1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: **WILLIAMS, AUSTIN F., CARRIAGEHOUSE AND HOUSE**

Other Name/Site Number:

2. LOCATION

Street & Number: 127 Main Street Not for publication: N/A

City/Town: Farmington Vicinity: NA

State: Connecticut County: Hartford Code: CT 003 Zip Code:06032

3. CLASSIFICATION

Ownership of Property		Category of Property	
Private:	X	Building(s):	X
Public-Local:	___	District:	___
Public-State:	___	Site:	___
Public-Federal:	___	Structure:	___
		Object:	___

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
2	___	buildings
____	____	sites
____	____	structures
____	____	objects
2	___	Total

Number of Contributing Resources Previously Listed in the National Register: 0

Name of Related Multiple Property Listing: N\A

4. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination 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.

_____

_____
Signature of Certifying Official Date

_____
State or Federal Agency and Bureau

In my opinion, the property ____ meets ____ does not meet the National Register criteria.

_____

_____
Signature of Commenting or Other Official Date

_____
State or Federal Agency and Bureau

5. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is:

____ Entered in the National Register
____ Determined eligible for the National Register
____ Determined not eligible for the National Register
____ Removed from the National Register
____ Other (explain):
_____

_____ _____
Signature of Keeper Date of Action

6. FUNCTION OR USE

Historic: Domestic Sub: single dwelling/secondary structure

Current: Domestic Sub: single dwelling/secondary structure

7. DESCRIPTION

Architectural Classification: Early 19th Century Revivals: Greek Revival

Materials:
Foundation: brick/brownstone
Walls: weatherboard
Roof: terne and membrane
Other:

Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.

The Austin F. Williams Carriagehouse and House are located on a 2.6-acre residential site on the east side of Main Street in the historic town center of Farmington. Sited well back and elevated above the road, the two buildings are accessed from Main Street by an unpaved driveway that runs along the north property line and are partially screened from public view by mature trees and shrubbery (see site plan).

The eastern end of the Williams Carriagehouse predates the house and played an important role in the abolition movement and also is believed to have served as a station on the Underground Railroad. Once the house was completed, this section housed carriages and contained the stables. It has a full two-room cellar underneath, accessible only by an interior sound-proofed trapdoor in the floor. Although it was converted to an apartment in the 1920s, original beams, posts, and floors are still in place. The west end, which was built as a woodhouse after the main house was finished, according to a contract drawn up in 1842, is partially finished with plastered walls on the second floor. There is a large open doorway on the west end elevation. Other internal features of the newer section are privy rooms on the first and second floors, each outfitted with multiple fixtures and plastered walls.

Built in 1842, the Greek Revival-style house is sheathed in clapboard and rests on a high brick and brownstone foundation which is exposed on three sides. It consists of a gable-roofed main block (37' x 47') with gabled flushboarded shallow pediments and open one-story verandas on both gable ends. A two-story right-angle wing which extends from the east side originally contained a screened-in columned porch at the first level that is now enclosed. Both the main block and the slightly later wing display full-height Doric pilasters and a continuous entablature. The carriagehouse, also Greek Revival in style and situated to the immediate northeast of the house, is an elongated building, consisting of three sections. Matching gabled sections with pediments on the south elevations oriented north and south are joined by a shed-roofed connector.

Except for its reorientation to the north, there has been little change to the exterior of the Williams House. When the property encompassed four acres and extended all the way to Hatter's Lane on the south, the facade faced south with a full-width entrance porch a full story above grade that displayed a circular main entrance staircase. The porch remains but the stairway has been removed. Today the nearly identical rear (north) elevation serves as the facade and displays a similar porch nearly at grade, sheltering the main entrance on the left side. Both porches have flared hipped terne roofs supported by openwork wooden lattices in a geometric pattern and have plain balustrades. The same type of lattice, which once framed the open spaces between the columns and pilasters of the former screened porch, now covers new windows installed in walls behind these openings. The rest of the fenestration is original, generally with six-over-six sash at the second floor and tall six-over-six-over-three sash that extend from the floor almost to the ceiling on the west elevation. Double glazed doors flanked by sidelights are found beneath the porches. Pierced cast-iron screens cover the three-part attic windows in the frieze of the main block. Other distinctive features of the house are the original louvered blinds that remain on most of the windows and doors.

