

## Allnutt Road

Montgomery County, Maryland

### **Significant Features:**

- Multiple historic homes, including the Richard Walter Williams house and the Williams farmhouse
- Site of the Civil War encampment, Camp Benton

### **History:**

The families most connected to the road are the Williams family and the Allnutt family. The Williams family has been a consistent part of the community since the beginning of this region's settlement. Some of the earliest Maryland settlers were of the Williams family, and Thomas Williams established the family in the area in 1665. The family owned much of the land along the Potomac River near Edwards Ferry, including the land on which Allnutt Road and the houses along it were constructed. As the older members of the family had children, the land was split up and given to each of the children so they could farm, which explains why many of the houses are located within close proximity to homes that were owned by the older members of the community.

The Richard Walter Williams house was constructed between 1841 and 1863 as one of two house John McGill Williams built for his two sons, Richard Walter Williams and John T. Williams. Richard Walter Williams lived in the house until 1890, when he passed away, and conveyed the property to his wife and son. After a few years they decided they could not run the farm effectively, and gave the land to the daughter/sister, Lucy, and her husband, Joseph N. Allnutt, in 1902. In 1933 they conveyed the land to two brothers in the family, Joseph Kenneth Allnutt and Richard Walter Allnutt. Richard passed away in 1982, and the property went to his wife, Elizabeth Allnutt. Currently their daughter, Sarah Hunter, owns the property. The history of ownership of this home explains the introduction of the Allnutt family into the previously Williams community along the road.

The other structure of historic significance, the Williams farmhouse, was constructed shortly after the Civil War, replacing the Zachariah Williams home that had fallen into disrepair during the war. All that remains of the original structure that was on the property is the log meat house, which is still standing today. The home is Victorian style, which was a common architectural choice in this region during the nineteenth century, and no changes have been made to the exterior of the house since its construction except for the addition of a bay window in 1903-1904. The size and style of the home is indicative of the wealth of the family, especially during that time period when homes were typically smaller and less complex in terms of architectural features, so it is clear from both the standing structure and the documentation of the Zachariah Williams house that the Williams family was a family of wealthy farmers. The home was built by Richard Walter Williams for his son, Charles, who lived in the home until his death in 1924. It was conveyed to his son, Charles M. Williams, Jr., and then immediately conveyed to his sons, Dorsey and Rodger Williams. This was also the home-Clifton Williams, who was

interviewed as part of the research conducted for this road, and his siblings grew up in, and is still owned by the family.

In the year 1861, troops came through the town of Poolesville due to its strategic location so close to the Potomac River. This area was an important region for the Union Army because there was only a short distance of water separating the two foes, the Union and the Confederacy. Maryland was a border state and some citizens were Confederate sympathizers or had Confederate leanings because of their close proximity to the South and similar complaints about the federal government, so it was crucial for the Union to ensure that the Confederacy did not advance on Maryland and in turn Washington DC. On September 15, 1861, Union troops of the Twentieth Regiment of Massachusetts approached the Williams farm along Allnut Road and set up on a large wheat field on the slope of a hill, surrounded by a “beautiful running stream of clear, cold water” (Bruce). The encampment consisted of multiple regiments, including First Massachusetts, Nineteenth Massachusetts, Brigade B, First Rhode Island Artillery, and many others that circulated through the region (Bruce). After six months, the troops left the property and continued onward to fight for the purpose of restoring the Union, but they still left their mark on the land. As a child, Clifton remembers finding bullets in the field while farming, and remembers how his family would let interested people onto the property who had metal detectors and the hope of finding some remnants and artifacts from Camp Benton. The family eventually stopped allowing this due to the disruption it caused to their farming, and the occasional issue of cows running loose when somebody searching the property forgot to close the gates properly. The troops did not just leave material items on the property as proof of their being on the land, they also left their mark on the landscape of the farm. There is a spot in the field to this day where crops refuse to grow and that is barren, and Clifton’s father attributed this strange phenomenon to the idea that the Union troops constructed an oven on that spot that, due to frequent use, made the land infertile.

