

PH0150851

DATA SHEET

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED MAY 19 1975

DATE ENTERED JUN 10 1975

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

William ("Lord") Morton House

AND/OR COMMON

Same

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

518 Limestone Street

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Lexington

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

06

VICINITY OF

STATE

Kentucky

CODE  
021

COUNTY

Fayette

CODE

067

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

**CATEGORY**

DISTRICT

BUILDING(S)

STRUCTURE

SITE

OBJECT

**OWNERSHIP**

PUBLIC

PRIVATE

BOTH

**PUBLIC ACQUISITION**

IN PROCESS

BEING CONSIDERED

**STATUS**

OCCUPIED

UNOCCUPIED

WORK IN PROGRESS

**ACCESSIBLE**

YES: RESTRICTED

YES: UNRESTRICTED

NO

**PRESENT USE**

AGRICULTURE

COMMERCIAL

EDUCATIONAL

ENTERTAINMENT

GOVERNMENT

INDUSTRIAL

MILITARY

MUSEUM

PARK

PRIVATE RESIDENCE

RELIGIOUS

SCIENTIFIC

TRANSPORTATION

OTHER: Clinic

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

Lexington-Fayette Urban County Government

Recreation  
Sr. Citizens Mtgs.

STREET & NUMBER

Municipal Building - 140 Walnut Street

CITY, TOWN

Lexington

VICINITY OF

STATE

Kentucky

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Fayette County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

Main Street

CITY, TOWN

Lexington

STATE

Kentucky

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

Survey of Historic Sites in Kentucky

DATE

1971

FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

Kentucky Heritage Commission

CITY, TOWN

Frankfort

STATE

Kentucky

ATAU

**7 DESCRIPTION**

<b>CONDITION</b>		<b>CHECK ONE</b>	<b>CHECK ONE</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED    DATE _____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Morton House is located just outside the business section of downtown Lexington in what is now Duncan Park on the northeast corner of Limestone and Fifth Streets diagonally across from Rose Hill (listed on the National Register, December 30, 1974). Although it is surrounded on all sides by an older declining neighborhood, the integrity of the site--the character and beauty of the house--is aided by the spacious grounds which encompass the park. The structure sits on a small knoll well back from the street with numerous large trees gracing the frontage. On the west side of the house is a small basketball court and to the rear, a parking area and playground equipment.

The Morton residence is of a modified Federal style and consists of a five-pavilion brick house on a one-story plan. The building is unique among early examples of Bluegrass houses, according to Kentucky architectural historian Clay Lancaster, in having stucco covering the exterior front and side walls. This stuccoed facade is scored to resemble stonework with quoins at the corners. Most of the stucco remains today.

The first, third, and fifth masses are crowned with hipped roofs; the second and fourth, connectors to the end wings, with saddleback roofs. All are slightly recessed from the central block. Originally a balustrade capped the main mass of the roof but it was removed some years ago. Attached to the rear of the central block is a portico, flat roofed, supported by four columns.

The central block is characterized by an arched entranceway with double doors flanked by large Palladian windows. The original sashes, however, have since been removed. The connectors are seen with false fan doorways; the end wings by paired rectangular windows.

On entering, a second fanlighted door at the rear of the hall leads to the drawing room, the largest room in the house, which contains a shallow-curved apsidal recess on the west side and opens into the parlor on the south. This large area is divided by huge double doors reaching almost to the very high ceiling. A cross-passage behind the front rooms on either side of the entrance hall leads through to the end wings, which are treated almost as autonomous units.

The original floors are still intact although some woodwork has been changed or replaced over the years. There are handsome mid-Victorian marble mantels with attractive dogwood pattern detail located in the drawing rooms, but several of the smaller rooms contain the original mantels.

In the 1880s alterations were made, including bay windows on the centers of the north and south wings; these have recently been removed by the City of Lexington.

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD		AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW				
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)		
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION				

SPECIFIC DATES    1810

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Morton house, with its tall arched doorway flanked by great Palladian windows, is one of the most elegant survivals of early Lexington's town residences. The interesting composition bears resemblance to others in the area (Rose Hill, Lewis Manor, the Gist-Peck House, and Plancentia all contain similar elements), but the Morton house is unique in its manorial ambitions, no doubt reflecting those of the original owner, "whose grand manner and scale of living prompted the townspeople to address him as 'Lord' Morton." (Lancaster, p. 61) It can be said to be somewhat representative of the geometric phase of architectural design which was to be superseded after 1820 by effects gained through the use of classic orders, pediments, and arcades. The hipped roof with recess or, as in the case of Rose Hill, advanced wings to the sides of the central mass, the facade adorned with attenuated Palladian windows characterize this particular phase common to the second decade of the 19th century. The Morton House remains, therefore, a distinctive representation of this brief transitional period of freshness and originality in traditional design.