Although the house framing system is post-and-beam, other rather modern construction

techniques and features were employed. Among them were mortared brick in the stud walls for insulation and the use of full-height ventilating stacks in the walls that extend up through the roof, where they are capped with operable covers. The only true chimney stack contains the flue for the one original fireplace of black marble, which was installed in the dining room at the southwest corner of the main block. The house also was equipped with a water system that was piped several thousand feet from a nearby creek and supplied a water closet and bathtub. The other design feature of note is living space, including the original kitchen, in the walkout basement, a more typically urban layout.

The interior of the house is also well preserved. Reorientation of the house produced some minor partition changes, but the general plan remains intact with a central east-west staircase from the basement level to the second-floor hallway, located near the center of the main block. The staircase displays mahogany hand rails and newels and turned balusters. Interior detail includes wide cornice moldings around the high (11-foot) ceilings of the first floor, especially in the living room, which now displays an early twentieth-century fireplace. Tall original double-panel doors of mahogany are found throughout this level. The most striking interior features, the wall and ceiling murals, were painted by Italian artists imported for this purpose by the original owner. Stylistically they resemble the type of decoration used in late Roman villas. Over the years some of the murals have been covered over by wallpaper or paint, but they remain generally intact in the two dining rooms and were recently uncovered in the living room.

8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:
Nationally: X Statewide:___ Locally:___

Applicable National Register Criteria:	A X B___ C __ D __
NHL Criteria:	1
NHL Theme(s):	II. Creating Social Institutions and Movements 2. reform movements
Areas of Significance:	Social History
Period(s) of Significance:	1841-1865
Significant Dates:	1841
Cultural Affiliation:	N/A
Builder:	Chauncy Wells, New Haven Cephas Skinner, Farmington
Historic Context:	XXXI. Social and Humanitarian Movements D. Abolitionism V. Political and Military Affairs, 1783-1860 J. The Rise of Sectionalism, 1840-1859

State Significance of Property, and Justify Criteria, Criteria Considerations, and Areas and Periods of Significance Noted Above.

Although distinguished for its long association with the Northern abolition movement through its owner, Austin F. Williams (1805-1885), a leading abolitionist of his day who devoted much of his life to the cause, this property achieves its greatest national significance for its direct connection with the celebrated *Amistad* affair of 1839-1841. In this complex legal case that ensued from a slave revolt on the high seas in 1839, the institution of slavery was challenged for the first time in the United States Supreme Court. Although it would take a Civil War and another 24 years to abolish slavery nationally, in this precedent-setting case, argued by the Honorable Roger Sherman Baldwin of New Haven and John Quincy Adams, former President of the United States, the central issue was human rights versus property rights. In March 1841 those who had participated in the revolt, members of the Mende tribe of West Africa, were released from prison. Taken under the protection of the *Amistad* defense committee, they were housed in quarters provided by Austin F. Williams on this site, now part of the extant carriagehouse, until they were returned to their homeland in November 1841.

Historical Background

The institution of slavery was deeply embedded in colonial society. As early as 1641, the Massachusetts Colony ratified legal bondage, soon followed by Maryland and Virginia. By the 1750s chattel slavery was legalized in all 13 colonies, although the distribution of Africans held in bondage varied widely by region. Slave labor had never been essential in the farming economy of the North, but it soon became a vital part of the evolving plantation economy of the South. Even though religious groups, primarily the Society of Friends (Quakers), had always been opposed, it was not until the Revolution that there was any concerted effort to abolish slavery. Not surprisingly, it was concentrated in the North where, in the spirit of the Revolution, states began to abolish slavery. Laws for gradual emancipation were passed in Rhode Island, New York, Connecticut, and New Jersey. [1] In Massachusetts, Vermont, New Hampshire, and Pennsylvania, immediate manumission was granted to blacks who had served in the war. Anti-slavery societies sprang up in the North and South by the 1790s. In Connecticut "The Society for the Promotion of Freedom and the Relief of Persons Holden in Bondage" was founded with the Reverend Ezra Stiles, former president of Yale College, as its head. Although Congress was bombarded with anti-slavery petitions by these groups, under pressure from Southern legislators, legal bondage was ratified nationally by new provisions to the United States Constitution, which extended the slave trade until 1808, and, more significantly, asserted the property rights of slaveholders. The first federal Fugitive Slave Law was passed in 1793. Not only were states encouraged to return slaves to their owners, captured runaways were denied due process, a provision which also threatened the status of free blacks.

