

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

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N-326

Property Name: William Morgan Farm

Location and Verbal Boundary Description:

The William Morgan Farm is located on Wilmington-Landenberg Road (also known as Doe Run Road or Road 293), approximately 0.2 miles north of its intersection with Corner Ketch Road (Road 324).

The nominated area includes two parcels of land on opposite sides of the road. The site includes Parcel Number 08-023.00-002, which contains the house; the southern third of Parcel Number 08-023.00-003, which contains the barn and an outbuilding; and a 175 foot section of Wilmington-Landenberg Road that passes between the two parcels.

The boundary for the barn and outbuilding begins at the southwest corner of Parcel 08-023.00-003 and proceeds north along the eastern side of Wilmington-Landenberg Road for 600 feet. From there it follows an imaginary straight line to the east boundary of the parcel, then it follows that boundary south to the southern boundary of the parcel and back to the point of beginning, containing approximately 8.5 acres.

The total acreage of the site is approximately 9.4 acres.

The boundaries are delineated on the attached map titled, New Castle County Property Tax Map, 1985.

UTM Reference: 18/436570/4400270

Owner: Norman T. Dempsey
850 Corner Ketch Road
Newark, Delaware 19711

Description:

The William Morgan Farm contains three buildings that contribute to the historic importance of the site: a stone bank barn which is dated 1809, a stone dwelling that is dated 1813, and a frame outbuilding that was constructed late in the nineteenth century.

The house is situated on the west side of the road with its facade oriented to the southwest. The barn is located directly across the road from it in similar alignment, with its ramp entrance on the north side. The outbuilding lies south of the barn near the edge of the road.

The barn and house are constructed with two types of local fieldstone. Definite pockets of differing rock outcrops exist in the Corner Ketch area. This phenomenon is

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clearly exhibited at the Morgan Farm where the mason carefully sorted the rock by color. The barn is constructed with a banded, light brown and white fieldstone, while the house is constructed primarily with a grey/black rock.

The barn is constructed of uncoursed, rubble fieldstone and is cornered with large fieldstone quoins. Its 1809 datestone is located in the west gable. The tripartite plan consists of 3 equal bays with a center bay driveway and threshing floor flanked by two hay mows. Along the southwest long wall a straw shed was added; constructed or repaired with re-used timbers. On the northwest gable end a two level, shed-roofed, combination corn crib - wagon shed was added. And on the southeast gable end a stone reservoir, supplied with wooden gutters, was added. These additions date from the mid to late 19th century.

The main portion of the barn was constructed with hewn principals: posts, purlins and girts; and vertically sawn secondary timbers: rails, studs and rafters. The gable roof has bridled common rafters on principal purlins supported by diagonal, notched struts which are braced to the purlin and tie beam. The strut, in addition, is tenoned into a common rafter. This is an archaic feature usually associated with principal rafter roof construction. The bent scheme consists of two posts between the higher girt and a low tie beam some 5 feet off the floor. The lower tie on the southeast side was supported by 3 short posts and 4 studs. The lower tie on the northwest inner bent is a large cambered beam supported by a short center post. Associated with this bent is a companion beam about four feet to the northwest and slightly lower than the cambered beam. The area between the 2 beams is roofed over with boards with the pitch angled into the hay mow. The companion beam also has a short center post with up-braces, as well as studs for the horizontal threshing floor wall fastened with hand headed nails. There is a door at each end of the wall.

Mortise and tenon joints are held fast with a single pin. Girts overlap the plate and key into the plate via a half dove tail tenon pinned through the top. End girts rest on a stone ridge along the gable and on several protruding stones. The northeast purlin is scarfed with an edge-halved scarf joint at the juncture with the purlin strut. A less critical place for a scarf joint is on the southwest plate where the removal of the wall has prompted the separation of the lapped and pinned timbers.

The spiked board floors lay on top-hewn log and square hewn timber joists, spanning the barn transversely. Each joist end is inserted in the stone long walls. The joists are supported in the center by a large girder extending the length of the barn. Some portions have been re-floored and replaced with circular sawn joists.

The straw shed has face-hewn log joists and square hewn joists. The southwest long wall is supported by a large girder with an edge-halved scarf joint supported by a half hewn, half log post with a pillow on a large stone.

