

**NORTH CAROLINA STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE**  
**Office of Archives and History**  
**Department of Natural and Cultural Resources**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES**

**Thomas A. Morgan Farm**

Townsville vicinity, Vance County, VN0386, Listed 12/19/2019

Nomination by Heather Fearnbach, Fearnbach History Services, Inc.

Photographs by Heather Fearnbach, April 19, 2018 and August 9, 2018



Thomas A. Morgan House, south elevation



Living room, looking west

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 for individual properties and 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 from 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 Thomas A. Morgan Farm

other names/site number Coon Creek Farm; Morgan Farm

### 2. Location

street & number 1471, 1473, and 1475 Morgan Road

**N/A** not for publication

city or town Townsville

**X** vicinity

state North Carolina

code NC

county Vance

code 181

zip code 27377

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby 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 for 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

North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural 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 the 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


Thomas A. Morgan Farm  
Name of Property

Vance County, NC  
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 count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
10	2	buildings
1	0	sites
2	0	structures
1	0	objects
14	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

N/A

## 6. Function or Use

### Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC: Single Dwelling

DOMESTIC: Secondary Structure

AGRICULTURE: Agricultural Outbuilding

AGRICULTURE: Processing

AGRICULTURE: Storage

AGRICULTURE: Animal Facility

AGRICULTURE: Agricultural Field

### Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC: Single Dwelling

DOMESTIC: Secondary Structure

AGRICULTURE: Agricultural Outbuilding

AGRICULTURE: Storage

AGRICULTURE: Animal Facility

AGRICULTURE: Agricultural Field

VACANT/NOT IN USE

## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Other: Rustic Revival-style Log House

Colonial Revival

### Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation BRICK

walls WOOD: Log

WOOD: Weatherboard

roof METAL

other

### Narrative Description

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

Thomas A. Morgan Farm

Name of Property

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## 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.

### Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Industry

### Period of Significance

1937-1967

### Significant Dates

1938

### Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked)

Morgan, Thomas A.

### Cultural Affiliation

N/A

### Architect/Builder

Mixon, Benjamin Harrell, builder and drawing renderer  
Flannagan, Eric G., architect, livestock barn

### Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

### Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more 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:

Coon Creek Farm LLC collection at Thomas A. Morgan Farm (private family papers)



Thomas A. Morgan Farm  
Name of Property

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## 10. Geographical Data

**Acreage of Property** Approximately 87 acres

See Latitude/Longitude coordinates continuation sheet

### UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1                                   
Zone Easting Northing  
2                                 

3                                   
Zone Easting Northing  
4                                 

☒ See continuation sheet

### Verbal Boundary Description

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

### Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Heather Fearnbach  
organization Fearnbach History Services, Inc. date 8/31/2019  
street & number 3334 Nottingham Road telephone (336) 765-2661  
city or town Winston-Salem state NC zip code 27104

### Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

#### Continuation Sheets

#### Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

#### Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

#### Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

## Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name Coon Creek Farm LLC, c/o Tom Morgan  
street & number 2249 Espejo Place telephone (203) 893-5398  
city or town Santa Fe state NM zip code 87505

**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 listing. Response to this request 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 Reduction Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20303.

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Thomas A. Morgan Farm  
Vance County, NC

## 7. Narrative Description

### Materials, continued.

Foundation: CONCRETE

Walls: BRICK

Walls: CONCRETE

Roof: ASPHALT

### Setting

The Thomas A. Morgan Farm National Register boundary encompasses approximately 87 of 1,911 acres that have been owned by three generations of the Morgan family since 1937. Thomas Morgan's holdings, initially comprising around 1,965 acres, extended south across Morgan Road, which runs east-west and now serves as the parcel's south edge. He purchased an additional 275 acres in 1940, and in 1944 sold the farm's south-central section, a 310-acre tract flanking the road, to his brother Robert Lee Morgan. Robert's tract included Grove Hill, a no-longer-extant two-story, weatherboarded, late-nineteenth-century dwelling where he resided with his family. Robert's son William Robert Morgan, known as "Bob," inherited that acreage, while Thomas Morgan's heirs retain the property on Morgan Road's north side.<sup>1</sup>

The farm is located in rural northwest Vance County, about eleven miles northwest of Henderson in Townsville Township. The north-south line dividing Granville and Vance Counties is around three miles west of the property's west edge. Neighboring crossroads communities include Townsville, approximately two miles northeast; Williamsboro, about three miles southeast; and Bullock, just over four miles west in Granville County. Although residential development continues to proliferate, large agricultural and wooded tracts perpetuate the bucolic nature of the immediate vicinity.

### Inventory

The inventory list enumerates buildings, structures, an object, and a site, beginning with the landscape and then moving to primary and secondary resources grouped by location. Primary resource names are underlined; outbuildings are described after the primary resource they are closest to. Each resource is designated as contributing or noncontributing to the district's historic significance and integrity. Designation criteria are based on age and degree of alteration. Buildings are considered contributing if

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<sup>1</sup> Tracts bought, sold, and conveyed by Thomas Morgan and his heirs are delineated in 2004 Vance County Deed 1055, p. 591. See also J. E. Reid, "Marrow Lands," report commissioned by Citizens Bank and Trust, May 3, 1937, in the possession of Coon Creek Farm LLC; Vance County Deed Book 198, p. 452; Deed Book 220, p. 61; Deed Book 221, p. 79; Deed Book 234, p. 537; Plat Map C, p. 54; Estate File 84-E-303.

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they were constructed before 1967 and retain architectural integrity from the period of significance. Noncontributing buildings were unsympathetically altered or erected after 1967. Dates of construction are based on building plans, documentary evidence; building technology, style, and form; and interviews with family members and other informants.

## Resource List

Landscape, contributing site

Thomas A. Morgan House, 1475 Morgan Road, 1938, 1948, 2000, contributing building

Dam, Pond, and Bridge, 1938, contributing structure

Tenant House, 1956, contributing building

Frank and Elizabeth Morgan House, 1473 Morgan Road, 1938, contributing building

Chicken House I, 1938, contributing building

Chicken House II, 1938, late-twentieth century, noncontributing building

Storage Building, early-twenty-first century, noncontributing building

Tobacco Packhouse, 1938, 1950s, contributing building

Livestock Barn, 1938, 1950s, contributing building

Corncrib, 1938, contributing building

Well House, 1938, contributing structure

Milking Parlor, 1938, contributing building

Equipment Shed, 1938, contributing building

Gas Pump, 1938, contributing object

Tenant House, 1471 Morgan Road, 1953, contributing building

## Landscape, Contributing Site

The irregularly-shaped National Register tract comprises pastures fronting Morgan Road, a central outbuilding complex and four residences connected by gravel roads, two man-made ponds, and perimeter wooded areas. A long, straight, cedar-lined, central road leads north from Morgan Road through fenced pastures to outbuildings and intersecting roads. The road that extends east at the primary outbuilding cluster provides access to a tenant house and the farm's wooded east section. A west road, north of the outbuildings, terminates at a cul-de-sac south of Thomas Morgan's log house. North of the west road, the central road intersects a road that leads to the pond and log tenant house northeast of Thomas Morgan's house and continues to the property's wooded north section, which is not included within the National Register boundary. The central road ends at a cul-de-sac adjacent to the Frank and Elizabeth Morgan House.

The topography is gently rolling, with most buildings situated in small clearings at higher elevations. Modern post-and-wire fences with metal-bar gates secure livestock pastures. During the mid-twentieth

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# National Register of Historic Places

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century, a no-longer-extant post-and-board fence and rose bushes tended by Thomas Morgan's wife Celeste flanked the central road south of the outbuilding complex.<sup>2</sup> Deciduous and evergreen trees line farm roads and serve as windbreaks bordering fields and pastures. Drainage ditches follow the same paths in most cases. Little Island Creek and its tributaries flow through the property, contributing to the rich soil, feeding springs, and facilitating the creation of the ponds in the south pasture and north of the Thomas Morgan House.

Aerial photographs and timber surveys illustrate that the distribution of wooded and cultivated acreage has been relatively consistent throughout the farm for the past eighty years. In 1937, forest engineer J. E. Reid concluded that the 1,972-acre tract encompassed 1,653 wooded acres, 199 cultivated acres, 85 acres of fallow fields or open land, and 35 acres of young pine saplings. Timber had not been extensively cut since the turn of the twentieth century, resulting in significant stands of mill-grade pine (67 percent) and white oak (13 percent) and smaller quantities of marketable poplar, red gum, red oak, and other hardwoods.<sup>3</sup> Frank Morgan oversaw subsequent timber harvests; corn, wheat, and tobacco production; and livestock management until his death in 1965, after which Bob Morgan assumed the task. Frank's family maintained a multi-acre vegetable garden south of their home and east of the primary outbuilding complex. A Henderson pickle factory purchased large quantities of cucumbers from the farm.<sup>4</sup>

Bob Morgan initiated loblolly pine cultivation to replace harvested pine and hardwood stands and introduced soybeans. Cash crop production ceased in the early 1980s, but timbering continues. While cleared acreage has been reduced, the multi-acre fields' and pastures' irregular shapes, which conform to landscape contours, are still visible. As of 2018, slightly fewer acres near the house and outbuildings are open and the wooded areas have less growth than shown in a 1955 aerial photograph. Approximately 66 acres in the south and east sections encompass pastures and fields. The mature loblolly pine stands in the central area were planted in 1978. Approximately 1,513 acres throughout the farm contain loblolly pine stands in various stages of cultivation. About 887 acres were planted after harvests in 1978, 1988, 1995, 2001, and 2002. The most recently harvested area, 205 acres along the property's west edge, was cut and replanted in 2014. After each harvest, tracts are either burned or chemically sprayed to kill volunteer growth. Crews then plant approximately five hundred seedlings per acre by hand as tree spacing is imperative to maximize growth. Tracts are thinned as trees mature, typically every fifteen to twenty years. Mature growth is cut, milled, and sold at sealed-bid auctions. The farm's 421-acre north section will be harvested and replanted in 2019. The stream management

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<sup>2</sup> Bob Morgan, Tom Morgan, Jim Morgan, and Virginia Hamilton, conversation with Heather Fearnbach, August 9, 2018.

<sup>3</sup> J. E. Reid, "Excerpts from the Timber Report on the G. W. and J. T. Marrow Tract," report commissioned by Citizens Bank and Trust, May 3, 1937, in the possession of Coon Creek Farm LLC.

<sup>4</sup> Bob Morgan, Tom Morgan, Jim Morgan, and Virginia Hamilton, conversation with Heather Fearnbach, August 9, 2018.

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zone adjacent to creeks and watersheds comprises 331 dormant acres that are carefully managed to avoid erosion.<sup>5</sup>

## **Thomas A. Morgan House, 1475 Morgan Road, 1938, 1948, 2000, contributing building**

### *Setting*

The house faces south at the end of a long curvilinear gravel drive that extends northwest from the central farm road. At its north end, the drive encircles a grass lawn punctuated with deciduous and evergreen trees. Pink- and white-flowering dogwoods planted in the mid-twentieth century predominate. Many large pines that once filled the area were removed after a late-twentieth-century storm caused extensive damage. The house is situated at higher elevation than the pond and creek to the northeast. Only a few trees punctuate the lawn between the house and pond in order to allow for unobstructed views.

### *Exterior*

The one-story-on-basement, H-plan, Rustic Revival-style log dwelling comprises a side-gable central block, flanking front-gable wings, and an inset front porch. Dark-stained, round, saddle-notched pine log walls are accentuated by white concrete mortar. Multipane steel-frame casement windows, painted dark green as they were historically, have dark-stained flat-board surrounds and shallow sills. The matching one-story addition that extends at a lower grade from the west wing's northwest corner was erected in 1948. A rectangular fieldstone chimney rises from the asphalt-shingled roof near the central block's west end. Aluminum gutters were installed in conjunction with repairs after a 2000 fire damaged the roof and rear addition. The building rests on a common-bond variegated-brick foundation.

