



PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT  
National Register Eligibility  
Morgan Farm  
(CRS #S3821)

Cedar Creek Hundred, Sussex County,  
Delaware

John Milner Associates, Inc.  
March 2005

intended for project team use



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CEDAR CREEK HUNDRED, SUSSEX COUNTY, DELAWARE**

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Submitted by

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**INTENDED FOR PROJECT TEAM USE**

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**March 2005**

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

In December 2004 JMA personnel undertook a preliminary architectural survey and field assessment of the Morgan Farm (CRS#S3821), situated south of Lincoln (Figure 1). The purpose of this preliminary assessment was to determine if the Morgan Farm is or is not likely to be eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). Historical research entailed a land use and development history of the farm, and included examination of deed records, tax assessments, court records (orphans court and probate documents), maps, and other visual records, as available. The field assessment included a site visit in order to develop a preliminary assessment of the architectural and historical integrity of the farm. Repositories consulted included the Delaware Public Archives and the Sussex County Deed Office. Knowledgeable individuals with information about the history and development of the farm were contacted, including the owners Mr. and Mrs. Richard Morgan.

A summary of JMA's findings is presented below, beginning with a physical description of the property, followed by a historic overview and our recommendations regarding the likely National Register eligibility of the Morgan Farm.

## 2.0 PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

The Morgan Farm encompasses 202 acres on the west side of Old State Road, east of Route 113 (Figure 1). At one time, the farm included the entire tract bounded by Haflinger Road, Old State Road, and Route 113, but in recent years outlying parcels have been sold off. The area south of Haflinger Road is now divided into three separate parcels, while the entirety of the Route 113 frontage has been divided into a string of residential lots. In addition, a subdivision has been platted on the west side of Old State Road south of the house.

### 2.1 THE HOUSE

The house is situated atop a slight rise west of State Road and is sited approximately 720 feet from the road (Plate 1). A gravel driveway, bordered on the south by a wood rail fence, extends to the south and rear of the house from the road. The immediate house precinct is planted in mature deciduous and evergreen trees. Some of the deciduous trees have been dramatically pruned. A cornfield is situated between the house and Old State Road. In addition to the house, the property contains several agricultural buildings and structures, located south, north, and west of the house. A line of trees defines the north side of the house precinct. Most of the remaining acreage is cropland.

Although historical evidence dates the house to 1897, its present appearance reflects a series of major alterations undertaken in the 1960s. The house, a two-story, wood-framed dwelling with a rectangular footprint, faces east toward Old State Road. The façade is marked by a two-story, two-bay, hipped-roof, monumental portico, and a jerkinhead roof gable.

The east façade of the house is two bays wide (plates 2 and 3). A wood door with three lozenge-shaped lights is placed in the south bay of the façade. The north first story bay contains a panel with six, aluminum-framed, hopper windows. Second story openings consist of two, wide, aluminum-framed, one-over-one, double-hung, sash windows, while the attic has two, aluminum-framed, one-over-one, double-hung, sash windows, placed to either side of the center line. The porch has a concrete floor and is reached by concrete steps extending up to its south bay. Its wood

posts are square in cross-section. The walls of the house are oak, sheathed in aluminum siding, and the soffits are also aluminum.

The north elevation of the house is also two bays wide (Plate 2). The first story bays consist of three, aluminum-framed hopper windows in the east bay and six, aluminum-framed hopper windows in the west bay. A through-the-wall air conditioning unit is placed immediately west of the west windows. Second story openings consist of two wide, one-over-one, double-hung, aluminum-framed windows. The south elevation (plates 3 and 4), also two bays wide, has paired, two-over-two, double-hung windows in the west bay and a pair of sliding, single-light windows in the east bay. The second story is fenestrated with two, wide, one-over-one, double-hung, aluminum-framed windows placed near the center of the wall.

A single story, shallow hipped roof, concrete block addition (Plate 5), sheathed in stucco, adjoins the rear (west) wall of the house. The outer wall of this addition has paired, one-over-one, double-hung, aluminum-framed windows in its north bay and a wood and glass door, protected by an aluminum and glass storm door in its south bay. The side elevations of the addition are fenestrated with single, wide, one-over-one, double-hung, aluminum-framed windows. The main block of the house has two, one-over-one, double-hung, aluminum-framed windows in the second story and two, smaller, double-hung, aluminum-framed windows on either side of the center line of the attic.

