

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name William Lindsay White House
other names/site number "The Retreat"

2. Location

street & number 97 Horseshoe Bend Road not for publication
city or town Kingwood Township vicinity
state New Jersey code NJ County Hunterdon zip code 08825

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I certify that this nomination
request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property
meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant
nationally statewide locally. See continuation sheet for additional comments.

Signature of certifying official/Title Date
Deputy SHPO Assistant Commissioner for Natural & Historic Resources
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet for additional comments.

Signature of certifying official/Title Date
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:
entered in the National Register. See continuation sheet.
determined eligible for the National Register. See continuation sheet.
determined not eligible for the National Register.
removed from the National Register.
other, (explain:)
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

William Lindsay White House
Name of Property

Hunterdon, NJ
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
1		sites
1	2	structures
		objects
3	2	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/ single dwelling

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

VACANT/ not in use

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

FEDERAL/ GREEK REVIVAL

COLONIAL REVIVAL

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONE

walls CLAPBOARD

VINYL

roof ASPHALT

other CONCRETE BLOCK FOUNDATION

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8 Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria considerations

(mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on continuation sheets.)

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Literature

Period of Significance

1938-c. 1955

Significant Dates

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

William Lindsay White (1900-1973)

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

William Lindsay White House

Name of Property

Hunterdon, NJ

County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of property 4.13 acres

Latitude / Longitude Coordinates

(Note to Preparers: NJ HPO will complete this portion of the Registration Form for all Preparers, based on the coordinates derived from the Site Map or District Map that HPO produces.)

1. Lat. 40.999995 Long. -74.999995
2. Lat. 40.999995 Long. -74.999995
3. Lat. 40.999995 Long. -74.999995
4. Lat. 40.999995 Long. -74.999995
5. Lat. 40.999995 Long. -74.999995

(NJ HPO will place additional coordinates, if needed, on a continuation sheet for Section 10.)

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet for Section 10.)

Boundary Justification Statement

(Explain, on the section sheet following the Verbal Boundary Description, how the chosen boundaries meet the requirements for boundary selection and are the most appropriate boundaries for the nominated property or district.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Dennis Bertland & Ann Parsekian

organization Dennis Bertland Associates date May 2021

street & number P. O. Box 315 telephone 609-397-3380

city or town Stockton state NJ zip code 08559

Additional Documentation

(Submit the additional items with the completed form that are outlined in the "Standard Order of Presentation" that NJ HPO provides. Each page must contain the name of the nominated property or district, and the State and the county in which the property or district is located. Consult with NJ HPO if you have questions.)

Property Owner

(Either provide the name and address of the property owner here or provide the information separately to NJ HPO. Check with NJ HPO for other requirements. All owners' names and addresses must be provided, including public and non-profit owners, but their presence on the form, itself, is not required).

name _____

street & number _____ telephone _____

city or town _____ state _____ zip code _____

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties and to amend existing listings. The proper completion of this form and the related requirements is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.470 *et seq.*)

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

Direct questions regarding the proper completion of this form or questions about related matters to the Registration Section, New Jersey Historic Preservation Office, Mail code 501-04B, PO Box 420, Trenton, NJ 08625-0420.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetWilliam Lindsay White House
Hunterdon County, NJSection number 7 Page 1**Summary Description**

The William Lindsay White House is a frame, early 19th-century farmhouse that was acquired and extensively renovated in the mid 20th-century by journalist William Lindsay White and his wife Katherine and occupied by them as their country residence. Accessed by a long, unpaved driveway from Horseshoe Bend Road, the house is surrounded by an open grassy area, beyond which much of the 100-acre property has reverted to woodland. Sited on slightly rising ground, the house faces south towards a branch of Copper Creek, a small Delaware River tributary, which is crossed by the driveway. Two early site features survive. A circular stone-lined well, located a few feet from the west end of the house, presumably dates to early/mid 19th-century, as does the stone foundation of a small bank barn, located about fifty yards to the west of the house. Two late 20th-century site features are present: low stone retaining walls running the length of the north and south sides of the house, each about twenty feet from the building. The property contains three contributing resources: one building, the White House; one structure, the well; and one site, the barn foundation. There are two non-contributing resources, both structures: the stone retaining walls. Despite renovations made to accommodate a church retreat after it was sold by the Whites in 1964, the White House retains its essential integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association to a degree sufficient to convey its significance during the period of 1938 – c. 1955.

Exterior Description and Structural Systems:

The William Lindsay White House is a frame, two-story, gable-roofed, single-pile-plan dwelling comprised of three laterally joined sections: a four-bay "I-house" on the west (Section A), which architectural evidence indicates was built c. 1825-45, when the property was owned by the Britton family, and two two-bay additions to the east (Photo #s 1, 2 & 3). The first addition (Section B) was extant by 1851, also constructed during Britton ownership, as documented by that date inscribed in attic-wall plaster. The second (Section C) most likely was erected as part of extensive renovations undertaken by the Whites upon purchasing the property in 1938 and was extant by 1941, as documented by a photograph appearing in a *Life* magazine article in that year (Historic Images 2).¹ The foundations of Sections A and B are constructed of coursed rubble stone; only Section A has a cellar, and its stone walls rest directly on a sheet of shale bedrock that serves as the floor. The foundation of Section C is parged concrete block. Sections A and B evidently are framed with mortise and tenon joinery and mostly saw cut timber, based on the framing exposed to view in the cellar and attic (Photo #16); In the attics the saw-cut rafters are connected at the peak with a pegged lap joint. Section C is constructed of wire-nailed modern dimensional lumber (Photo #19). There are three stone chimneys, one each within the gable-ends of Section A, and the third within the east end wall of Section B. The west-gable-end chimney of Section A features a large parged exposed chimney back, and all three chimneys have parged brick stacks centered on the roof ridge. Original clapboard siding survives on the south (front) elevation, as evidenced by the vertical seams at the junctions of the three builds, but has been covered by vinyl siding on the other elevations. The roof currently is covered asphalt, but broken slates and slate dust on the attic floor indicate that it was once clad with

¹ "Journey for Margaret A War Refugee Comes to the U. S.," *Life*, December 8, 1941, pp. 83-86.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetWilliam Lindsay White House
Hunterdon County, NJSection number 7 Page 2

the material. Other early features of Sections A and B include molded box cornices, flush raking eaves, 6/6 sash windows with architrave trim and transomed entries with panel doors and architrave surrounds. Section A originally had paired inner-bay front entries, of which only the eastern one survives. It features a vertical-two-panel door typical of the Greek Revival style, while its delicately reeded transom bar is more representative of Federal-style work. The entry to the west and the adjoining window were replaced by a large multi-pane picture window presumably during the Whites' renovations. Patched clapboards indicate that a porch once extended across the full width of the front of Sections A and B, and the 1941 photograph documents that it had round columns and wooden floor deck (Historic Images 2).² The flagstone terrace stretching across the south front of the house and the shed-roofed porch fronting Sections B and C replaced that porch in the 1960s or early 1970s, as documented by a photograph taken around that time (Historic Images 1). The second-story north entry presumably was installed as an emergency exit in the 1960s, when the house was renovated for use as a church retreat.

Interior Description:

The two 19th-century portions of the house (Sections A and B) retain considerable early fabric, as well as features dating to the two phases of 20th-century remodeling. Early elements include random-width flooring, plaster walls, vertical board partitions, fireplaces and fireplace mantels, as well as panel and batten doors with cast-iron hardware and molded woodwork (architrave door and window trim, baseboards) revealing Federal/Greek Revival stylistic influences. The first-story of Section A, now a single room (Room 101; photo #s 5 & 7), (Roo originally had two rooms of about equal size, as evidence by the mortise holes for the studs of the removed partition between them visible in the exposed second-story floor joist just south of the front entry. Each room had a fireplace, both of which survive. The west (original kitchen) fireplace has stone jambs and a timber lintel, but was reduced in size, probably in the 1938 renovations, by the installation of a closet on its north side (Photo #8). At the back of the closet can be seen the outline of a removed bake oven that evidently protruded from the exterior on the chimney back. The east (original parlor) fireplace has a plastered firebox and Federal style mantel featuring delicately molded pilasters and cornice with reeded frieze blocks (photo #6). An enclosed "half-spiral" staircase is located to the south of the west fireplace and a four-door cupboard to the right of the east fireplace. The architrave door and window trim and panel doors incorporate Grecian ovolo moldings; the baseboards and batten doors feature simple quirked bead moldings. The second story of Section A also has two rooms (Room 201, photo #11 & Room 202, photo #12), and a narrow hallway (Room 203, phot #13)) was created from the south end of the east room (Room 202) with a plank partition to provide access to second-story of Section B. Two doorways open into Room 202 from the hallway, and the ghost of a partition in the walls of Room 202 indicates that it was divided into two small rooms at one time.

Section B has a single first-story room, a kitchen (Room 102), which retains some early fabric (Photo #9). Its chimney was reworked to accommodate an inset cast-iron cooking stove, which appear to be of mid 20th-century provenance and presumably replaced a cooking fireplace. An enclosed "half-spiral" staircase to the south of the fireplace has been rebuilt, but the original board partition, door openings and adjoining closet re-

² Ibid.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetWilliam Lindsay White House
Hunterdon County, NJSection number 7 Page 3

main. Another enclosed staircase in the southwest corner of Room 102 provides access to the cellar of Section A. The second story of Section B has three rooms, a larger one to the front (Room 204) and two small ones to the rear (Rooms 205 and 206, the latter now a bathroom; photo #14). The enclosed newel-turned attic staircase to the south of the chimney was removed to access to the second-story of Section C. On the first-story of Section C, a narrow hallway (Room 103) accesses a bedroom (Room 104, photo #10) and a small bathroom (Room 105). The second-story of Section C has two small bedrooms (Rooms 208 and 209; photo #15) opening from a small hallway (Room 207), which also accesses the rebuilt staircase leading up from Room 102. The finishes throughout Section C and the second story of Section B are quite simple and include “knotty-pine” paneling and toilet-stall enclosures in the bathroom (Room 206) that date to the church renovations of the 1960s. The attics of Section A, B and C are unfinished.

Chronology of Construction:*Campaign I: Section A (c. 1825-45)*

The oldest portion of the White House, Section A, can be dated c. 1825-45 based on physical and stylistic evidence, and quite likely it was erected by Nathaniel Britton who purchased the farm from his mother and siblings in 1834. Modern machine-cut nails and saw-cut plaster lath were employed in its construction, neither of which was available much before 1830.³ The decorative trim exhibits both Federal and Greek Revival stylistic influences. And while the east fireplace mantel in Room 101 (photo #6) is similar to Federal style examples present in other local houses dating to the early 1800s, the simple Grecian ovolo moldings used for much of Section A’s wooden trim are more typical of the second quarter of the 19th century and resemble woodwork pictured in pattern books of the era.⁴ In 1834, Nathaniel Britton was a young married man who probably had been operating the family farm for some years, and it is likely that he built the Section A around that time to provide for his growing family and perhaps replace the old homestead.

Section A is a representative example one of the region’s most distinctive vernacular house types, known by cultural geographers and architectural historians as the “I-house,” a two-story, gable-roofed dwelling with a one- or two-room, single-pile floor plan and interior gable-end chimneys. Ubiquitous throughout the Delaware Valley and much of Hunterdon County, the type has English antecedents; its American cultural hearth is in the Lower Delaware Valley/Chesapeake region. Local examples have three-bay, four-bay, and two-over-three-bay fenestration patterns, and range in date from the mid-18th to the late-19th centuries. In two-room-plan “I-houses” like Section A, one room served as the kitchen and the other as the parlor (which often doubled as a bedroom), and many examples are distinguished by paired inner-bay front entries, as Section A had originally.⁵

³ Lee H. Nelson, “Nail Chronology as a Guide to Dating Old Buildings: American Association of State and Local history Technical Leaflet 48,” *History News*, Vol. 24. No. 11 (November 1968); Harry B. Weiss and Grace M. Weiss, *The Early Sawmills of New Jersey*, page 33.

⁴ Dennis N. Bertland, *Early Architecture of Warren County*, pp. 32 & 48; Asher Benjamin, *The Architect, or Practical House Carpenter*, Plates XXI, XXII, XXXIX, XLIII, XLIV & XLV.