An engaged porch that projects slightly further south than the wings' south walls shelters the primary entrance at the five-bay south elevation's center. The porch features bracketed stripped-log posts, a bluestone floor, and an exposed wood roof system. Two central bluestone-capped brick steps provide access. A grinding stone from a grist mill that was on the property when Thomas Morgan acquired it is inset in at the base of the steps. A bluestone walk extends to the gravel drive.

Windows and doors are notably intact. As the house was not originally air-conditioned, operable sash of varying size and screen doors provided critical ventilation. Fenestration is regular. Thirty-pane

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<sup>5</sup> 1937 aerial photograph in the possession of Coon Creek Farm LLC; Vance County near Townsville, aerial photograph AJY-5N-117, North Carolina Geological Survey, February 26, 1955; aerial photograph, Vance County ConnectGIS, 2017; Bob Morgan, Howard R. Gillis (timber broker), and William J. Stayton (consulting forester), conversation with Heather Fearnbach, August 9, 2018.

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steel-frame sash, each comprising a central sixteen-pane casement, six-pane fixed upper row, and four-pane sidelights, light the main block's primary rooms. Tall, narrow, ten-pane sash with an eight-pane casement and two fixed upper panes pierce secondary wall expanses. Six-pane sash with a four-pane casement and two fixed upper panes illuminate bathrooms. The kitchen features a twelve-pane sash with an eight-pane casement on its west elevation and an eighteen-pane sash with an eight-pane casement on its north elevation. The grade slope to the north allows for short four- and eight-pane casements with slightly projecting header-course brick sills on the north and west basement walls. Most casements originally had screens, but only a few remain.

Board-and-batten doors feature oversized wrought-iron strap hinges and thumb latches. The wood-frame screen doors are also original. Those on the south elevation and the rear addition's west elevation initially had 120-volt bars spanning the upper section that zapped insects, but the electrification element has been removed.<sup>6</sup> The kitchen entrance on the four-bay west elevation was originally accessed by a short straight run of wood steps with a wood railing that led to a small wood landing. A small shed porch and large wood deck supported by square wood posts were constructed at this entrance after the 2000 fire. A dimensional lumber railing borders the deck. The brick-paver walk that leads to the steps was added in 1995.

The one-story gabled rear addition is three bays long and one bay wide. Bracketed stripped-log posts support the single-bay shed porch at the central entrance on the addition's west elevation. A concrete step leads to the concrete landing, which has a brick foundation. Tall eight-pane casements light the addition with the exception of the two-pane bathroom casement at the east elevation's center. The entrance at the east elevation's south end is encompassed within the narrow shed-roofed screened breezeway with a concrete floor and steps that extends from the main block's west wing to provide sheltered egress between the basement and addition. On the main block's north elevation, a four-bay sunroom projects further north than the main block's wings.

***Interior***

The main block's first story encompasses a central living room and north sunroom; two bedrooms and a shared bathroom in the east wing; and a master bedroom, bathroom, and kitchen in the west wing. The interior retains character-defining finishes including log walls with concrete mortar, wide oak floors ornamented with faux pegs, simple molded pine baseboards and window and door surrounds, and thick vertical-board doors with wrought-iron hardware. The spacious living room is open to the roof, showcasing wood rafters, trusses, and board decking, some of which were replaced after the 2000 fire. Replacement elements are slightly lighter in color than original components. A large fireplace with a fieldstone surround, thick wood mantel shelf, bluestone hearth, and brick firebox is centered on

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<sup>6</sup> Tom Morgan, Jim Morgan, and Virginia Hamilton, conversation with Heather Fearnbach, August 9, 2018.

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the west wall. A grinding stone from the grist mill that was on the property is inset in the hearth. The wrought-iron andirons and fireplace tools and three-section brass screen embellished with a pussy willow motif are original. Thomas Morgan designed the living room light fixtures: small brass sconces with ribbed globes that emulate lights on naval vessels, and five-arm brass chandeliers with oil-lamp globes and brass shades. Although the décor has been updated since Morgan's 1967 death, original furnishings, accessories, art, and photographs remain throughout the house.

Random-width vertical pine boards sheathe the central frame partition walls within the wings and narrower uniform-width pine boards clad the ceilings. Each wing contains two rooms separated by a bathroom and closets. The bathrooms retain original tile wainscoting, shower surrounds, and floors; mirrored, illuminated, metal medicine cabinets; and white porcelain tubs, lavatories, and pedestal sinks. The east bathroom features pale-turquoise square-ceramic-tile wainscoting with darker turquoise base and bullnose tiles. The patterned floor comprises small square turquoise tiles and larger white floor tiles. The west bathroom is identical with the exception of yellow tile. Ceramic towel bars and toothbrush, cup, toilet paper, and soap holders are mounted in the wainscoting. The west lavatory has been replaced.

Doors in the living room and sunporch's west walls provide access to the kitchen. Simple white wood cabinets with laminate countertops were installed on the west and north elevations in 2000. The kitchen has a sheet vinyl floor. A large pantry and basement stair line the south elevation. The stair entrance is opposite the exterior door at the room's southwest corner. A straight run of wood steps with a wood handrail leads to the basement.

The unfinished partial basement contains storage, furnace, and laundry rooms, as well as a bathroom remodeled in 2000. The principal rooms have poured-concrete floors, unpainted brick walls, and exposed mechanical systems. The main level's floor system is exposed with the exception of the north storage room, where narrow boards sheathe the ceiling, and the bathroom, which has a gypsum-board ceiling. An original tall wood cabinet with five-panel doors remains in the furnace room. The oil-fueled furnace was replaced by a gas furnace and air conditioning in 2000.

The rear addition now comprises two bedrooms and a central bathroom. The small vestibule at the west elevation's center provides access to both bedrooms. The north room was originally a tack room and therefore features a built-in storage cabinet with three tall paneled upper doors, three drawers, and three short paneled lower doors. The south room has always served as a bedroom. The wing finishes are the same as those in the main block with the exception of sheet-vinyl floors installed in 2000. The bathroom has vertical-board wall sheathing, a matching ceiling, and a sheet-vinyl floor. The wall-mount white porcelain sink with tapered chrome legs and towel bars is original. The shower surround and lavatory were added in 2000.



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## **Dam, Pond, and Bridge, 1938, contributing structure**

B. H. Mixon's crew constructed the formed-concrete dam that captures water from Little Island Creek north of the house. The large rectangular pond was regularly populated with fish during the mid-twentieth century and has been periodically dredged. Sediment was removed and the banks restored in 2016. A bridge with a wide-plank deck and formed-concrete abutments spans the creek on the pond's east side.

## **Tenant House, 1956, contributing building**

The hip-roofed, square, one-room, log residence northeast of the Thomas A. Morgan House and pond was called "the box," according to a 1960 inscription in the concrete porch floor. Like the Morgan House, the dwelling is characterized by dark-stained, round, saddle-notched log walls and concrete mortar. Projecting rafter ends support deep eaves and the shed-roofed front porch that spans the entire three-bay façade (west elevation). The slender round steel porch posts and concrete-slab floor were added between 1960 and 1963. The concrete-block foundation increases in height moving east due to the grade slope.

Six-over-six double-hung wood sash with aluminum-frame screens illuminate the interior. On the west elevation, two windows flank a wood six-panel door with a wood-frame screen door. Two windows piece the north elevation on either side of the square concrete-block stovepipe chimney at its center. One window remains exposed near the east elevation's north end. A board-and-batten-sheathed, shed-roofed, rear addition comprising a north bathroom and a small screened south porch extends from the east elevation's south section. The addition's north elevation is blind. A six-over-six double-hung wood sash lights the bathroom. Square wood-frame screens fill the upper portion of the porch walls. Three concrete-block steps lead to the single-leaf wood-frame screen door at the center of the porch's south wall.

The interior was originally a single open room. Intact finishes include log walls with white-painted concrete mortar, narrow oak floors, and simple flat baseboards and window and door surrounds. The roof system—dimensional lumber rafters and painted-plywood roof decking—is exposed. Partial-height plywood partition walls with hollow-core plywood doors were added in the early 1960s to create two rooms on the south side and a small southeast corner closet.

## **Frank and Elizabeth Morgan House, 1473 Morgan Road, 1938, contributing building**

Thomas Morgan commissioned the construction of this one-story, brick, austere Colonial Revival residence to accommodate his younger brother Frank Wilson Morgan (1904-1965), who served as the

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farm's manager. Frank's wife Elizabeth and their daughter Virginia shared the home. B. H. Mixon rendered the floor plan and elevations.<sup>7</sup>

The compact house faces south toward a grass lawn at the end of a straight gravel drive that extends north from the primary farm road and terminates at a cul-de-sac. The dwelling is three bays wide and four bays deep, with a side-gable main block and a hip-roofed rear section. The variegated-red-brick running-bond veneer walls are embellished with a soldier-course water table and window and door lintels, as well as slighting projecting header-course window sills. A small gabled portico with square posts, a bead board ceiling, a brick floor, and brick steps shelters the primary entrance on the south elevation. The larger west porch matches with the exception of a painted concrete floor and the dimensional lumber railing that has been added at the steps. The recessed, originally screened, rear porch at the dwelling's northwest corner was enclosed with windows and a single-leaf aluminum-frame storm door in the late-twentieth century. A small shed-roofed canopy with square posts surmounts the entrance and formed-concrete steps. Original wood doors with nine-pane upper sections and two-vertical-panel bases remain at the south, west, and north entrances. Single and paired windows, larger in primary spaces than the bathroom and kitchen, pierce each elevation. Vinyl six-over-six double-hung sash (which replaced the original multipane double-hung wood sash), vinyl siding in the west and south porch gables; vinyl siding on the rear porch walls, fixed vinyl louvered shutters flanking the two paired façade windows; and an asphalt-shingle roof were installed in early 2000. There were no shutters originally. A rectangular brick chimney serves the main block and a tall square brick chimney rises on the north elevation.

The efficient floor plan comprises six primary rooms flanking a central corridor that extends north from the living room's northeast corner. Original interior finishes include smooth plaster walls and ceilings, tongue-and-groove oak floors, paneled wood doors, and molded window and door surrounds, baseboards, and picture rails. On the living room's south and west elevations, exterior doors provide porch egress. The north elevation features a central fireplace with a classical post-and-lintel mantel. A dining room and kitchen fill the dwelling's west half north of the living room. An original shaped wood valance ornaments the dining room window. Original wood cabinets with flat doors, drawers, and a shaped cornice above the window span the kitchen's west wall. The laminate countertop and central island were installed in the early-twenty-first century. Three bedrooms and a bathroom line the east elevation. A straight run of wood steps leads from the rear porch to the partial basement's northeast corner. The open room has concrete floors, brick walls, and a pegboard ceiling.

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<sup>7</sup> B. H. Mixon, "Thomas A. Morgan Cabin," undated drawings (four sheets) in the possession of Coon Creek Farm LLC.

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## **Chicken House I, 1938, contributing building**

Two long, narrow, weatherboarded, shed-roofed chicken houses stand northeast of the house. A post-and-wire fence encloses the area between them. Both face south. The north chicken house is intact, with bands of open windows flanking a central board-and-batten door on the south elevation. The remaining elevations are blind.

## **Chicken House II, 1938, late-twentieth century, noncontributing building**

The south chicken house was likely originally identical, but the south wall was sheathed with T-111 panels and three narrow windows and two T-111 doors installed in the late-twentieth century. An open shed extends from the east elevation. The small square window on the west elevation has been enclosed with weatherboards.

## **Storage Building, early-twenty-first century, noncontributing building**

A corrugated-metal storage building with a low front-gable roof and a roll-up corrugated-metal door on the south elevation is northwest of the house at the end of the gravel drive.

