was erected, and record his fabrication of many similar items of household hardware prior to his transition from blacksmithing to storekeeping and innkeeping in the mid 1780s.

Wide plank floors remain throughout the structure with a variety of "patchwork" sizes and configurations, ranging from original late 18th century floors to flooring of the mid- to late 19th century. The plaster of the interior walls shows a progression of composition and technique, applied over riven-, accordion-, and circular-sawn strip lath fastened with machine-cut nails and wire nails, reflecting changing materials and construction technology at the time of various alterations. The majority of the interior walls remain plastered, and many are now covered with distemper paint. Evidence of multiple layers of whitewash and paint in hues of deep red, blue, and ochre, as well as generations of wallpaper, have been identified. In at least four rooms stenciling survives on plastered walls above and beneath layers of whitewash and paint (see Fig. 10). Most rooms in the house display moulded chair rails, some with paneled-, plank-, or bead board wainscoting, reflecting hierarchical, chronological, and stylistic differences. A relatively narrow range of classical and neo-classical moulding profiles are represented in the surviving late 18th - and early 19th century architectural trim found on the interior and exterior of the house. With the exception of the carved and turned mid-19th century newel post of the staircase (see Fig. 11) which replaced the center chimney during the middle decades of the 19th century, the architectural trim applied during the mid-19th to early 20th centuries remodeling was quite simple and plain, occasionally ornamented with beading, but more often than not left unornamented.

Most interior doors throughout the house have two- or four- fielded and raised panels. A heavy, double-thickness door with transom lights over the doorway is located in the interior north wall near the center of the house, separating the c.1795 section of the building from the lean-to additions.

The c.1795 Dwelling House Structure and Additions

The primary entrance to the house is presently through the eastern doorway on the south elevation. Originally one entered into a small lobby situated in front of the central chimney mass, with a three-run staircase rising along the east wall of the ground floor lobby, along the chimney mass, and reaching the second- floor landing after rising along the west wall. On both the ground floor entry and the second-floor landing doorways opened onto the east and west rooms.

The west ground floor room of the original dwelling house contains what is referred to as the tavern room; the second-floor room above was likely a family bedroom. The most striking features of the tavern room are a Federal-style elliptical arch leading to an alcove at the north end of the room (see Fig. 12) and an opening in the west wall for a bar, situated within the east end of the store/post office addition. With the removal of the original central chimney with its four fireplaces in the mid-19th

century, the current Federal-style wooden mantelpiece with pilasters, a wide entablature ornamented with reeding, and a moulded mantel shelf was installed, apparently as a decorative feature (see Fig. 13). Although the original mantelpiece had been removed, the original raised paneling surrounding and above the fireplace opening remains, as does raised- and fielded-paneled wainscoting along the east wall and part of the north wall. The tavern room is accessed via three doorways opening from the front entry hall, from the enclosed bar and post office/store, and from a rear passage along the north wall. Two double hung windows in the south wall light the room. Though the current windows have 12/12 sash, investigation has shown that the original windows were sized slightly differently and positioned slightly lower, likely altered during the third quarter of the 19th century. There is evidence of a previous window on the west wall existing prior to the erection of the store structure onto the west gable end of the house which reveals the original form and positioning of the ground floor windows.

The second-floor chamber immediately above the tavern has a simple Greek Revival-style wooden mantelpiece (see Fig. 14) that is purely ornamental and was obviously reused from another location in the house or from another building. The chimney breast wall assemblage, as in the room below, consisted of several over mantel panels. This was removed in the mid-19th century with the central chimney. A simple, floor-to-ceiling corner cupboard with raised- and fielded panel doors remains in the southwest corner of the room (see Fig. 15). The walls and ceiling in this chamber are plastered, covered with multiple layers of whitewash and paint, the final layer being distemper paint – which is easily removed, revealing stenciled frieze, borders, and central- and corner- medallion motifs on whitewashed plaster (see Fig 10). All four of the walls in this room display moulded chair rails and baseboards. The windows in this room, as in all of the second-floor rooms of the c.1795 structure, retain their original form, size, and positioning on the walls, as well as their original window architraves with simple Roman ogee mouldings, which are echoed on all of the surviving late 18th century door architraves in the house (see Fig. 16).