⁵ Peter O. Wacker, *The Musconetcong Valley of New Jersey*, pp. 85-87, Dennis Bertland Associates, *Wickecheoke & Lockatong Watersheds, Hunterdon County, New Jersey, Cultural Resources Survey*, Vol. I, pp. 3-3 & 3-4; Rosemont Rural Agricultural District National Register Nomination, pp. 7-4; Bertland, *Early Architecture*, pp. 3 & 4.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetWilliam Lindsay White House
Hunterdon County, NJSection number 7 Page 4

While some sources credit such paired entries to Germanic origins, they are also found in Dutch-American houses in northeastern New Jersey.⁶ Whatever the derivation, a simple explanation might be that in dwellings without an entry hall, two entries increased privacy and allowed for some separation of public and private space.

Campaign II: Section B Addition (1851)

Section B evidently had been added to the house by 1851 based on the inscription of the date “August 28 1851” on the stairwell wall in the attic, incised while the plaster was wet (Photo # 17 & 18). The names of “T Sinclair” and “William C Mettler/ age 20 years” accompany the date. While it may be that Sinclair and Mettler built Section B, or at least plastered the wall, they also may have been employed as farm laborers by the Brittons, who three years later sold Mettler 50 acres subdivided from the west side of their farm.⁷ In any case, Section B, as built, certainly could have accommodated farmhands or functioned as independent living space for a small family, providing a combination kitchen/living room on the first story and bedrooms and attic above accessed by the enclosed staircase alongside the chimney. If Section B were free standing, it would exemplify the smallest version of the “I-house.” Linear expansion, such as the Section B addition, is a common attribute of the region’s vernacular domestic architecture.⁸ The second-story hallway of Section A presumably was created concurrently with or sometime after the construction of Section B, and a short, steep, enclosed flight of stairs in the southwest corner of Section B’s first-story room provided interior access to Section A’s cellar.

Campaign III: Section C Addition and Section A & B Renovations (1938-1941)

Upon their acquisition of their Kingwood farm in 1938, William and Katherine White embarked on a campaign of major renovation and repair that resulted in the transformation of what was then a neglected old farmhouse into a modern country residence. In letters to his parents, White noted that work involved installing electricity, plumbing and a new well, as well as painting and basic repairs.⁹ However, their renovations also included a number of distinctive alterations reflecting a Colonial Revival sensibility that helped turn the old farmhouse into a modern country residence, as well as, quite likely, the addition of Section C, which—judging by concrete block and modern dimensional lumber used for its foundation and frame—could not date much early than the mid 20th century. In Section A, the partition between the two first-story rooms was demolished, creating one large living room, and the plaster ceiling removed and woodwork stripped of paint for a more primitive “colonial” look (Photo #7). The old cooking fireplace was altered for more efficient use by reducing the width of the opening and installing a damper; a closet with recycled panel door filled the north end of the old fireplace within which the old bake oven opening remained (Photo #8). A large multi-pane picture window replaced the

⁶ Robert Craig, New Jersey Historic Preservation Office, Email Communication; HABS NJ-16.

⁷ Hunterdon County Deeds, Book 115, page 666. In 1857, Mettler and his wife Jane, then residents of Alexandria Township, conveyed the 50 acres to Amos P. Hunt of Pennsylvania for \$2,800.00, a substantial price increase that suggests Mettler had made major improvements to the property (the farmstead immediately west of the subject property on Horseshoe Bend Rd. at the creek crossing [Hunterdon County Deeds, Book 115, page 741]).

⁸ Dennis Bertland Associates, *Wickecheoke & Lockatong*, page 3-3.

⁹ E. Jay Jernigan, *William Lindsay White 1900-1973*, pp. 109 & 110.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetWilliam Lindsay White House
Hunterdon County, NJSection number 7 Page 5

west front entry and window providing a view of the stream, as did the porch extending across the front of Sections A and B. The porch, enlarged living room, altered fireplace and Section C were all extant by 1941, as documented by photos accompanying the *Life* magazine article published in December of that year (Historic Images 2).¹⁰ In Section B, the Whites probably installed the cast-iron cook stove and the second-story bathroom. The Whites probably also were responsible for the paneled window shutters. The slate roof likely was installed at this time.

The Whites' renovations were influenced by the Colonial Revival, which American designers and homeowners increasingly embraced as an architectural and decorative arts style during the first half of the 20th century. Throughout portions of the Delaware Valley, and other select picturesque and historic regions of the nation with reasonable access to urban centers, older farmsteads were transformed into country residences by people of means and often refurbished in the Colonial Revival style. In her landmark study of Dutch-American architecture in the New York/New Jersey region, published in 1936, architectural historian Rosalie Fellows Bailey acknowledged the trend. In discussing how early houses could be modernized in a historically appropriate manner, she observed that while "a strict restoration with the preservation of the original layout" was the ideal, since "a large living room is the modern desideratum, and as the rooms in Dutch houses are comparatively small, two of them may be thrown together," and cited the 1930s renovations of the Van Wickle House in Somerset County as a good example of how this could be achieved.¹¹ The Col Abraham Staats House also underwent a Colonial Revival remodeling in the 1930s, work which included the installation of a large bay window as well as the creation of a large living room from two small rooms.¹² Although their capitals as not visible in the 1941 photograph, the round columns of the White House porch had round bases set on square plinths, suggestive of Colonial Revival Tuscan-order columns (Historic Images 2).

Campaign IV: Church Retreat Renovations (1960s)

Upon purchasing the property from the Whites in 1964, the First Reformed Church of Somerville, New Jersey, made a number of alterations to the house to accommodate its chosen use as a nondenominational retreat center (Photo #s 10, 14 & 15). The work included the remodeling of Section C and the second-story of Section B to accommodate bunk-like bedrooms and bathroom with enclosed toilet stalls and installing "knotty-pine" paneling and closets in several rooms; the partition that divided Room 202 into two small rooms likely was removed at this time. A second-story window on the north side of Section A was replaced with an emergency exit providing access to a steel fire escape staircase; the Section B staircase apparently was rebuilt as part of this work. At some point new appliances and cabinets were installed in the kitchen, the back kitchen door (D104) was replaced. Vinyl siding and metal combination/storm screen windows also were installed. However, on the exterior of the house the most notable alteration was the removal of the front porch and the construction of the existing front porch and terrace, as documented by a photograph of c. 1970 (Historic Images 1).

¹⁰ "Journey for Margaret A War Refugee Comes to the U. S.," *Life*, December 8, 1941, pp. 83-86.

¹¹ Bailey, pp. 38, 39, 43 & 469.

¹² HABS NJ-479.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

William Lindsay White House
Hunterdon County, NJ

Section number 7 Page 6

Additional Site Features:

- 1. Well. (Contributing).** A circular stone well, approximately three feet in diameter, is located a few feet from the west end of the house (Photo #3). No longer in use, the well has a circular, coursed-rubble stone curb capped with a concrete slab; and its depth is unknown. The well presumably dates to the early/mid 19th century.
- 2. Bank Barn Foundation (Contributing).** The foundation of a small bank barn is located about fifty yards to the west of the house. The foundations consists of three, one-story walls of coursed rubble stone that enclosed the barn's basement stable: a north, rear wall, built into rising ground and mostly below grade, and two side walls. The fourth, south side, which provided entrance to the stable is open and fully above grade. The upper story of the barn presumably was of frame construction. The foundation presumably dates to the early/mid 19th century.
- 3 & 4. Two retaining walls (Non-contributing).** Two low, mostly dry-laid stone retaining walls to the front and rear of the house apparently date to the late 20th century. The front wall is not visible in a c. 1970 photograph of the house (Historic Images 1).

Several other site features are no longer extant. A frame garage of perhaps mid 20th-century date that stood southeast of the house was demolished shortly before the property was acquired by Kingwood Township in 2015. One or more chicken coops located about 30 yards north of the house were demolished or collapsed in late 20th century, and their site is overgrown with and obscured by brush. One of the coops can be glimpsed in the c. 1970 photograph to the west of the house (Historic Images 1).

Historical Integrity:

The William Lindsay White House meets National Register requirements for integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association sufficient to convey its significance under Criterion B for the period 1938 – c. 1955. The dwelling occupies the site on which it was built, thus retaining its integrity of location. Despite the renovations that occurred after 1964 when the house was used as a church retreat (replacement front porch, synthetic siding on the sides and rear, the rear fire escape, and the bunk room finishes and fixtures), the dwelling's form, plan, structure, and detailing remain sufficiently intact to convey its essential integrity of design, as enlarged and renovated by the Whites in the mid 20th century. The William Lindsay White House also retains its integrity of setting. While property surrounding the house has largely reverted to woodland over the past half century, the surrounding properties comprise a landscape of open cropland and scattered woods, that excluding scattered modern residential development, projects a rural agricultural character little changed from the dwelling's period of significance. The house also retains its integrity of materials. The materials used to build and rebuild the house also remain largely intact, except for the above-mentioned changes. Because of the integrity of materials and design, the workmanship used to construct the house is apparent, and the building clearly retains its integrity of workmanship. The property's extant early fabric and features convey a clear sense of its historic character during its period of significance; as a result house retains its integ-

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

William Lindsay White House
Hunterdon County, NJ

Section number 7 Page 7

urity of feeling and association. Although some early fabric has been lost or covered by modern finishes, the William Lindsay White House retains its essential integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association to a degree sufficient to convey its significance.

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetWilliam Lindsay White House
Hunterdon County, NJSection number 8 Page 1

Summary Paragraph

From 1938 to c.1955, the subject property in Kingwood, New Jersey, was the country residence of William Lindsay White (1900-1973), the prolific Kansas-born journalist and World War II correspondent, whose published work in the 1940s made a significant contribution to the literature of current affairs during the war and post-war era. White achieved national prominence and acclaim (as well as some opprobrium) in the 1940s with his syndicated newspaper column, "Take a Look;" his CBS radio broadcasts from Europe during the war; his magazine reports as a roving editor for *Reader's Digest*; and his numerous books including *Journey for Margaret* (1941), *They Were Expendable* (1942), *Queens Die Proudly* (1943), *Report on the Russians* (1945), and *Lost Boundaries* (1948). One of his radio broadcasts from the Finno-Russian warfront won a national award, giving him his first major recognition as an important journalist. A number of his books were bestsellers, three were made into movies, and one was the first book designated as "Imperative" by the Council on Books in Wartime. White did much of his writing at his New Jersey farm during the peak years of his career, including his arguably most important and influential book *Report on the Russians*, written in 1944, and it is the property most closely associated with his productive life and achievements.¹ The property possesses significance under Criterion B in the area of literature for its association with White, and its period of significance begins in 1938, the year in which White and his wife Katherine acquired it as a country residence, in hopes of making a more settled home, and ends c.1955, after which the Whites spent most of their time in Kansas as he focused on supervising his inherited family newspaper. What had been a modest 19th-century farmhouse was substantially remodeled by the Whites upon their purchase of the property. Despite later alterations made when used as a church retreat, the house retains integrity to the Whites' period of occupancy.

William Lindsay White

William Lindsey White was the son of William Allen White, the nationally prominent editor and publisher of an influential Kansas newspaper, the *Emporia Gazette*, and a firm supporter of Theodore Roosevelt and his progressive politics.² According to the younger White's biographer, the elder White had a profound, often controlling influence on his son, known as Bill, who eventually succeeded in stepping out of his father's shadow and achieving his own professional success and national prominence as a journalist.³ Born June 17, 1900, Bill White grew up in Emporia, Kansas, and attended the public schools there while working part time for his father's newspaper. He traveled to Europe with his family in 1909 and attended the national convention of Bull Moose (Progressive) Party in Chicago with his father in 1916. He matriculated at the University of Kansas in 1918, but interrupted his college education to join his father at the Paris Peace Conference after World War I. Returning to the United States, he transferred to Harvard University, graduating in 1924, and thereafter worked at the family newspaper as a reporter for ten years, during which time he honed his journalistic skills. In 1931 he married Katherine Klinkenberg, a Kansas native who previously had worked for *Time* magazine in New York City. The newlyweds lived in Emporia for a few years while Bill continued to work for the *Emporia Ga-*

¹ E. Jay Jernigan, *William Lindsay White 1900-1973*, p. 162. The Whites occupied the farm much longer than any of their New York residences during his most productive and significant period, and according to his daughter he did much of his writing at the Kingwood farm in the upstairs west room [Barbara White Walker Interview with Jenna Kinlock, November 6, 2017]. See pages 8-12 and 8-13 for more on White's Kingwood home.