## ***South Outbuilding Cluster***

## **Tobacco Packhouse, 1938, 1950s, contributing building**

The one-story, side-gable-roofed, German-sided tobacco packhouse west of the corn crib and barn has a formed-concrete foundation and a standing-seam metal roof with exposed gable ends. Sliding vertical-board-and-batten doors secure wide central entrances on the north and south elevations. B. H. Mixon's drawings indicate that the doors facilitated drive-through loading and unloading. The wide rectangular window east of the door has been boarded-up, but initially illuminated the grading room at the northeast corner. The windowless southeast corner room was used for tobacco ordering.<sup>8</sup> Two small rectangular windows pierce the gable ends, but the east, south, and west elevations are otherwise blind.

The completely intact interior is characterized by an exposed frame structural system. Although the drive-through has a dirt floor, the flanking areas have elevated wood floors. German siding sheathes the partition walls of the east rooms and five horizontal-panel doors secure their entrances. A freestanding, movable, straight run of open wood steps currently positioned at the drive-through's

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<sup>8</sup> B. H. Mixon, "Tobacco Storage House," undated drawing in the possession of Coon Creek Farm LLC.

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south end leads to the east loft. A ladder provides access to the loft above the barn's open west section.

A shorter one-story, two-bay, mid-twentieth-century garage addition extends from the east elevation. Sliding multi-panel plywood garage doors fill most of the north elevations. The remaining elevations are blind. The garage has cementitious siding, a concrete-block foundation, a gravel floor, and an open unfinished interior with exposed wood wall and roof framing.

## **Livestock Barn, 1938, 1950s, contributing building**

The gambrel-roofed, weatherboarded, two-level livestock barn faces east at the outbuilding complex's northeast corner. The building was gradually enlarged with a series of rear livestock stalls and a north equipment shed. B. H. Mixon provided preliminary sketches for the barn, but Henderson architect Eric G. Flannagan rendered the drawings that were executed. Mixon subsequently drew the plans for the one-story rear shed addition that was later expanded to the north.<sup>9</sup>

The east elevation's dominant feature is the narrow-vertical-board-and-batten, double-leaf, pointed-arch, hay loft door beneath the deep eaves. A horse weathervane tops the roof peak above the door. The primary central entrance was initially secured with a sliding door, but the door and the weatherboards to its north were removed in the late 1950s to create a wider opening adjacent to the equipment shed that extends across the barn's north elevation and the rear shed addition.

The weatherboards on much of the barn's north wall were removed in conjunction with the equipment shed's construction. Bracketed square posts with cast-concrete plinths support the shed, which has a dirt floor. The rear shed addition replaced an open shed that originally spanned the west elevation. The addition's north elevation is blind. A single-leaf board-and-batten door and three rectangular stall windows pierce the west elevation. A drop-down horizontal-board shutter secures the north opening. The addition's south elevation comprises two single-leaf board-and-batten doors and two square stall windows. Five matching windows punctuate the barn's south elevation. Board-and-batten shutters secure the window openings. The barn rests on a formed-concrete foundation. Standing-seam metal sheathes the roof.

The barn's northeast section originally contained a large mule stall. This area is now open. The calf stall west of the mule stall remains. On the south side of the central passage, moving east to west, three livestock stalls, a harness room, a granary, and a corncrib line the south elevation. Vertical

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<sup>9</sup> Eric G. Flannagan, "Barn for Thomas Morgan Estate, Vance County, North Carolina," undated drawings (four sheets) in the possession of Coon Creek Farm LLC; B. H. Mixon, "Addition to Barn," undated drawing in the possession of Coon Creek Farm LLC.

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boards sheathe the partition walls and board-and batten doors (Dutch doors in the stalls) and original hardware are intact. Stalls retain original wood-and-wire feed bins. Stall floors are dirt, but the harness room, granary, and corncrib have elevated wood floors. Between the stall and harness room doors, a hay chute facilitates feed transfer from the loft. Within the harness room, a straight steep run of wood steps leads to the loft.

## **Corncrib, 1938, contributing building**

South of the barn, a square weatherboarded corncrib with a pyramidal folded-standing-seam-metal roof and exposed rafter ends is elevated on brick piers. An open equipment shed supported by stripped logs posts spans the west elevation. The upper sections of each elevation consist of slatted boards that provide air circulation for stored corn. A board-and-batten door at the north elevation's center allows interior access.

## **Well House, 1938, contributing structure**

The deep well and pump east of the corncrib are covered by a small structure with five-to-one common-bond redbrick walls and a metal-sheathed shed roof. Small rectangular metal vents pierce the east and west elevations. A poured-concrete pad extends from the west and north elevations.

## **Milking Parlor, 1938, contributing building**

The one-story, shed-roofed, weatherboarded milking parlor south of the corn crib has a brick foundation and a standing-seam metal roof. Flat-board soffits cover the rafter ends. The primary south elevation comprises two single-leaf, board-and-batten, Dutch doors and two square windows. Two six-pane wood sash remain in the lower portions of the west elevation's window openings, which are enclosed with plywood. A single-leaf, board-and-batten, Dutch door and a square window pierce the north elevation's center, while the east elevation contains a single board-and-batten Dutch door. Most of the interior is open. Vertical boards sheathe the lower portion of the walls in two stalls at the building's west end. The floor is dirt and the interior unfinished with exposed wood wall and roof framing. A bracketed square post at the building's center supports the dimensional lumber beam that carries the roof load.

## **Equipment Shed, 1938, contributing building**

The gable-roofed equipment shed south of the milking parlor features an open south section with bracketed stripped log posts, weatherboarded gables, and vertical-board sheathing at the top of the south wall. The weatherboarded metal- and wood-working shop that spans the entire north elevation is

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not shown on B. H. Mixon's initial plan, which illustrates a small corner tool room.<sup>10</sup> Three long, rectangular, three-section window openings on the tool room's north elevation are enclosed with plywood. A two-shelf wood bench extends across the most of the north elevation beneath the windows. A wood-frame-and-wire wall secures the equipment cage at the room's west end. Rough-sawn vertical boards form the wall between the tool room and the open shed. The building has a standing-seam-metal roof and a dirt floor.

**Gas Pump, 1938, contributing object**

The metal gas pump east of the primary farm road and the barn is in fair condition. The shell is extensively rusted and the front and rear panels collapsed, exposing the interior workings.

**Tenant House, 1471 Morgan Road, 1953, contributing building**

The side-gable-roofed concrete-block house east of the outbuilding complex is surrounded by a grass lawn and accessed by an unpaved drive from the farm road. The three-bay south elevation comprises a central single-leaf vinyl door and two flanking windows. The original wood door, which had three horizontal base panels and a six-light upper section, was replaced in 2018. Six-over-six vinyl sash were installed throughout the house at the same time, replacing steel-frame casement windows. Square wood posts on concrete-block plinths support the one-bay shed-roofed entrance porch, which has a beadboard ceiling and concrete floor. Two windows pierce each of the east and west elevations. A shed-roofed bathroom with a high north window projects from the north elevation's center. The recessed porch was enclosed with vinyl siding and a single-leaf vinyl door in 2018. A concrete-block stove-pipe chimney rises from the center of the asphalt-shingle roof.

The interior is characterized by painted concrete-block walls, a poured-concrete floor, original Celotex and replacement gypsum-board ceilings, two-panel wood doors, and simple molded wood cornices and window and door surrounds. Floor coverings were removed and the kitchen and bathroom remodeled in 2018. A ceramic tile floor, textured PVC wall panels, and an acrylic tub and shower surround were added in the bathroom.

**Integrity Statement**

The Thomas A. Morgan Farm possesses the seven qualities of historic integrity—location, setting, feeling, association, design, materials, and workmanship—required for National Register designation. The buildings maintain integrity of location as they stand on original sites. The retention of extensive acreage preserves the farm's rural character and thus perpetuates integrity of setting, feeling, and

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<sup>10</sup> B. H. Mixon, "Machinery Shed," undated drawing in the possession of Coon Creek Farm LLC.

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association. Landscape appearance has been consistent since 1938, with little change to farm roads, field patterns, and relationship of wooded tracts to open pastures and fields.

The remarkably intact farm dwellings and outbuildings display integrity of design, materials, and workmanship. The Rustic Revival-style Thomas A. Morgan House and the log tenant house are characterized by dark-stained, round, saddle-notched pine log walls accentuated by white concrete mortar. The Thomas A. Morgan House features bracketed stripped-log porch posts, a bluestone front porch floor, multipane steel-frame casement windows, and board-and-batten doors with oversized wrought-iron strap hinges and thumb latches. Intact interior finishes comprise log walls, wide oak floors ornamented with faux pegs, simple molded pine baseboards and window and door surrounds, and thick vertical-board doors with wrought-iron hardware. The simply executed 1956 tenant house has six-over-six double-hung wood sash and a full-width front porch supported by slender round steel posts. The one-story, brick, gable-and-hip-roofed, austere Colonial Revival Frank and Elizabeth Morgan retains two gabled porticos with square posts, smooth plaster walls and ceilings, tongue-and-groove oak floors, paneled wood doors, and molded window and door surrounds, baseboards, and picture rails. With the exception of an altered chicken house, six of the seven original frame outbuildings maintain architectural integrity. Most evolved as needed to facilitate ongoing use. The gambrel-roofed frame livestock barn and gable-roofed frame tobacco packhouse were enlarged in the 1950s. The sliding central door on the barn's east elevation, some weatherboards to the north, and weatherboards on much of the north wall were removed in the late 1950s in conjunction with the north equipment shed's construction. These modifications do not significantly diminish the barn's overall integrity, however, due to the retention of original elements including livestock stalls and a harness room, granary, and corncrib with vertical-board partition walls, board-and batten doors with original hardware, wood-and-wire feed bins, a hay chute, and wood steps to the loft.

## **Statement of Archaeological Potential**

The Thomas A. Morgan Farm is closely related to the surrounding environment. Archaeological remains, such as trash middens, remains of planting beds and fence lines, former outbuildings, and other structural remains which may be present, can provide information valuable to the understanding and interpretation of the farm. Information concerning the character of daily life for the tenant farmers and farm managers, as well as structural details and landscape use, can be obtained from the archaeological record. Therefore, archaeological remains may well be an important component of the significance of the property. At this time no investigation has been done to document these remains, but it is likely that they exist, and this should be considered in any development of the property.



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## 8. Statement of Significance

The locally significant Thomas A. Morgan Farm meets National Register of Historic Places Criterion B in the area of industry due to its association with Vance County native and Sperry Corporation president Thomas A. Morgan throughout his productive career. The period of significance begins with Morgan's 1937 acquisition of the property and ends upon his 1967 death. The influential executive headed North American Aviation from 1929 until 1933, followed by the Sperry Corporation and its subsidiaries until his 1952 retirement. During his tenure, the concern made significant contributions to the aviation, electrical, hydraulic, and marine industries and the U. S. military and navy by developing and manufacturing hundreds of products ranging from automated firing devices to sound locators. The firm grew exponentially during World War II, burgeoning from 5,376 personnel in 1940 to 56,019 at fifteen plants in 1945. The company also provided equipment operation training for more than 77,000 military and naval personnel over the course of the war. Sperry Corporation and its subsidiaries garnered thirty-four government awards for outstanding performance and reported over two billion dollars of defense equipment sales between 1940 and 1945. In 1948, Morgan accepted a President's Certificate of Merit from Secretary of Defense James V. Forrestal in recognition of the Sperry Corporation's contributions to Allied success during World War II. U. S. presidents Franklin D. Roosevelt, Harry S. Truman, and Dwight D. Eisenhower sought Morgan's guidance due to his business acumen and industrial expertise. Morgan led myriad boards of directors and promoted charitable campaigns of entities including the United Negro College Fund and the American Cancer Society until his death in 1967. Although his primary residence was in Manhattan, New York while he headed Sperry Corporation, he spent as much time as possible at the Vance County farm until his retirement, after which he remained there for the rest of his life. The Thomas A. Morgan Farm is the principal extant property closely associated with Morgan during his productive career. His ability to develop the farm in the late 1930s, both for personal recreation and to provide an agricultural livelihood for his family and tenant farmers, demonstrates his multi-industry influence and financial success during the mid-twentieth century.