The eastern portion of the c.1795 dwelling house has merged in function with the area created by the north ell addition, first in the late 18th–early 19th century when the north ell was constructed, and again in the mid 19th century when both the central chimney and the large chimney in the north end of the north ell were removed. Extensive remodeling was undertaken after the removal of the two chimney masses and their fireplaces. On the ground floor this combined area now includes a double parlor, with the southernmost of the two rooms remodeled with rounded, plastered corners, a feature common during the Victorian era (see Fig. 17). On the second floor several small bedrooms were created from the larger rooms in the original house and north ell addition with the erection of new partition walls, likely to accommodate the large Williams family and guests in the inn during the first half of the 19th century and again in the late 19th– early 20th century when the house and the former parsonage to the south were used as a summer inn and boardinghouse. The plastered walls of two of the second-floor rooms in the north ell are decorated with stenciled frieze and border motifs similar to the stenciling found in the western second-floor rooms of the house. Other rooms retain their plastered walls from the early- and mid-19th century applications in various stages of preservation. With the removal of the two chimneys and fireplaces several brick stove flues were constructed to accommodate wood stoves. Eventually a coal-fired central heating system was installed, which in turn was replaced with a circulating hot water/steam system with iron radiators in a number of the rooms in the early 20th century.

In the basement below the north ell a massive stone fireplace foundation – approximately 10 feet square – survives (see Fig. 18). It is likely that the ground floor room above in the north ell served as a kitchen, perhaps as an early tavern room with its own entrance through the east wall. A small room on the ground floor on the south side of the space formerly occupied by the chimney mass and fireplace was originally a pantry, with surviving scars of a counter and multiple shelves on its board walls. At some time in the 20th century this pantry space was turned into a bathroom. A similar bathroom was created on the second floor immediately above. The surviving stenciling on the walls of that space indicate that it was part of a suite of second-floor rooms situated around the north ell chimney.

Store and Post Office:

Both the store and the post office are quite well preserved from c.1813 and appear unaltered from the time they ceased to function as a store and post office in the mid-19th century which visitors sometimes describe as “looking like a movie set.” The extensive U-shaped store counter remains in excellent condition as do the multiple customized drawers and shelves

covering the walls, conveying the atmosphere of an active mercantile establishment (see Fig. 19). The plastered store ceiling has an access opening to accommodate a hoist system to the second floor via a hand-crafted, wagon wheel hoist mechanism remaining fully preserved and functional in the attic directly above the ceiling access ports (see Fig. 20).

The store and post office occupy the ground floor of the store structure. The walls consist of planed horizontal boards; the east, north and west walls of the store space are covered with shelving which rises to the ceiling behind the counters. There are five doors in the store: one leading to the northern lean-to addition of the house, one leading into the small post office/bar alcove, one leading down a set of basement stairs, one leading up the stairway connecting the first and second floors, and one exterior doorway in the south wall which was the primary public entry into the store and post office. Two large windows are located on either side of the exterior doorway in the south wall, and one 12/12 double-hung sash window is situated in the west wall. The room was heated by a woodstove which sat in the central area of the store; its stovepipe rose through the ceiling and up through the second floor and attic through the roof.

The tiny post office is a very small room occupying the southeast corner of the store. Like the store, its shelves and postal boxes are very well preserved (see Fig. 21). This small room functions as a passage between the store and the tavern room, shut off from both the store and tavern room with doors. The post office enclosure also has a pass-through window connecting to the adjacent tavern room set high on the east wall as would be consistent for functioning as the bar to serve liquor in the tavern. A second pass through counter allows access between the post office and the store. The tiny post office area is lit by half of a large window in the south wall, with the other half of the window lighting the store beyond the west wall of the post office. This window, spanning both the store and the post office has two sashes, each containing 18 panes that slide horizontally rather than vertically (see Fig. 22).