² Jernigan, page 3.

³ *Ibid.*, page 4.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

William Lindsay White House
Hunterdon County, NJ

Section number 8 Page 2

zette, but relocated to the East Coast, first living in Washington, D.C., where he worked briefly for two newspapers, and then in 1936 moving to New York City, where he landed a job at *Fortune* magazine that lasted for a short time, but mainly focused on writing a novel. The novel, *What People Said*, published in 1938, received generally favorable reviews and achieved modest sales, but was not the success for which he had hoped.⁴

Realizing that he could not make a living writing fiction, White returned to journalism and in 1939 both established a syndicated newspaper column and embarked on a new career in radio. First appearing in October of that year, his column, "Take a Look," was eventually carried by more than fifty newspapers, gaining him a national audience and helping to steer American public opinion away from isolationism as the new world war began.⁵ The launch of White's syndicated column coincided with Germany's invasion of Poland. White immediately sailed to Italy and by November was in Berlin, where he filed dispatches that were edited by his wife. In Berlin, he impressed CBS radio broadcaster William Shirer, who asked him to fill in for a week. In December, White found his way to Sweden to cover the Russo-Finnish War for his syndicate and CBS. His affecting Christmas Eve broadcast from the trenches near Helsinki was part of this reporting. Entitled "The Last Christmas Tree," it received the National Headliner's Club award for the best European broadcast of the year – the radio equivalent of the Pulitzer Prize – giving him his first major recognition as an important journalist.⁶ Shortly after the broadcast, New York playwright Robert Sherwood wrote a play based on the broadcast, "There Shall Be No Night," which opened the following spring and was an immediate success.⁷

Bill White came back from Europe in February 1940, but late that year traveled to Europe again to continue his war coverage, filing columns for his newspaper syndication and writing articles for *Reader's Digest* at the same time. White's trip to Europe had resulted in an important opportunity to try radio broadcasting, and he performed well with his own radio dispatches and also filling in for Edward R. Murrow and Eric Sevareid. CBS asked him to return to America as a radio broadcaster while continuing with his syndicated column. This was an offer White was keen to accept, since his syndicated reporting had been less lucrative than he had expected. However, White's father, whose reputation and influence exceeded his own, preferred that his son remain in Europe to cover the Balkans. The senior White was not aware of the CBS offer and quietly intervened in his son's plans, using his connections with the syndicate to circumvent the planned return trip. As a result, White was dropped from the CBS payroll, "thus ending carefully built-up radio connection invaluable to future."⁸ His wife, Katherine, recalled years later: "In May of 1940, Bill finally got home, broke and broken. His parents who had been proud of his broadcasts took the position that they had meant what they did for his own good because he was a newspaper man, not a radio man."⁹ Despite this setback he went to London in October 1940 to report on the war, finally returning February of the following year via Lisbon with a British war orphan in tow.¹⁰

The major result of his 1940 reporting in Europe was the book, *Journey for Margaret*, a lightly fictionalized account of his search for and adoption of a young English girl orphaned by the war named Barbara. Pub-

⁴ Ibid., pp. 5-7.

⁵ Ibid., pp. 110-117 & 127-129.

⁶ Ibid., page 117. Previous winners of the award included Edward R. Murrow and William Shirer (CBS) for best radio reporting, coverage of foreign affairs from Europe, in 1938.

⁷ http://www.emporiagazette.com/opinion/editorials/article_333e5490-4bc0-11e2-bbdc-0019bb30f31a.html

⁸ William L. White quoted Jernigan, pp. 123-125.

⁹ Katherine White quoted in Jernigan, page 125.

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 130 & 133-134.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

William Lindsay White House
Hunterdon County, NJ

Section number 8 Page 3

lished in November 1941, it was his first work of nonfiction and attracted considerable attention and favorable reviews. *Life* magazine called it “one of the most moving books to come out of the war.”¹¹ Importantly, it introduced what was to become his familiar stylistic device of transforming one or more extended interviews into a dialogue-driven narrative. Fellow writer Willa Cather was an immediate fan, writing her brother:

I don't know why the book is so darned good, but it just is. I guess it's because Bill has a big heart, like his Dad. Of course it's well made (the book, not the heart!). It has two themes, the sentimental one and the military one (which gives more real information about air craft and mine sweepers than anything else I've read) and the two themes help each other out. But I don't believe he planned that construction, and it's nicer because he didn't plan it. Came nater'al.¹²

The book was almost immediately adapted as a movie, starring Robert Young and child-actress Margaret O'Brien, and became a box-office hit in 1942.¹³

White's next book, *They Were Expendable* (1942), the story of the PT boat squadron that brought Gen. Douglas MacArthur out of Bataan, was another critically acclaimed best seller. Due to its large circulation, the navy had offered *Reader's Digest* first chance at the story; White was assigned to look into it. His book was first excerpted in the *Reader's Digest*, and it then became a Book-of-the-Month Club best seller in 1942. In addition, it was given the distinction of being the first book designated as “Imperative” by the newly formed Council on Books in Wartime. The *New York Times Book Review* gave the book a front-page review, saying “W.L. White has fashioned an account of America's disastrous Philippine campaign that is almost unbearably painful at times, yet so engrossing that few who begin it will be able to put it down until they have finished its adventure-packed pages.”¹⁴ To an even greater degree than *Journey For Margaret*, *They Were Expendable* utilized dramatic dialog to tell the story: White conducted extensive interviews with the four squadron members, and then essentially removed himself from the narrative. This book, too, became a hit movie (slightly fictionalized) starring Robert Montgomery (who actually commanded a PT boat during the war), John Wayne, and Donna Reed. White followed up his navy story with a similar story about an Army Air Force pilot. *Queens Die Proudly*, was published in June 1943. It, too, was an immediate best seller, though sales dropped off later in the year due to the publication of several other gripping books about the war in the Pacific theater, such as *Thirty Seconds Over Tokyo* by Ted Lawson and *Guadalcanal Diary* by Richard Tregaskis.¹⁵

White's subsequent book, *Report on the Russians* (1945), was perhaps his most significant work published during the war – and was definitely his most controversial. The book was based on his experiences during a trip to the Soviet Union in late spring 1944 that he took with Eric Johnston, the president of the United States Chamber of Commerce.¹⁶ *Report on the Russians* was among the first books to draw attention to some of the unpleasant realities of Soviet life, such as “disappearances,” political prisoners, and labor camps, in con-

¹¹ “Journey for Margaret A War Refugee Comes to the U. S.,” *Life*, December 8, 1941, page 83.

¹² Willa Cather to Roscoe Cather, December 9 [1941]. Willa Cather Archive, Center for Digital Research in the Humanities, University of Nebraska-Lincoln. She was likely wrong, though, doubting that White “planned that construction.”

¹³ Jernigan, pp. 139 & 140.

¹⁴ “Their Shields Were Plywood: Bukleley's Men Wonder When We'll Wake to War,” *The New York Times*, Sept. 13, 1942, page 1. The pocket card from the copy at the Hunterdon County Library indicates that it was regularly read through the 1960s.

¹⁵ Jernigan, page 149.

¹⁶ Jernigan, page 157.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

William Lindsay White House
Hunterdon County, NJ

Section number 8 Page 4

trast to the legal rights and liberties that Americans took for granted. Perhaps most notably, White recounted the Katyn Forest Massacres, a raid on an American air base at Poltava that he witnessed, the panic of Moscow, and accounts of slave labor. One reviewer commented:

The most vivid and, to this reviewer, the freshest part of the book is the description of Mr. White's visit to the Ukrainian airfield used by the Eighth Air Force bombers on their first shuttle raid across Germany. The description of the German attack on the field is a brilliant piece of war reportage: "It was like a page torn out of a textbook, telling how to bomb under ideal conditions. I doubt if anything was so like the book since the Italians bombed the Ethiopians." Lack of radar made the Russian anti-aircraft fire ineffective.¹⁷

After returning from his trip, White spent three months at his New Jersey farm writing the book.¹⁸ Previewed in *Reader's Digest* in late 1944 before publication in early 1945, the book stayed on the bestseller list from March to September. However, the book garnered strong criticism from the State Department and among White's peers as an unpatriotic attack on an American ally in the last stages of the war.¹⁹ White's biographer, E. J. Jernigan, points out that in 1942, "after the Allies had warily embraced a wartime moratorium by commercial publishers on books hostile to the USSR, an agreement quietly encouraged by the State Department and honored informally for nearly three years by the trade."²⁰ The publication of White's book was considered a break with that moratorium, an action that was no doubt a major contributor to its critical reception. Later, as American and Soviet interests diverged after the war, attitudes changed and White's perceptions began to be appreciated not reviled. Writing in 1982, historian William L. O'Neil concluded:

White's real sin was prematurity. His book was remarkably accurate, considering his short visit and lack of special knowledge. But White's truths were something that few liberals and fewer progressives wanted to hear. They suggested what was actually the case, that Stalin's Russia would not be so easy to get along with after the war.²¹

White continued to write prolifically after the war, perhaps most notably editing his father's unfinished autobiography, *The Autobiography of William Allen White*, which won the Pulitzer Prize for biography in 1947. *Report on the Germans* was published in 1947. *Lost Boundaries*, a book based on a true story of passing for white was published in 1948; a film followed in 1949 that received several awards but was banned in Atlanta and Memphis. In 1949, *Land of Milk and Honey*, White's book about Leon Volkov, a Soviet pilot who escaped to America, was published. *Bernard Baruch: Portrait of a Citizen*, White's biographical sketch of financier and presidential advisor Bernard Baruch, was published in 1951. *Back Down the Ridge*, an account of evacuating casualties during the Korean War, was published in 1953.²²

¹⁷ D. Fedotoff White, "Reviewed Works: Report on the Russians by W.L. White," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 240, Our Muddled World (Jul., 1945), pp. 152-153.

¹⁸ Jernigan, page 162.

¹⁹ Ibid., pp. 162-172.

²⁰ Ibid., page 165.

²¹ William L. O'Neil, *A Better World*, pp. 90-92.

²² Jernigan, pp. 192-199, 201-203, 206, 220 & 23.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

William Lindsay White House
Hunterdon County, NJ

Section number 8 Page 5

After his father's death in 1944, White inherited control of the *Emporia Gazette* and had to turn more attention to the family newspaper, spending increasing amounts of time in Emporia and eventually moving there full time around 1955, although retaining the farm and New York house for years thereafter. White continued to publish topical books and write for *Reader's Digest* in addition to his editorial duties. *Captives of Korea* (1957), *The Little Toy Dog* (1962), and *Report on the Asians* (1969), were well reviewed, but did not generate the popularity of his earlier works.²³

White died in Emporia on July 26, 1973, after a life of remarkable journalist achievement.²⁴ In addition to thirteen books, he published more than one thousand editorials in the *Emporia Gazette*; wrote a syndicated column for sixteen months; and authored over ninety articles that appeared in prominent American periodicals with national readerships, including *Esquire*, *New Republic*, *Scribner's*; *Nation*; *Atlantic Monthly*; *Saturday Evening Post*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Life*, *Look*, *Ladies' Home Journal*, and, most frequently, *Reader's Digest*, which for many years was the best-selling magazine in the country.²⁵ That White did not pursue a broadcast career or garner the celebrity of Edward R. Murrow or Eric Sevareid, does not diminish his contribution to World War II journalism, nor does the opprobrium associated with *The Russian Report* detract from it.

The Firestorm Over *The Report on the Russians*

The Report on the Russian, written at the Kingwood farmhouse and published in early 1945, was the culmination of White's work as a World War II war correspondent.