The Thomas A. Morgan Farm also merits listing under Criterion C for architecture due to its remarkably intact collection of mid-twentieth-century dwellings and outbuildings arranged in a manner that takes advantage of the topography and maximizes the farm's functional efficiency, a central tenet of progressive agricultural practices. Henderson building contractor Benjamin Harrell Mixon rendered plans for the Rustic Revival-style log Thomas A. Morgan House (1938), the brick Colonial Revival Frank and Elizabeth Morgan House (1938), seven frame outbuildings, and a pond and dam, all of which his company erected by 1938 using wood and stone from the farm. The Morgans commissioned prolific Henderson architect and engineer Eric G. Flannagan to provide drawings for the livestock barn's original section. The simply executed livestock barn, tobacco packhouse, chicken houses, corncrib, milking parlor, and equipment shed epitomize the pragmatic construction approach that was typical during the 1930s. The farm also contains a concrete-block tenant house (1953) constructed by

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Greystone Concrete Products Company and a Rustic Revival-style log tenant house (1956) built by Prince Hargrove. The National Register boundary encompasses approximately 87 of 1,911 northwest Vance County acres that have been owned by three generations of the Morgan family since 1937; sufficient land to convey the farm's rural character, agricultural significance, and association with Thomas A. Morgan. Ownership continuity facilitated landscape preservation, as shown by aerial photographs illustrating consistent distribution of wooded and cleared acreage over the past eighty years.

## Criterion B Context and Historical Background

### *Thomas A. Morgan (1887-1967)*

Thomas A. Morgan, born on September 27, 1887, was the eldest of sharecroppers James and Virginia Morgan's six children. He attended a rural one-room public school in northwest Vance County before entering high school in the small Halifax County community of Littleton, where he subsidized living expenses by working in a livery stable and as a carpenter, electrical repairman, and power plant and telephone exchange operator. Morgan received electronics training after enlisting in the United States Navy in 1908. While the U.S.S. Delaware's chief electrician in 1911, he helped to install and operate the newly invented Sperry gyrocompass—a nonmagnetic compass that utilizes a continuously driven gyroscope (fast-spinning disc) and the Earth's rotation to calculate geographical direction. Due to the gyroscope's immunity to magnetic interferences such as those caused by steel structures, electric circuits, and ore deposits, gyrocompasses could be used on metal-hull ships, in inclement weather, and at night, making them indispensable for naval applications. Morgan's technical prowess resulted in a job offer from the Sperry gyrocompass's inventor, Dr. Elmer A. Sperry. Morgan accepted in 1912 and travelled throughout Europe marketing Sperry's equipment and installing it on British, French, Italian, and Russian naval vessels. The company supplied the United States Navy and allied forces with gyrocompasses and other devices during World War I. Morgan's territory expanded to China and Japan following the war. He became Sperry Gyroscope Company's vice-president in 1922 and president in 1929 when North American Aviation, Inc., purchased the business from Dr. Sperry. North American Aviation's holdings then included Berliner Joyce Aircraft, Eastern Air Transport and Curtiss-Wright Corporation, purportedly the world's largest aircraft manufacturer. Morgan subsequently headed all four companies.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>French inventor Jean-Bernard-Leon Foucault had developed a gyroscope in 1852, and others followed, but German inventor Hermann Anschütz-Kaempfe's 1906 gyroscope was the first that could be practicably used on naval vessels. The German Imperial Navy began employing the technology in 1908. Don Eddy, "He Builds Machines That Think," *This Week Magazine* (New York Herald-Tribune), November 9, 1941, p. 9; Don Wharton, "Tattooed Tarheel," *Saturday Evening Post*, May 22, 1943, pp. 22-23, 63; "Thomas A. Morgan," undated three-page narrative in the "Clippings – Miscellaneous" file in the possession of Coon Creek Farm LLC; Anna Rothe, ed., *Current Biography: Who's News and Why* (New York: H. H. Wilson Company, 1950), 409; The Atlantic Companies, "Thomas A. Morgan," *The Atlantic Log*, July-August 1958, pp. 9

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When North American Aviation divided its assets in April 1933, Morgan was elected president of Sperry Corporation, comprised of Sperry Gyroscope Company, Ford Instrument Company, and the Intercontinental Corporation. General Motors Corporation obtained North American Aviation, Berliner Joyce Aircraft, and Eastern Air Transport. Sperry Corporation soon increased production capability through the acquisition of gear and transmission manufacturers Waterbury Tool Company of Connecticut in 1935 and Vickers, Inc. of Detroit in 1937. During the 1930s and 1940s, Sperry engineers conducted microwave technology research and developed equipment that precipitated modern radar systems. The concern supplied clients in the aviation, electrical, hydraulic, and marine industries and the U. S. military and navy with hundreds of products ranging from automated firing devices to bombsights, high-intensity search lights, gyrocompasses, gyrohorizons, gyropilots, range finders, and sound locators. The firm grew exponentially during World War II, burgeoning from 5,376 personnel in 1940 to 20,000 by November 1941 and 56,019 at fifteen plants in 1945, despite the fact that more than 16,000 employees were released to serve in the armed forces. The company also provided equipment operation training for more than 77,000 military and naval personnel over the course of the war. Sperry Corporation and its subsidiaries garnered thirty-four government awards for outstanding performance and reported over two billion dollars of defense equipment sales between 1940 and 1945. In 1948, Morgan accepted a President's Certificate of Merit from Secretary of Defense James V. Forrestal in recognition of the Sperry Corporation's contributions to Allied success during World War II.<sup>12</sup>

Sperry Corporation encompassed three principal units through the mid-1940s: Sperry Gyroscope Company, with plants on Long Island and in England; Ford Instrument Company in Long Island City; and Vickers, Inc. in Detroit and Waterbury, Connecticut. In conjunction with plans to increase agricultural equipment production after the war, the company acquired subsidiaries including New Holland Machine Company, Dellinger Manufacturing, Hetzler and Zook, and Wright Automatic Machinery Company of Durham, North Carolina, one of the nation's five largest packing equipment manufacturers. Morgan remained Sperry Corporation's president until 1946, served as board chairman from 1946 until 1949, and functioned in both capacities from 1949 until his 1952 retirement. That year, the company reported \$240 million in sales.<sup>13</sup>

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and 15; "Thomas A. Morgan, 80, Dead; Ex-Chairman of Sperry Corp.," *New York Times* (hereafter abbreviated *NYT*), October 30, 1967; Encyclopaedia Britannica, "Gyrocompass," <https://www.britannica.com/technology/gyrocompass> (accessed September 2019).

<sup>12</sup> "Thomas A. Morgan," undated narrative; "Summary of Sperry War Record," undated narrative in the "Clippings – Miscellaneous" file in the possession of Coon Creek Farm LLC; "Sperry Buys Tool Company," *NYT*, January 25, 1935; "Sperry Adds Vicker, Inc.," *NYT*, May 1, 1937; *Statesville Daily Record*, November 26, 1941; "Thomas A. Morgan, 80, Dead; Ex-Chairman of Sperry Corp.," *NYT*, October 30, 1967..

<sup>13</sup> "Machinery Firm Bought by Sperry," *Statesville Daily Record*, January 15, 1949, p. 1; Merrill Lynch, Pierce, Fenner and Beane, "Sperry Spreads Out," *Investor's Reader*, February 2, 1949, pp. 12-13; "Thomas A. Morgan, 80, Dead; Ex-Chairman of Sperry Corp.," *NYT*, October 30, 1967;.

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Myriad boards and charitable causes benefited from Morgan's business acumen, industrial expertise, and generosity. A few particularly notable examples of his accolades and leadership roles follow. Morgan resided in Tokyo at the time of the devastating 1923 earthquake. His relief efforts during the aftermath resulted in commendations from the U. S. Secretary of State and the Japanese government, which presented him with an Order of the Rising Sun. He built strong social networks upon returning to New York, where he maintained a primary residence. His civic engagement included heading the 1939 New York World's Fair's advisory committee on aviation, intended to facilitate efficient airport function during the event. Morgan received honorary doctor of sciences degrees from Elon College (1939) and Duke University (1943) as well as an honorary doctor of engineering from North Carolina State College (1943). He worked with philanthropists including John D. Rockefeller Jr. to promote the United Negro College Fund from its 1944 inception through 1962, chaired the organization's board for ten years, and led national fundraising campaigns, assisted in 1945 by former North Carolina governor J. Melville Broughton, who served as a vice-chairman. Morgan also supported the New York City committee of the American Cancer Society, coordinating the 1949 fundraising drive.<sup>14</sup>

U. S. presidents Franklin D. Roosevelt, Harry S. Truman, and Dwight D. Eisenhower sought Morgan's guidance. Truman selected Morgan to chair the Advisory Committee on Management Improvement, created in 1949 to execute the Hoover Plan for federal agency reorganization. He also led a team that evaluated foreign aid utilization in Greece during the Eisenhower administration. In 1954, Morgan, University of North Carolina president Gordon Gray, and Loyola University of Chicago chemistry professor Ward V. Evans comprised the investigatory panel that concluded that nuclear scientist Robert Oppenheimer should not be awarded security clearance.<sup>15</sup>

Over the course of his career, Morgan chaired Bankers Trust, Ford Instrument Company, Pan American Airways, Shell Oil, and Western Union boards. He was a director of Commerce National Bank and Trust Company of New York, Lehman Corporation, and the American Arbitration Association; a National Safety Company trustee; an Aeronautical Chamber of Commerce of America director and president; a New York State Council of National Defense member; and a major in the U. S. Army Reserve. At the time of his 1967 death, Morgan was a director of Bulova Watch Company, U. S. Industries, and Atlantic Mutual Insurance Company.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> "T. A. Morgan Named to Fair Committee," *NYT*, July 10, 1937; "The Negro College, *Asheville Citizen-Times* (hereafter abbreviated *ACT*), April 20, 1945, p. 4; "Named General Chairman for Cancer Fund Drive," *NYT*, January 24, 1949; Rothe, ed., *Current Biography*, 410; "Duke Degree to T. A. Morgan," *NYT*, May 23, 1943; "A Fitting Honor," *ACT*, May 24, 1943, p. 4.

<sup>15</sup> "Cited for Service," *Marine News*, February 1949, p. 21; "Thomas A. Morgan, 80, Dead; Ex-Chairman of Sperry Corp.," *NYT*, October 30, 1967.

<sup>16</sup> "T. A. Morgan Picked To Lead Air Group," *NYT*, January 8, 1933; "T. A. Morgan, Sperry Corp.'s Head, Elected Director of Lehman Group," *New York Times*, February 28, 1942; "3 Added to Western Union Board," *NYT*, August 10,

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Vance County, NC*The Vance County Farm*

Thomas Morgan's affinity for northwest Vance County, as well as his financial fortitude following the Great Depression due to his industrial success, was manifested in his 1937 purchase of approximately 1,965 acres only a few miles from where he had labored in tobacco fields as a child. The property included cultivated and wooded land and pastures as well as a two-story, ten-room, metal-roofed, frame owner's residence and six tenant houses, three of which were occupied. Five tobacco barns, a tobacco pack house, a tobacco strip house, a stable, and ten other outbuildings were located on property the owners managed, while an additional five tobacco barns, three pack houses, and three strip houses were used by tenant farmers.<sup>17</sup> Thomas recruited his brothers Robert and Frank and their families to reside upon and manage the farm. Henderson building contractor Benjamin Harrell Mixon rendered plans for Thomas's house, Frank and Elizabeth's brick home, seven frame outbuildings, and a pond and dam, all of which his company erected by 1938 using wood and stone from the farm.<sup>18</sup> Robert, his wife Thelma, and their five children occupied Grove Hill, a two-story, weatherboarded, late-nineteenth-century dwelling formerly owned by the Marrow family.<sup>19</sup> Thomas sold the farm's south-central section, a 310-acre tract flanking the road that included Grove Hill, to Robert in 1944. Robert and Thelma Morgan's family resided in the house until it was destroyed by a mid-twentieth-century fire.<sup>20</sup>

The Morgans, sharecroppers, and day laborers cultivated corn, wheat, tobacco, and home gardens and tended horses, mules, cattle, pigs, and chickens. Frank's family maintained a multi-acre vegetable garden south of their home and east of the primary outbuilding complex. A Henderson pickle factory

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1950; "Former Head of Sperry on Bulova Watch Board," *NYT*, February 27, 1953; "Thomas A. Morgan, 80, Dead; Ex-Chairman of Sperry Corp.," *NYT*, October 30, 1967; "Industrialist Morgan Dies At Age of 80," *High Point Enterprise*, October 30, 1967, p. B5.

