

**FORM B - BUILDING**

Assessor's number  
46/83

USGS Quad  
Plymouth

Area(s)

Form Number  
121

Massachusetts Historical Commission  
Massachusetts Archives Facility  
220 Morrissey Boulevard  
Boston, Massachusetts 02125

Town Kingston

Place (neighborhood or village) Jones River Village

Address 15 Summer Street

Historic Name Parson Zephaniah Willis House

Uses: Present residential

Original residential

Date of Construction ca. 1740

Source Melville 1976

Style/Form Colonial

Architect/Builder \_\_\_\_\_

Exterior Material:

Foundation stone

Wall/Trim wood shingle/wood

Roof asphalt shingle

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures none

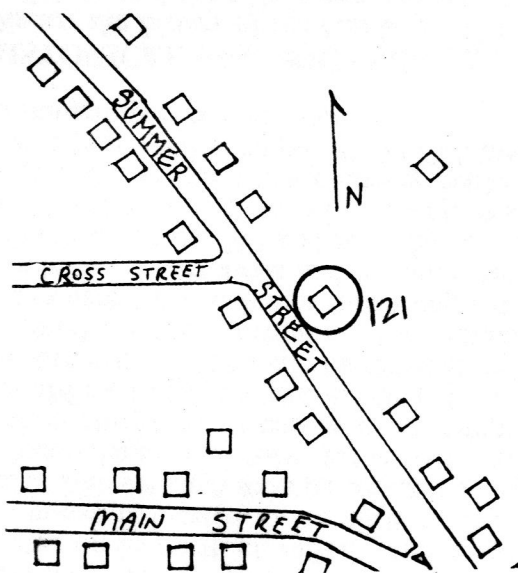
Major Alterations (with dates) two 1½-story, side-gable  
ells on N (late 19th c./after 1879); two rear ells (ca. 1952);  
attached gable-roof garage (early-20th c.)

Condition good

Moved X no yes Date \_\_\_\_\_

Acreage 1.79 acres

**Sketch Map**



Recorded by V.Adams, N.Avery, M.Harrington, C.Meagher, J.Snow Setting set back approx. 75 feet from street; stone wall to

Organization The Public Archaeology Laboratory, Inc. west, circular paved drive to north; grass, trees, shrubs

Date (month/day/year) June 1997

JUL 22 1997

MASS. HIST. COM.

## BUILDING FORM

### ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION — *see continuation sheet*

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

15 Summer Street is a 2½-story, 5-by-3 bay, saltbox, Colonial-style building sheathed in wood shingles and set upon a stone foundation. Numerous additions to the building appear on both the north and rear (E) elevations. A 1½-story, 2-by-2 bay, side-gable ell (late 19th century/after 1879) set on a stone foundation is located on its north elevation. A 1½-story, gable-roof ell (late 19th century/after 1879) set perpendicular to the house is located to the north of this first ell. Attached to this, is a 1-story, gable-roof, attached garage (early 20th century) set on a concrete foundation. Ells on the rear (E) elevation of the main block of the house include a large, 1½-story, gable-roof addition (mid-20th century) and a smaller, 1-story, gable-roof ell (mid-20th century) on its east side. A simple wood deck is also located on the south end of the rear elevation. According to the present resident, these last two ell were added ca. 1952 when the building was used as a restaurant/inn. The main entrance is centrally located on the facade (W) within a 1-story, 1-bay, gable-end, enclosed entrance vestibule. The entrance consists of a wood paneled door flanked by narrow 6/6 windows and slender Doric columns supporting a dentilled pediment. Windows are 6/6 and 12/12 double-hung sash with simple wood surrounds and louvered shutters. Shed roof dormers with paired 10-light windows are located on both the front (W) and rear (E) roof slopes of the main block of the house and on the front roof slope of the 1½-story ell to the north. A large brick chimney is centrally located on the main block of the house at the ridge and a second brick chimney marks the roof line of the 1½-story ell to the north. 15 Summer Street is a well-preserved example of the Colonial style, typical in this part of Kingston. The building is unusual for its numerous rear and side ell.

### HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE X *see continuation sheet*

*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.*

In 1717, 41 residents of the northern part of Plymouth petitioned the General Court to be set off from Plymouth as a separate township or a precinct. They were allowed to become the north precinct of Plymouth on the condition that they maintain a suitable minister (Bailey 1920:33). At that time, the central part of the present town of Kingston belonged largely to Major John Bradford who gave the precinct fourteen acres of land in 1717. This land was to be used for the town woodlot, the Training Green, a burying ground, and a meetinghouse (Bailey 1920:36). In 1726, the north precinct, after having been a part of the town of Plymouth for 106 years, acquired its independence and became the town of Kingston (Bailey 1920:41).