Background

On the eve of World War II, much of America, perhaps especially the Midwest, had an isolationist attitude. In 1939, when William Lindsay White made his first trip to Europe as a foreign correspondent, he was nearly forty years old. While most of his peers were many years younger, White's advantage was the many years of experience he had as a reporter and as an editorial writer.²⁶ One writer noted that, "although he was a relative newcomer to the world of war correspondence, he... adapted enthusiastically to the demands of reporting the news while ducking for cover..."²⁷ Even before 1939, when his award-winning reporting from Finland was broadcast, White was viewed in America as a serious journalistic voice as well as a popular reporter. But prior to his reporting trip to Europe that year, White published two magazine articles, "confidently expressing his opinion that his fellow Midwesterners would be extremely reluctant to help England fight another war. For one thing, they could never be persuaded to vote for aid to allies who had not yet paid their debts from the first war..."²⁸ His trip thoroughly changed his thinking. This is reflected in his being selected by Pulitzer-winner Stephen Vincent Benet as one of five contributors to his 1940 book, *Zero Hour: A Summons to the Free*, a col-

²³ Ibid., pp. 145, 162, 206, 251 & 272; Hunterdon County Deeds, Book 661, page 306.

²⁴ Ibid., pp. 272 & 273.

²⁵ Ibid., pp. 6 & 329-334.

²⁶ For example, Edward R. Murrow and Harrison Salisbury were born in 1908; Eric Sevareid was born in 1912, John Hersey and Howard K. Smith in 1914, and Walter Cronkite in 1916. Ernie Pyle, also born in 1900, was an exception.

²⁷ Karen Manners Smith, "Father, Son, and Country on the Eve of War: William Allen White, William Lindsay White, and American Isolationism, 1940-1941," *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains* 28 (Spring 2005), page 34.

²⁸ Smith, page. 35.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

William Lindsay White House
Hunterdon County, NJ

Section number 8 Page 6

lection of anti-fascist essays intended to persuade the reader to abandon America's isolationist stance. As Benet explained his choice,

White has his own tale to tell – the tale of a skilled and intelligent newspaperman, working in Europe and putting down what he saw, but thinking in American terms. His frame of reference is neither that of the Eastern seaboard nor that of the cosmopolitanism of art but directly and avowedly that of the Middle West. That is what he keeps going back to – that is where...most of his similes start.²⁹

White's essay for the book, "I saw It Happen," is written in what had become his signature colloquial style, as in this picturesque section:

Now, of course, this is a very nice country, after seven months in warring Europe, but I'm not talking about its celery or olives or orange juice or its thick rare sirloins, or the fact that there is plenty of leg room in our taxis. This country is nice in ways you know nothing about, my little pals, because you are so used to them. Ask any diver who unscrews his helmet to suck in a chest full of free fresh air.... But sweeter even than a breakfast of broiled pork tenderloin, fried hominy and coffee, is the justice we have in this country. You may think it can be improved. Or may never have noticed that it is sweet; this is because you've never been without it."³⁰

During the 1930s and 1940s, most Americans relied on local and national newspapers for their news. But this time period was also an inflection point as ownership of radios became widespread and newsreels became a routine feature at the cinema. Media historian Jean Folkerts has noted:

Although objectivity had become solidified as a professional norm designed to eliminate bias, by 1933 the American Society of Newspaper Editors was recognizing the importance of interpretative news. It became generally recognized that the complexity of the world between the wars demanded a 'new view of facts' that required more than just an accumulation of factual material.³¹

Serving as the primary connection between the events in Europe and the Pacific and the American public, America's war correspondents provided both information and insight. Typically censored by military authorities, journalists also self-censored their work: "Journalists understood the importance of their work, both at home and at the front, and were expected to aid the war effort by maintaining high morale." Books based on reporting, such as White's *They Were Expendable* and *Queens Die Proudly*, followed the same model. War correspondents commonly received assistance and support from the State and War Departments. When reporters were broadcasting or filing reports from Europe, they did so under the guidelines (or censorship) of the country from where they were reporting. White's 1940 reporting from the London Blitz produced "London Fire, 1940," another powerful piece of writing, which was published in the *Reader's Digest*, America's most widely circulated magazine. This was one of a number of human-interest pieces about the Blitz written by American reporters around this time,

²⁹ Stephen Vincent Benet, ed., *Zero Hour: A Summons to the Free*, New York: Farrar & Rinehart, Inc., 1940, page 9.

³⁰ Benet, pp. 170 & 174.

³¹ Jean Folkerts, "Report on the Russians: The Controversy Surrounding William Lindsay White's 1945 Account of Russia," *American Journalism*, 32:3, page 309.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

William Lindsay White House
Hunterdon County, NJ

Section number 8 Page 7

usually with the blessing and assistance – not to say the connivance – of the British war propaganda machine.... Among all the writers who covered the fire, it was William Lindsay white who exploited the metaphorical possibilities of the night to their fullest potential and who had the most pointed agenda. He was the only major American correspondent who produced a full-length article on this single, most spectacular episode of the London Blitz.³²

American war correspondents were aligned in their opprobrium towards the fascists. But the Soviet Union was a more complicated subject for reporters. Relations between the United States and the Soviet Union had been strained in the years before the war as a result of the Soviet invasion of Finland (1939); the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact (1939); and the Soviet invasion of Poland (1939) and the Baltic states (1940). With Germany's invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941 (in contravention of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact), and its subsequent mutual assistance treaty with Great Britain, America found itself allied with the Soviet Union when it entered the war later in 1941. Despite the military alliance, the two countries continued to promote opposing economic and political ideologies.

White's Reporting Trip and Backlash

In June 1944, White accompanied Eric Johnston, president of the United States Chamber of Commerce, to Russia on a six-week tour of the Soviet Union. Johnston, a liberal Republican, who had received an invitation from Stalin and had some political aspirations, was eager for the potential news coverage. White had successfully pitched a unique "color story" to his editor at Reader's Digest. It was to be an informal account of White's impressions as a seasoned reporter and first-time visitor to the Soviet Union. White received credentials as a war correspondent, with an agreement to file dispatches as he had from England in 1940. While based in Moscow, White traveled on an overnight press visit to a new Army airbase near Poltava in Ukraine that was built to accommodate American bombers. That same night, Germans bombed the airbase, destroying forty-nine bombers and killing two Americans and thirty Soviets. White and the other correspondents witnessed the raid, but none of the correspondents could report on the calamity while they were still in the Soviet Union. Later in the tour, White travelled with Johnston and several other correspondents to three wartime industrial evacuation centers: Magnitogorsk, Sverdlovsk, and Omsk. At each stop they toured factories, were banqueted, and entertained. They also travelled to Novosibirsk, capital of Siberia, and Tashkent in Uzbekistan before returning to the United States in mid-July.³³

Upon his return, White promptly wrote a piece on his travels for his syndicate, the North American Newspaper Alliance, which was mildly critical of the Soviets. September found him at his Kingwood farm, where he spent the next three months writing a book-length account of his trip, working rapidly in order to complete a book before ongoing events dated his narrative. A condensation of *Report on the Russians* appeared in the December 1944 issue of the *Reader's Digest*. The backlash was immediate, beginning with an item in Moscow's official newspaper, *Pravda*, by a Soviet journalist who wrote that the book was "the usual stew from the Fascist kitchen with all its smells, calumnies, ignorance and hidden anger." This was followed by an article published by the Canadian Communist Party claiming to unmask White as a liar. Then came a scathing column by Bennett Cerf in the *Saturday Review of Literature*. Earlier in the war, Cerf, as head of Random House, had

³² Smith, page 39.

³³ Jernigan, page 156.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

William Lindsay White House
Hunterdon County, NJ

Section number 8 Page 8

proposed a moratorium by commercial publishers to prevent publication of books hostile to the USSR. The moratorium had been honored for nearly three years – until White’s book.³⁴ Published in January, 1945, the full-length book version was even more critical of the Soviets.

Opposition to *Report on the Russians* continued to expand. The National Council of American-Soviet Friendship, composed largely of professionals who were sympathetic to socialism, believed that the USSR and the United States should join together in their common fight against fascism. In March, the Council drafted a petition expressing opposition that was shared with journalists working in the Soviet Union:

A group of foreign correspondents ..., including John Hersey, Quentin Reynolds, Richard Lauterbach, Robert Magidoff, Ralph Parker and Edgar Snow, has issued a statement expressing ‘their disagreement with the views and observations set forth by William L. White in his book, ‘Report on the Russians,’ the National Council of American-Soviet Friendship, Inc., announced yesterday. Declaring that Mr. White’s book, as condensed in the *Readers Digest*, was written on the basis of a brief trip and that the author had no knowledge of the language, history or culture of the country, the correspondents said that ‘the book has to be linked with the significance of ignorant and inimical groups here and in Europe, who seek to sharpen distrust and suspicion among the Allies.’ Among those who signed were James Aldridge, Raymond Arthur Davies, Jerome Davis, John Fisher, John Gibbons, Alexander Kendrick, David Nichol, Edmund Stevens, Alexander Werth and Ella Winter.³⁵

The Council also sent the petition to potential reviewers of White’s book. They followed up with a thirty-two-page pamphlet, “The Truth About the Book the Nazis Like”, which was sent to booksellers. The Council included very prominent members, such as Senator Arthur Capper from White’s home state of Kansas. In early 1945, a group of sixteen influential correspondents signed a statement disagreeing with the book.³⁶ The book was also attacked in *Pravda*. White’s narratives about the Katyn and Poltava events were the first western eyewitness accounts, and there was pushback from critics with accusations about his sources being unreliable: “[I]f one were to believe the reviews, particularly those of the New York press, White, had, with a few strokes of his pen, transformed himself from a credible war correspondent to a Russian red-baiter.”³⁷

The Spring 1945 issue of *The Saturday Review of Literature*, which at that time was edited by the politically liberal Norman Cousins, included an unusual “roundtable” feature of five writers, which Cousins justified “because of the arguments that the book has generated, as well as the importance of the subject itself.” At the same time, the magazine’s own review was generally positive. *Editor and Publisher* – a trade publication that covered the newspaper industry – reported the reaction to White’s book with four separate articles its March 31 issue. One column by Dwight Bentel reported that an informal survey of seventy-five reviews found they ran three-to-two against White, and included numerous contradictory quotations from various reviews.³⁸ Although the *Editor and Publisher’s* own review was highly critical, the magazine’s editorial defended White’s freedom to report his own impressions. The influential magazine *Foreign Affairs* reviewed White’s book in July 1945:

³⁴ Quoted in Jernigan, page 165.

³⁵ “Writers Dispute White: Correspondents Take Issue With Views in ‘Report on Russians,’” *New York Times*, March 18, 1945.

³⁶ Folkerts, page 317.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, page 308.

³⁸ Dwight Bentel, “White’s Book Creates Reviewer Furor,” *Editor and Publisher*, quoted in Jernigan, page 171.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

William Lindsay White House
Hunterdon County, NJ

Section number 8 Page 9

Unhappily, when White went to Russia he did not possess that knowledge of the country's history or the readiness to understand what he saw which alone would have made him a reliable reporter. Though most of his facts are probably true, or at least have the appearance of truth, he has managed in their selection to convey a distorted picture of Russian life today. Perhaps this is due in part to naïveté and provincialism, though the reader cannot but suspect that it is in part due to the author's unwillingness psychologically to meet the Russians half way. It is only fair to say that White's general attitude of deprecating the drab primitiveness of Soviet life is reminiscent of the way foreigners viewed his own Middle West not so many years ago when it, like Russia, was suffering from growing pains.³⁹

Note the reviewer's own acknowledgement of "the drab primitiveness of Soviet life."

White also had his defenders. William H. Chamberlin – who was a Marxist as a younger man before becoming an avowed critic of the Soviet Union – wrote "W.L. White and His Critics," a rebuttal published that Spring in the *American Mercury* (at that time edited by Lawrence Spivak who co-founded "Meet The Press" the same year). Chamberlin commented:

One hopes that at least some of the singers of the hymn of hate against White's book will, on reflection, become ashamed of the political and intellectual company they are keeping. One may also hope that, as sometimes happens, the volley of critical brickbats will enhance public interest in the book and increase its distribution. For, with all its inevitable limitations, it gives the American people two things they desperately need. One is an honest, vivid, pictorial view of Soviet living conditions, without benefit of Soviet censorship; the other is concrete grounds for believing that their system, conceived in liberty and based on political democracy and respect for the rights of the individual, is enormously superior to any form of totalitarianism, whether Communist or Fascist.⁴⁰

John Chamberlain, a member of the intellectual Right, also defended him in "The Gang-Up on Bill White," in liberal politics and cultural magazine, *The New Leader*, April 14, 1945, 5;

Criticisms included White's tone and style – the "impolitic iconoclasm" and "open skepticism" that characterized the narrative.⁴¹ But also his impressions about and descriptions of people, places, and daily Soviet life, observing shabbiness, drabness, inequality, and the overbearing ever present government mindfulness. White had a distinct advantage over his fellow journalists who were based in the Soviet Union in the fact that he was able to drop in as a visitor and then return to the United States with no expectation of returning. Whereas some fellow war correspondents railed about this, claiming superiority due to their long-term assignments, it was also this very thing that allowed White to write about his observations without having to please Soviet censors, thereby delivering a more honest look behind the curtain. Despite the criticism, or perhaps as a result of it, the book was on the best seller list from March through July, with sales declining in conjunction with the end of the war in Europe.