Considering family history alone this area has historic importance, but this encampment and the area around the Williams farmhouse is also featured in a Winslow Homer oil painting of Captain William Francis Bartlett and Lieutenant Colonel Francis Winthrop Palfrey that was created in 1881 as part of his documentation of the frontlines of the Civil War. This painting is now displayed in the Boston Public Library as part of their Twentieth Regiment Collection. The fact that Winslow Homer created a painting featuring this property, and the fact that multiple historical novels include information about this encampment, emphasizes the importance of the region during the Civil War.



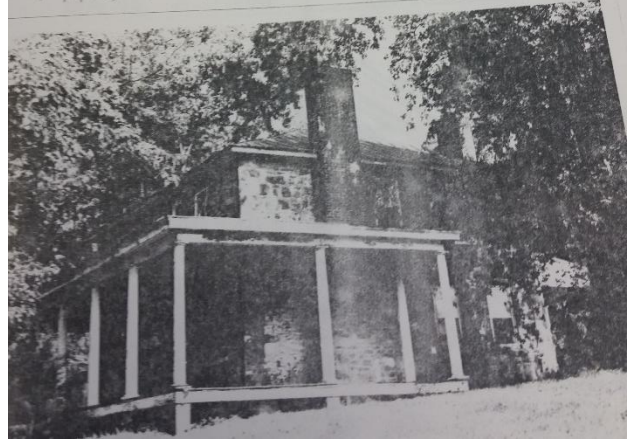
Williams Farmhouse



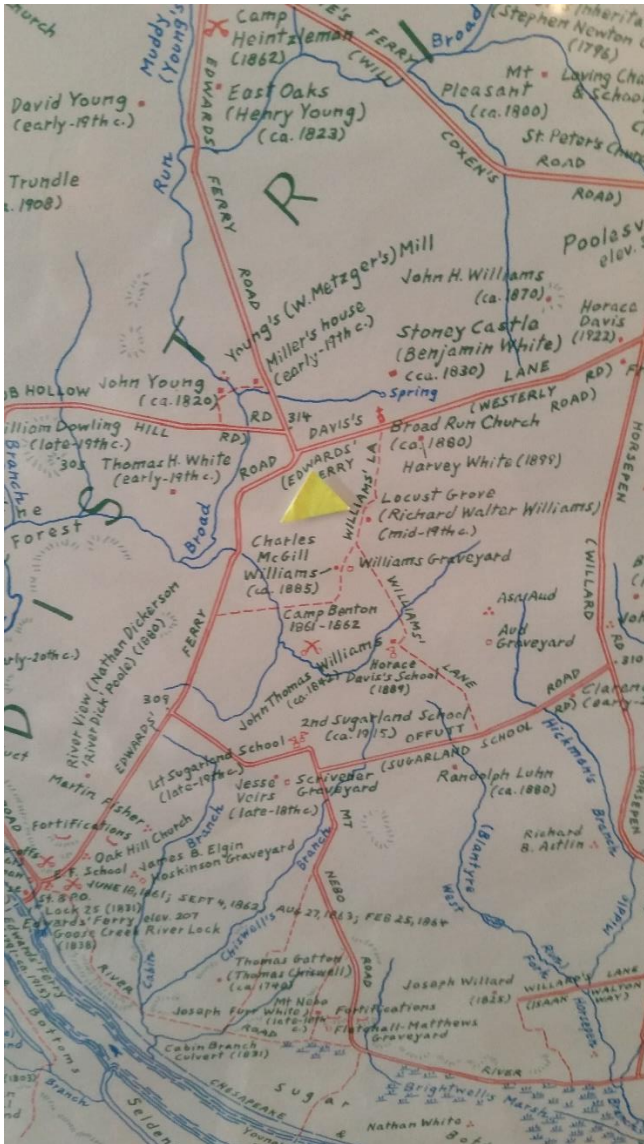
R. Walter Williams House  
Westerly Rd. nr. Edw. Ferry Rd, Pookesville, MD  
10/4/73, M. Dwyer

W. Facade

SW Facade



Richard Walter Williams House



Allnut Road was once named Williams Lane (designated by the yellow flag on the map) due to the long-term Williams family population of the road.

*Officers at Camp Benton, Maryland, 1861 oil painting by Winslow Homer*

