

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

1044

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 National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any 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.



1. Name of Property

Historic name: Morgan West Wheatland Cemetery

Other names/site number: N/A

Name of related multiple property listing:
N/A

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

2. Location

Street & number: 55th Avenue between 10 and 11 Mile Roads

City or town: Wheatland Township State: MI County: Mecosta

Not For Publication: Vicinity:

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

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

I hereby certify that this x 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 forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property x meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

 national statewide x local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

 x A B C D

<u>Brian D. Murray</u>	<u>10/27/14</u>
Signature of certifying official/Title:	Date
<u>MI SHPO</u>	
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government	

In my opinion, the property <u> </u> meets <u> </u> does not meet the National Register criteria.	
<u> </u>	<u> </u>
Signature of commenting official:	Date
<u> </u>	<u> </u>
Title :	State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

Morgan West Wheatland Cemetery
Name of Property

Mecosta Co., Michigan
County and State

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain:)

Don Edson H. Beall
Signature of the Keeper

12-16-14
Date of Action

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

Morgan West Wheatland Cemetery
Name of Property

Mecosta Co., Michigan
County and State

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	buildings
<u> 1 </u>	<u> </u>	sites
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	structures
<u> </u>	<u> 1 </u>	objects
<u> 1 </u>	<u> 1 </u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Funerary/Cemetery

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Funerary/Cemetery

Morgan West Wheatland Cemetery
Name of Property

Mecosta Co., Michigan
County and State

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

N/A

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: Marble, limestone, granite, concrete, fieldstone

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

The Morgan West Wheatfield Cemetery is a rectangular two-and-one-half-acre African American burial ground located on the east side of 55th Avenue in the northwest part of rural Wheatland Township west-northwest of the village of Remus and east of the village of Mecosta. The rear or east portion of the roughly 200 (north-south) by 550-foot (east-west) grounds, reached by a short two-track drive, contains burials, while the front or west end does not. The cemetery is comprised of an older half-acre rear section known as the Old Cemetery that contains graves dating back to the 1860s and a two-acre front section added in 1954. Still in use, the cemetery contains a total of over 380 marked graves and another twenty-five that are unmarked. Of these 225 are buried in the Old Cemetery. The cemetery contains fifty-six nineteenth-century graves.

Narrative Description

The cemetery grounds rise gently to the east from the road. The surrounding rural countryside is gently rolling, with a combination of woods and open fields. The gravel 55th Avenue passes by running in a north-south direction, an intersection with 10 Mile Road a quarter mile to the south. To the immediate north of the cemetery are open fields, with woods beyond. To the south, beyond a scattered tree line, is a farm with mostly open fields. To the east are woods. Directly across the street to the west is a mix of open field and woods. The village of Remus is located about two and one-half miles east-southeast and the village of Mecosta about one and one-half to the west.

Morgan West Wheatland Cemetery
Name of Property

Mecosta Co., Michigan
County and State

The cemetery grounds front on 55th Avenue, but the portion currently used for burials has its front parallel with and perhaps 200 feet back from it. The land slopes gently upward toward the east from the road, and the area containing burials is located on the slightly higher, gently rolling ground. An unpaved two-track drive runs east from the road along the north edge of the grounds past the unused open ground nearer the road to the edge of the woods. It runs in a nearly straight line, but makes a slight jog around a hand pump. The drive continues as a narrow open, trackless strip of lawn across the back of the tract next to the woods, then back toward the road along the south edge. Like the strips along the cemetery's east and south edges, another open strip of lawn running along what seems to be the west front edge of the old part of the cemetery also serves as a drive. The grounds are mostly open, but contain a scattering of mostly coniferous trees and shrubs. There are no buildings or structures, but one modern wooden bench with rustic supports and wood slat seat and back, with cut-out heart ornaments, is present.

The cemetery has a grid-type arrangement. The monuments are placed in clearly defined rows ranged north and south, sixteen rows in the Old Cemetery, with fourteen to twenty-three lots to a row, and nine more rows platted thus far in the new part. All monuments face west.

The cemetery contains a broad range of monuments and markers typical of Midwest cemeteries in the later nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Materials used include white and "blue" marble, sandstone, limestone, granite, fieldstone, and concrete. Square or round-head tablet headstones, pedestal types with gabled, vaulted or urn tops, pulpit markers with slanting tops sometimes displaying an open book and in one case a cross, beveled or slant-face markers, and low flat-top markers are all present. In the newer front section the monuments are mostly in granite of various hues and typically exemplify the tablet-form, slant-face, and low flat-top marker types. The cemetery contains a number of government-issued monuments for veterans of military service beginning with the Civil War.