³⁹ Robert Gale Woolbert, Review of *Report on the Russians*, *Foreign Affairs*, July 1945. Accessed online: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/reviews/capsule-review/1945-07-01/report-russians>.

⁴⁰ William H. Chamberlin, "W.L. White and his Critics," *American Mercury*, May 1945, pp. 625-31.

⁴¹ Jernigan, page 168.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

William Lindsay White House
Hunterdon County, NJ

Section number 8 Page 10

Jernigan writes that White believed he was the target of a “calculated Communist campaign to manage American public opinion.”⁴² So while *The Saturday Review of Literature* had offered him space for a reply, he waited more than a year before publishing his own rebuttal of his critics, which appeared in the October 5, 1946 issue. By then, of course, the war had been over for more than a year, and the United States’ mistrust of Stalin was resurgent. White wrote:

[M]y profession is not, or rather it should not be, merely a branch of the entertainment industry. It is all right if the current B picture at the neighborhood movie tells the audience what they want to hear at just the time they want to hear it. A reporter, however, must on occasion warn his readers of dangers ahead, even when they do not want to see them. I have never agreed with the notion, widespread in literary circles, that it is, in time of war, the patriotic duty of a writer to tell the public soothing lies, or to withhold important but disagreeable facts, although I concede that he will temporarily be more popular if he prudently complies with this.... The moral is, never try to tell people on the day before Christmas that there isn’t any Santa Claus. Let them find out for themselves.⁴³

Retrospective Analysis

William Lindsay White was not the only critic of the Soviet Union, nor was he the earliest, but he certainly was among its most prominent in the waning months of the war. Beginning in 1942 William Henry Chamberlin, who had come to White’s defense in the *American Mercury*, regularly deprecated efforts “to prettify Stalin,” and published skeptical articles in *Atlantic Monthly*, *Harper’s* and *Saturday Evening Post*. In his 1972 book, *The United States and the Origins of the Cold War, 1941-1947*, noted Cold War historian John Lewis Gaddis noted Chamberlin’s effort and addressed the kid-glove approach toward the Soviet Union that permeated most of the coverage by American war correspondents:

The uncritical descriptions of Russia which became so prevalent in the mass media during World War II reflected the desire of those Americans sophisticated enough to concern themselves with contradictions in international affairs to find complete ideological consistency in the war aims of the anti-Axis coalition. This well-intentioned but misguided effort generated a false sense of euphoria which led to disillusionment and recrimination later, when it became apparent that, aside from common interest in defeating their enemies, the Soviet Union and the United States had radically different concepts of what the postwar world should be like.⁴⁴

Gaddis writes that White was “the one conspicuous exception” who did not refrain from criticizing the Soviet Union while the war was still on. However, whereas White’s book was met with much opprobrium, only a year later, a more critical article by Brooks Atkinson appearing in the *New York Times* not only received more favorable treatment by critics, but also resulted in a White House invitation.⁴⁵ White’s resentment toward his critics was obvious in a response he put in “Report on the Critics:”

I notice where Brooks Atkinson has recently returned from Russia muttering that the Kremlin doesn’t want our friendship, and that artistic originality there is deader than Ruther B. Hayes. Well, boys, where is your petition denouncing Brooks? Brooks, of course, is yapped at for this by Comrade Zaslavsky in Prav-

⁴² Jernigan, page 174.

⁴³ W.L. White, “Report on the Critics,” *The Saturday Review of Literature*, October 5, 1946, page 15.

⁴⁴ John Lewis Gaddis, *The United States and the Origins of the Cold War, 1941-1947*, NY: Columbia University, 1972, 2000, page 42.

⁴⁵ Gaddis, page 42. The Atkins account was published in the *New York Times* on July 7-9, 1946, and in *Life* on July 22, 1946.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

William Lindsay White House
Hunterdon County, NJ

Section number 8 Page 11

da in the same gaudy language he used against me a year ago. Fellow, what are we waiting for? Hasn't anyone a pencil handy? The nation, which was in peril a year ago when you were trying to holler me down, is in even greater danger today, for our army is back home and in Paris Comrade Molotov has the [Secretary of State] James Byrnes over the barrel.... So why the delay? Because, chums, Russia has not changed; it is still the same country under the same leadership which we saw during the war. But snuffing sentimentality on that subject is not so popular ... as it was a year ago. So a little job of character-assassination on Brooks Atkinson will take real courage.... So up, boys, and at him! Massage your tear glands and start sobbing that he has deliberately insulted the heroes of Stalingrad.⁴⁶

Paul Willen, a graduate of Columbia's Russia Institute and a frequent writer on the Soviet Union, noted many prominent American observers were sympathetic toward the Soviet Union after the United States' entry into the war, including James Reston of the *New York Times*, Harrison Salisbury of the *United Press*, Fred Neely of *Collier's Magazine*, Edgar Snow of the *Saturday Evening Post*, Gardner Coles of *Look*, and Ambassador Joseph Davies. According to Willen, White was a rare exception. Eric Johnston's "glowing account of his recent trip to Russia" was followed just two months later by White's less flattering report of the same trip. In a 1954 essay in the, Willen observed that during the war years

The pro-Soviet mood pervaded almost all our publications....This was a time when the American people needed every kind of emotional reassurance which could be supplied to them. To sustain fighting morale, to justify huge sacrifices, men had to be infused with great hatred of their enemies and, at the same time, great confidence in their allies. To have questioned the intentions of these allies – upon whom so much of the war strategy depended – would have been to have jeopardized the entire national morale.⁴⁷

A review of a 1982 paper presented by Jean Folkerts emphasized another important aspect of White's *Report on the Russians*, his detailed accounts of events not previously reported: the Katyn Forest Massacres; a raid on the American air base at Poltava (Ukraine); slave labor; and the Russian retreat from Moscow, "stories which at that time had not been presented to the public eye but which in later years were acknowledged to be highly significant accounts." A review of Folkert's paper noted:

The focus on ideology rather than on events represented a desire for Americans to protect their national interests and to create an ideological consistency between the two great powers. Correspondents were trying to secure Russian trust and support in hope of breaking down tight censorship controls. There was also a need to promote Russian-American cooperation for world peace. Bill White's experience is a documentation of the strength of public opinion in volatile times and a reminder that the role of the press is not to promote ideology consistency or schism, nor to aid in government manipulation, but to clarify events and issues.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ White, "Report on the Critics," page 38.

⁴⁷ Paul Willen, "Who 'Collaborated' with Russia," *The Antioch Review*, Autumn, 1954, Vol. 14 No. 3, pp. 268, 269.

⁴⁸ Review in *Resources in Education*, Vol. 17, issue 10-12, 1982; the paper was later published in *American Journalism* as: Jean Folkerts, "Report on the Russians: The Controversy Surrounding William Lindsay White's 1945 Account of Russia."

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

William Lindsay White House
Hunterdon County, NJ

Section number 8 Page 12

In his 2012 PhD dissertation, Dustin M. Gann discussed White's approach to reporting: "White's blend of opinion and journalism required a balance between an expression of personal expectations and undeniable facts, which over time became a tightrope he struggled to walk."⁴⁹

William Lindsay White and his Kingwood, New Jersey, Farm

On a junket through the western New Jersey countryside in the spring of 1938, William and Katherine White came across an old farm in Kingwood Township, a few miles from the Delaware River at Frenchtown, that "enthralled [them] with its potential as a weekend retreat."⁵⁰ On July 16th of the year, they acquired title to the 103-acre property, which became the first home owed by the Kansas natives.⁵¹ In letters to his parents in 1938, Bill White described the Kingwood farm as abandoned but beautifully sited by a stream and the house as sound but lacking electricity or plumbing, overgrown with brush and infested with wildlife. Having purchased the property by paying \$2,100 in cash and assuming a \$1,400 mortgage, the Whites secured a federal housing loan to cover the installation of electricity, plumbing and a new well.⁵² The couple "spent most of their weekends that summer and fall [of 1938] in overalls proudly cleaning out, painting, and supervising basic repairs to the house."⁵³ Their renovations eventually included a number of distinctive alterations that helped turn the old farmhouse into a modern country residence: the removal of the first-story partition to create one large living room, the installation of a large multi-pane picture window providing a view of the stream from the living room, updating the old cooking fireplace for more efficient use, and the construction of a porch along the south front of the house, alterations in line with contemporary conversions of New Jersey farmhouses.⁵⁴ While the Whites maintained a New York residence, they changed their rented city abodes with some frequency and felt that the Kingwood farm gave them a more settled life, eventually allowing the childless couple to adopt an English war orphan named Barbara whom White found while in England as a war correspondent in 1940.⁵⁵ White's well-received book about the experience, *Journey for Margaret*, was reviewed in a December 1941 issue of *Life* magazine, and photographs accompanying the article help document the renovations made by the Whites to the farmhouse.⁵⁶

⁴⁹ Dustin M. Gann, "Written in Black and White: Creating an Ideal America, 1919-1970," PhD Dissertation, Department of History and Graduate Faculty at the University of Kansas, 2012, page 149.

⁵⁰ Jernigan, page 109.

⁵¹ HCD, Book 416, page 406 (Actual title to the property was vested in Katherine, not her husband.); Jernigan, pp. 6 & 7.

⁵² William Lindsay White to parents, May 28, 1938 and August 31, 1938, as referenced in Jernigan, pp. 109 & 110.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, page 110.

⁵⁴ See section 7, pp. 4 & 5 for more on this topic.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 134, 136-139. Between 1936 and 1944, the Whites moved on average every two years in New York City, renting apartments first on the Upper East Side in 1936 and 1937, followed by a townhouse in Greenwich Village in 1941, and another apartment in the Village in 1944. They finally purchased a house on the Upper East Side in late 1944, 160 E. 66th Street, but did not occupy it until the following year (and owned it until the 1960s). The Whites occupied the Kingwood farm for many more years than any of their New York residences during his most productive and significant period [Jernigan, pp. 100, 104, 112, 139, 162 & 189]. While little is known about their rental abodes, their townhouse survives but recently was extensively renovated by Jean-Luc Briguet Architecture [Jessica Dalley, "This \$12M Townhouse Sits on a Secret Garden in NYC," April 14, 2015, ny.curbed.com, accessed March 2001; Jean-Luc Briguet, portfolio, briguetarchitect.com, accessed March 2001]. When they sojourned in Emporia, they stayed at Red Rocks, the former home of Bill's parents that is a Kansas State Historic Site, where they lived upon returning to Kansas in the mid 1950s. In 1951, the couple also acquired a vacation house on Fisher's Island off Connecticut [Jernigan, page 226].

