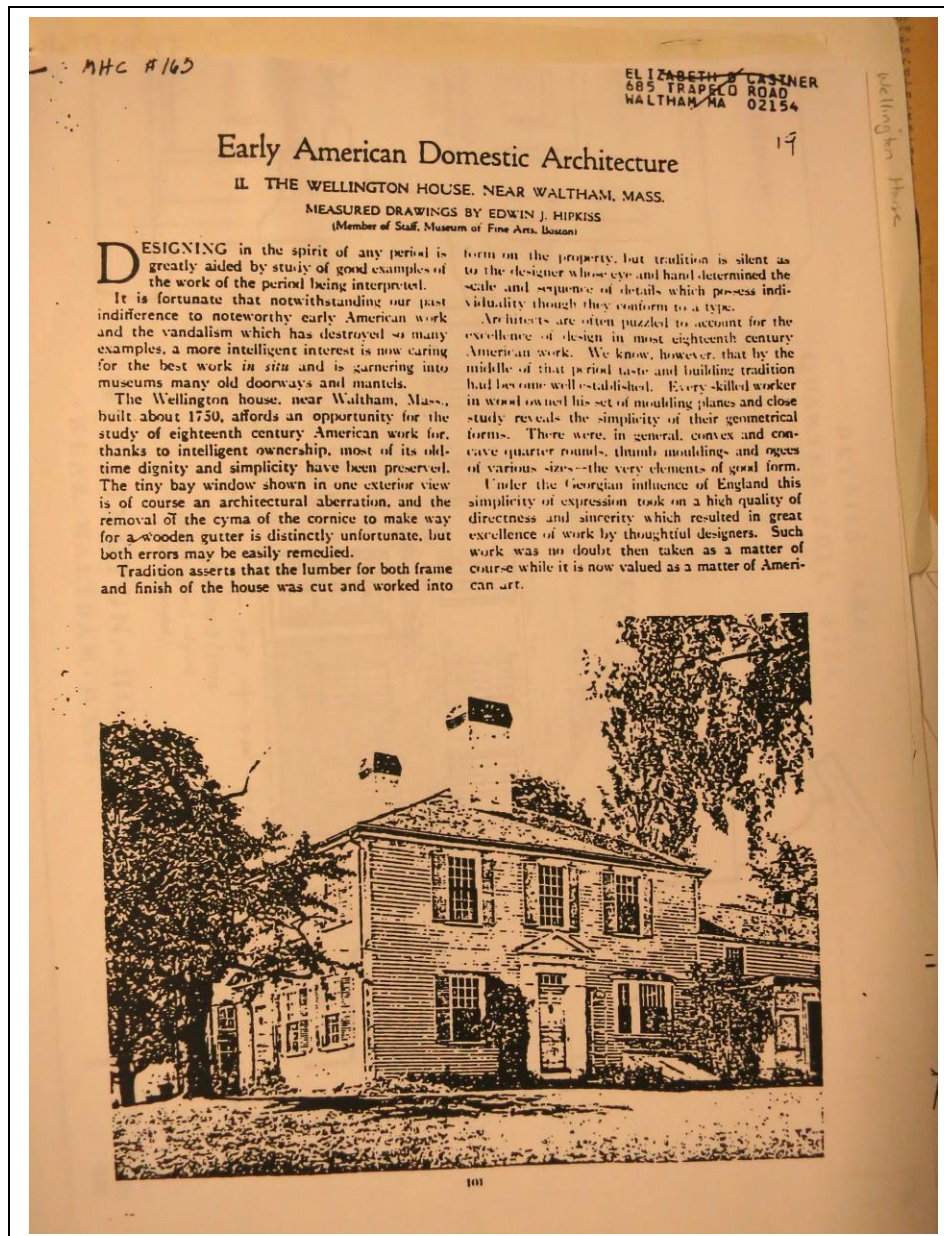


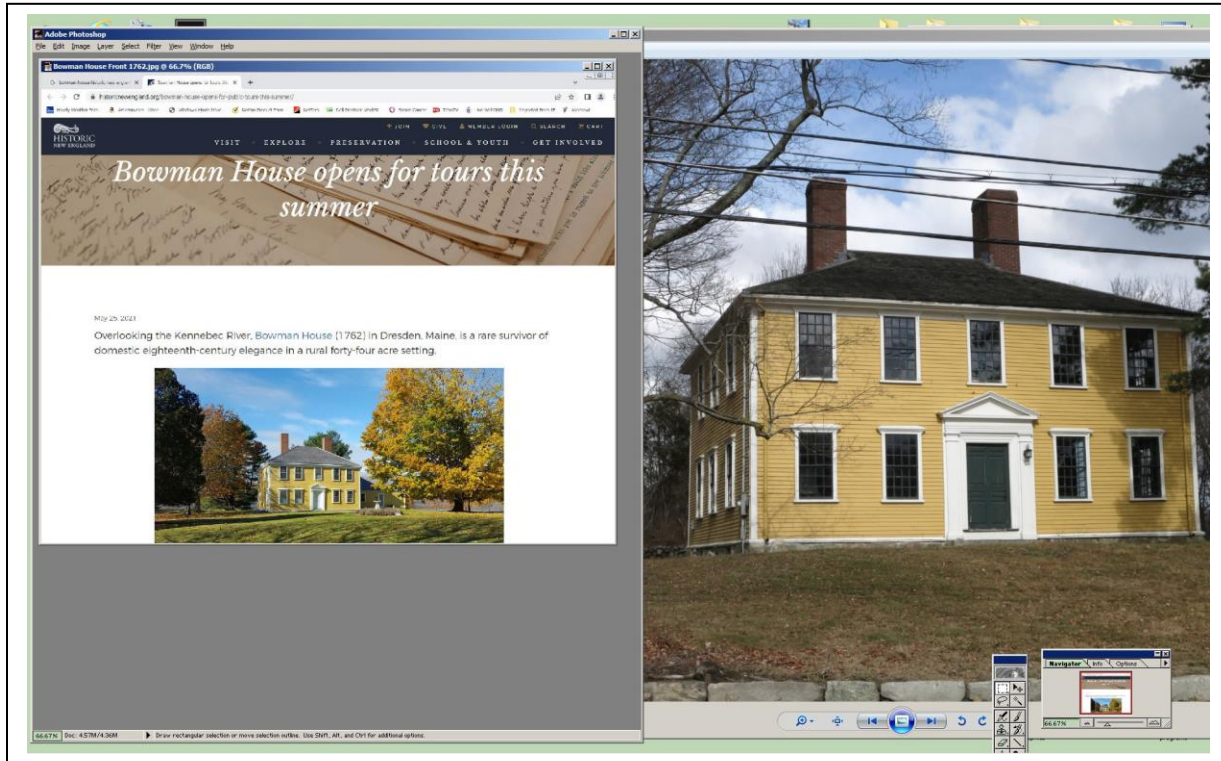
Dating the William Wellington House
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c. 1750 Edwin J. Hipkiss, Curator of American Arts at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, wrote an article on the William Wellington House of Waltham, Massachusetts, for the September, 1920, issue of the Architectural Forum, p. 101. In addition to many historic photos and drawings of the house, Hipkiss noted that the house was built about 1750. He did not give his reasoning for that date.