The house also has important historical associations. It was built in 1810 by an early Lexington resident, one of the most prominent and successful of the city's merchants, William Morton. It was later purchased by Cassius Marcellus Clay, well-known firebrand abolitionist, editor of the anti-slavery newspaper The True American, legislator, and Minister to Russia (1863-69).

Morton, a native of England, was a successful merchant in Pennsylvania before migrating south. In 1787 he came to Lexington, then a burgeoning pioneer western village, and remained to see it develop by the turn of the century into the capital of the Bluegrass section of Kentucky. From the early 1780s until 1820, the "Athens of the West" was the largest and wealthiest city west of the Alleghenies with the exception of the French city of New Orleans. Morton, as a merchant, was also to witness Lexington's decline as Kentucky's commercial center, to be superseded by its rival, Louisville, strategically located on the Ohio River at the Falls.

Morton was to prosper during these early days of the city's growth and expansion. When he first arrived in Lexington he opened a general trading store on the southwest corner of Main and Upper Streets, and later constructed a half-block of store buildings in downtown Lexington. He also operated a tanyard on the corner of Main and Upper (now Patterson) Streets. In drawing for the outlots, Morton was awarded the property on North Limestone from 5th to 6th Streets, now a part of Duncan Park where the Morton House is situated.

(continued)

**9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Clay, Cassius M. The Life of Cassius Marcellus Clay, Vol I. Cincinnati: J. Fletcher Brennan & Co., 1886, pp. 73,74.

Coleman, J. Winston. "Lexington As Seen by Travellers 1810-1835." Collected Works. Reprinted from the Filson Club History Quarterly, Vol. 29 (July 1955), p. 267. (continued)

**10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

JTM OK  
HL

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 1 acre

UTM REFERENCES

A | 16 | 7120 | 4710 | 4214 | 3910 |  
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

B | | | | | | | | | | | |  
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C | | | | | | | | | | | |  
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

D | | | | | | | | | | | |  
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE CODE COUNTY CODE

STATE CODE COUNTY CODE

**11 FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME / TITLE

Richard S. DeCamp, Executive Director

GM

ORGANIZATION

Lexington-Fayette County Historic Commission

DATE

STREET & NUMBER

187 Market Street

TELEPHONE

CITY OR TOWN

Lexington

STATE

Kentucky

**12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION**

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

~~REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE~~

*Cedric W. Melton*

TITLE

*State Historic Preservation Officer*

DATE

*5/12/75*

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

*[Signature]*

DATE

*6/10/75*

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

*[Signature]*

DATE

*JUN 9 1975*

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 6

PAGE 2

William ("Lord") Morton House

Historic Survey and Plan for Lexington & Fayette County, Kentucky  
Urban County Planning Commission  
227 North Upper Street  
Lexington, Kentucky

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ITEM NUMBER 7

PAGE 2

William ("Lord") Morton House

Presently the house, with protective screens on all windows and a fan in one of the front Palladian windows, is only a reflection of its once elegant appearance. Fortunately, however, the city of Lexington has preserved the building and stabilized it against deterioration and does hope one day to restore the house to a condition befitting its architectural and historical significance.

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ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 2

William ("Lord") Morton House

Morton became a prominent Lexingtonian, taking an active interest in the welfare of his community. As one contemporary wrote, "Mr. Morton was a liberal and public spirited citizen, and was the largest and most active contributor to the building of the first and second Episcopal churches, himself and family being members of that Church." His generosity also included a donation of \$10,000 for the foundation of a city school, which was constructed and named for him (Leavy , p. 254).

Morton died in 1836 and his residence, constructed in 1810, was sold in 1838 to Cassius Marcellus Clay, well-known for his leadership in abolitionist affairs. While Clay was residing at the Morton house, he published the abolitionist newspaper, the True American. He was to encounter considerable opposition, however, among the local citizenry which prompted him to install cannons and iron pikes at his Mill Street office. He did gain sufficient support to get elected as a Whig to the State Legislature in 1840 (having served previously from Madison County, 1835, 1837). Other public offices included an appointment by President Abraham Lincoln as Minister to Russia.

Clay owned, in addition to the Morton House, an estate in Richmond, Kentucky (Whitehall, listed on the National Register March 11, 1971). He had originally moved from Madison County because, as he stated in his memoirs, his family disliked country life. He decided on Lexington as a more central place to live. Clay called his Lexington house "the most elegant in the city."