⁵⁶ "Journey for Margaret A War Refugee Comes to the U. S.," *Life*, December 8, 1941, pp. 83-86.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetWilliam Lindsay White House
Hunterdon County, NJSection number 8 Page 13

White was a prolific writer, and according to his daughter Barbara he did much of his writing at the farm in the upstairs west room, including *Journey for Margaret (1941)*, *Queens Die Proudly (1943)*, *Report on the Russians (1945)* and *Report on the Germans (1947)*.⁵⁷ One of his most important and controversial works, *Report on the Russians*, can be documented to have been written there between August and October, 1944. Negative reaction to its criticisms of the Soviet state when the Russians were our wartime allies resulted in measures of intimidation directed towards White, including someone breaking into the farmhouse in the March 1945, rifling his files and stealing several papers.⁵⁸ The Whites had a wide circle of friends in the literary world, some of whom they entertained at their farm, perhaps most notably novelist John Dos Passos and *Life* editor Daniel Longwell.⁵⁹ While the Whites traveled extensively in America, in addition to William's reporting trips to Europe during and after World War II, and acquired a vacation house on Fisher's Island in 1951, they continued to use the Kingwood farm for weekend escapes into the mid-1950s when they began to spend most of their time in Kansas.⁶⁰

Pre-White and Post-White History of the Kingwood Farm

Before the Whites

Although its earlier history remains obscure, ownership of the property that became the country home of William and Katherine Whites can be traced back to 1775, when it formed part of a 290-acre tract in Kingwood Township, Hunterdon County, mortgaged on April 8 of that year by Nathaniel Britain and wife Thisby to William Allen, Esq. for the sum of £566.13.3. The "mortgage deed" noted that Britain (the family name was spelled Briton) had purchased the tract from Allen and his wife, and the recorded instrument likely secured its purchase price in whole or part.⁶¹ The tract evidently formed part of the extensive Hunterdon County lands owned by William Allen (1704-1780), a prominent Philadelphia merchant and attorney, who served as Chief Justice of Pennsylvania and mayor of Philadelphia and developed extensive iron works in northeastern Hunterdon County with his partner Joseph Turner in the 1740s.⁶² How or when Allen acquired the property is unknown. However, the Hammond map of early Hunterdon land titles suggests that the 290-acre parcel formed part of "lot 46," a 312-acre tract surveyed in 1712 under New Jersey's proprietary system of landholding for one Joseph Latham, by right of a warrant obtained from the Council of West Jersey Proprietors in the previous year.⁶³ During Allen's ownership, the tract probably was rented to tenant farmers, as was commonly was the case with the landholdings of absentee owners throughout northwestern New Jersey during the period. Additional research might shed more light on the early history of the subject property.

⁵⁷ David Harding, "Preserving Kingwood farm," *Courier News*. March 19, 2016, page 2a; Barbara White Walker Interview with Jenna Kinlock, November 6, 2017.

⁵⁸ Jernigan, pp. 162 & 167. Barbara White thought that American Communists were responsible for the break-in; Harding, page 2a.

⁵⁹ Barbara White Walker Interview.

⁶⁰ Jernigan, pp. 226, 240, 249 & 251.

⁶¹ Hunterdon County Mortgages, Book 1, page 219. The mortgage, which was recorded on August 1, 1775, specified three bond payments of £188.17.9 due on May 1, 1777, May 1, 1778 and May 1, 1779. It was cancelled on November 3, 1786. No separate deed for the conveyance of the ownership of the tract was recorded.

⁶² Charles S. Boyer, *Early Forges and Furnaces in New Jersey*, pp. 233-243; Hubert Schmidt, *Rural Hunterdon*, pp. 57-59, 61, 216 & 217-219.

⁶³ D. Stanton Hammond, *Hunterdon County, New Jersey, Sheet C*, Map Series 4. Genealogical Society of New Jersey, 1967; West Jersey Deeds, NJ State Archives, Libre A, page 127.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetWilliam Lindsay White House
Hunterdon County, NJSection number 8 Page 14

The 1775 mortgage described Nathaniel and Thisby Britain as residents of Alexandria Township, Hunterdon County, and Nathaniel Britain's name does appear on a 1774 list of the tenants on the Hamilton Tract in that township.⁶⁴ Little else is known about their origins. Considerable genealogical research has been done on the Brittain, or Britton, family in colonial America, and while the names of Nathaniel's parents or his birthdate are unknown, it may be that his forebears were brothers William and Nathaniel Britton, English emigrants who settled on Staten Island in the 17th century, some of whose descendants moved to New Jersey.⁶⁵ Another genealogical source identifies "Thisbe," wife of Nathaniel Britton, as the daughter of Cornelius and Catherine Anderson, born October 1740 in Hopewell, New Jersey.⁶⁶ The estate records of Nathaniel, who died intestate evidently in early 1803, document that he and Thisby had at least ten children, one of whom was named Anderson.⁶⁷

Sometime between 1775 and 1778, Nathaniel and Thisbe moved to the Kingwood tract, portions of which remained in the hands of their descendants until the middle of the 19th century. Nathaniel Britton appears on the 1778 Kingwood Township tax roll, the earliest one surviving for the municipality, assessed for 289 acres of improved land, valued at £1,000, four horses, nine cattle & seven hogs.⁶⁸ He is listed on the six other township tax rolls extant between 1780 and 1802, providing evidence that he farmed the property until sometime before his death. He was again assessed for 289 acres in 1780 and 1789, but only for 190 acres in 1785 and 1797 and for 184 acres in 1786, reductions that probably can be explained by his renting some of his land in those years, most likely to a son or relative (during this period tenants were assessed for the property they rented, not the owners).⁶⁹ That Nathaniel was not assessed for any land in 1802 suggests that he had retired from farming by that time and was renting all his land, as does the inventory of his personal estate made on January 21, 1803, presumably shortly after his death, which totaled \$405.41, a fairly modest value for a large landowner at that time.⁷⁰

⁶⁴ Hunterdon County Mortgages, Book 1, page 219; James P. Snell (ed.), *History of Hunterdon and Somerset Counties, New Jersey*, I, page 416. Philadelphian James Hamilton had acquired the large property, located in present-day Holland Township, from William Allen and Joseph Turner in 1774 [*Ibid.*].

⁶⁵ "Britton Genealogy," haygenealogy.com. This website provides extensive information about the family of Richard Britton, Sr., of Batcombe, Somerset, England (1613-1679), who fathered at least seven children, at least four of whom immigrated to America, including William and Nathaniel, along with detailed sources for that information and, most importantly, clearly states what is contradictory, uncertain or unknown. Another website, without providing documentation, claims that Nathaniel was born in 1735, Middlesex, New Jersey, the son of Col. Nathaniel Britton (1710-1785) and Rebecca Larrison. It also claims that he married Thisbe Anderson in 1756 and gives the names and dates of their eleven children ["Nathaniel Brittain, 1735-1803," ancestors.familysearch.com].

⁶⁶ "Thisbe Anderson, 1740-1814," geni.com. The 1791 will of Cornelius Anderson, Hopewell Township, includes a bequest of £30 to his sister Thisbe Britton, providing evidence to support this family relationship [NJ Wills, 1529J].

⁶⁷ NJ Wills 2047J.

⁶⁸ New Jersey Tax Ratables, Kingwood Township, May 1778.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*. 1780, 1785, 1786, 1789, 1797 & 1802. In 1797, for example, Nathaniel Britton was assessed for 190 acres of improved land; while Nathaniel Britton, Jr. was assessed for 100 acres and William Britton for 69 acres.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*. 1802; NJ Wills 2047J. In 1802, seven male Britons appeared on the tax roll; those assessed for land were William; 190 acres; John, 270 acres; William, Jr., 145 acres; and Samuel Britton, 145 acres. Three other Britons were listed for taxation: Nathaniel, 1 head of cattle & 1 hog; Anderson, 2 horses, 2 cattle & 1 hog; and Nathaniel, single man. It is unclear if the Nathaniel assessed for livestock was Thisby's husband, their son or another relative.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetWilliam Lindsay White House
Hunterdon County, NJSection number 8 Page 15

In October 1805, Nathaniel Britton's Kingwood farm was divided into seventeen lots of varied size for his heirs (his widow, eight surviving children, and the children of his two deceased children).⁷¹ Lot #1, the largest of parcels containing 74 acres, encompassed the southern half of the subject property and the site of the William L. White House, as is evident by comparing the survey map of the 1805 division and the plotting of later deeds (Figure 1).⁷² Assigned to his widow Thisby as her dower portion, lot #1 presumably included the family homestead, which most likely was located along the creek on or near the site of the White House, but not the farm's best agricultural land. The latter encompassing the upland north of the dower lot was divided into six lots ranging from 20 to 29 acres in size that were assigned to Nathaniel's five surviving sons (John, Nathaniel, William, Anderson and Samuel and the children of his deceased son, Cornelius). All but Samuel also received one of five small contiguous lots, presumably wood lots, subdivided from the east side of their father's property. Samuel received the largest lot, #7, a 29-acre parcel abutting the north side of the widow's lot, making his share roughly equal to his brothers' portions. Five other lots ranging from 2.75 to 15.50 acres in size, were subdivided from the southeastern and southwestern corners of the farm and assigned to Nathaniel's three daughters Catherine, Mary and Franky, and the children of deceased daughter Elizabeth.

Upon Thisby Britton's marriage to Daniel Drake of Hopewell, New Jersey in 1808 or after her death, which purportedly occurred about 1814, her dower interest in lot #1 reverted to her late husband Nathaniel's other heirs.⁷³ While Thisby may have occupied the homestead at least until her remarriage, most likely with other family members, her son Samuel Britton (1779-1814) evidently succeeded her in possession soon thereafter and sought to reassemble a portion of the family farm.⁷⁴ In 1809, Samuel increased his holdings to 82.5 acres by acquiring from his brother William four of the lots assigned to his brothers in the 1805 division, and on October 14, 1814, five days before his death, he agreed to purchase his sister Franky's 1/16th interest in lot #1.⁷⁵

Samuel Britton's detailed estate inventory taken on December 1, 1814, six weeks after his intestate death, totaled the considerable sum of \$2,300.08 and documents that he was a substantial farmer practicing the diversified farming typical of Hunterdon County in the 18th and early 19th centuries. He grew hay, wheat, rye, oats and flax, and his livestock, valued at \$407, included four horses, eight head of cattle, twenty-six sheep and "3 fat hogs in the pen." His dwelling, probably his parents' homestead, was modest and simply furnished (only three rooms were named, the "east room," the "west room" and the "chamber"). He had six notes totaling \$540.78,

⁷¹ NJ Wills 2047J. The ten children named the 1805 division of Nathaniel's real estate were sons John, Nathaniel, Cornelius (deceased), William, Anderson & Samuel and daughters Catherine (wife of Luther Calvin), Elizabeth (deceased, wife of Andrew Bray), Mary (wife of William Horn) & Franky (wife of Ezekiel Rose, Jr.). His grandchildren were not named.

⁷² NJ Wills 2047J; Hunterdon County Deeds, Book 63, page 496; Book 115, page 666; Book 127, page 90; Book 416, page 406; Book 429, page 426; & Book 2368, page 339. Lot #1 was identified as the "dower right of Thisby Britton" in a later deed [Hunterdon County Deeds, Book 26, page 180].

⁷³ Hiram E. Deats, *Marriage Records of Hunterdon County, New Jersey, 1795-1875*, pp. 41. Daniel Drake evidently was Thisby's widowed brother-in-law; the 1791 will of Hopewell resident Cornelius Anderson mention both his sister Thisbe Britton and his brother-in-law Daniel Drake, who he made a co-executor of his will [NJ Wills 1529J].

⁷⁴ Samuel Britton was buried in the Baptist Graveyard in Baptistown, New Jersey, a few miles from the family farm, and his grave-stone documents his birth and death dates [Samuel Britton (1779-1814) finda-grave.com].

⁷⁵ Hunterdon County Deeds, Book 21, page 58 & Book 25, page 182. The four lots purchased in 1809 were: lots #5 (22 acres) and #11 (4.75 acres) assigned to William in the division and lots #6 (22 acres) and #12 (4.75 acres) assigned to their brother Anderson and subsequently conveyed by Anderson to William.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetWilliam Lindsay White House
Hunterdon County, NJSection number 8 Page 16

including one from William Britton for \$289.34. One other valuable item was “the time of a black man” worth \$133.33, perhaps that of Jasper whose bed was identified as being in the “chamber.”⁷⁶

Samuel, who had married Sarah Curtis in 1802, died leaving five minor children ranging in age from eleven to one (Mary, Jonathan, Thisby, Nathaniel and Lavinia), whose guardians took steps that gave them ownership of half of their grandmother Thisby’s dower lot (lot #1) and presumably the family homestead. In May 1816, their aunt Franky and her husband deeded them her 1/16th interest in lot #1, thus executing their previous agreement with Samuel, and in the same month the siblings acquired the interests of three of their grandfather Nathaniel’s other heirs in lot #1.⁷⁷ Through these purchases and their inheritance from their father, Samuel’s heirs acquired ownership of a 136-acre farm, encompassing the subject property and the site of the White House, where they presumably lived with their mother Sarah. As listed in the 1830 Federal Census, Sarah Britton headed a multi-generation household that evidently included one of her two sons, Jonathan or Nathaniel, his wife and young child, as well as her teen-age daughter Lavinia.⁷⁸

On May 3, 1834, Sarah Britton and her children Jonathan, Mary and Lavinia, together with their spouses, as heirs of Samuel Britton, conveyed the 136-acre farm to their fellow heir, son and brother Nathaniel Britton, for \$1,869.08.⁷⁹ Nathaniel, then a married Kingwood resident about twenty-seven years old, probably had been operating the farm for some years (his siblings were married and living elsewhere), and it is likely that he built the oldest portion of the extant house around this time to provide for his growing family and perhaps replace the old homestead. The 1840 Federal Census enumerated Nathaniel Britton as the head of a multi-generational household with nine members that besides his wife and several children included two older women (probably his mother and another relative) and a young adult male (likely an employee and/or relative).⁸⁰ According to the 1850 Federal Census, which gives considerably more detail about the people enumerated than earlier censuses provide, Nathaniel Britton, age 43, farmer, headed a household of five whose other members were his wife Sarah Britton, age 42, no occupation given; their son Jonathan, age 13, and daughter Matilda, age 16; along with John Vanorman, age 25, for whom no occupation was given but presumably was a farm hand. Nathaniel reported owning real estate worth \$5,000.⁸¹

⁷⁶ NJ Wills 2643J.