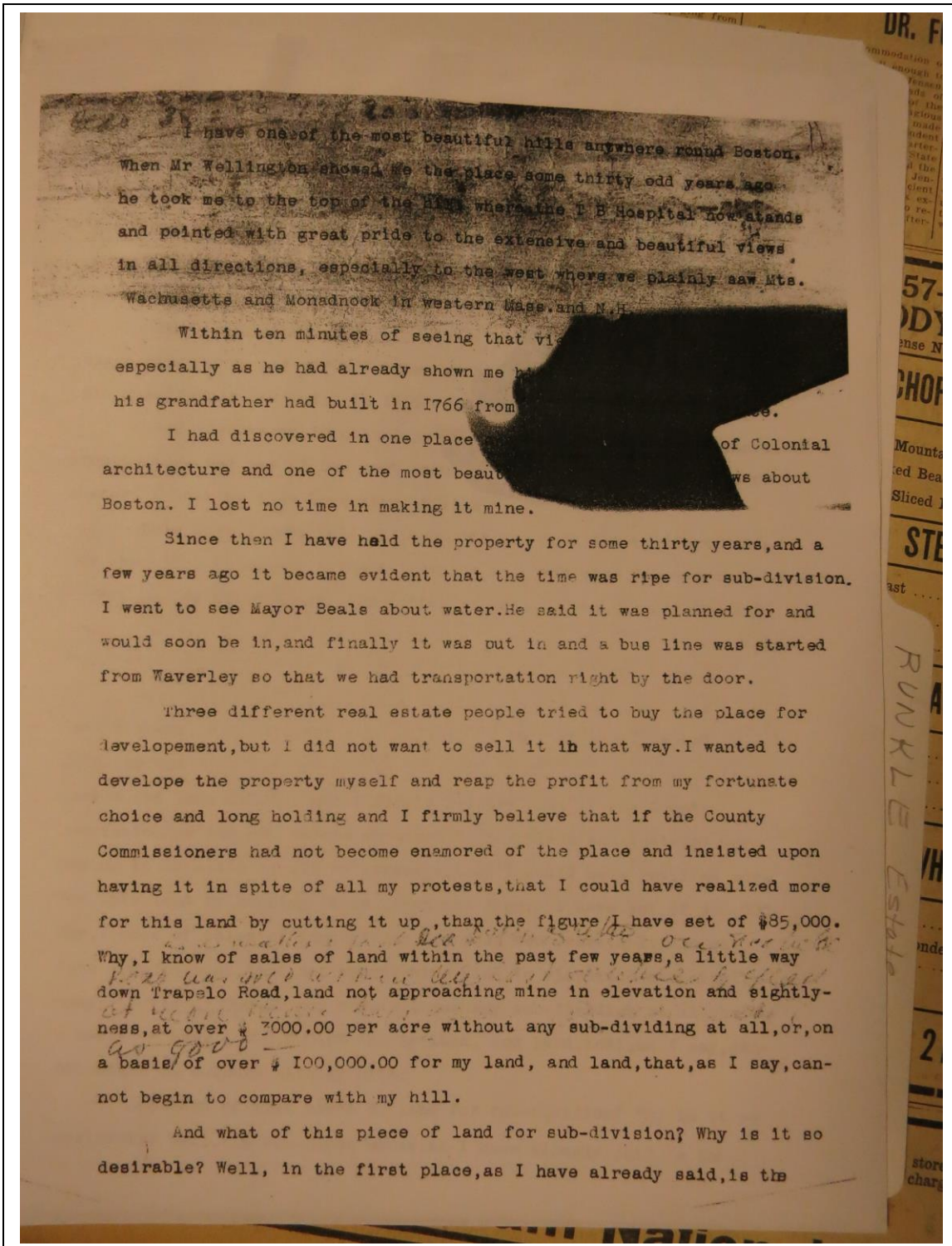
From the Waltham Historical Society Archive

1762 Historic New England owns the Bowman House in Dresden Maine, which it has dated to 1762. The William Wellington House looks very similar to the Bowman House, and, although this is not a proof, it indicates that a mid-eighteenth century date for the house is possible.



Bowman House on Left, from Historic New England Website, Wellington House on Right

1766 The archive of the Waltham Historical Society contains a copy of a document donated by Judy Hose Kiss. The document is a typed statement by John C. Runkle in which he was justifying the price he was requesting for his farm. The statement is undated, but probably dates to around 1929, when the county took the land for a tuberculosis hospital. There is a copy of the original statement, and a transcript of it by Elizabeth Runkle Purcell. Runkle bought the farm in 1903 from Charles Lowell Wellington, William Wellington's grandson and the last of the Wellington family to own the William Wellington House. In the statement, Runkle quotes Wellington as telling him that the house was built by William Wellington in 1766, using lumber from the site. William would have been 19 years old in 1766.



Original typed by John C. Runkle

I have one of the most beautiful hills anywhere round Boston. When Mr Wellington showed me the place some thirty odd years ago he took me to the top of the hill where the T B Hospital now stands and pointed with great pride to the extensive and beautiful views in all directions, especially to the west where we plainly saw Mts. Wachusetts and Monadnock in western Mass. and N.H.

Within ten minutes of seeing that view I had bought the place, especially as he had already shown me his beautiful old house that his grandfather had built in 1766 from lumber out of the place.

I had discovered in one place one of the rarest gems of Colonial architecture and one of the most beautiful and extensive views about Boston. I lost no time in making it mine.

Since then I have held the property for some thirty years, and a few years ago it became evident that the time was ripe for sub-division, I went to see Mayor Beale about water. He said it was planned for and would soon be in and finally it was put in and a bus line was started from Waverley so that we had transportation right by the door.

