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Cole Ave building, 1934-2012

YOUTH CENTER: 100 YEARS

What we now know as the Williamstown Youth Center originated as a project of civic-minded Williams College undergraduates in the 1920s, who created the Clark Chapel Boys' Club (CCBC). Originally housed on Spring St., on the site of what is now the post office, the CCBC (or Boys Club, as it was then) moved into its long-term home on Cole Avenue in October, 1934.

The building, which was erected in the 1830s as a school, finally provided enough space for the many neighborhood clubs that existed at the time to coalesce into a single organization. Many of the programs that became associated with the Boys' Club and its successor, the WYC, originated with the CCBC. Athletics, art programming, summer camps—all began as CCBC offerings.

Prior to this, in 1927, the Boys' Club became affiliated with the Boys' Clubs of America, and John Commelier became the first non-student, paid superintendent of the Club. This marked the beginning of the organization we know today.

From 1934 to 1966, the Club expanded with the town. It moved its summer camp to a new location on Northwest Hill, which became a permanent site for many years. There were four one-week sessions; the cost was \$2.00 a week. Today the arts and craft structure is still standing along a Hopkins Forest trail on the east side of Northwest Hill Road.

In 1969, the Club introduced a program for girls—and in the 1970s, the Boys' Club belatedly became the Boys' and Girls' Club, before officially renaming itself as the Williamstown Youth Center in the 1980s. By the 1990s, the building had accrued decades worth of wear and tear, and serious thought was given to constructing a new Youth Center.

A new era began when David Rempell was hired as Executive Director in 2004, and Paul Jennings was elected as President of the Board of Directors shortly thereafter. This provided the leadership needed to spearhead the community effort to build a new home for the WYC. After fits and starts, and many ideas of various locations in town, the new Williamstown Youth Center opened in November 2012 by the elementary school.

LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

It is with gratitude and humility that we acknowledge that we are learning, speaking, and gathering on the ancestral homelands of the Mohican people, who are the indigenous peoples of this land.

Despite tremendous hardship in being forced from here, today their community resides in Wisconsin and is known as the Stockbridge-Munsee Community.

We pay honor and respect to their ancestors past and present as we commit to building a more inclusive and equitable space for all.

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kets. kets. man Russell Lamoue

New Boys Club Building



S THE NEW ARTS AND CRAFTS Northwest Hill. Workers are Harvey
of Williamstown Boys' Club, located at left, and George Anderson.

PAST, PRESENT & FUTURE

A Q&A with Tu Le from 328North Farm



Tell us about yourselves and 328North. What do you do?

Tu: 328North started as a homestead and a space for Matt and me to rebuild from a devastating house fire in Western PA in 2014. Matt and I decided to take a detour, en route to Burlington, and drove through the Berkshires. We discovered Williamstown in early summer.

There was a very welcoming energy to this town that we felt and wanted to be a part of. We set out to build a homestead that eventually turned into a farm-based business. 328North has been the foundation for the work we do now. From planting flowers for weddings to various herbs and flavors for food events, the farm has allowed us to build our palettes.

Williamstown has a long history of farming and agriculture. In 1861, there were 138 farms in town—but by the late 20th century that number dwindled to 12. How do you view your work today in relation to that history?

Tu: The history of many cultures is built on agrarian substructures. As we learned more about the Indigenous land we were building upon, we adapted and used a lot of their methods of farming.

With all hand-scale tools, the both of us put our heads down and slowly built a system that relied heavily on my Vietnamese culture. We learned and adapted to what the environment allowed and built a micro farm that works for us.

What future do you envision for Williamstown's gardening, farming, and agricultural communities?

Tu: Climate change is something we are currently living through. Each season presents new challenges that require farmers to quickly adjust and adapt. Extreme weather requires more resources, so diversifying crops and methods are vital.

What's your favorite flower?

Tu: Peonies. The history of these flowers spans millennia and continents.

OUR SALTBOX HOME

BY PHIL SMITH

After graduating from Williams in 1955, I moved back to Williamstown in 1959 to become Fred Copeland's Assistant Director of Admission. A year later, Susan Taylor and I were married and began our family of four girls on Bulkley Street and Fort Hoosac Place before moving in 1967 to 1385 Main Street.