<sup>17</sup> None of the buildings listed in the 1937 survey are extant. J. E. Reid, "Marrow Lands," in report commissioned by Citizens Bank and Trust, May 3, 1937, in the possession of Coon Creek Farm LLC; Vance County Deed Book 198, p. 452; Deed Book 220, p. 61; Deed Book 221, p. 7.

<sup>18</sup> B. H. Mixon, "Thomas A. Morgan Cabin," undated drawings (four sheets) in the possession of Coon Creek Farm LLC; "T. A. Morgan Farm Statements, 1952-1967," in the possession of Coon Creek Farm LLC; Bob Morgan, conversation with Heather Fearnbach, August 9, 2018.

<sup>19</sup> Grove Hill was erected by Drewry S. Marrow (1836-1921) and his wife Sallie Ann. The couple married in 1861, had six children, and operated a sizable farm by 1880. Their son Goodrich Wilson Marrow (1866-1927), known as "Goodie," resided in the home with his wife Louise, their two daughters, and his widowed father until his death. Thomas Morgan purchased the property from G. W. Marrow's estate. Watkins, John Bullock, Jr., *Historic Vance County* (Henderson: Henderson Daily Dispatch, 1941), 22; U. S. Census, Population Schedules, 1870-1940; death certificates.

<sup>20</sup> Robert's son William Robert Morgan, known as "Bob," inherited the 310-acre tract. The land south of Morgan Road is excluded from the Thomas A. Morgan Farm National Register boundary. Vance County Deed Book 234, p. 537; Plat Map C, p. 54; Estate File 84-E-303; Bob Morgan, Tom Morgan, Jim Morgan, and Virginia Hamilton, conversation with Heather Fearnbach, August 9, 2018.

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purchased large quantities of cucumbers from the farm.<sup>21</sup> North Carolina Farm Census reports indicate that Thomas Morgan owned 1,905 acres in 1945. Thirty-five people lived on the property, most of whom were tenant farmers who cultivated 126 acres of corn, tobacco, and hay; five acres of vegetables; and an orchard containing fifty fruit-bearing trees. Livestock included six dairy cows and two hundred chickens. Fourteen people resided on Robert Morgan's 310-acre farm in 1945. His family planted and harvested twenty acres and tenants farmed seventeen acres.<sup>22</sup> Approximately four hundred acres of Thomas Morgan's property were cultivated in 1949. Tobacco remained the primary cash crop through the 1960s. The Morgans referred to the property as "Coon Creek Farm."<sup>23</sup> The moniker's origin is unclear, as there is not a creek by that name in the area. Little Island Creek and its tributaries flow through the property, contributing to the rich soil, feeding springs, and facilitating the creation of the ponds in the south pasture and north of the Thomas Morgan House.

Thomas stated in a 1941 interview that five African American families resided on the property at that time. Although they have not been definitively identified, the 1940 U. S. census enumerates the following African American households with occupants who rented dwellings and supplied farm labor in proximity to Robert and Frank's homes: Henry and Sary Terry, their daughter June Eaton, and lodgers William and Judy Oliver; William T. Smith, his wife Rebecca, and their three children; Ed and Mamie Jenkins, their five young children, and Mamie's sister Pinkie Venable; Eugene and Margaret Smith; and Thurman and Mary Edwards and their five children.<sup>24</sup> Bob Morgan estimated that five families comprising least thirty people lived and worked on the farm through the 1950s and confirmed that the Edwardses were among them. Families entered sharecropping agreements with half- or three-quarter-share terms, furnishing labor while the Morgans supplied equipment, seeds, and fertilizer; well-maintained residences and outbuildings; and medical expense coverage. Tenants paid electric bills. Their houses were initially in the farm's north section, referred to as "Middle Place" and "Back Place," which is not within the National Register boundary as the dwellings are no longer extant and the acreage is actively timbered. Crop sale proceeds were distributed per agreement terms at the end of each harvest season, with the owner receiving either fifty or seventy-five percent of the profits. The Morgans also hired laborers including Junius Brown; Charles Cheek, known as "Charlie;" Thomas Evans; Roscoe Hargrove, known as "Bully;" Florence Hargrove, called "Beattie;" Sam Royster; and Conway Yancey; some of whom lived on the farm. All were African American.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Bob Morgan, Tom Morgan, Jim Morgan, and Virginia Hamilton, conversation with Heather Fearnbach, August 9, 2018.

<sup>22</sup> North Carolina Department of Agriculture, Statistics Division, *Farm Census Reports*, 1945, Box # 119 (Vance-Wake Counties), North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh.

<sup>23</sup> "Sperry Spreads Out," *Investor's Reader*, p. 16; Bob Morgan, Tom Morgan, Jim Morgan, and Virginia Hamilton, conversation with Heather Fearnbach, August 9, 2018.

<sup>24</sup> Eddy, "He Builds Machines That Think," p. 27; U. S. Census, Population Schedule, 1940.

<sup>25</sup> "T. A. Morgan Farm Statements, 1952-1967;" Bob Morgan, conversation with Heather Fearnbach, August 9, 2018.

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Tenant farmer Junius Brown was the first resident of the 1953 concrete-block house that stands east of the outbuilding complex on the north side of an east-west farm road. B. H. Mixon drew a floor plan for a similar four-room dwelling prior to his 1952 death. Farm records indicate that Frank Morgan paid Greystone Concrete Products Company \$3,705.00 to supply the materials and labor necessary to construct the residence in April 1953. The building was complete by May, when it was added to the farm insurance policy. Following their 1954 marriage, Bob and Margaret Morgan occupied the house until building a Ranch house at 9639 NC Highway 39 N in 1963. Robert Woody leased the dwelling from January 1965 through December 1966 for \$40 per month.<sup>26</sup>

Charlie Cheek, a tenant farmer and furniture maker, initially lived in the farm's north section, but moved into the log dwelling northeast of the Thomas A. Morgan House and pond, which was erected specifically for him by builder Prince Hargrove, upon its October 1956 completion and remained until 1960. The log house was called "the box," according to a 1960 inscription in the concrete porch floor. Tenant Blaine Forbes leased the house for \$30 a month from November 1960 until August 1963. The dwelling was subsequently intermittently occupied by Thomas Morgan's household staff.<sup>27</sup>

Thomas and his fourth wife, Celeste Walker Page (1909-1984) visited Vance County whenever possible, enjoying the property during brief and extended visits. A 1941 newspaper profile reported that he found solace at the farm on weekend sojourns, relaxing with his dog Queenie and saddle horse Highland King. He put on "buckskin breeches, field boots and [a] sombrero" and "puttered" in his metal and wood-working shop, sometimes resolving complex company issues before returning to New York.<sup>28</sup> Thomas's adult children Thomas A. Morgan Jr. (1915-2006) and Mary Hamilton (1924-2017) and their spouses and children visited during the summer.<sup>29</sup> Some of the Morgan's New York staff

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<sup>26</sup> B. H. Mixon, "Tenant House," undated drawing, and "T. A. Morgan Farm Statements," April and May 1953 and January 1965-December 1966, in the possession of Coon Creek Farm LLC.; Bob Morgan, conversation with Heather Fearnbach, August 9, 2018.

<sup>27</sup> Prince Hargrove began erecting the log tenant house in June 1956 and farm records indicate that the work was finished in October. A chair crafted by Charlie Cheek remains in the Thomas A. Morgan House living room. "T. A. Morgan Farm Statements," June-October 1956 and November 1960-August 1962, in the possession of Coon Creek Farm LLC; Bob Morgan, conversation with Heather Fearnbach, August 9, 2018.

<sup>28</sup> Eddy, "He Builds Machines That Think," p. 27.

<sup>29</sup> Morgan married Celeste Walker Page after divorcing his third wife, Isabel Parker, in August 1941. His eldest son Thomas A. Morgan Jr. (1915-2006), by his first wife Josephine Edwards (1893-1917), earned a journalism degree at University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, served in the U. S. Army during World War II, and enjoyed a lengthy career in newspaper and television. Thomas A. Morgan Jr., his wife Mildred, and their children Thomas A. III and James resided in Naples, Florida, for many years. Morgan and Diana Calisher (1893-1922) married on October 29, 1918, and lived in New York, where they had a son Peter (1919-1922). Diana and Peter contracted tuberculosis and died within four months of each other while convalescing in Asheville. Morgan and his third wife Isabel Parker married in Shanghai, China, on December 6, 1922. Their daughter Mary wed Alexander R. Hamilton in Manhattan in 1951. The couple and their children Virginia, Alexander (called Sandy), and Bruce resided in New York. "Little Boy Dies at Home Sunday," *ACT*, February 6,



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accompanied them to Vance County. Local residents including John and Jeanette Hargrove also provided household management assistance.<sup>30</sup>

The Morgans frequently hosted business leaders and politicians eager to hunt and fish, and their hospitality was reciprocated by peers elsewhere in the state. They built relationships with North Carolina industrialists including Richard Thurmond Chatham, known as Thurmond, who was Chatham Manufacturing Company's president, a four-term U. S. congressman, and a U. S. Navy veteran. Chatham resided in Winston-Salem, but also operated Klondike Farm near Elkin, a model dairy established after he acquired the property from his wife Lucy Hodgkin Hanes's family, who owned Hanes Hosiery and P. H. Hanes Knitting Company. Chatham and Morgan's mutual interest in agriculture was reflected by Chatham's sending a dozen fig trees to Coon Creek farm in November 1948.<sup>31</sup> Morgan joined expeditions such as a November 1944 bear hunt near Mt. Mitchell in Yancey County with North Carolina governor J. Melville Broughton, Carolina Power and Light president Louis V. Sutton, South Carolina attorney Charles Sapp, *Asheville Citizen-Times* vice-president Don S. Elias, and Asheville businessmen William M. Smathers and Stanford R. Webb.<sup>32</sup>

Thomas's interest in the farm was not solely recreational. He encouraged Frank, Robert, and tenants to employ progressive farming methods and livestock management strategies. The Morgans worked with the agricultural extension service to implement effective erosion control and irrigation, soil preparation and fertilization, crop rotation, livestock pond excavation, pasture renovation and seeding, and natural fence and windbreak planting practices.<sup>33</sup> Robert focused his efforts on the 310-acre tract he owned in the farm's south-central section, while Frank oversaw timber harvests, crop production, and purchased and cared for high-quality livestock including performance-tested bulls on the rest of the farm until his death in 1965. Frank and Elizabeth submitted monthly reports regarding the farm's operation and requests for fund disbursements to Thomas's New York office, where assistants including Norman S. Swan processed payments and maintained records. Communication was greatly improved after Carolina Telephone and Telegraph extended service to the property in early 1949. Phones were installed in the Morgans' dwellings and in the metal and wood-working shop. Robert's son Bob and his wife Margaret assisted him with farm management and assumed full responsibility for the farm

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1922; "To Send Body of Mrs. Morgan to New York Home," *ACT*, May 22, 1922, p. 5; "Divorces T. A. Morgan," *NYT*, August 27, 1941; "Tom Morgan," *Naples Daily News*, August 12, 1973, p. 5; marriage records, death certificates.

<sup>30</sup> Bob Morgan, conversation with Heather Fearnbach, August 9, 2018.

<sup>31</sup> Norman S. Swan, inter-office memorandum to Frank W. Morgan, November 16, 1948, "Coon Creek Farm Correspondence, 1948," file in the possession of Coon Creek Farm LLC.