Three different real estate people tried to buy the place for development, but I did not want to sell it in that way. I wanted to develop the property myself and reap

1779 Elizabeth Castner, former archivist at the Waltham Public Library, and a descendent of William Wellington, wrote a history of the farm, and people and houses related to it, called "The Wellingtons of Trapelo Road". The typed manuscript is not dated, but there is a hand written note added to the end of it with the date 1936. In the manuscript, Castner argues that the William Wellington House was probably built around 1779. She based this on the differences of the town taxes owed by William and his father, Thomas, between 1770 and 1780, where Williams tax went from being slightly less than Thomas's to being about 50% greater than Thomas's.

rary. The house now standing on the old Whitney farm was built by William Wellington but the exact date of its erection has not been determined. The tax lists on file in the assessors department at the City Hall show that up to and including 1779 Thomas Wellington's tax upon his real estate was about 10% higher than that of his son William while in 1780 William's tax was about 50% higher than his father's. This seems to indicate that he built his new house in 1779 but of course this is not conclusive evidence.

Quote from "The Wellingtons of Trapelo Road" by Elizabeth Castner

This date was subsequently used in the MACRIS form on the house.

1789 In Edmund L. Sanderson's 1936 book on Waltham's history, "Waltham as a Precinct of Watertown and as a Town, 1630-1884", in the section on Waltham families, he gives a date of 1789 for the construction of the William Wellington House, but without any corroborating evidence. Note that Sanderson also said that William married Mary Whitney in 1764, but the actual marriage record shows it was in April of 1769.

two years old. The farm was awarded to their son William who was at that time owner and living on the David Whitney farm lying between the two parts of the home place. He had married Mary Whitney in 1764 and bought her father's farm in 1777. About 1789 he built the house now standing on the property of the Middlesex Tuberculosis Hospital.

Quote from "Waltham as a Precinct of Watertown and as a Town" by Edmund L. Sanderson

This date was subsequently used by Sara B. Chase, who surveyed the house as a preservation consultant in 2007.

1790 In Phinehas Lawrence's 1858 history of the northern part of Waltham, "Trapelo Past and Present", as transcribed by Marie Daly, he gives a date of about 1790, but, as with Sanderson, without any corroborating evidence.

Westward on Trapelo street is situated the residence of Darius Wellington. As before mentioned, this estate has long been Wellington property, and the house which is situated upon it was built in about 1790 by Wm. Wellington. He resided there until his death in 1812, and the estate soon afterwards passed to the possession of its present proprietor.^[53]

Quote from "Trapelo Past and Present" by Phinehas Lawrence

In 1777, William Wellington bought the middle portion of his eventual farm from the heirs of his father-in-law, David Whitney (MLR 80/407). This was the first time that William Wellington's name appeared in the Massachusetts Land Record deed index. The David Whitney farm was surrounded at that time on the east, north, and west by the lands of Thomas Wellington, William's father. William Wellington had married Mary Whitney in April, 1769, according to the marriage records of the day, and their son was born in December 1769. According to the 1771 Massachusetts Tax Valuation, William owned one house and his total annual worth was 10 pounds. His father, Thomas, also owned one house and his total annual worth was 12 pounds. Neither David Whitney nor his widow were listed. There was a Josiah Whitney listed as owning one house, but it appears that he lived farther east along Trapelo Road. It seems like the house William owned could have been on David Whitney's land, and that he may have built it there with the permission of his father-in-law-to-be, in anticipation of his marriage to Mary. William would have been 19 years old in 1766. Therefore, the date of 1766 makes some sense. The increase in his taxes noted by Elizabeth Castner between 1770 and 1780 may have been because of his purchase of the Whitney farm, with the house already on it.

The 1777 deed noted that William was a "victualler". There is reason to believe that Thomas Wellington may have maintained a tavern at some point, but it also seems reasonable that his son, William, may have kept his own tavern at some point, and that it may have been in the house he may have built in 1766. Elizabeth Castner, in her paper "The Wellingtons of Trapelo Road" notes that, in the 1797 direct tax listing, there were only three other houses in the town and one tavern with a higher assessment than William's, and the other houses included the Lyman Estate and the Gore Estate. The house is certainly large and refined enough for this as its comparison to the Bowman House owned by Historic New England shows.

In conclusion, the documentary evidence is inconclusive as to when the William Wellington House may have been built. It is possible any time between about 1750 and 1790, although,

based on the Runkle/Wellington narrative history, along with William's marriage date, the 1771 tax listing, and the resemblance to the Bowman House, I would favor the 1766 date. Perhaps this is a good candidate for applying some dendrochronology to the mystery. If the wood used in the beams of the house date to being harvested before 1770, then there is a good chance that the 1766 date may be valid. If the beams date to after 1770, then the 1766 date could not be correct.