The Federal style house of Linda and Brad Williams is comfortably situated in a grove of trees on land purchased from the government by William H. Dunning and Nelson R. Norton in 1839. The original part of the home was built by 1841, with an addition about a year later. The old house was little changed in the next century until the farm was purchased by Bud Gierahn in 1944. He put on new siding and redid the interior. He also built a stone fireplace in the living room, and finished the outside of it with brick from a very old smokehouse on the property. The Williams’ bought the place in 1974, and did even more extensive remodeling. Yet, some of the walls are still from the original farmhouse, judging by the square nails and 1840’s era horsehair plaster. They also repaired the barns in order to raise a few horses.

The Williams’ have turned their farm into a wildlife sanctuary by returning most of the former cropland to natural prairie grasses and flowers and enlarging four natural spring-fed ponds. Linda, a third generation professional artist, uses the resulting landscape as inspiration for her wildlife paintings. Birds are a favorite subject, and they are abundant, especially in the pond settings. Canada geese, mallards, blue-winged teal, woodducks, mergansers and black ducks occasionally share their space with little green and great blue herons, sandhill cranes and lesser scaup. The property extends back to the river, that is, Honey Creek, and includes a former Indian campsite, judging from the number of arrowheads found at the location over the years.

Liz Noble