The lower portion of today's Main Street was known as the Boston Road from the Plymouth line northward to "the Point" at Summer Street, and then north on Summer Street to the Duxbury town line. Today's Main Street from "the Point" westward was known as the Bridgewater Road (Melville 1976:377). It was around this intersection, on the slight hill which rises from the Jones River below, that the Kingston town center developed. Main and Summer streets (Route 3A) had been the town's first macadamized surface in 1906-7. By 1921,

### BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES X *see continuation sheet*

- Bailey, Sarah Y. *The Story of Jones River in Pilgrim Plymouth, 1620-1726*. Kingston, MA, 1920.
- Bailey, Sarah Y., and Emily F. Drew. *The Civic Progress of Kingston [and] A History of Her Industries, Two Hundred Years, 1726-1926*. Kingston, 1926.
- Board of Registrars. *Persons Listed by the Board of Registrars in the Town of Kingston for the Year 1953*. Board of Registrars, Kingston, Massachusetts, 1953.
- Drew, Emily. *Kingston: the Jones River Village*. 1944 (Edited and annotated by Doris M. Johnson, 1995).
- Drew, Thomas Bradford. "History of Kingston," in D.H. Hurd, *History of Plymouth County, Massachusetts*. Philadelphia, 1884.
- Jones, Henry M. *Ships of Kingston*. Memorial Press, Plymouth, MA, 1926.
- Massachusetts Historical Commission. *Reconnaissance Survey Report: Kingston*. Boston, 1981.
- Melville, Doris Johnson. *Major Bradford's Town: A History of the Town of Kingston, 1726-1976*. Kingston, 1976.

X Recommended for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. *If checked, you must attach a completed National Register Criteria Statement form.*

**INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET**Community:  
KingstonKIN.121  
Property Address:  
15 Summer StreetMassachusetts Historical Commission  
Massachusetts Archives Facility  
220 Morrissey Boulevard  
Boston, Massachusetts 02125

Area(s)

Form No.  
121**HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE (continued)**

traffic along Summer Street (Route 3A) necessitated the widening of this road. In 1921, \$8,500 was appropriated for land-taking damages for the proposed widening; in 1922 the road south of the library was broadened resulting in the removal of several buildings (Melville 1976:143).

15 Summer Street was constructed ca. 1740 and later served as the home of Parson Zephaniah Willis, the fourth minister of the First Congregational Church who was ordained in 1780 at the age of twenty-three (Melville 1976:96). Willis, also known as a botanist, occupied the house from ca. 1780 until his death at the age of 90 in 1847 (Melville 1976:347). Willis was one of Kingston's most prominent citizens. He was the minister of the First Congregational Church for 50 years and also served as the town clerk. The 1876 map identifies the building as belonging to Bertha H. Willis and Sarah T. Willis. By 1879, the house continued to be occupied by these women, and included property which extended east as far as the Old Colony Railroad tracks (1879 Walker map). The 1903 Walker map identifies the property as belonging to Theodore Bliss Cunningham, a sea captain (1876 Directory). By 1953, the building was occupied by Ralph F. Brassil, a 42-year-old restaurant owner who used the house for a restaurant/inn known as the Willis House (Melville 1976:347). The house was used for a boarding house and residence as late as 1976 (Melville 1976:81). In 1997, the house was owned by Margaret W. Carter (Town Database Records 1997).

**BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES (continued)**

*Plymouth County Directory*. Stillman B. Pratt & Company, Middleboro, Massachusetts, 1867.  
Thompson, Elroy S. *History of Plymouth, Norfolk, and Barnstable Counties, Massachusetts*. New York, 1928.  
Town Database Records. Assessor's Office, Kingston Town House, Kingston, Massachusetts, 1997.  
Vertical Files located at the Local History Room of the Kingston Public Library.

**Maps**

1820-1830 *Five School Districts*. Anonymous.  
1831 *Map of Kingston*. John Gray.  
1876 *Map of the Town of Kingston, Plymouth County, Mass.* E.N. Boyden.  
1879 *Atlas of Plymouth County*. George E. Walker & Co.  
1903 *Atlas of Plymouth County*. George E. Walker.  
1928 *Map of*

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## National Register of Historic Places Criteria Statement Form

Check all that apply:

☒ Individually eligible    ☐ Eligible only in a historic district  
☐ Contributing to a potential historic district    ☐ Potential historic district

Criteria:    ☐ A    ☒ B    ☒ C    ☐ D

Criteria Considerations:    ☐ A    ☒ B    ☒ C    ☐ D    ☐ E    ☐ F    ☐ G

Statement of Significance by The Public Archaeology Laboratory, Inc.  
*The criteria that are checked in the above sections must be justified here.*

The Parson Zephaniah Willis House is a well-preserved example of the Colonial style in Kingston and is unusual for its numerous rear and side ell additions. The house possesses integrity of materials, location, workmanship, feeling, and associations. It was the residence for 67 years of Parson Zephaniah Willis, the fourth minister of the First Congregational Church. Willis served the church for over 50 years and was also the town clerk. Its architectural form, age, and well-preserved setting are all important elements of its local significance. It meets criteria A and C of the NRHP. Its period of significance extends from ca. 1740 to 1947. Additional historical research will be required to complete a nomination.