Clay returned to White Hall in 1850 and later sold the Morton residence to Dr. Lloyd Warfield who owned it until 1873. Henry T. Duncan, a former mayor of Lexington, was the next owner and occupant from whom it descended to Lily Duncan Draper. It was she who, in 1913, sold the house to the city for park purposes. It is currently used by the city of Lexington as a recreation center.

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ITEM NUMBER 9

PAGE 2

William ("Lord") Morton House

Connelley, William E. & Coulter, E. M. History of Kentucky, Vol. III. Edited by Charles Kerr, Chicago: American Historical Society, 1922, p. 355.

Dunn, C. Frank. Old Houses of Lexington, Vol II. (typed manuscript, Kentucky Historical Society), p. 456.

Jarrett, Calvin. "Cassius Marcellus Clay, A Popular Portrait!" Register of the Kentucky Historical Society, Vol. 64, pp. 277-292.

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Newcomb, Rexford. Architecture in Old Kentucky. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1953, pp. 65, 66.

Simpson, Elizabeth. Bluegrass Houses and Their Traditions. Lexington: Transylvania Press, 1932.

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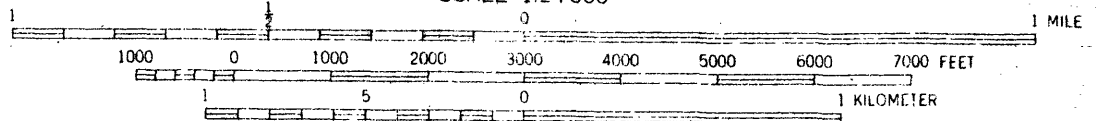


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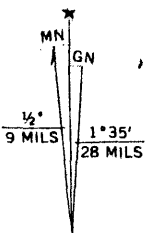


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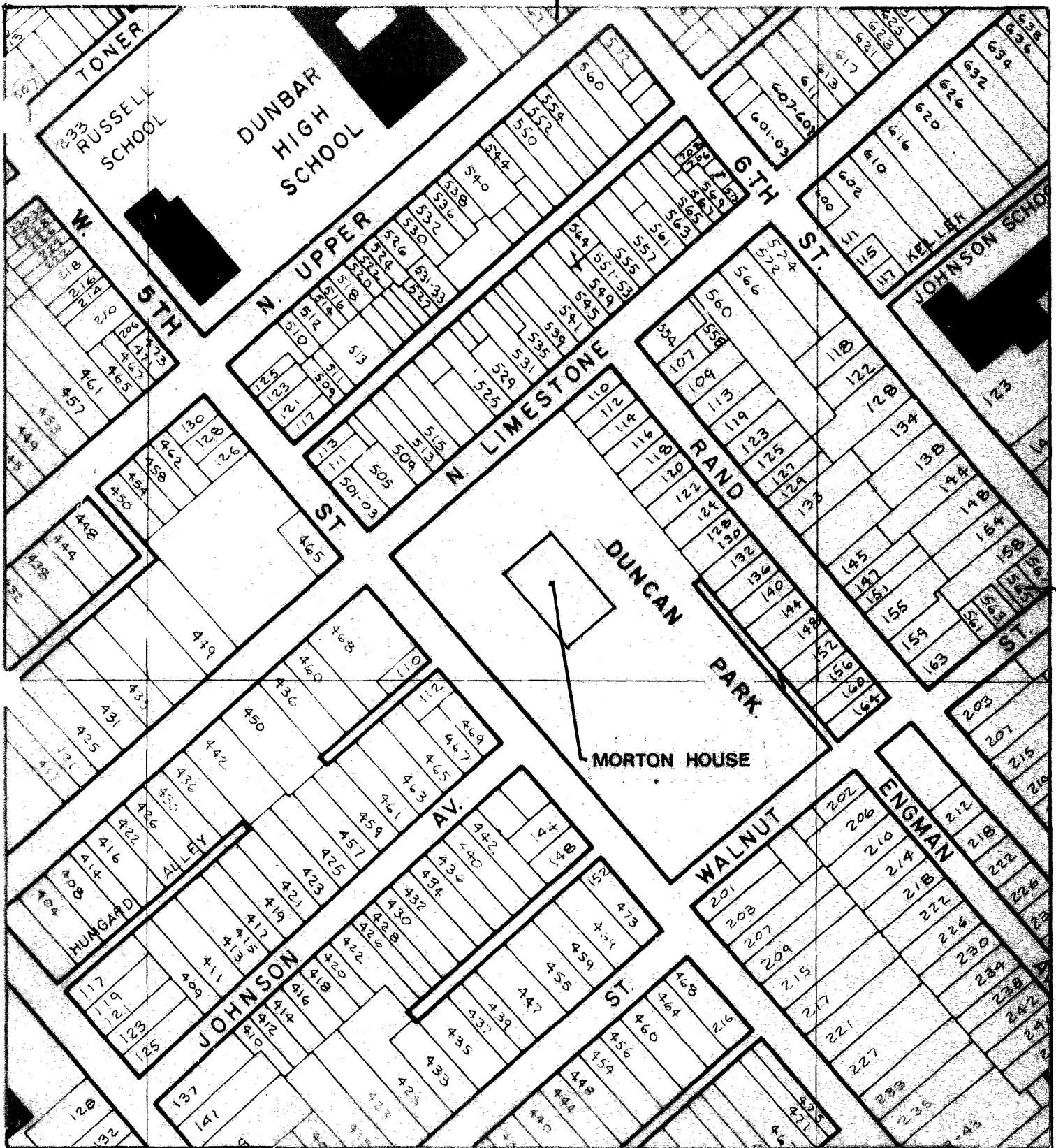
CONTOUR INTERVAL 10 FEET  
DATUM IS MEAN SEA LEVEL