In summary, as the first wave of abolitionism drew to a close, slavery had been largely eliminated in the North, but the region's anti-slavery advocates had had little impact on national policy. Some individuals in the North continued to profit from the slave trade, but the

[1] Connecticut's gradual manumission laws were typical. The 1784 legislation provided that slaves born after that time would be freed at age 25. The age limit was lowered to 21 in 1787. Unqualified emancipation in the state was not passed until 1848.

actual percentage of African Americans in the population there was quite small, generally under two percent, and very few remained in bondage after 1800. Although legislated emancipation was a factor, many Northern owners had voluntarily freed their slaves in the post-Revolutionary period, often through testamentary devices at death, or had sold them to Southern plantation owners. Despite modest gains, such as the Northwest Ordinance of 1787, for Northern supporters the chances for permanent, gradual abolition of slavery nationwide seemed remote in the face of the agricultural and economic revolution taking place in the South. Although rice, sugar, tobacco, and indigo remained major cash crops in the South, after the invention of the cotton gin in 1793, cotton production soared and the plantation system with its dependence on slave labor became more firmly entrenched. It is estimated that the Southern black population of 700,000 of 1790 escalated to nearly four million by 1860 and in states like South Carolina, blacks came to outnumber whites two to one. Furthermore, the Northern industrial textile economy came to depend on Southern cotton, as did that of England. Because of this, concerted support for abolition did not resurface until the 1830s.

Abolitionism in the Nineteenth Century

The early nineteenth century was a period of general social reform. The first steps were taken to alleviate the plight of a growing underclass by forming charitable organizations and building private institutions to aid the indigent, the orphaned, and in some states, the mentally ill. In this era, prison reform was addressed as was the inferior role of women in society. Temperance organizations flourished. Abolition of slavery, however, became the major reform movement of the period. This divisive and controversial issue engaged most towns and cities in the North.

Northern society became increasingly polarized on the anti-slavery issue; abolitionists themselves were divided in their political goals and methods. Parallel but separate abolition societies were formed by both blacks and whites, with the more radical calling for immediate emancipation. Northern churches split on these issues, some never to be reunited. A loose coalition, which included a few Southern planters as well as white anti-slavery advocates in the North, came to support the views of the American Colonization Society (ACS), founded in 1816, which advocated the return of free blacks to Africa. For this group colonization was a program to establish Protestant missions for the "enlightment of darkest Africa." Colonization was supported by some blacks. In fact, under the auspices of the ACS, by 1860 some 12,000 African Americans had emigrated, most to Liberia, a colony in Africa established by the society.

Northern white abolitionists concentrated on national issues, such as the expansion of slavery in the Western territories, instead of improving the conditions of freed blacks in their midst who were generally segregated and denied suffrage. The black abolitionist movement, which

originated in African-American churches in the North, pressed for civil and economic rights

for freed blacks.[2]

Both groups sponsored abolition newspapers, most notably *Freedmans Journal*, the nation's first black newspaper, and William Lloyd Garrison's *Liberator*. Garrison's militant views found favor in the black community and nearly two-thirds of his subscribers were African Americans. A vocal black minority, one that included such famous former slaves as Fredrick Douglas, became increasingly militant in their demands for freedom; some activists, such as David Walker and Henry Highland Garnet, also freedmen, called for liberation through violence. With the proliferation of such inflammatory anti-slavery literature by both whites and blacks, some Southern states enacted laws to prevent black literacy.

The potential for slave rebellion was an ever present concern in the South. Not only had there been numerous slave uprisings in the Caribbean earlier in the eighteenth century, the successful slave rebellion in Santo Domingue (1791-1803) had resulted in the overthrow of a French colony and the founding of the independent black nation of Haiti. Three important uprisings took place in the United States that alarmed Southerners and exacerbated racial tensions. The revolts staged by Gabriel Prosser in 1800, Denmark Vesey in 1822, and Nat Turner's famous attempt in 1831 led to tighter slave codes in the South which further restricted the movement of bondsmen. Finally the passage of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 significantly raised the stakes in this ideological struggle. Abolitionists who had been aiding escaping slaves on the Underground Railroad now faced risk of federal prosecution.