Our saltbox house is the oldest in Williamstown still on its original site. After Holly, our fourth daughter, was born we added a great room and enlarged the kitchen to accommodate our family.

When we first moved, the garden only consisted of one peony plant and a few scraggly daylilies. Over time, I dug out a number of gardens by hand, and we now have an annual peony party which features over 100 varieties as well as other perennials.

For 30 years, we held a community perennial plant sale at our home the Saturday before Mother's Day to benefit Greylock ABC, which Susie and I were instrumental in founding at Mt Greylock High School.



HISTORIC FACTS

The saltbox house illustrates a home that followed the small gable-roofed regulation houses found in the early settlement of Williamstown. It was well placed at the corner of Main street and the original line of the Bee Hill Road. This magnificent saltbox, originally with four rooms and two chimneys, represented the greater prosperity and security of the 1760s.

RUNNER UP

Millstone in the Museum Garden

A historic millstone now stands as the centerpiece in the Museum's newly planted native garden. For many years, this large granite grinding stone was positioned at the front of the Botsford House on Main Street (the former House of Local History). We believe it came from the Green River Grist Mill on Water Street (see image, right). The grist mill alleviated the time-consuming task of reducing grain to flour by hand, and was one of the first of the village mills to make its appearance. This particular building was removed in 1952.

Our garden millstone was a part known as the *runner*. The runner sat atop a piece of bedstone, and its rotation grinded grain trapped between the two stones. This mechanized mortar and pestle was designed to funnel ground flour to the outer rim of the stones through furrows, where the flour was then collected. These grooves are called *harps*, and their patterns varied by region. You can still see them engraved on our millstone, around the space for the "spanish cross" where a metal piece connected the millstone to a water wheel, powering its continuous churn.



*Do you want to help
us keep history alive?*

*Make a donation to the
museum today!*

Please send your donation, payable to "Williamstown
Historical Museum" to PO Box 422, Williamstown, MA 01267

PRESIDENT'S REMARKS

Dear WHM members and friends,

This past winter, the Board of Directors agreed that taking a hiatus over the winter months made sense, as many similar museums do in our area. While far from hibernating, we were busy welcoming new board members, researching new initiatives, and planning for what we hope will be a vibrant spring, summer, and fall season.

During the summer, while our fearless director, Michael Nixon, returns home to Australia for a well-deserved vacation, we will be joined by recent Williams College graduate Josh Picoult '24, who will serve as interim director of museum operations. Josh has extensive experience working at the Hill-Stead Museum in

Farmington, CT, and the Simsbury Historical Society. We hope you will consider joining us in welcoming Josh and our new board members at the Williamstown Historical Museum's Annual Meeting, scheduled for **Saturday, June 22, at 11:00 AM in the Dolan-Jenks Barn** on the museum grounds. The meeting will be followed by tours, refreshments, and open conversations regarding our exhibits and continuing mission of collecting stories and artifacts reflecting the history and heritage of our beloved community. I hope to see you there.

Sincerely,
Mike Goodwin, President

Williamstown Historical Museum

P.O.Box 422

Williamstown, MA 01267



HARVEST FAIR

*SUNDAY SEPTEMBER
29TH, 11AM TO 3PM*

SAVE THE DATE

Questions? New email or address?

Please contact Michael Nixon, WHM Director:
michael@williamstownhistoricalmuseum.org

WORDS FROM A TRUSTEE

LINDA CONWAY

Favorite historical fun fact?

Since my husband and I lived in the 1771 Judah Williams house on Main Street for many years, I discovered something—what may be legend—about that property. Williams was a commissary for the Revolutionary forces and because of wartime inflation his “scrip” became worthless. Word has it that at war’s end he piled the scrip on the town green in front of his brick house, lit a bonfire, and headed west to Troy and then Utica.

Why support the WHM?

Ever since moving here I have been a member of the House of Local History (Williamstown Historical Museum). Life in this town since the early days is important to the history of our region and our country as well as to higher education. Williamstown deserves a strong, well-supported historical museum to educate residents and visitors with materials collected from all aspects of the town’s past and for future generations.