UTM GRID AND 1971 MAGNETIC NORTH DECLINATION AT CENTER OF SHEET

LOCATION OF MORTON HOUSE  
IN RELATION TO IMMEDIATE AREA

MAP 2 of 4



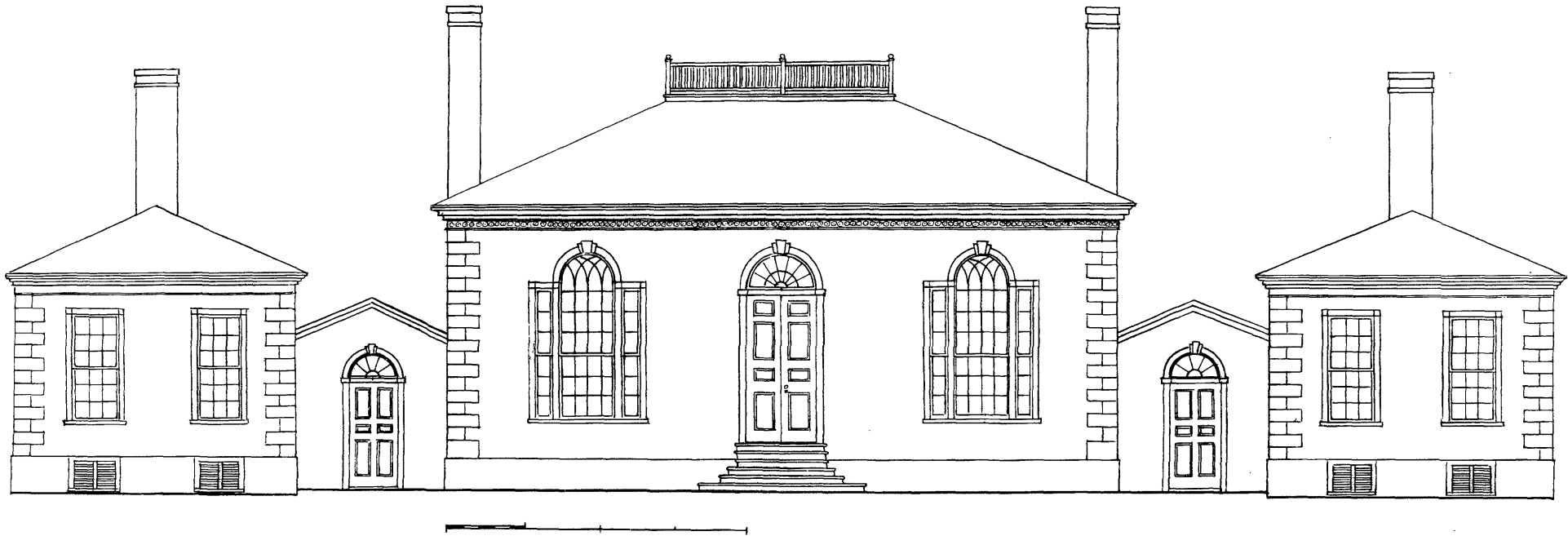
38° 03' 08" N

LOCATION OF MORTON HOUSE  
 A DEFINITION OF PROPERTY



SCALE IN FEET

MAP 3 of 4



#-22A

Restoration Drawing of "MORTON HOUSE"

By Clay Lancaster