Bondsmen had been escaping in both the North and the South since the early colonial period Britain later found it politically expedient for Canada to welcome escaping blacks and give them rights as citizens, and many more from the mid-South sought refuge there. During the American Revolution, many bondsmen crossed the lines hoping to be freed by the British. Slavery was phased out in Connecticut and other Northern states by the early 19th century.[3]

Historical Significance

Farmington's Role in the Movement

The abolition movement, which had become a major cause celebre in Connecticut by the 1830s, proved to be exceptionally divisive in the Town of Farmington. To enlist support for the cause, Farmington abolitionists invited Simon A. Phelps, an agent of the American Anti-Slavery Society, to speak at public gatherings. No incidents marred the first meeting in 1834, but the December 1835 program precipitated a riot. Despite a number of arrests, the case against the rioters was dropped in the "best interests of the town." Despite unprecedented and organized local opposition (an anti-abolition society with 200 members), Farmington

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[2]See John Hope Franklin and Alfred Moss, Jr., *From Slavery to Freedom: a History of African Americans* (7the ed., New York: McGraw Hill Publishing Co., 1994) and Benjamin Quarles, *Black Abolitionists* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969).

[3]Connecticut adopted a gradual abolition law in 1784 and, in 1797, repealed the entire colonial slave codes. In 1848 Connecticut enacted total abolition. Marie Tyler-McGraw, *Historic Context: The Underground Railroad in American History* (typscript [DRAFT], Washignton, DC: National Register, History and Education, National Park Service, 1998).

abolitionists persevered and some became leaders in the state-wide movement. They formed a local anti-slavery society in 1837, perhaps the first in the Connecticut, and helped organize the Hartford County association by the end of that year. Farmington leaders, Austin F. Williams, John T. Norton, and Samuel Deming, who all were to play a role in the *Amistad* affair and the Underground Railroad, were local officers and also served in that capacity in both the county and the state organizations, the latter reestablished in 1838.

By that time the pro- and anti-slavery forces were permanently enjoined at the national level where the issue was primarily states' rights. Most moderates in the state had opposed the extension of slavery permitted by the Missouri Compromise of 1820, but also condemned the interference of Congress in the treatment of slaves in any state. However, when the "gag rule" for slavery petitions to Congress was forced through the House of Representatives in 1836 and 1837, even such a moderate sympathizer as John Quincy Adams became politically engaged. Then serving as a representative from Massachusetts, he led a Congressional battle to restore the right of petition in 1838 and called for the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia. Farmington abolitionists, who had repeatedly petitioned Connecticut's Whig legislature on the issue of slavery to no avail, eventually formed a third political party. The Liberty Party, as it was known, nominated a full slate with candidates for representatives, governor, and other state offices, including Austin F. Williams for treasurer. Though unable to actually elect abolitionist representatives, the Liberty Party did prevent Whigs and Democrats who opposed them from serving in 1840, 1841, and 1844[4]

The *Amistad* Case

Despite international opposition, an illegal slave trade still flourished during this period. Africans captured by slave traders were taken to Caribbean ports where they were conditioned in the infamous barracoons (literally holding pens) of Havana for work on island sugar plantations. Others were smuggled into the United States and sold to Southern planters. The *Amistad* revolt occurred when 53 West Africans of the Mende tribe (who had lived in the interior east of present-day Sierra Leone) were being transported from Havana to Puerto Principe, another Cuban port, on board the Spanish ship *Amistad,* a 200-ton cargo schooner originally built in Baltimore. The Mende had been part of a larger group of 500 people captured in Africa and illegally brought to Cuba on the slaver *Tecora*. After being sold to two Spanish planters on June 26, 1839, they were given false papers and Spanish names to substantiate a fraudulent claim that they were legal slaves who had resided in Cuba before 1820 (to conform to international slave trading laws then extant). Four days out of port, the Mende, led by Sengbe Pieh (renamed Joseph Cinqué), took control of the vessel and ordered the ship to sail for Africa. In the course of the revolt, the ship's captain and the cook were killed and the planters taken prisoner, but at least two of the crew escaped in a small boat. Although the ship sailed east during the day as ordered, under the cover of darkness, its course was altered to the north. Finally, with supplies exhausted and rigging shredded, the *Amistad* anchored off the tip of Long Island on August 24. By then, ten of their original number had died, two in the revolt, the rest from thirst or disease. Taken in custody by the United States Navy, the *Amistad* was seized as a salvage prize and towed to the Connecticut port of New

[4]In that period a clear majority was required to elect legislators in Connecticut, so third parties had considerable political leverage, preventing opposition party candidates from serving. In 1846 the law was changed to a simple plurality.