The house rests on a concrete block foundation. The cellar is illuminated by two-light windows placed in the east and south walls of the foundation. A bulkhead with two-leaf, metal doors adjoins the center of the south wall of the house. The roof of the house is sheathed in composition shingles. A brick chimney with corbelled cap rises from the center of the roof ridge.

A gravel parking area is located at the rear of the house and is bounded on three sides by buildings and structures.

## **2.2 OUTBUILDINGS**

A row of three outbuildings is situated south and southwest of the house (Plate 6). The easternmost, a single-story, gabled front, wood-framed block that rests on a concrete foundation may be used as a shop. A wood and glass door is placed off-center in its north gable end and a one-over-one, double-hung window is placed in its west wall. A louvered vent is placed in the center of the front gable peak. The building is sheathed in vinyl siding, and its roof is sheathed in composition shingles.

The center outbuilding is a gabled-front, wood-framed, two-bay garage. A wide, overhead door is placed in the north gable end, and a boarded-over window is placed in the gable peak. The garage has single, double-hung, sash windows in the center of the side walls. The building is sheathed in vinyl siding and has a roof sheathed in composition shingles.

The western outbuilding is a gabled-front garage with a deep west lean-to. A steel rolldown door is placed in the north wall of the main block, while an entry door is placed in the north wall of the lean-to. A sliding door is placed in the west wall of the lean-to. The garage is sheathed in vertical board siding, while its roof is sheathed in metal sheets.

A cluster of cylindrical metal grain storage structures with conical caps is situated west and north of the western outbuilding (Plate 7). These structures are loaded by means of a tall, metal-framed elevator that towers over the house and other buildings.

North of the house is a small, two-story, garage apartment building (Plate 8). The first story garage bay has two, sliding, wood doors placed in its south wall. Wood-framed steps bolted to the east wall of the building extend up to a second story balcony that adjoins the south wall. This balcony is bordered by a wrought-iron railing. The south wall is recessed from the eaves and contains a double-hung, sash window and a door. The upper story walls are sheathed in aluminum siding, while the roof is sheathed in asphalt shingles.

An equipment garage-shop building adjoins the north side of the parking area (Plate 9). This oblong, gabled-roof building has open bays along the eastern portion of its south façade walls. These open bays facilitate the storage of farm equipment. The west end of the south wall is enclosed. It contains a single-light, wood entry door, and a steel rolldown door. The east wall of the building is blank. Its gabled roof is sheathed in corrugated metal. All of the current outbuildings appear to have been constructed in the mid-to-late twentieth century.

### **3.0 HISTORICAL OVERVIEW**

Ownership of the present Morgan property has been traced back to 1705. In February of that year, the Commissioner of Property granted by warrant a tract of 404 acres in Sussex County to Henry Pennington. Henry Pennington bequeathed the property to Elizabeth Watson who subsequently married William Burton, a sawyer of Sussex County. On August 5, 1736, William and Elizabeth Burton sold 200 acres of land, located on the south side of the Main Branch of Cedar Creek and adjoining the Mill Branch, to William Fisher for 40 pounds (Sussex County Deed Book G7:158-159, August 5, 1736; hereafter SCDB).

Shortly after, William Fisher absented himself from Sussex County without paying his debts. His brother James, one of his creditors, sued and obtained a judgment against him in the May Term 1736. The land was taken in execution of the judgment. John Shankland, Esquire, High Sheriff of Sussex County, sold the land to James Reed, the highest bidder, for 26 pounds five shillings (SCDB G7:236-237, February 7, 1737). Upon James Reed's death, the property passed to his sons John and Jesse Reed. Jesse Reed purchased his brother's interest in the land. When Jesse Reed died intestate his eldest son James acquired the land (SCDB 41:388, December 13, 1800).

In December 1800, James and Nancy Reed sold an 85 acre, 52 perch tract of land in Cedar Creek Hundred to Joseph Truitt, Junior for the sum of 137 pounds, 10 shillings (SCDB 41:388, December 13, 1800). Two undated assessment inventories in the collection of the Delaware Public Archives provide a capsule picture of his holdings.