The house is a two story, three bay, gable-roofed building with an original two-story, gable-roofed rear ell. The south facade and east side of the house (the two

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sides that are visible from the road) are constructed with black fieldstone, while the rear elevations are constructed with a combination of black and light brown fieldstone. The stonework is uncoursed, and finished with roughly dressed quoins and keyed lintels. The datestone, which reads WM M 1813, is located in the east gable. The facade has a symmetrical, center door arrangement. Originally, the doorway contained an eight-panel door with a rectangular transom. However, in 1982 sidelights and a fanlight were added. Windows are six-over-six sash with some one-over-one replacements. The gable roof is clad with slate shingles and is edged with a plain box cornice.

The interior of the house is arranged in a double pile, center hall plan. Originally, each room had an interior end fireplace, however, a few have been removed. The front parlor has a formal federal style mantel with paired pilasters and urns flanking the hearth opening. Door and window surrounds have deeply incised reeded moldings with bullseye corner blocks. Interior doors have eight molded panels, and the dining room exhibits a chairrail with a punched scallop design.

Below the house is a full basement with a stone relieving arch at each endwall. There is a door in the eastern relieving arch that leads to a stone-lined root cellar with a round-arched ceiling. A trap door in the yard between the house and the road also provides access to the root cellar.

The outbuilding south of the barn is said to have been used at one time as a slaughter house. It is a frame, one story, gable-roofed building on a dry laid rubble stone foundation. The exterior is covered with whitewashed board and batten siding and metal roofing.

History and Significance:

The William Morgan Farm is perhaps the perfect example and representative of the early decades of the nineteenth century in Mill Creek Hundred. Under Criterion A, the William Morgan Farm epitomizes the transition from the late eighteenth century to the early nineteenth century, and under Criterion C the buildings are important as dated examples from the early years of the rebuilding period.

The dated stone buildings are examples of the transformation from impermanent log construction to a more durable masonry construction. Both buildings are described as being "large" by the tax assessor in 1816. The dwelling is so large, double pile with a service wing, that it was untouched during the rebuilding period in the late nineteenth century when nearly every dwelling included in this nomination was expanded. The barn is significant for a number of reasons. As one of the earliest dated barns, it is important as a point of comparison to date other barns. Several archaic features are present in this barn. It has the characteristic low tie beam and flared post and strut bent. However, the flared purlin strut is tenoned into the common rafter; nearly identical to the circa 1760 Phillips barn where the strut is tenoned into a principal rafter. Also present is an edge-halved scarf joint, again found only in two other early barns.