London where an inquiry was held on deck. Since grounds were established for charges of piracy and murder, the Mende were taken to the New Haven jail and held over for trial in September in Hartford.

In the complicated legal case that continued over the next 18 months, many issues were involved, not the least of which was whether United States courts had any jurisdiction in the matter. The prime concern of abolitionists was whether the prisoners would be declared Spanish slaves or freeborn Africans who had been kidnapped. Civil suits by the Spanish planters, claims by Spanish government, and the salvage rights of the naval officers clouded these issues. Furthermore, unconstitutional intervention on the part of President Martin Van Buren, then up for re-election for a second term, subverted the judicial process.

Although former President John Quincy Adams had an advisory role, in the lower courts, the defense was led by the Honorable Roger Sherman Baldwin of Connecticut. Baldwin's strategy was to secure a writ of *habeus corpus* to compel the court to free the Mende unless formal charges were filed, thus establishing their rights as human beings. Even if murder charges were filed, on this basis, the Mende would be entitled to claim self defense. In the first trial in U.S. Circuit Court, District of Connecticut, Judge Smith Thompson, Associate Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court, denied the writ and ruled that since the presumed criminal acts had been committed on the high seas, the court had no jurisdiction. However, he refused to release the Mende from jail because of the pending civil suits and scheduled another trial in January 1840. Since the presiding judge for that court was Andrew Judson, a white-supremacist, Baldwin asked for a change of venue to New York (where slavery had been abolished in 1827), but again was denied.[5] In his ruling, Judson, despite pressure from President Van Buren and the Spanish minister to turn over the Mende for trial in Cuba, found a politically expedient middle ground. After holding that the naval officers had salvage rights to the ship but not to the persons of the Africans, the court ruled that the Mende had been kidnapped illegally and were free under international law. And much to Van Buren's dismay, the judge ordered that the Mende be delivered to the President of the United States to be returned to Africa. Upon the instigation of Van Buren, the United States government appealed this decision all the way to the United States Supreme Court, where the U. S. Attorney General Henry Gilpin essentially argued that the Africans were legal Spanish property.[6]

In their stirring defense on behalf of the Mende, Baldwin and Adams took the high ground. As abolitionists, they seized the opportunity to refocus the case on the basic issue of human rights and to challenge the institution of slavery on moral and constitutional grounds. Baldwin noted that "the [federal] Constitution as it now stands will be searched in vain for any expression

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[5]Andrew Judson had clearly revealed his anti-abolition attitude in the Prudence Crandall case. Acting as counsel for the State of Connecticut, he prosecuted Crandall, a white teacher in Canterbury, Connecticut, for trying to enroll black girls in her previously all-white academy in 1833. She was twice convicted for violating Connecticut's so-called "Black Law" because some of these black students came from outside the community. Although both convictions were overturned by the state supreme court, Crandall was forced to close her school.

[6]The United States vs the Libellants and Claimants of the Schooner Amistad, etc., 40 U.S., 518, January 1841 Term.

recognizing human beings as merchandise or legitimate subjects of commerce." [7] Citing the Madison Papers as his constitutional authority, he questioned:

> .... whether the governrnent based on the promotion of JUSTICE, which was founded on the great principles of the Revolution, as proclaimed in the Declaration of Independence, can ... become a party to the proceedings for the enslavement of human beings cast upon our shores ... within the territorial limits of A FREE AND SOVEREIGN STATE....[8]

By order of the Supreme Court, the Mende were finally freed on March 9, 1841. The decision, rendered by Justice Joseph Story, generally upheld the lower courts. It reaffirmed that the Mende were not the property of the Spanish planters, and since they had been held illegally by force, could not be considered pirates or robbers.[9] The earlier directive to return the Mende to Africa at government expense was reversed, thus relieving the American government of any further diplomatic embarrassment *vis-à-vis* Spain. This task fell to the *Amistad* defense committee which had provided financial and moral support for the prisoners throughout the trial.

