

WILLIS-POST HOUSE,
WILLIS AVE.,
EAST WILLISTON, NASSAU COUNTY,
LONG ISLAND, NEW YORK.

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

District No NY-5.

Historic American Building Survey,
Lester B. Pope, District Officer,
Pratt Institute, Brooklyn, N.Y.

"WILLIS-POST HOUSE"

East Williston, Nassau County, New York

Owner

I. M. Simpson
Willis Avenue
East Williston, Nassau County, New York.

Date of Erection

About 1800.

Architect

Unknown.

Builder

The Willis family.

Present Condition

Well preserved and well cared for. Beautifully furnished. Location, however, surrounded and endangered by real estate developments. Originally built with gambrel roof, later changed to a gable roof; main cornice and entrance porch probably added at this time. Wing seems older than main building.

Number of Stories

Two, and attic.

Materials of Construction

Masonry foundation, otherwise wood throughout. Walls, shingle siding. Shingle roof. Large chimneys inside.

Additional Data

The Family.

The Willis family settled in the northern part of the

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(Continued)

Hempstead plain at an early date. As the family grew, the sons acquired separate farms where homes were built. At the close of the last century, three of these homesteads still existed but today two only survive and only one is still a residence. This area was known as Williston, but through a realty development which concentrated population to the west, the original houses are now in East Williston. The one remaining house belonged to a branch of the Willis family, the male line of which died out, so that the house passed with the marriage of a daughter into the Post family. The new owner was a fancier of fine race horses, many of which he bred and trained on his own grounds. In the latter half of the last century, he developed the large system of barns and stables still standing on the property.

The House.

The house itself cannot be accurately dated because of the removals of those who would remember and the lack of written evidence, but it is from about 1800.

A major alteration to the roof has changed it from a Dutch gambrel to a New England gable. This alteration is nicely seen in the attic, where the hewn uprights at the gable-ends terminate on the old lines and are spliced out with sawn timbers to the new roof. It is possible that the cornice and the front entrance belong to the same alteration.

The wall shingles, windows, and doors seem to be of the original design as does the interior woodwork.

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The interior is exceedingly well preserved. The present owners, the I.M.Simpsons, are to be congratulated on their taste and judgment in the care with which they have restored the interior to its best possibilities and have furnished it with a selection of old pieces of rare and valuable furniture. Despite the installation of up-to-date plumbing, heating, and lighting the original spirit and character have been well preserved.

Two or three alterations at different times have changed the original purpose of the rooms. The transverse partitions in what are now the living room and the dining room have been removed. The present living room was originally two rooms, a front and rear parlor. The present dining room was originally the dining room and a rear bed room. The lines of these partitions are visible on the floor and are shown on the first floor plan, sheet #1.

The mantel in the living room, which is shown on sheet #8, is the original of the back parlor. The former front parlor fireplace was closed up and the mantel removed to the fireplace in the dining room. This mantel is shown on sheet #9. The original dining room mantel was removed and is probably the one which stands unattached in the servant's room #3, on sheet #12. There is no fireplace in this room and no reason for a mantel except for decoration.

The kitchen fireplace and bake oven were closed up and a new cook range installed. The iron crane belonging in this fire-

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(Continued)

place is now in the dining room, and shows in the photograph of that mantel. The closet adjoining these fireplaces was originally the passage between the kitchen and dining room. The changes in the kitchen mentioned are from 1919, when the Simpsons took the house.

At the rear of the front hall was a small office, marks of the partition and doorway being still visible on the floor. It was supposed to have been installed by Mr. Post and used as his office in his equine transactions. This space was reopened before the present ownership.

The stairs are very simple. The balusters are square, the handrail round, the whole terminating in a small square-tapered newel. The exposed string is plain, the jib below is filled with a simple panelling. The railing and treads are dark, the rest is cream colored.

The second floor of the main house has only two rooms and a bath. It is cut off from the service wing entirely. The floor level is a foot higher, the trims are wider and more detailed, and the finished work more elaborate in all particulars. It would seem to vindicate a tradition in the family that the service wing was an older house. The bathrooms in both sections are, of course, small bed rooms remodeled.

This isolation of the service wing may have another relation in the fact that for several generations the same family of colored people have worked in the service of the family in

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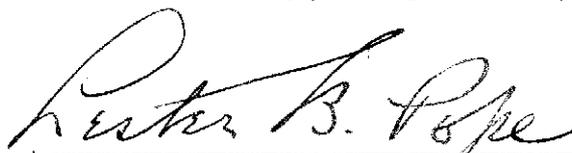
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residence. Probably the earliest were slaves; their name is that of one of Long Island's very early families, Carman, and the adoption of the owners name at liberation was quite common.

Study of this house has been very valuable in spite of the lack of specific data as to the age of the original house and the major alterations. The maintainance of the charm of the original structure throughout the changes in modernization shows the possibility of the use of this style of architecture in our present day life.

LESTER G. CHAPIN
Leader of Field Party
Nassau County, Long Island, New York

Approved:



LESTER B. POPE, District Officer
Historic American Buildings Survey
Brooklyn (Long Island) District
Pratt Institute, Brooklyn, New York

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Rev Aug 20 1936. J.W.