⁷⁷ Deats, *Marriage Records of Hunterdon County*, p. 41; Hunterdon County Deeds, Book 26, pp. 180, 182, 183 & 284. These deeds named Samuel’s five surviving children. One genealogical source provides the following information about the children of Sarah and Samuel Britton: Mary (1803-1883) married Benjamin Rittenhouse in 1823; Thisby (c. 1805-1826); Nathaniel (born 1807) married Sarah (?); Stacy (1811-14); Lavinia (born 1813) married David Coughlin; and Jonathan C. (c. 1804-1838), married Matilda (?); [person page 1056, fieldgenealogy.com]. Daughter Thisbe (born October 22, 1804, died 1824) has been identified as the maker of an early Hunterdon County needlework sampler. Her c. 1818 sampler (Figure. 2) gives her name and birthdate and is noted as earliest known example with the distinctive Hunterdon County “Collared Deer” motif [Hubers@AntiqueSamplers.com]. See also Dan and Marty Campanelli, *A Sampling of Hunterdon County Needlework*, pp. 26 & 27.

⁷⁸ United States Census, Kingwood Township, 1830. Sarah Britton’s six-member household had two white males (1 aged between 10 & 15 and 1 between 20 & 30 and four white females (1 under 5 years of age, 1 between 15 & 20, 1 between 20 & 30 and 1 between 40 & 50). The female aged between 40 & 50 must be Sarah Britton, who would have been 49 in that year, and the male and female aged between 20 & 30, presumably was one of her two sons, Jonathan (26 in 1830) or Nathaniel (23 in 1830), and his wife.

⁷⁹ Hunterdon County Deeds, Book 63, page 496.

⁸⁰ United States Census, Kingwood Township, 1840. Nathaniel Britton’s nine-member household had four white males (1 aged between 5 & 9, 1 between 15 & 19, 1 between 20 & 29 and 1 between 30 & 39) and five white females (1 under 5 years of age, 1 between 10 & 14, 1 between 30 & 39, 1 between 50 & 59 and 1 between 60 & 69).

⁸¹ United States Census, Kingwood Township, 1840.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetWilliam Lindsay White House
Hunterdon County, NJSection number 8 Page 17

The agricultural schedule of the 1850 census lists Nathaniel Britton as the proprietor of a farm with 110 acres of “improved land” and 20 acres of “unimproved land” (presumably woodland). Britton’s farm was valued at \$5,000, and the farm equipment, \$400. His livestock, worth \$680, included 4 horses, 4 milk cows, 3 other head of cattle, and 14 swine. Farm production encompassed 100 bushels of wheat, 145 bushels of rye, 6500 bushels of Indian corn, 140 bushels of oats, 35 bushels of buckwheat, 20 bushels of Irish potatoes, 10 tons of hay and 180 pounds of butter. The value of “slaughtered animals” was \$180. Its acreage and production made it a medium-size farm in Kingwood Township.

The 1851 county map (Figure 3) identifies the extant house as the residence of “N. Brittin,” and the inscription of the date “August 28, 1851” on the stairwell wall of Section B attic, incised while the plaster was wet, is evidence that Section B had been constructed by that time (Figure 4). The names of “T Sinclair” and “William C Mettler/ age 20 years” accompany the date. While it may be that Sinclair and Mettler built Section B, or at least plastered the wall, they also may have been employed by Britton as farmhands. In any case, three year later Nathaniel and Sarah Britton sold 50 acres subdivided from the west side of their farm to Mettler, whom the deed described as a Kingwood resident, for \$1,600.00.⁸²

On March 28, 1859 Nathaniel and Sarah Britton conveyed their Kingwood farm to Kingwood resident Nathaniel Thatcher for \$5,000.00, by which date they had moved to Alexandria Township.⁸³ The more than doubling of the farm’s sale price since 1834 suggests that substantial improvements were made by the Brittons and reflects the increased land values in the county during that era.⁸⁴ As listed in the 1860 Federal Census, the Nathaniel Thatcher’s household had three members: Nathaniel, age 52, farmer; his wife Sarah Ann Thatcher, age 50, no occupation given; and their son Samuel, age 24, a farm laborer. Nathaniel reported owning real estate worth \$4,500 and personal property worth \$500.⁸⁵ The farm changed hands again in 1869, when the Thatchers sold it to Sylvester Burkett of nearby Frenchtown for \$6,500.00, another large price increase.⁸⁶ Burkett apparently leased the farm to tenants for a share of the crops, or hired a farm operator, as documented by the inventory taken in September 1871 upon his interstate death, which included “wheat in stack on the Farm,” along with “standing” crops of corn and buckwheat, along with oats and clover seed “in Barrack” and two hogs.⁸⁷ To settle Burkett’s estate the farm was sold at auction for \$3,625.00 and conveyed by his administrators to high bidder John Case of Alexandria Township on March 29, 1873, the dropped in price from 1869 probably the reflection of decreasing land values in Hunterdon County at this time.⁸⁸ The 1873 Hunterdon County atlas identifies “J. Case” as farm’s owner (Figure 5).⁸⁹ Case apparently purchased the property for his daughter Elizabeth Wilson,

⁸² Hunterdon County Deeds, Book 115, page 666. Three years later, Mettler and his wife Jane, then residents of Alexandria Township, conveyed the 50 acres to Amos P. Hunt of Pennsylvania for \$2,800.00, a substantial price increase that suggests Mettler had made major improvements to the property (the farmstead immediately west of the subject property on Horseshoe Bend Rd. at the creek crossing [Hunterdon County Deeds, Book 115, page 741].

⁸³ Hunterdon County Deeds, Book 127, page 90. The deed described the tract as bordering “land sold to William C. Mettler” and as part of the land conveyed by Samuel Britton’s heir to Nathaniel Britton in 1834.

⁸⁴ Hunterdon County Deeds, Book 127, page 90.

⁸⁵ United States Census, Kingwood Township, 1860.

⁸⁶ Hunterdon County Deeds, Book 142, page 564.

⁸⁷ NJ Wills, 7036J.

⁸⁸ Hunterdon County Deeds, Book 153, page 415.

⁸⁹ F. W. Beers, *Atlas of Hunterdon County, New Jersey*, page 55.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetWilliam Lindsay White House
Hunterdon County, NJSection number 8 Page 18

since in his will executed less than one month later, he bequeathed to her “all that farm whereon she now resides situated in the Township of Kingwood containing one hundred acres of land more or less.”⁹⁰

Upon her father’s death in 1880 Elizabeth inherited title to the farm, upon which she and her husband William Wilson lived until sometime before his death in 1899.⁹¹ The Wilson household, as listed in the 1880 Federal census, numbered five: William, age 44, farmer; his wife Elizabeth Wilson, age 41, keeping house, their daughter Annabelle, age 16, who “helps mother,” and their son John C., age 6, along with Rachel A. Opdyke, age 33, an unmarried “farm servant.”⁹² The agricultural schedule of the 1880 census lists William Wilson as the proprietor of a general farming operation. His farm, valued at \$3,000.00, consisted of 92 acres of “tilled [land] including fallow and grass in rotation (whether pasture or meadow),” 5 acres of “woodland and forest” and 4 acres of unimproved land. The value given for farm equipment was \$300 and that for livestock, \$500. The amount spent on farm labor in 1879 was \$100; in that year \$32 was spent for fertilizer and \$50 for building repairs. Livestock “on hand” included 8 dairy cows, 7 “dropped” calves, 3 horses, 6 swine and 35 poultry. In 1879, 3 cattle had been purchased, 6 sold and one slaughtered. In that year, the farm had 13 acres of mown grasslands and 24 acres “not mowed,” producing 14 tons of hay and 5 bushels of clover seed. Other farm production in 1879 included 400 bushels of corn from 15 acres, 300 bushels of oats from 10 acres, 98 bushels of buckwheat from 4 acres, 70 bushels of rye from 8 acres, 48 bushels of wheat from 5 acres and 20 bushels of Irish potatoes from ¼ acre; as well as 600 pounds of butter. A 4-acre apple orchard had 40 bearing trees and produced \$20 worth of orchard products. The total estimated value of the farm’s products in 1879 was \$1,000.⁹³ In 1901, Elizabeth Wilson, then a resident of Alexandria Township sold the farm to Frenchtown resident to James E. Sherman for \$1,000, 1/5th of its sale price forty years earlier.⁹⁴ The property changed hands eight times more times between 1901 and 1938, during which period the owners appear to have specialized in raising poultry and/or egg production, as evidenced by the large chicken coops that once stood to the north of the house.⁹⁵ Perhaps due to the Great Depression, the house was empty and the farm had been abandoned by 1938 when acquired by William and Katherine White.⁹⁶

After the Whites

In 1964, the William and Katherine White sold their New Jersey farm to the First Reformed Church of Somerville, New Jersey.⁹⁷ The church operated the farm as a nondenominational retreat center for several decades, during which time they made a number of alterations to the house, most notably the remodeling of the second-story to accommodate bunk-link bedrooms and bathrooms with enclosed toilet stalls. The church, later reorganized as the United Reformed Church of Somerville, named the property “the Retreat” and used it

⁹⁰ NJ Wills, 8028J.

⁹¹ Ibid.; NJ Wills 10341J. The Wilsons were living in Alexandria Township at the time of William’s death in 1899.

⁹² United States Census, Kingwood Township, 1880.

⁹³ US Census, Agricultural Schedule, Kingwood Township, Hunterdon County 1880.

⁹⁴ HCD, Book 264, page 579.

⁹⁵ Ibid., Book 272, page 115, Book 340, pp. 8 & 11, Book 356, page 128, Book 395, page 414, Book 398, page 14, Book 407, page 483 & Book 415, page 435; Barbara White Walker interview.

⁹⁶ Ibid. Book 416, page 406; Jernigan, page 109.

⁹⁷ Jernigan, pp. 145, 162, 206 & 251; Hunterdon County Deeds, Book 661, page 306.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

William Lindsay White House
Hunterdon County, NJ

Section number 8 Page 19

for a host of events: picnics, pot lucks and retreats for youth and women's groups. Eagle Scout candidates built benches for outdoor worship services, or marked hiking trails. Families rented the home to host Thanksgiving dinners or for vacations. Young couples married there."⁹⁸

Eventually finding itself unable to support the operation of the farm as a retreat, but wishing to preserve the property, the church approached the Hunterdon Land Trust, which helped facilitate its acquisition in 2015 by the Kingwood Township utilizing a number of open space preservation funding sources.⁹⁹ The White farm, now part of the 700-acres along Copper Creek forming Horseshoe Bend Park, is used for passive recreation, while the Township has begun to implement plans to preserve and reuse the house itself.