Farmington residents had been involved with the case since it began.[10] After John T. Norton of Farmington visited the prisoners soon after they were jailed in New Haven, he clearly expressed in a letter to a Hartford newspaper the moral imperatives embraced by the Northern white abolitionist movement, stating that it was America's obligation "to restore this abused race to their natural rights and to give them the benefits of cultivation and Christianity."[11] During the Mende's 18-month imprisonment, plans were made to bring them to Farmington upon their release, a course of action recommended by the defense committee, headed by Lewis Tappan of the American Missionary Society. If the ruling was ultimately unfavorable, alternatives under consideration included even the radical step of liberating the prisoners by force and taking them to Canada.

There is extensive correspondence between Austin F. Williams and Lewis Tappan regarding the arrangements made for the Mende's care in Farmington.[12] The women lived in private homes and presumably did domestic work. The men, who had quarters provided by Williams (see below), were expected to work six days a week in the fields and all the Mende attended

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[7] *Ibid*, p. 20. The Adam's brief does not appear in the transcript cited (perhaps due to its length), but it was published and widely circulated at the time.

[8] *bid*, p. 20.

[9] The decision was based on a Spanish decree of 1817 banning the slave trade, which declared that after that date all Negroes brought into her dominions by slave traders were to be free. One Antonio, a legal slave owned by the *Amistad* captain, was returned to the captain's heirs in Spain on the claim of the Spanish vice consul.

[10] The story of the Mende in Farmington is taken from Christopher T. Bickford, *Farmington in Connecticut* (Canaan, New Hampshire: Phoenix Publishing, 1982), pp. 290-300.

[11] *Congregational Observer*, September 14, 1839, cited in Bickford.

[12] Ibid. On file in the American Missionary Society archives on microfiche.

Sunday services at First Congregational Church (designated an NHL in 1975). Provision was made to continue their education, which had begun while they were jailed in New Haven, and tutors were hired. They also were required to participate in fund-raising exhibitions held throughout the Northeast. Williams had hoped the funds would be used for a permanent black school in Farmington, but the defense committee's goal was to raise money to defray the cost of their passage to Africa and the establishment of a Christian mission there. Although some free blacks objected to the exploitation, the Mende spoke at these gatherings and also performed with tumbling demonstrations, a skill perfected during their time in New Haven. Joseph Cinqué was the major attraction. Already well known to the public, he had been hailed as an African chief by poet William Cullen Bryant and his portrait painted by Nathaniel Jocelyn. Cinqué delivered speeches in his native language about their capture in Africa and the *Amistad* revolt, while others did readings in English from the Bible.

Although the *Amistad* committee had hoped to have time to truly educate the Mende in Christian doctrine before they went home as missionaries, within a few months it became apparent to everyone that they were eager to return to Africa. There were signs that the Mende had begun to chafe under their rigid schedule and perhaps felt exploited; the committee was greatly concerned that their behavior would reflect unfavorably on the abolitionist cause. Not only did they refuse to perform at the exhibitions without pay, they were less willing to work as farm laborers. In one instance, Cinqué called a labor strike until Austin Williams paid for his new coat. Matters came to a head after the drowning of one of the men, which at the time was thought to be a suicide, and a later near-riot that ensued from a scuffle with drunken militia men on training day. Following a last round of exhibitions to raise more money, the Mende, accompanied by several missionaries (two of whom were black), left Farmington after a farewell ceremony on November 27. They arrived in Freetown, Sierra Leone, West Africa, in January 1842.

The historical associations of the Austin F. Williams Carriagehouse with the *Amistad* Mende are fairly well documented. Recent research has supplemented what until now has been largely oral tradition, except for a published personal reminiscence of a Farmington resident who visited the Mende as a child that seems to confirm that they were housed in a separate building.[13] There never was any question that during most of their eight-month-stay in Farmington, the Mende lived on Williams' property, although until his housing arrangements were completed, they stayed over Samuel Deming's store. Williams expressed his concern about these temporary quarters in a letter to Lewis Tappan and made plans for their relocation. He bought this parcel on Main Street a few weeks later. Since several buildings then standing on the lot, including an old house and a barn, were both demolished in the early twentieth-century, there has been some question as to whether the Mende quarters were still extant. Williams' correspondence does indicate that he immediately set about having a new building erected for "our Mendi family." The frame was raised on May 4, 1841, and the building was completed by the end of the month. From other more definitive evidence, it now appears that the new building is now the east end of the existing carriagehouse. A surviving contract to build the west end and connector dated January, 1842, after the Mende had left Farmington,