<sup>32</sup> "Hunters Given Races By Bears But Get No Shot," *ACT*, November 12, 1944, p. 14.

<sup>33</sup> "Sperry Spreads Out," *Investor's Reader*, p. 16.

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upon his death. Bob initiated loblolly pine cultivation to replace harvested pine and hardwood stands and planted soybeans.<sup>34</sup>

Thomas Morgan's children and their families gathered at the farm for several weeks every summer. Grandchildren Tom Morgan, Jim Morgan, and Virginia Hamilton remember visits beginning in 1960. A mobile home provided auxiliary quarters when the log house was full. The youth played in the woods, fished, swam, rode horses, and organized puppet shows. Thomas's wife Celeste and the extended family continued to visit the farm after his death. His grandchildren retain ownership as Coon Creek Farm LLC. Bob Morgan remains the farm manager.<sup>35</sup>

## Criterion C Architecture Context

The Thomas A. Morgan Farm also merits listing under Criterion C for architecture due to its remarkably intact collection of mid-twentieth-century dwellings and outbuildings arranged in a manner that takes advantage of the topography and maximizes the farm's functional efficiency, a central tenet of progressive agricultural practices. Vance County farms contain historic homes erected in a wide variety of styles, from vernacular log dwellings to Ranch houses. Four dwellings remain on the Thomas A. Morgan Farm: the Rustic Revival-style log Thomas A. Morgan House (1938), a Rustic Revival-style log tenant house (1956), the brick Colonial Revival Frank and Elizabeth Morgan House (1938), and a concrete-block tenant house (1953). The Rustic Revival-style residences, which manifest national mid-twentieth-century architectural trends and an idealization of nature and traditional building practices, are the most architecturally distinctive.

### *Rustic Revival*

B. H. Mixon's use of indigenous materials (wood and stone from the property) to construct the Morgan Farm buildings was not only cost-effective, but had long been viewed as a means of integrating buildings and landscapes. The approach was promoted by mid-nineteenth-century architects and landscape designers including Andrew Jackson Downing, whose pattern books featured wood-sided cottages with native-stone foundations and chimneys in picturesque settings. The style experienced resurgence during the early-twentieth century when many Americans rejected Victorian extravagance in favor of efficiently planned bungalows. American stonemason, furniture maker, and metalworker Gustav Stickley was among those who popularized Craftsman-style architecture after studying the English Arts and Crafts movement—a reaction against the loss of manual skills and traditional crafts

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<sup>34</sup> "Rated Bulls Upgrading Cattle in Vance County," *Rocky Mount Telegram*, October 18, 1966, p. 5; Coon Creek Farm," files in the possession of Coon Creek Farm LLC; Bob Morgan and Tom Morgan, conversation with Heather Fearnbach, August 9, 2018..

<sup>35</sup> Vance County Deed Book 990, p. 697; Deed Book 1055, p. 592; Tom Morgan, Jim Morgan, and Virginia Hamilton, conversation with Heather Fearnbach, August 9, 2018.

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due to the mechanization of the Industrial Revolution. His magazine, *The Craftsman* (1901-1916), emphasized the use of natural, handcrafted materials and low, horizontal massing to establish harmony between a house and its environment. Dwellings with wide overhanging eaves, open room arrangements, and inviting porches appeared in national magazines such as *House Beautiful* and *The Ladies Home Journal*. Stickley, Radford, Sears, Montgomery Ward, Aladdin, and others sold plans by mail.<sup>36</sup>

The Rustic Revival style, which drew upon the same nostalgic appreciation for indigenous materials and traditional building practices as the Craftsman style, was also featured in pattern books such as *Bungalows, Camps and Mountain Homes*, published in 1915 by William Comstock. William West Durant's 1870s designs for the "great camps" of wealthy industrialists in New York's Adirondack region featuring notched-log walls and stripped-log beams, rafters, porch posts, and furnishings, were emulated at wilderness retreats throughout the nation. Careful siting, large windows, expansive porches, and other outdoor living spaces maximized views and connectivity with the natural world. Rustic lodges such as the Old Faithful Inn in Yellowstone National Park and the Grove Park Inn in Asheville, North Carolina epitomized this approach.<sup>37</sup>

During the 1930s, as the United States suffered from the Great Depression, the saddle-notched logs, massive stone chimneys, and iron door hardware that characterized the Rustic Revival style took on new meaning, as such elements evoked the spirit of the American pioneer in a time of nationwide economic hardship. Community buildings constructed in conjunction with Franklin Delano Roosevelt's New Deal programs were often log. The no longer extant Scotland Neck Community House in Halifax County was an impressive log building constructed with Emergency Relief Administration (ERA) funds. The two-story cypress edifice included a gymnasium, recreation hall, library, ladies' lounge, men's lounge, kitchen, and restrooms with showers. Smithfield's log community house was one of the largest ERA projects in Johnston County. Completed in 1934, it features an auditorium, reading alcove, committee room, kitchen, and restrooms. Comparable buildings include the Middleburg Community House in Vance County, the Lumberton Community House in Robeson County, the Pikeville Community House in Wayne County, the Red Oak Community House in Nash County, and the Selma Community House in Johnston County.<sup>38</sup> The

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<sup>36</sup> Paul Duchscherer and Douglas Keister, *The Bungalow: America's Arts and Crafts Home* (New York: The Penguin Group, 1995), 2, 7-8, 14-15.

<sup>37</sup> Catherine W. Bisher, Michael T. Southern and Jennifer F. Martin, *A Guide to the Historic Architecture of Western North Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 59-60; Bruce E. Johnson, "Built Without an Architect: Architectural Inspirations for the Grove Park Inn," In *May We All Remember Well, Volume I* (Asheville: Robert Brunk Auction Services, Inc., 1997), 217; Linda Flint McClelland, *Building the National Parks: Historic Landscape Design and Construction* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 98.

<sup>38</sup> Davyd Foard Hood, "United States Post Office," Smithfield, Johnston County, National Register of Historic Places nomination, 1993; J. S. Kirk, Walter A. Cutter, and Thomas W. Morse, eds., *Emergency Relief in North Carolina: A*

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Rustic Revival style also prevailed in North Carolina's state and national parks as the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) erected log, heavy-timber, and native-stone edifices and infrastructure. The 1939 ashlar and heavy-timber bathhouse at Hanging Rock State Park in Stokes County, designed by Robert Ormand and constructed by the CCC in 1939, is an exceptional example.<sup>39</sup>

Wealthy businessmen and industrialists also embraced the Rustic Revival style for retreat complexes situated on large tracts of woodlands and fields where guests enjoyed hunting, fishing, and socializing. Vance County, easily accessible by rail and highway, was a popular recreational hunting destination. In 1911, for example, Mutual Alliance Trust Company president James H. Parker of New York purchased acreage near Williamsboro to create a hunting preserve that he stocked with Hungarian partridges, blue quail, and native birds.<sup>40</sup> Thomas Morgan perpetuated the trend with an infusion of Northern capital during the mid-twentieth century.

As Vance County's historic architecture has not been intensively surveyed, no rural Rustic Revival 1930s residences comparable to those at Morgan Farm have been identified to date. Henderson building contractor Benjamin Harrell Mixon rendered plans for the house as well as other dwellings and outbuildings that his company erected using wood and stone from the farm.<sup>41</sup> His son Ben Mixon asserted that his father erected a very similar retreat known as Camp Indian Head for surgeon and Maria Parham Hospital chief of staff William B. Noel and his wife Rosalie north of Highway 158 near Ruin Creek in Dabney (west of Henderson), approximately thirteen miles south of Morgan Farm. The circa 1935 complex included a log dwelling and a pond with a concrete dam and waterwheel.<sup>42</sup> Although several informants remember the property, attempts to locate it were unsuccessful.

Comparable retreats elsewhere in North Carolina have been documented, however. At Devotion, the country estate of R. J. Reynolds Tobacco Company scion Richard Joshua Reynolds Jr., known as "Dick," and his wife Elizabeth Dillard Reynolds, the couple implemented Rustic Revival elements at a

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*Record of the Development and Activities of the North Carolina Emergency Relief Administration, 1932-1935* (Raleigh: Edwards & Broughton, 1936), 224-226, 492.

<sup>39</sup> William C. Tweed, et al, *Rustic Architecture: 1916-1942* (National Park Service, Western Regional Office, Division of Cultural Resource Management, 1977); Catherine W. Bisher and Michael T. Southern, *A Guide to the Historic Architecture of Piedmont North Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 362.

<sup>40</sup> The exact location of Parker's hunting preserve is unknown. "Low Rates for Hunting and Fishing Parties," *Henderson Gold Leaf*, January 9, 1902, p. 4; *Henderson Gold Leaf*, March 30, 1911, p. 3.

<sup>41</sup> B. H. Mixon, "Thomas A. Morgan Cabin," undated drawings (four sheets) in the possession of Coon Creek Farm LLC; "T. A. Morgan Farm Statements, 1952-1967," in the possession of Coon Creek Farm LLC; Bob Morgan, conversation with Heather Fearnbach, August 9, 2018.

<sup>42</sup> Ben Mixon (B. H. Mixon's son), telephone conversation with Heather Fearnbach, August 1, 2018. The Noels' rented a residence on Country Club Drive in 1940, but erected a home at 938 Hargrove Street by 1942 and resided there until their deaths in 1971 (William) and 1973 (Rosalie). Charles W. Miller, *Miller's Henderson, N. C., City Directories* (Asheville: Southern Directory Company, 1938-1964); death certificates.

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grand scale. They acquired ten thousand acres from thirty-five landowners in Surry and Alleghany Counties and commissioned architects Augustus Constantine and William Roy Wallace to design buildings including a general store/gas station/post office, dairy, chicken house, pheasant house, fish hatchery, stables, cattle farm, slaughter house, hydroelectric dam, carpenter shop, movie theater, hunting lodge, and staff residences. Pine, oak, and wormy chestnut trees cut and milled on site provided framing and sheathing materials, while local river rock and quarried milky quartz were used for chimneys, foundations, retaining walls, and other hardscape components. The majority of the buildings were completed between 1933 and 1939. Reynolds hired approximately three hundred local workers for the project, which greatly benefited the local economy during the Great Depression.<sup>43</sup>

Likewise, Morgan Farm's construction involved many area residents. B. H. Mixon's project supervisor James Coleman Twisdale of Townsville managed local craftsmen who erected the 1938 buildings at Thomas A. Morgan Farm. The men utilized wood and stone from the property to reduce cost. Twisdale established his own company after Mixon's 1952 death and continued to maintain Morgan Farm buildings for many years.<sup>44</sup>

The Thomas A. Morgan House and log tenant house exemplify the Rustic Revival style's focus on natural finishes, exposed structure, and hand-crafted elements. Each dwelling is effectively integrated into the landscape through a low profile; dark-stained, round, saddle-notched pine log walls; expansive porch; and large windows. The one-story Thomas A. Morgan House features a side-gable central block and flanking front-gable wings, bracketed stripped-log porch posts, a bluestone front porch floor, multipane steel-frame casement windows, and board-and-batten doors with oversized wrought-iron strap hinges and thumb latches. Intact interior finishes include log walls, wide oak floors ornamented with faux pegs, simple molded pine baseboards and window and door surrounds, and thick vertical-board doors with wrought-iron hardware. The one-story tenant house is characterized by a hip roof, square footprint, six-over-six double-hung wood sash, and a full-width front porch supported by slender round steel posts. The one-story, side-gable-roofed, concrete-block tenant house is more utilitarian, with painted concrete-block walls and a poured-concrete floor.