In the first, Truitt held 115 acres of land, of which 75 acres was cleared. Livestock included two horses, a cow and calves, a yoke of oxen and three young cattle, three sheep, and a young hog. In the other inventory he was taxed for 306 acres of land, one African American man aged 26 years valued at \$90, one African American woman aged 20 years valued at \$80, four horses valued at \$100, two yoke of oxen valued at \$40, four cows and calves valued at \$32, three two year old cattle valued at \$9 and two sows and thirteen shoats valued at \$19 (Sussex County Assessment Records n.d.).

Joseph Truitt died intestate in 1823, leaving a parcel of real estate described as follows:

Situate in Cedar Creek Hundred, containing about 200 acres with the buildings and improvements thereon, adjoining lads of Andrew Gist, Zadock Richard & others.

His heirs included his widow Elizabeth Truitt, his daughter Rachel, and husband David Watson; Elizabeth Truitt; James Truitt; Percy Truitt; Andrew Truitt; Mary Truitt; and Nancy Truitt. The parcel was divided into two tracts. The first tract, known as widow Elizabeth Truitt's dower, contained 49 acres, including a house that fronted on State Road. The second parcel, divided among Truitt's other heirs, contained 151 acres and included a house on the opposite side of State Road (Orphan 1824).

Truitt's estate included the typical possessions of a prosperous farmer. Among the more valuable items in the \$822.69 inventory were one bed and furniture valued at \$12, one bed and furniture valued at \$10, one Dutch fan valued at \$9, one old carriage valued at \$18, white corn in the stable loft valued at \$16, yellow corn in a crib valued at \$35, ten stacks of fodder valued at \$20, one old bay horse valued at \$12, one brown mare valued at \$55, one gray horse valued at \$55, 13 head of sheep valued at \$13, one pair of oxen valued at \$28, two young steer valued at \$12, four cows valued at \$28, 10 head of hogs valued at \$24, one ox cart valued at \$18, 821 pounds of salt meat valued at \$64, nine bushels of wheat valued at \$18, and one black boy for a term of eleven years and four months valued at \$180 (Chancery 1824).

On October 20, 1832, Truston P. McColley acquired the lands that had been formally owned by Elizabeth Truitt, widow of Joseph Truitt, at a Sheriff sale for \$156. The purchase included, "...a parcel of land.... containing 50-acres..." (SCDB 43:13, October 20, 1832).

Truston Polk McColley was born near Georgetown, Sussex County on March 9, 1793. His grandfather, Robert Watson McColey emigrated from Scotland about 1730. Truston McColley was the son of John McColley who resided on a large plantation in Sussex County. Working with his father until his young adulthood, he left home to engage in the hatting business in Georgetown. Soon after, he moved to Milford where he prospered as a merchant (Aldine 1882:536). An undated assessment listing provides a summary of his holdings at one point in time. These holdings included one African American girl "Harriet" with a four year term remaining valued at \$25, six horses valued at \$300, four yoke of oxen valued at \$120, five cows valued at \$35, seven yearlings valued at \$28, one sow and pigs valued at \$4, two shoats valued at \$6, and 16 ounces of silver plate valued at \$17.60 (Sussex County Assessment Records n.d.).

McColley married Hetty Smith in 1814, and they had five children. A member of the Methodist Episcopal Church, he became a minister in 1826, serving as such without compensation until his death. According to a biographical sketch, he married more couples (1,600) and preached more funeral sermons (1,000) than any minister in the state. He died on March 5, 1874 (Aldine 1882: 536-537).

In April 1865, Truston P. McColley conveyed a 50-acre property to John B. Gough for the sum of \$1,650.00 (SCDB 72:417, April 1, 1865). In an atlas published in 1868, J.B. Gough is clearly noted as owner of lands and building in the general location of the present day dwelling (Figure 2).

In 1866, Gough took out insurance on the property with the Kent County Mutual Insurance Company. The dwelling was described in the insurance policy as follows:

1 story frame dwelling 16 by 30 feet with two chimneys and two fireplaces warmed with the same and stoves with the pipes well secured—Ashes away from building....Well in yard, nearest building 10 feet. The property is on the road from Milford to Georgetown just about 2 miles beyond Lincoln owned by the subscriber and occupied by Mr. Hambleton Dean as tenant.

The estimated value of the property was \$750 (Kent 1866).