[13] Charles Ledyard Norton, *Farmington Magazine*, February, 1901, reprinted in *Farmington, Connecticut: The Village of Beautiful Homes*, 1906, pp. 174-178.

refers to reusing some of the windows of the "Mendi House."[14] Further credence is given to this tradition by the full cellar under that part of the building, a domestic feature not normally found in agrarian outbuildings. Lastly, stylistic evidence is most compelling. An old house or barn already standing on the place would not have exhibited integral features of the latest Greek Revival style.

Proof of the association of this site with the Underground Railroad is less well documented. The network was so secret that only one of the eight participants in Farmington ever acknowledged his involvement in print and that was John T. Norton.[15] However, since Austin F. Williams was a leading abolitionist of his day and devoted much of his life to the cause, it has been generally accepted that he operated a way station and his participation in the Railroad was cited by Strother in his definitive account of the network in Connecticut.[16]
Largely due to William's humanitarian efforts and those of several other local merchants, Farmington became noted for its abolition activity in the Northeast and as a major station on the Underground Railroad in the *antebellum* period. Oral tradition holds that some escaping slaves making their way to freedom in Canada were hidden in the Austin Williams carriagehouse cellar. After the war, Williams was appointed director of the Freedmen's Bureau for New England and New York. In this capacity he found housing and jobs for freed blacks.

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[14]"Farmington Book," p. 208. Until this contract was found, many in Farmington had thought the whole building was the dormitory, and that Cingue stayed in special quarters in the west end. It should be noted that Williams was not yet in residence; the contract to build his house was also dated after the Mende returned to Africa.

[15]Norton admitted his role in an essay he wrote for *Freedom's Gift*, an abolition anthology published in Hartford in 1840, cited in Bickford's *Farmington in Connecticut,* p. 296.

[16]Horatio T. Strother, *The Underground Railroad in Connecticut* (Wesleyan University Press, 1962), p. 167.

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

___ Preliminary Determination of Individual Listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
_X_ 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:
_X_ State Historic Preservation Office
___ Other State Agency
___ Federal Agency
_X_ Local Government
_X_ University
_X_ Other (Specify Repository): Farmington Village Library Archives;
American Missionary Society Archives (AMAA);
New Haven Colony Historical Society Archives and
Sterling Library, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut.
(Also see bibliography.)

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Acreage of Property: 2.6

UTM References:	Zone	Northing	Easting
	A 18	680670	4621050

Verbal Boundary Description:

The boundaries of the nominated property are described in the Farmington Land Records, Volume 478, page 81, being the same property identified on Farmington Tax Assessor's Map 61, as Lot 10, Neighborhood 13.

Boundary Justification:

The boundaries of the nominated property encompass all the remaining property and extant buildings that were associated with Austin F. Williams during the period of significance of the site.

11. FORM PREPARED BY

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Telephone: 860/347 4072

Date: September 15, 1996

Edited by: Patty Henry
National Historic Landmarks Survey
National Park Service
1849 C Street NW
Room NC-400
Washington, D.C. 20240

List of Photographs

All photographs were taken by Cunningham Associates, Ltd. in July, 1996.
Negatives are on file with the Connecticut Historical Commission.

1. **General view of house facade, facing SW**

2. **North and west elevations of house, facing S**

3. **East elevation of house, facing NW**

4. **Added east wing of house, facing N**

5. **Carriagehouse, facing NW**

6. **Carriagehouse, facing NE**

7. **Carriagehouse interior: Main room 1st floor showing location of trapdoor, facing N**

8. **Carriagehouse interior: Trapdoor entrance to cellar from above**

9. **South porch of house, facing NE**

10. **North porch of house, facing S**

11. **House interior: Main staircase, facing S**

12. **House interior: Front hall from staircase, facing NE**

13. **House interior: Living room, facing W**

14. **House interior: North dining room from living room, facing NE**

15. **House interior: Main dining room, facing N**

16. **House interior detail: Cornice/murals on living room wall, facing SE**