*Colonial Revival*

Many mid-twentieth-century farm residences were identical to those found in urban settings. The Colonial Revival aesthetic was particularly popular, with events such as the United States' 150th anniversary celebration in 1926 fueling emulation of iconic American buildings. Architectural

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<sup>43</sup> Marion E. Venable, "Long Creek Farm," North Carolina Study List Application, 2000; Richard Silverman, "Historic Architecture Report, B-3911, Surry County," North Carolina Department of Transportation, 2005. William Roy Wallace, "Richard J. Reynolds, cottage for Joe Saylor, slaughter house, turkey pen and feed storage, 1936," Drawer 399, William Roy Wallace Architectural Papers, MC 00517, North Carolina State University, Raleigh.

<sup>44</sup> Bob Morgan, conversation with Heather Fearnbach, August 9, 2018.

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historians have documented that between 1910 and 1940 Colonial Revival elements were more often employed in American houses than any other style. Richard Guy Wilson asserted that the Colonial Revival is “the United States’ most popular and characteristic expression. Neither a formal style or a movement, Colonial Revival embodies an attitude that looks to the American past for inspiration and selects forms, motifs, and symbols for replication and reuse.”<sup>45</sup> The one-story, brick, gable-and-hip-roofed Frank and Elizabeth Morgan House displays Colonial Revival features such as symmetry, gabled porticos with square posts, regular fenestration, and a post-and-lintel living room mantel. Original interior finishes include smooth plaster walls and ceilings, tongue-and-groove oak floors, paneled wood doors, and molded window and door surrounds, baseboards, and picture rails.

### *Outbuildings*

The Thomas A. Morgan Farm reflects the efficiency of diversified, progressive, mid-twentieth-century agricultural operations. Building arrangement was intended to take advantage of the topography while economizing labor. Farm buildings were erected in high, well-drained areas, with outbuildings located far enough away from the house to minimize odors, insects, noise, and fire danger, but not at such a distance that chore completion routes were needlessly long. Outbuildings and structures associated with the domestic sphere were closest to the family dwelling, while buildings needed for crop and livestock production were farther away. Farm buildings were grouped according to function.<sup>46</sup>

General purpose and livestock barns stood close to farm roads, fields, and pastures. Equipment sheds were conveniently located in farmyards and along the farm roads. Some farm machinery, automobiles, and trucks were housed and serviced close to dwellings, while tractors, plows, and harvesting machines were stored in large equipment sheds closer to the agricultural fields. Granaries, corn cribs, silos, and hay sheds were located close to barns and pastures to allow for easy access to livestock feed.<sup>47</sup>

Building planning, financing, and construction are always an important part of farm operation, no matter the farm size or type, but were particularly significant concerns during the depression years of the 1930s. Farmers erected buildings in the most economical manner possible, using inexpensive, readily available, or salvaged materials. Farm buildings were often remodeled, expanded, or moved as productivity increased or needs changed. Utility was typically the primary consideration; appearance was secondary. Many farmers learned about trends in building construction and farm arrangement through interaction with specialists, reading agricultural extension service publications, and

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<sup>45</sup> Richard Guy Wilson, *The Colonial Revival House* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 2004), 6, 89.

<sup>46</sup> Gemini Research, *Historic Context Survey of Minnesota Farms, 1820-1960* (St. Paul: Minnesota Department of Transportation, Office of Environmental Services, 2005), 6.179.  
(<https://www.dot.state.mn.us/culturalresources/docs/crunit/vol1.pdf>, accessed August 2019).

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.61, 6.233.

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discussions amongst themselves. Their information network also included private industries, from building material and farm equipment manufacturers to seed companies, who offered technical assistance as they promoted products designed to increase labor efficiency, reduce maintenance and operational costs, and increase output.<sup>48</sup>

The seven frame outbuildings erected on the Thomas A. Morgan Farm in 1938 epitomize this pragmatic construction approach. The gambrel-roofed frame livestock barn is the most architecturally significant. Although many farmers utilized outbuildings plans and specifications published in *The Progressive Farmer* or agricultural extension service bulletins, the Morgans' commissioned prolific Henderson architect and engineer Eric G. Flannagan, whose broad oeuvre included civic, ecclesiastical, educational, institutional, medical, recreational, and residential buildings, to render drawings for the barn's original section. B. H. Mixon drew a preliminary plan based upon Frank Morgan's suggestions, and Mixon's crew built and subsequently expanded the barn with a series of shed additions through the 1950s.<sup>49</sup> As was typical in multipurpose early- to mid-twentieth-century barns, the weatherboarded balloon-frame structure has a formed-concrete foundation, standing-seam metal gambrel roof, and board-and-batten doors and shutters. Original interior elements include three livestock stalls, harness room, granary, and corncrib lining the south elevation. Those areas retain vertical-board partition walls, board-and batten doors with original hardware, wood-and-wire feed bins, a hay chute, and wood steps to the loft, all common features in livestock barns of this period.

The gable-roofed frame tobacco packhouse was enlarged with a two-bay garage addition in the 1950s, but maintains architectural integrity. Mixon rendered the packhouse plan, which encompasses a central dirt drive-through and flanking areas with elevated wood floors. German siding sheathes the partition walls of the east rooms and five horizontal-panel doors secure their entrances. The west section is open. The packhouse is the only surviving outbuilding associated with tobacco production on the farm. Tobacco curing commenced in log or frame tobacco barns, where leaves tied to split-wood "sticks" hung on tiered poles. In pack houses and equipment sheds, dry leaves were removed from the sticks; sorted by size and original location on the tobacco stalk (a process known as "grading"); tied together at the stem ends into bundles called "hands;" and loaded into flat, open baskets for transport to a tobacco warehouse where they were sold at auction.<sup>50</sup>

Four of the remaining 1938 outbuildings—a chicken house, corncrib, milking parlor, and equipment shed—are well-maintained and unaltered. The general characteristics of such outbuildings changed

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid, 5.1-5.9.

<sup>49</sup> Eric G. Flannagan, "Barn for Thomas Morgan Estate, Vance County, North Carolina," undated drawings (four sheets) in the possession of Coon Creek Farm LLC; B. H. Mixon, "Addition to Barn," undated drawing in the possession of Coon Creek Farm LLC.

<sup>50</sup> Jerome Brooks, *Green Leaf and Gold: Tobacco in North Carolina* (Raleigh: Division of Archives and History, 1997), 20, 32-33.



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little from the late-nineteenth through the mid-twentieth century. The lower wall sections of frame corn cribs are usually sheathed with boards and/or metal siding, while the upper sections consist of slatted boards to provide air circulation to dry the stored ears of corn, which were stripped of husks but remained on the cobs. Wire mesh was often secured behind the wood slats to discourage rodents. Farmers typically used interior ventilators (slatted frameworks) to create open space at the cribs' centers.<sup>51</sup> The square weatherboarded corncrib on Morgan Farm, elevated on brick piers, features a fire-resistant, pyramidal, folded-standing-seam-metal roof and slatted upper walls.

Milking parlors, which contain stalls where cows were secured while being milked, were frequently attached to dairy barns but are sometimes freestanding, as with the Morgans' milking parlor south of the corn crib. The utilitarian one-story, shed-roofed, weatherboarded building has a brick foundation, standing-seam metal roof, board-and-batten Dutch doors, and square windows. Vertical boards sheathe the lower portion of the walls in two stalls at the building's west end. The floor is dirt and the interior unfinished with exposed wood wall and roof framing.

Poultry houses were designed to be well-ventilated and illuminated, and thus usually featured windows or screened openings on approximately one-quarter of the south elevation. Interior fittings included perches, nesting boxes, and food and water containers.<sup>52</sup> The north long, narrow, weatherboarded, shed-roofed chicken house northeast of the Frank and Elizabeth Morgan House is intact, with bands of open windows flanking a central board-and-batten door on the south elevation. The originally identical south chicken house was extensively remodeled in the late-twentieth century and is therefore noncontributing.

Few comparable mid-twentieth-century Vance County farms have been documented. Successful tobacco and livestock farmer Forrest Ellington's property near Middleburg, surveyed in conjunction with an environmental review project, is somewhat similar, encompassing a two-story, brick, gable-roofed, Colonial Revival 1948 dwelling; 1950s brick Ranch house; and a series of outbuildings erected principally from the late 1920s through the 1950s. The outbuilding complex includes a livestock barn, corncrib, equipment shed, tobacco packhouse, tobacco barn, tenant house, and granary (all frame); a concrete-block pumphouse; and modern metal bulk barns. Most are intact, although the livestock barn and tenant house have been sheathed with metal siding. As at Morgan Farm, the outbuildings are simply executed, as functionality and affordability dictated design and materials. The Ellington family still cultivates a portion of the residual 105 acres of the once approximately six-hundred-acre farm.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Gemini Research, *Historic Context Survey of Minnesota Farms, 1820-1960*, "Corncribs," 6.62 -6.63.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid, "Poultry Houses," 6.365 -6.38.

<sup>53</sup> Mattson, Alexander and Associates, Inc., "Phase II (Intensive Level) Architectural Resources Survey, Southeast High Rail Corridor, Petersburg, Virginia to Raleigh, North Carolina," prepared for Michael Baker Engineering and the North Carolina Department of Transportation, August 7, 2009, pp. 41-49.

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Vance County, NC**Benjamin Harrell Mixon (1905-1952) - B. H. Mixon, Inc.**

Henderson building contractor Benjamin Harrell Mixon's career was cut short by his untimely death at the age of forty-seven. His namesake company's diverse oeuvre of residential, commercial, industrial, and agricultural commissions in Vance County and the surrounding area reflects its ability to adapt to client needs, building technology advances, and stylistic trends. Although he lacked formal architectural training, Mixon rendered precise drawings for many of these edifices, including his personal residence at 275 Country Club Drive and dwellings and outbuildings on Thomas A. Morgan's farm. It is not known how he developed such exemplary drafting and construction skills.<sup>54</sup>

A native of Scotland Neck, a small Halifax County community, Mixon moved to Henderson as a child when his father Henry Walton Mixon (1876-1920) relocated his jewelry business to the larger town. B. H. Mixon attended public schools and likely worked for local contractors before establishing his own firm by the 1930s. He recruited his younger brother Henry Walton Mixon Jr. (1907-1959) to assist with bookkeeping and project administration. B. H. Mixon, Inc.'s crews of carpenters, masons, plasterers, and painters erected well-crafted, substantial dwellings in the residential subdivision adjacent to Henderson Country Club including the residence of its developers James H. and Lucy P. Brodie as well as Andrew J. and Nora B. Watkin's sophisticated Colonial Revival-style house that emulated Mt. Vernon. Durham architect George Watts Carr designed both dwellings. Mixon's company also constructed his Colonial Revival-style personal residence and houses for Straughn H. and Amie C. Watkins, Marc McGinnis, and Reed H. and Ruth C. Harris (Lakeside Drive). Industrial commissions include a Corbett Truck Company factory off Dabney Drive, a Roses Five and Ten Cents Store warehouse, portions of the Harriet-Henderson Cotton Mill complex, and tobacco auction houses. The Rustic Revival-style dwellings at Thomas A. Morgan and William and Rosalie Noel's rural retreats may have been unique, but B. H. Mixon, Inc. probably built many outbuildings similar to those at the Morgans' farm.<sup>55</sup>

As one of the county's most prolific builders, B. H. Mixon Inc. undoubtedly worked with Henderson architect Eric G. Flannagan on many occasions. The Morgans' livestock barn reflects this collaboration, as B. H. Mixon drew preliminary sketches, Flannagan provided final plans for the original section, and Mixon designed the 1950s rear shed addition.<sup>56</sup> Mixon died in 1952 at the height

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<sup>54</sup> Ben Mixon (B. H. Mixon's son), telephone conversation and email correspondence with Heather Fearnbach, August 2018.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.; B. H. Mixon, undated drawings in the possession of Coon Creek Farm LLC; Charles W. Miller, *Miller's Henderson, N. C., City Directory, 1938-1939* (Asheville: Southern Directory Company, 1938), 205. According to Ben Mixon, Durham architect Edgar Toms Carr, George Watts Carr's grandson, possesses some of his grandfather's architectural drawings.