When Gough died in 1894, he had few assets. An inventory of his estate included only a tool chest and a lot of tools valued at \$6.50 and a boring machine valued at \$1.50 (Chancery 1894). His debts totaled \$675.50 and included a \$400 mortgage owed John Butcher and a \$160 judgment owed Hiram Barber. Gough was survived by his wife Annie E and left no children. His nearest blood relatives were his siblings Richard and Louisa Gough. His land holding was described in an orphans' court document as

a certain tract, piece or parcel of land situate in Cedar Creek Hundred, Sussex County, Delaware, adjoining lands of F.A. Whitehead, E.H. Bancroft and others, containing 50 acres more or less, with a dwelling house thereon (Orphan 1894).

On January 26, 1895, Gough's 50 acre tract was conveyed to Benjamin F.B. Woodall by Charles H. Sackett the administrator of John B. Gough. Any relationship of Gough to Woodall is currently unknown (SCDB 120:470, February 15, 1895).

Less than a month later, Benjamin F.B. and Mary E. Woodall, of Cedar Creek, conveyed, "...land on the West side of State Road, leading from Lincoln City to Georgetown, that adjoins land of the Whitehead, containing 50-acres...." to Bradbury Morgan for \$750.00 (Sussex County Deed Book 120:470, February 15, 1895). From this point on, additional acreage would be added to the existing farm, and the property would remain in Morgan family ownership to the present.

Bradbury Morgan was born in Nanticoke Hundred on February 1, 1846. He was the son of Uriah T. and Elizabeth Wallace Morgan and the grandson of Benjamin Morgan, a Sussex County farmer and house carpenter. He was educated in the public schools of Cedar Creek Hundred and worked on the homestead farm until age 22. For the next 26 years, he cultivated rented land before purchasing his own tract in 1895. In 1897, Mr. Morgan rebuilt the home on the subject property making it a "model farm house" (Runk 1899: II:936). This rebuilding marked the construction of the current house.

Morgan was married to Rachel A., daughter of William R. and Sarah (Cloverdale) Hickman of Cedar Creek Hundred. Their children included Eliza J. (Mrs. Nathaniel Coverdale), Sarah A., Joseph H., Evelyn E., Aaron M., William B, Hubbard, and Rachel A (Runk 1899: II:936-937). In the 1900 Census, his family was enumerated as follows: Bradbury, 54, farmer; Rachel, 48; Sarah A., 26; Joseph H., 24, farm laborer; Nicy [Evelyn] E., 27; Aaron M., 20, farm laborer; William B., 18, farm laborer; Hubbard, 15, farm laborer; and Rachel, 9 (US Bureau of Census 1900).

As early as 1900, Bradbury Morgan began adding adjacent acreage to his 50-acre farm. In January of 1900, Morgan acquired an additional 70 acres of land, from Robert Y. Watson and wife, of Milford, for \$1,000 (SCDB 133:95, January 15, 1900) and purchased an undisclosed

amount of land from Andrew J. Lynch, appointed administrator through the Orphans Court to sell the assets of Edward F. Betts, deceased (SCDB 211:525, August 2, 1918).

Bradbury Morgan died in 1918. In his will, he made four specific bequests: 1) His wife, Rachel A., was devised the house and lot during her natural life as long as she remained a widow. After her death or remarriage, ownership would pass to her four daughters: Jennie [Eliza J.] Coverdale, Sarah A. Clendaniel, Etta [Evelyn E.] Deputy and Raie [Rachel A.] Morrison. 2) All other land and real estate were to be equally divided among his four sons and their heirs and assigns: Aaron M., William R., Hubbard and Joseph H. 3) All personal property except enough household goods for his wife, was to be sold with the proceeds going to the four daughters; 4) each son should pay their mother 25 dollars per year and should she live alone, procure enough firewood for her use (Sussex Count Will Book 22:442-443, January 16, 1915)

His estate included the typical possessions of a farmer. Among the more valuable items in the estate inventory were eight hogs, valued at \$40, one cow valued at \$50, wood valued at \$50, one mare valued at \$75, a cottage and outbuilding at Slaughter Beach valued at \$150, stock in the Lincoln Shirt Factory valued at \$100, cash totaling approximately \$700, one hundred bushels of wheat valued at \$200, a cook stove and floor covering valued at \$15, an organ valued at \$10, a boat valued at \$12, clover hay valued at \$120, a McCormick binder valued at \$50, three sides of meat valued at \$12, a can of lard valued at \$12, a cupboard and contents valued at \$10, floor covering and furniture from the sitting room valued at \$15, a sewing machine valued at \$10, front room furniture valued at \$20, front bedroom furniture valued at \$15, bedding and floor covering from bedroom #2 valued at \$15, bedding from bedroom #2 valued at \$10, and chickens and ducks valued at \$25. The total value of the goods, chattel and money less the amount reserved for Rachel Morgan was \$1,975.57.