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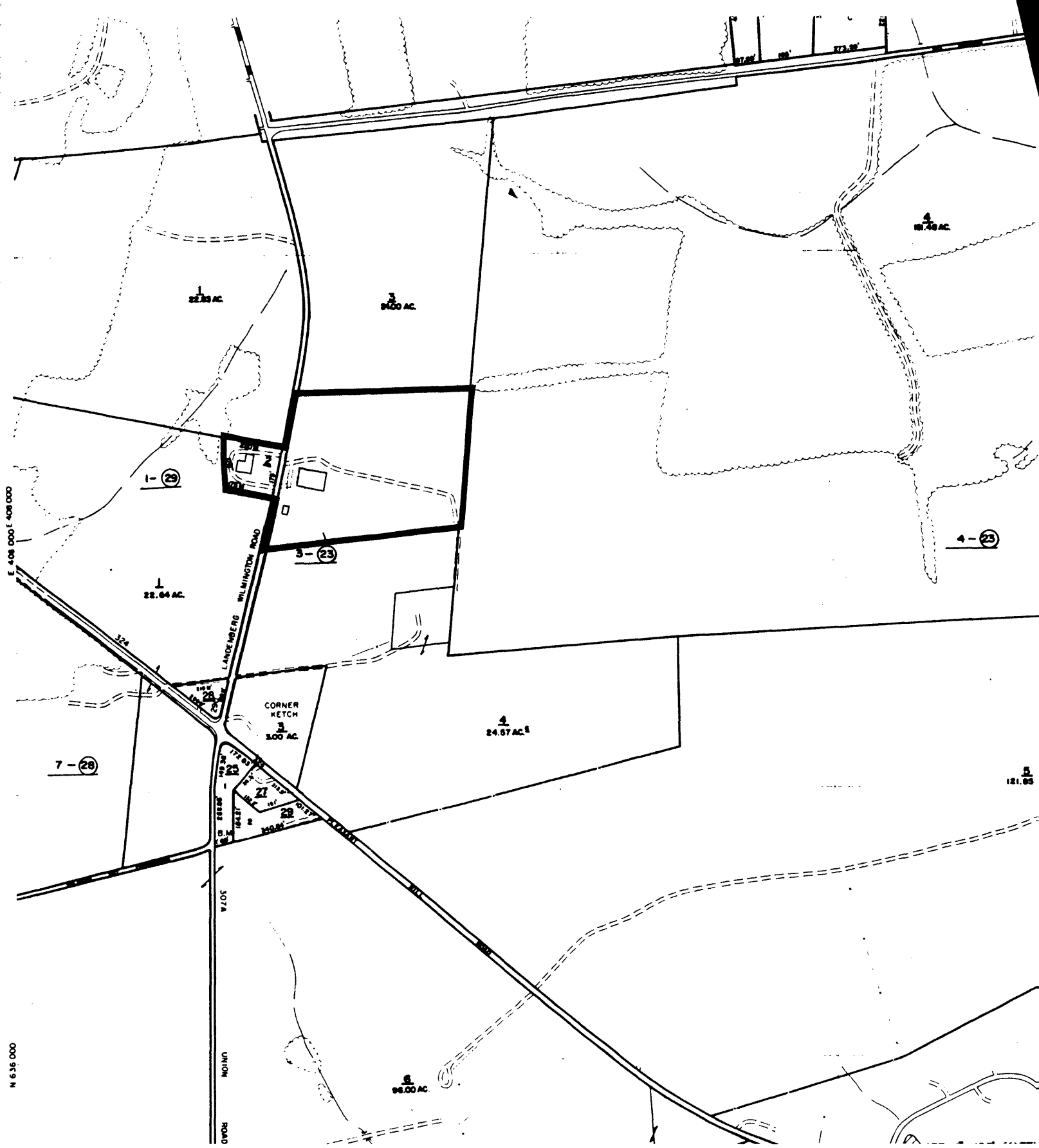
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Expansion in the late nineteenth century and the specialization in dairy farming is evidenced by the addition to the barn of the straw shed and a gable end wagon shed with corncrib.

William Morgan acquired this tract in 1797 from an agent of the Penn family. Tax assessment records for 1798 indicate that of the 235 acres he purchased, 150 acres were improved. His land wealth is relatively high for the period since 89% of Mill Creek Hundred landowners owned fewer than 235 acres, and 81% had fewer than 150 improved acres. The 1798 records also reveal that Morgan lived in a log house, and that a log barn, and two log tenements were located on the property. Morgan's 1803-1804 tax records show that he had acquired four slaves, which was relatively rare in this part of Delaware. The first documentary evidence of the existing stone barn and house appears in the 1816-1817 tax assessment. William Morgan is listed as owning a "new large stone dwelling, one large stone barn and stables, three log tenements," and four slaves. These records bear out the 1809 and 1813 datestones on the barn and house. Today no evidence of the log buildings remain. The size of the Morgan farm in 1816 was still considerably larger than the norm; William Morgan owned 230 acres while the average farm size was 86 acres. Thus, the sudden increase in land values in 1816, perhaps caused by a demand related to an unprecedented population growth, was much more profitable to William Morgan than to other farmers, enabling him to build such impressive buildings.

When William Morgan died he left his estate to his daughter Mary Morgan and William Baldwin, stipulating that all but 100 acres be sold. He owned 257 acres at his death. The house and seven acres were sold to Thomas Key and wife on March 29, 1834 for \$211.23 1/2. The next day Mary Morgan bought back the same land and house for the same amount of money. Apparently this was done to satisfy the terms of the will. As Mary Morgan remained single all her life, it is very unusual that she owned this property independently. In 1857, she sold the farm to Milton Michener.

The setting of the Morgan Farm is still that of gently rolling pastures, hay fields, and plow land, evoking a scene from that prosperous era.



N-326 William Morgan Farm
 New Castle County Property Tax Map, 1985
 Parcel Numbers 08-023.00-002
 08-023.00-003