<sup>56</sup> Eric G. Flannagan, "Barn for Thomas Morgan Estate, Vance County, North Carolina," undated drawings (four sheets) in the possession of Coon Creek Farm LLC.

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of his productive career. Maine native George W. Kane (1890-1966), a Roxboro-based general contractor who also owned Roxboro Concrete Supply Company, purchased B. H. Mixon, Inc., in 1953. Ben Mixon Jr. later worked for Kane's firm until establishing his own general contracting business in 1973.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Ben Mixon, telephone conversation and email correspondence with Heather Fearnbach, August 2018; U. S. Census, Population Schedules, 1900-1940; death certificates; Charles W. Miller, *Miller's Roxboro, N. C., City Directories* (Asheville: Southern Directory Company), 1956-1964.

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## Section 10. Geographical Data

### Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

1. Latitude: 36.475659 Longitude: -78.460837
2. Latitude: 36.476117 Longitude: -78.467522
3. Latitude: 36.479944 Longitude: -78.468638
4. Latitude: 36.480491 Longitude: -78.467982
5. Latitude: 36.482118 Longitude: -78.463231
6. Latitude: 36.482236 Longitude: -78.461416
7. Latitude: 36.478904 Longitude: -78.458680

### Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated property consists of approximately eighty-seven acres of Vance County tax parcel 0323 01005 as indicated by the heavy solid line on the enclosed map. The National Register boundary corresponds with tax parcel boundaries to the south (Morgan Road right-of-way) and southeast (historic lot line) and Little Island Creek and its tributaries to the west and north. The north boundary was drawn to include a clearing north of the 1938 pond as well as the 1956 tenant house. Scale: one inch equals approximately three hundred feet.

### Boundary Justification

The National Register boundary encompasses the dwellings, outbuildings, landscape features, and sufficient acreage to convey the farm's rural character, agricultural significance, and association with Thomas A. Morgan. Although the farm currently encompasses approximately 1,911 acres, most is devoted to loblolly pine cultivation, initiated after 1965 by Bob Morgan to replace harvested pine and hardwood stands. Cash crop production ceased in the early 1980s, but timbering continues. The boundary thus excludes most actively timbered areas.

### Additional Documentation: Current Photographs

All photographs by Heather Fearnbach, Fearnbach History Services, Inc., 3334 Nottingham Road, Winston-Salem, N. C., on April 19 and August 9, 2018. Digital images located at the North Carolina SHPO.



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1. Landscape, central north-south farm road, looking north (above)
2. Thomas A. Morgan House, 1475 Morgan Road, south elevation (below)





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3. Thomas A. Morgan House, west elevation (above) and 4. northeast oblique (below)





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5. Thomas A. Morgan House, living room, looking west (above)  
6. Dam, Pond, and Bridge, looking northeast (below)





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7. Tenant House, southwest oblique (above)

8. Frank and Elizabeth Morgan House, 1473 Morgan Road, south elevation (below)





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9. Livestock Barn, southeast oblique (above) and 10. Corncrib, northeast oblique (below)





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11. Equipment Shed, northeast oblique (above)

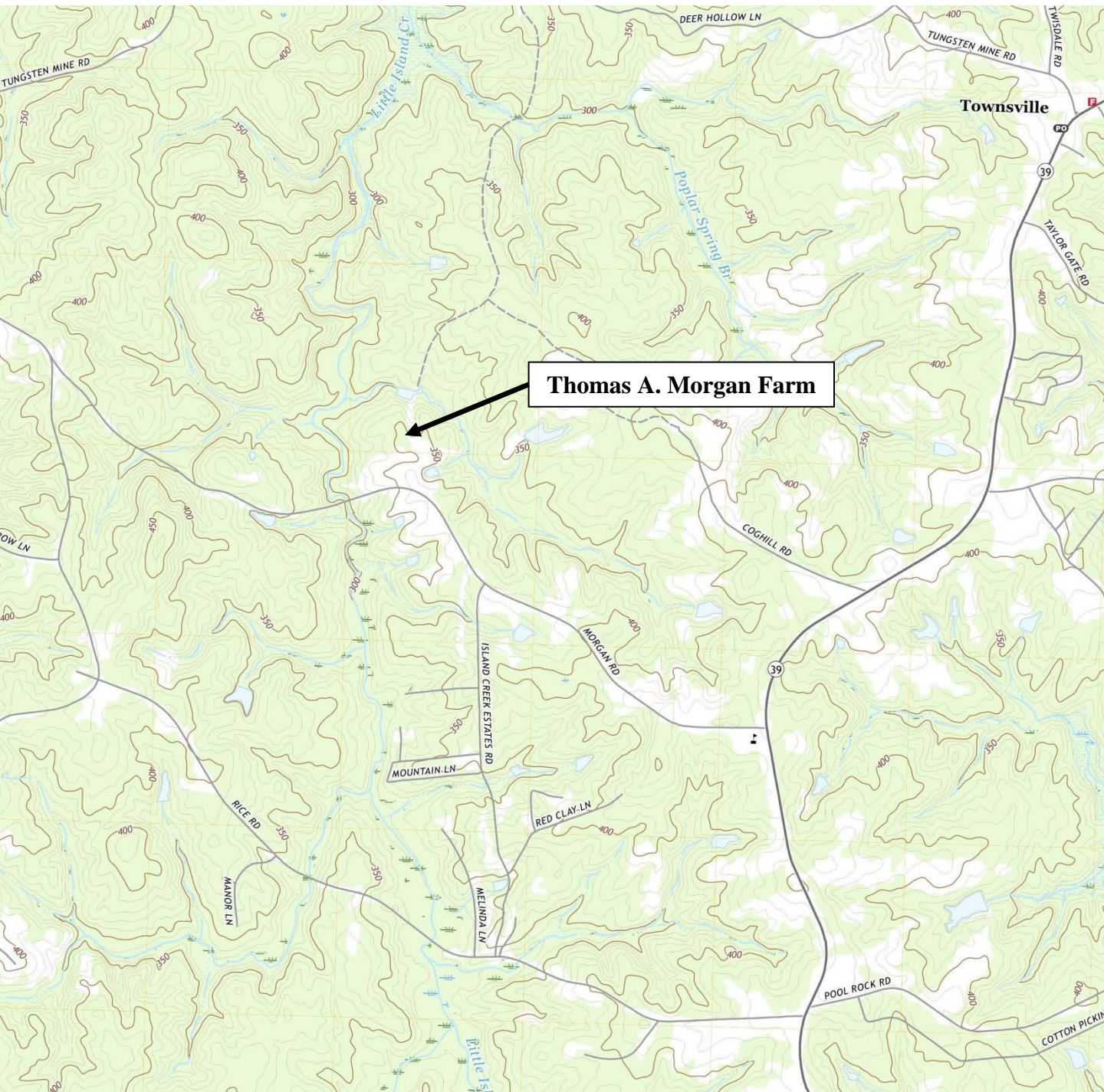
12. Tenant House, 1471 Morgan Road, southwest oblique (below)



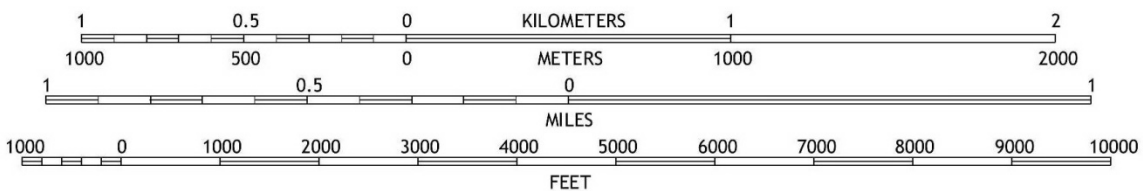


**Thomas A. Morgan Farm**  
**1471, 1473, and 1475 Morgan Road**  
**Townsville, Vance County, North Carolina**  
**Location Map**

U. S. Geological Survey  
Townsville Quadrangle, 2019



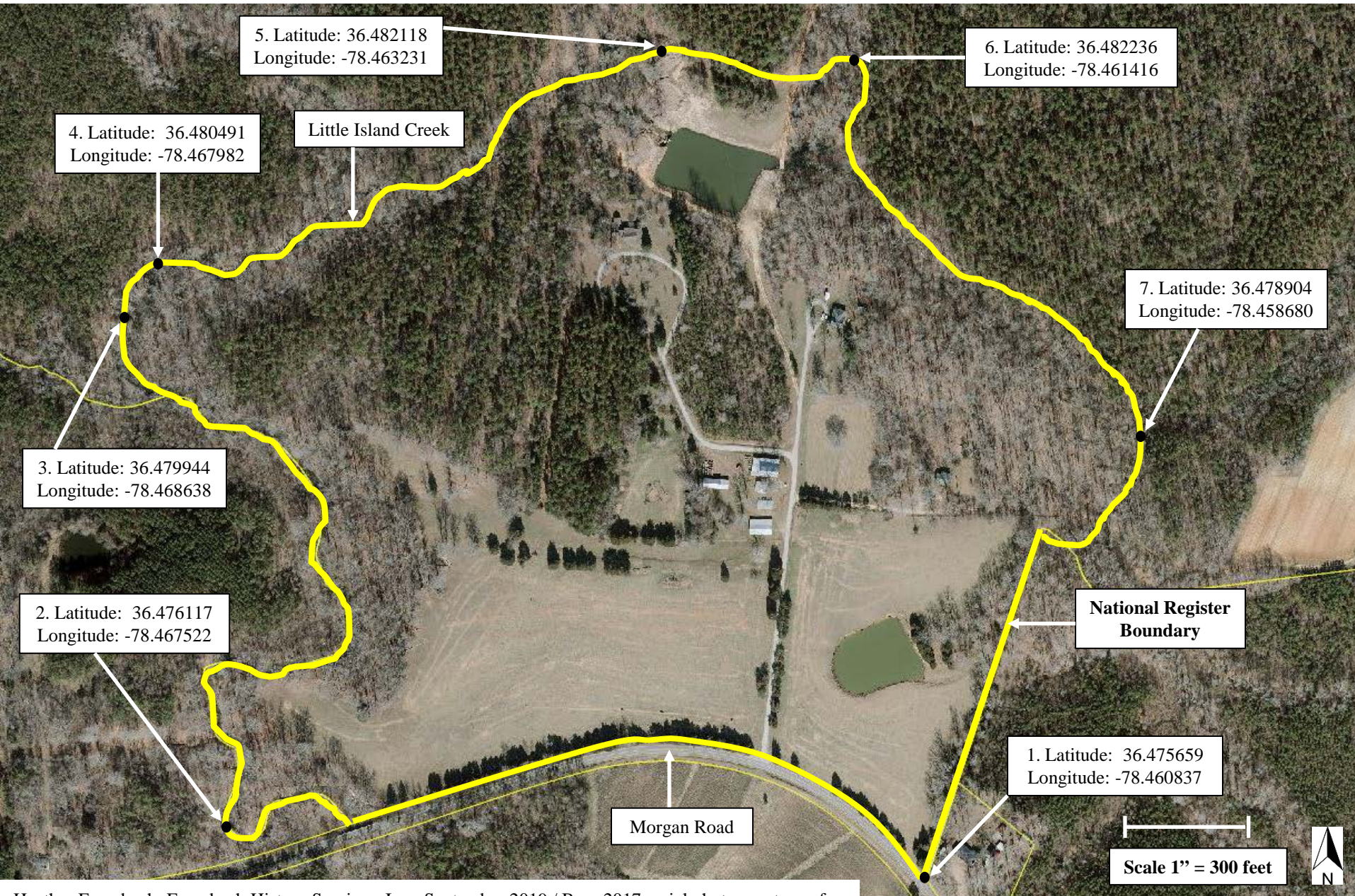
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# Thomas A. Morgan Farm, 1471, 1473, and 1475 Morgan Road, Townsville, Vance County, North Carolina

## National Register Boundary





# Thomas A. Morgan Farm, 1471, 1473, and 1475 Morgan Road, Townsville, Vance County, North Carolina

## Site Plan and Photograph Key