Excess goods and chattel were sold at the farm by Norman E. Prettyman on July 11, 1918. Many items were purchased by neighbors of the Morgans. His cottage at Slaughter Beach was sold to Nathaniel Coverdale for \$150 (Chancery 1922).

In August of 1918, Joseph H. Morgan and Hubbard Morgan conveyed their share of lands, totaling 197-acres, "with land, buildings, improvements, waterways...." to their brothers, Aaron M. Morgan and William B. Morgan (SCDB 211:525, August 2, 1918). Within a month William B. Morgan conveyed his half interest in the property to Aaron. Like his father, Aaron continued to acquire surrounding land to add to the family farm. In January of 1924, Aaron acquired land from Nellie E.B. and William P. Peach. On March 16, 1949, Aaron Morgan died, leaving his real and personal estate to his wife, Mae. In December of 1951, Mae Morgan conveyed "...a parcel of land....containing 202-acres..." to her son, Richard M. Morgan (SCDB 408:399, December 8, 1951). Currently, Richard M. Morgan and his wife, Catherine H. Morgan are the owners of the 202-acre parcel (SCDB 2282:66, April 7, 1998).

According to the current owners, the house was renovated in the 1960s. These renovations included construction of the portico porch, sheathing in aluminum siding, replacement of windows, and refurbishing the interior.

## 4.0 PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT

The Morgan Farm has been preliminarily assessed for likely eligibility under the four criteria of the National Register of Historic Places. As noted, the Morgan property has been used as a farm

since at least the eighteenth century. This continued agricultural use conveys a strong association with the agricultural history of Sussex County. The agricultural use has changed over time. Information from nineteenth century records indicates that livestock raising was historically important. No livestock is presently raised in the core area of the farm. Instead, the farm is used for large-scale grain production. Although one or more of the outbuildings may pre-date 1955, all postdate the time of original construction of the house (approximately 1897). (A barn, built at the same time as the house, has been demolished). Therefore, although the farm may have played a historically important role in the agriculture of Sussex County, the present building fabric lacks connections to nineteenth and early twentieth century agriculture. Therefore, the farm does not appear eligible for the National Register under Criterion A.

Research in the two major nineteenth century biographical compilations of Delaware indicates that two individuals who owned the property, Truston Polk McColley and Bradbury Morgan, are represented by biographies. McColley was a well-known Methodist minister who gained prominence by performing many weddings and conducting many funerals. He played an important role in the nineteenth century religious life of Sussex County. However, the farm was not the location most closely related to his productive life, and the current buildings postdate McColley's ownership. Therefore, the farm does not appear eligible for the National Register for its association with McColley. Bradbury Morgan, though a prosperous farmer, did not appear to play an important role in the history of the local community or Sussex County. Therefore, the farm does not appear to be National Register-eligible for its association with Morgan (Criterion B).

Eligibility under Criterion C requires that a property embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, represent the work of a master or possess high artistic values. The house, as a late nineteenth century vernacular dwelling substantially altered during the mid-twentieth century, is not likely eligible for its architecture. The outbuildings and structures, typical of a Sussex County grain farm, also lack architectural significance.

The house and outbuildings, as typical vernacular buildings of their period, do not appear to possess the potential to yield important information about construction techniques or practices. Therefore, the farm complex itself appears ineligible for the National Register under Criterion D. However, the present owners of the farm showed the surveyors projectile points uncovered in the fields of the property, indication that the farm, as much of the surrounding area of Sussex County, was the site of Native American occupation. Presently no concentrated deposits of historic or prehistoric artifacts have been identified. Consequently the property's potential archeological significance (Criterion D) cannot be assessed currently.

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1900 Census of Population. Cedar Creek Hundred, Sussex County. On microfilm at the Delaware Public Archives, Dover, DE.