Lean-To Structure:

The northern lean-to portion of the house is the final major addition to it. Dendrochronology dates this final construction to c.1821. The lean-to roof attaches to the store's second-floor, northern edge roofline, continuing at a slightly decreased slope and descending down to the one-story north wall of the lean-to, filling out the present rectangular footprint of the house/store/north ell/north lean-to structure (see Fig. 2). The lean-to space contains a large kitchen and pantry, and a rear entry lobby which contains a brick bake oven and the remains of a set-kettle built into the back of the former kitchen fireplace and chimney mass (see Fig. 23). The northwest corner contains two small rooms likely used as bedrooms. Above these rooms, under the long sloping, saltbox-like roof of the lean-to, is an unfinished and undivided attic space. The kitchen has been modernized over the 19th and 20th centuries, but still retains its fireplace and mantelpiece, although the firebox opening has been retrofitted to accommodate a cast iron fire frame, and the mantelpiece looks to have been altered or reconfigured to fit the present firebox (see Fig. 24).

The rear entry, housing the bake oven and set-kettle structure has a Goshen stone floor and a doorway which opens through the north wall to a wooden porch added on the back (north) side of the house. This porch appears to be of relatively more recent construction and is in poor repair (see Fig. 7). The walls of the porch have been removed due to collapse and decay. This porch leads to the connected farmstead buildings attached to the house.

OUTBUILDINGS:

The dwelling house and outbuildings are connected in a traditional New England connected farmhouse-outbuilding form that includes a carriage house, a small ice house, and a connector barn/woodshed/shop structure - a form which became popular in central and northern New England during the middle decades of the 19th century (see Fig. 1).

Carriage House:

The carriage house at the west end of the connected structure is a three-bay post and beam structure in relatively good repair, though it has undergone several phases of repair and alteration and requires considerable repair of its underpinnings. Positioned on a slope, the crawlspace below is easily accessed from the south (see Fig. 25). Its south gable end is clapboarded (see Fig. 26), while the other three elevations are enclosed with vertical boards. The building is

accessed by two large, sliding barn doors in the east elevation (see Fig. 27) and a walkway into the connector barn on the north. Originally the structure was a modest, free-standing, one-bay-deep English barn with a single double-door opening in the central bay of the present east elevation, with hay mows, now removed or altered, in the bays to either side of the central bay. Dendrochronology dating has indicated that the timbers in the carriage house/barn were felled the winter of 1834/1835. Letters written by Lucius M. Boltwood indicate that the underpinnings of the carriage house were repaired in the 1890's.

Connector Barn:

The two-story connector barn is in poor repair and includes a workshop area, an open space large enough to accommodate a wagon or wood storage, a workshop, and a large "pit" that was used to dispose of glass/pottery/trash – still containing a great deal of broken glass and pottery shards dating from the 1800's –1900's (see Fig 28). Dendrochronology dating indicates that the timbers in the connector barn were felled in the winter of 1839/1840. The connector barn was rather haphazardly erected with many reused building timbers. At present it is in poor condition and in danger of some roof collapse.

In 1834, a tornado destroyed a shed on the property and unroofed one of the barns on the Williams property.⁴ Prior to 1874 there were additional barns on the Williams property that were destroyed by fire, suspected to be arson.⁵ It is unknown where these structures were located and/or if they were connected to the existing structures.

Ice House:

The one-story, above-ground ice house is attached to the north side of the connector barn, benefiting from the northern shade of that building (see Fig. 29). It is in relatively good condition and displays typical, post-1820 double-wall construction. A slightly-sloped earth floor allowed for quick outflow of melt water. Its double-walled construction created an insulating air pocket. This space also may have been used to hold straw as an insulator.⁶ The original boundaries of the Williams homestead included access to Lower Highland Lake, approximately 1000' west that would have provided abundant ice supplies in the winter.

Outhouse:

Several wills of the owners of the property suggest there were at least two outhouse sites in the immediate vicinity of the connector barn as well as reference to a "necessary room" in the basement of the residence.⁷ These sites may provide interesting archeological information when excavated in the future.