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⁹⁸ Harding, page 2a

⁹⁹ Ibid.; Hunterdon County Deeds, Book 2368, page 339.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

William Lindsay White House
Hunterdon County, NJ

Section number 9 Page 1

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

William Lindsay White House
Hunterdon County, NJ

Section number 9 Page 2

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

William Lindsay White House
Hunterdon County, NJ

Section number 9 Page 3

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

William Lindsay White House
Hunterdon County, NJ

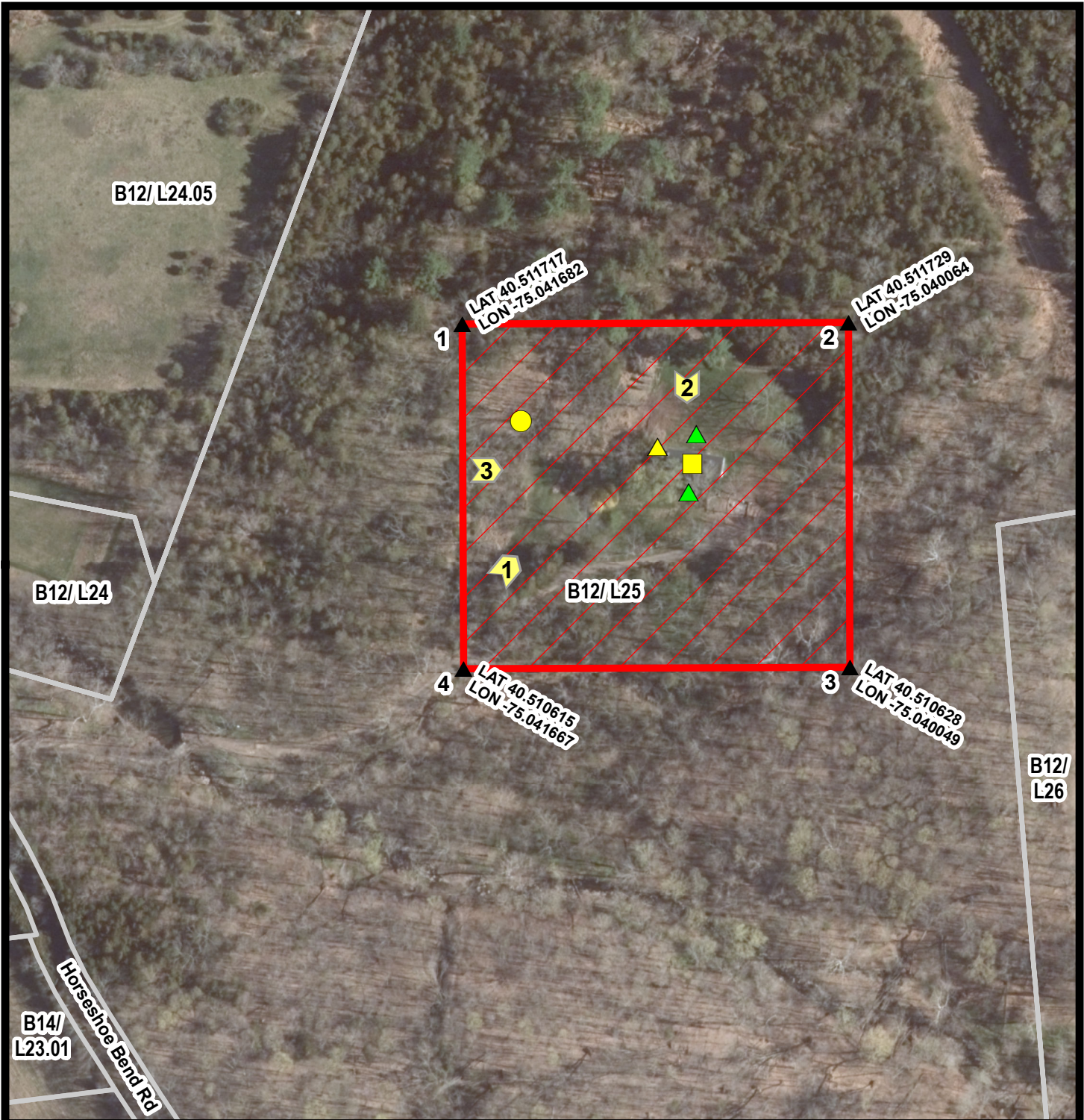
Section number 10 Page 1

NARRATIVE BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The boundary of the William Lindsay White is delineated as a on the attached “William Lindsay White Boundary and Photo Identification Map.” The map utilizes a recent property survey for a base map. The boundary encompasses a rectangle measuring approximately 450 feet on its north and south sides and 400 feet on its east and west sides.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The boundary of the property was delineated to encompass the William Lindsay White House and its associated resources, as well as a sufficient amount of surrounding property to convey a sense its rural setting but excluding the woodland that has grown up on what was largely open farmland during the property’s period of significance.



William Lindsay White House

New Jersey and National Registers Nomination
 Kingwood Township,
 Hunterdon County,
 New Jersey



Datum: NAD 1983 State Plane New Jersey

Boundary and tax map

Legend

- NJ & NR Boundary
- Resources**
- Contributing building
- Contributing site
- Contributing structure
- Non-contributing structure
- Photo location
- Coordinates
- Tax Parcels

4.14 Acres



NJDEP,
 Historic Preservation Office
 May 2021

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Photographic Identification Page 1

William Lindsey White House
Hunterdon County, NJ

PHOTOGRAPHIC IDENTIFICATION

The following information is the same for all photographs submitted with the nomination:

Name: William Lindsey White House
Location: Kingwood Township, Hunterdon County, NJ
Photographer: Chris Pickell and Dennis Bertland
Date: Spring/Fall 2019
Negative Repository: Dennis Bertland Associates

PHOTO #	SITE #	VIEW
1	Exterior	NE
2	Exterior	S
3	Exterior	E
4	Cellar	W
5	1 st -Floor, Room 101B	E
6	1 st -Floor, Room 101B, Fireplace	E
7	1 st -Floor, Room 101A	W
8	1 st -Floor Room 101A, Fireplace	W
9	1 st -Floor, Room 102	SE
10	1 st -Floor, Room 104	SW
11	2 nd -Floor, Room 201	W
12	2 nd -Floor, Room 202	E
13	2 nd -Floor, Hallway 203	W
14	2 nd -Floor, Hallway 204	N
15	2 nd -Floor, Room 208	NE
16	Attic, Section A	W
17	Attic, Chimney detail	W
18	Attic, Chimney detail	W
19	Attic, Section C	E

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

William Lindsey White House
Hunterdon County, New Jersey

Section number Photos Page 1



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

William Lindsey White House
Hunterdon County, New Jersey

Section number Photos Page 2



Photo: 3

Exterior

E

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

William Lindsey White House
Hunterdon County, New Jersey

Section number _____ Photos _____ Page 3



Photo: 4

Cellar

W

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

William Lindsey White House
Hunterdon County, New Jersey

Section number Photos Page 4



Photo: 5

1st-Floor, Room 101B

E

DR

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

William Lindsey White House
Hunterdon County, New Jersey

Section number _____ Photos Page 5



Photo: 6

1st-Floor, Room 101B, Fireplace

E

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

William Lindsey White House
Hunterdon County, New Jersey

Section number _____ Photos _____ Page 6



Photo: 7

1st-Floor, Room 101A

W

DR

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

William Lindsey White House
Hunterdon County, New Jersey

Section number _____ Photos _____ Page 7



Photo: 8

1st-Floor Room 101A, Fireplace

W

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

William Lindsey White House
Hunterdon County, New Jersey

Section number _____ Photos Page 8



Photo: 9

1st-Floor, Room 102

SE

DK

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

William Lindsey White House
Hunterdon County, New Jersey

Section number _____ Photos _____ Page 9



Photo: 10

1st - Floor, Room 104

SW

DK

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

William Lindsey White House
Hunterdon County, New Jersey

Section number Photos Page 10



Photo: 11

2nd -Floor, Room 201

W



Photo: 12

2nd -Floor, Room 202

E

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

William Lindsey White House
Hunterdon County, New Jersey

Section number _____ Photos _____ Page 11



Photo: 13

2nd -Floor, Hallway 203

W

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

William Lindsey White House
Hunterdon County, New Jersey

Section number Photos Page 12



Photo: 14

2nd -Floor, Hallway 204

N

DK

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

William Lindsey White House
Hunterdon County, New Jersey

Section number Photos Page 13



Photo: 15

2nd -Floor, Room 208

NE

DK

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

William Lindsey White House
Hunterdon County, New Jersey

Section number Photos Page 14



Photo: 16

Attic, Section A

W

DR

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

William Lindsey White House
Hunterdon County, New Jersey

Section number _____ Photos Page 15

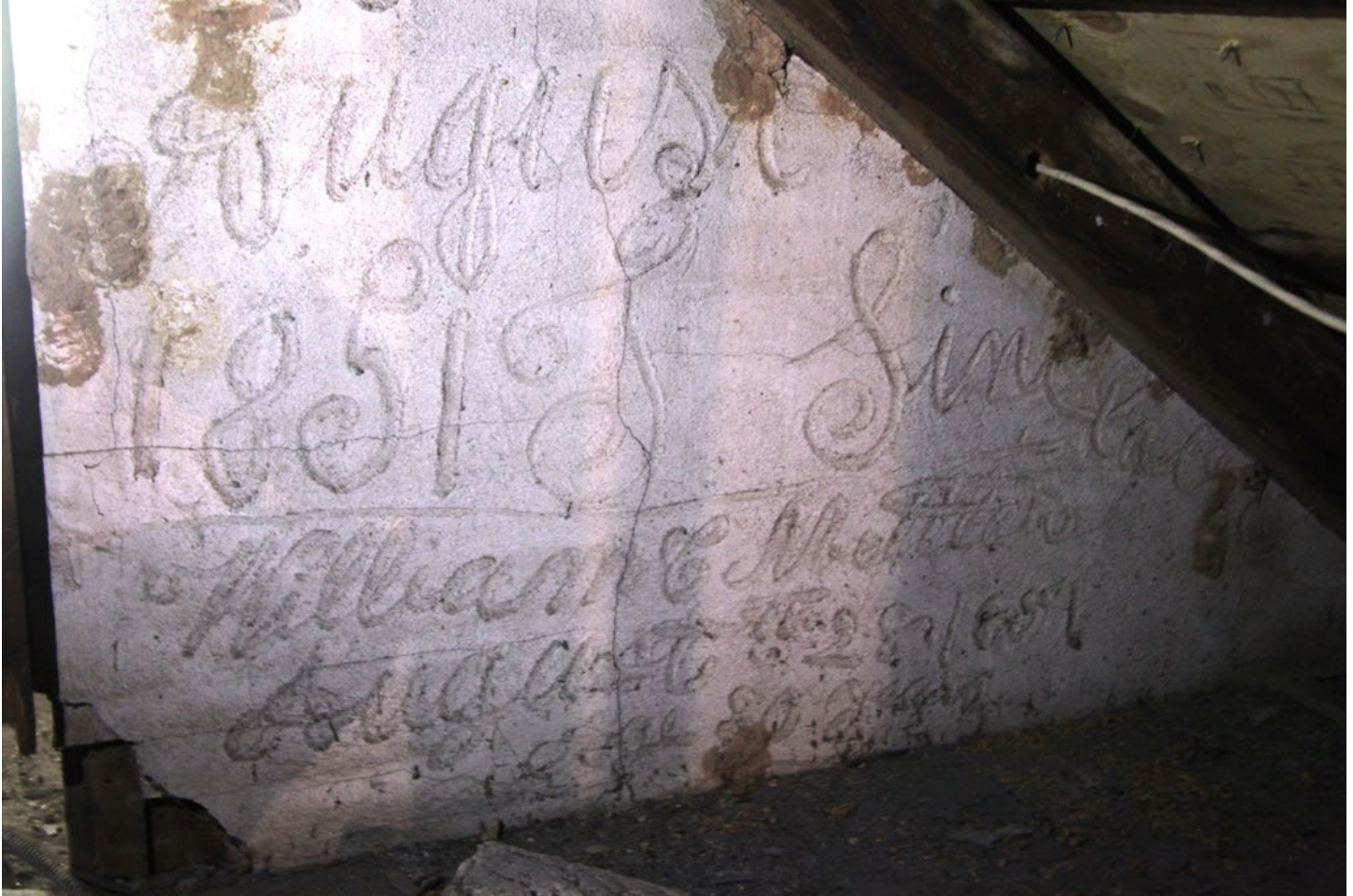


Photo: 17

Attic, Chimney detail

W

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

William Lindsey White House
Hunterdon County, New Jersey

Section number Photos Page 16



Photo: 18

Attic, Chimney detail

W

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

William Lindsey White House
Hunterdon County, New Jersey

Section number Photos Page 17



19

Attic, Section C

E

DK