## FIGURES

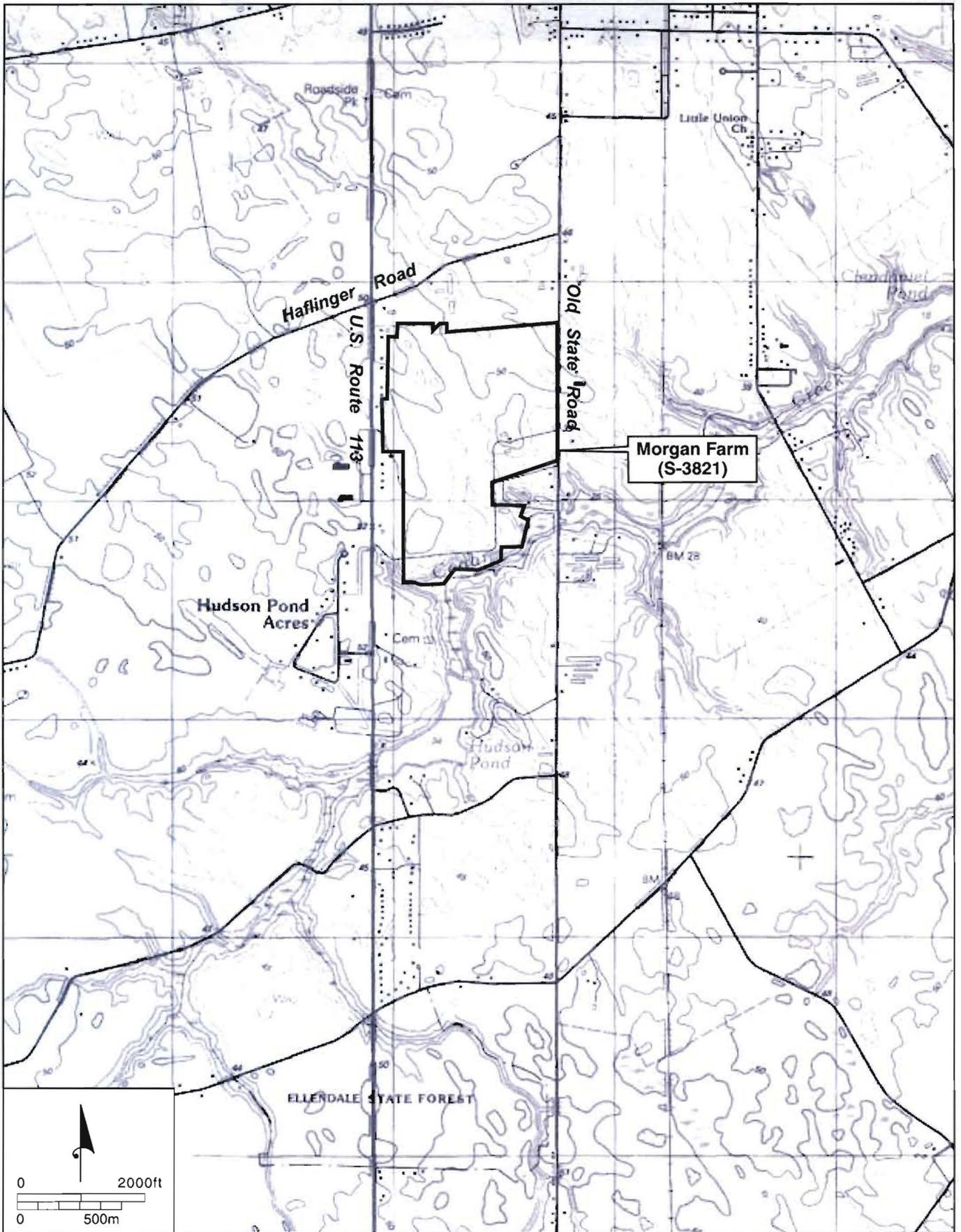


Figure 1. Location map. *Ellendale* 7.5-minute series, USGS quadrangle, 1992.



## PLATES



Plate 1. Morgan Farmhouse and vicinity. From vicinity of Old State Road toward west.



Plate 2. House. East façade and north elevation toward southwest.



Plate 3. House. East façade and south elevation toward northwest.



Photo 4. House. South elevation toward north.



Photo 5. House. South and west elevations toward northeast.



Plate 6. South outbuildings, north and east elevations, toward southwest.



Plate 7. Grain storage structures toward southwest.



Plate 8. Garage apartment. South façade and east elevation toward northwest.



Plate 9. Equipment garage-shed. West end, south elevation, toward northwest.