There are four early twentieth-century monuments or associated planters built of small rounded cobbles or fieldstones, two with round basket forms resting on square-plan fieldstone bases and topped by rounded handles also finished in small stones, and a third, smaller one with round basket and small stone-finished handle whose upper end comes to a point. A fourth example has a tapering, almost wineglass form with a circular top, without any "handle," containing a basin for flowers.

The cemetery also contains a number of concrete markers of tablet or flat-slab-on-low-fieldstone-base form, several seemingly home-made or displaying what seems to be home-made inscriptions scratched into the wet concrete.

The cemetery's older monuments also include one whitish stone boulder monument, carved with the inscription "Mable Carrothers 1896-1918" in cursive script and also a single rustic limestone monument that, rectangular in footprint and capped by a cross-gable form, has tree branches marking the corners, outlining an arched inscription area in each face, and spelling out the name Mortimer across the base (for the Rev. C. Mortimer, who died in 1898).

Among the nineteenth and early twentieth-century monuments are a number that display ornament with Christian symbolism. One monument, that for Susanah Cummins, who died in 1866, displays a weeping willow, symbolic both of grief and sorrow and of immortality. A number display flowers and foliage, including at least two for children that show what appear to be roses. The marker for Alice Sleet, who died in 1920, features what seems to be a primrose, with its connotations of sadness but also memory and eternal love. At least two monuments, those of Elizabeth Moore and of Millie J. Morgan, who died in 1887 at the age of thirteen, depict a dove, symbol of purity and peace, and two, those of James W. Cross and of Martha M. Koch, who died in 1883 at the age of two, depict a lamb, frequently used on childrens' graves, symbolic of innocence. Several monuments each depict an upraised hand with single finger pointing upward, symbolic of a soul that has risen to heaven, and clasped male and female hands, symbolic of matrimony and, as an inscription on one monument states, "Meeting in Heaven." Several monuments also display an open book motif, suggestive of the deceased's heart opened to God.

Morgan West Wheatland Cemetery is maintained with neatly trimmed grounds by Wheatland Township.

Morgan West Wheatland Cemetery
Name of Property

Mecosta Co., Michigan
County and State

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.)

- 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 old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

Morgan West Wheatland Cemetery
Name of Property

Mecosta Co., Michigan
County and State

Areas of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Ethnic Heritage/Black

Period of Significance
1864-1964

Significant Dates
1864
1896
1954

Significant Person
(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)
N/A

Cultural Affiliation
N/A

Architect/Builder
N/A

Morgan West Wheatland Cemetery

Mecosta Co., Michigan

Name of Property

County and State

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The Morgan West Wheatland Cemetery meets national register criterion A as the largest African American burial ground in the Mecosta-Isabella-Montcalm County area, the site of a substantial Black settlement that began in the early 1860s. The half-acre original or Old Cemetery part of the grounds, in use since the burial of Ann M. Guy there in 1864, was formally donated for cemetery use by property owner Aaron Morgan in 1896. An additional two acres were added to the grounds in 1954. The Morgan West Wheatland Cemetery is the final resting place of numerous pioneer Blacks in the area and, in many cases, of several generations of their descendants.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least one paragraph for each area of significance.)

Brought about by the lure of inexpensive lands that could be purchased under the Homestead Act, a migration of African Americans to Isabella, Mecosta, and Montcalm counties that began in the early 1860s resulted by the early years of the twentieth century in the coalescing of a substantial African American population in portions of those counties. Mecosta County's southeastern townships of Millbrook, Morton, Sheridan, and especially Wheatland, and the Isabella County townships of Broomfield and Rolland, located along Isabella's west edge adjacent to the Mecosta County townships, became the heart of this settlement, but other parts of the tri-county area, including several townships in southern Montcalm County, fifteen to twenty miles south, also received a substantial share of the migration. The largest number came here from previous homes in south-central Ohio, but substantial numbers also came from Ontario, Canada, and from Cass, Berrien, and other counties in southwestern Michigan.

The migration to the tri-county area from Ohio came particularly from the counties of Athens, Hocking, Meigs, Morgan, Muskingum, and Perry, which form a region extending from about fifty miles southeast of Columbus southeast to the Ohio River about twenty-five miles west of Marietta (another significant source of the migration from Ohio was Champaign County, west of Columbus). The settlers coming to Michigan from southern Ohio included escaped and freed slaves from the South, most often reportedly from Virginia, and members of their families. Escaping the South, they had begun to settle in Ohio in the 1830s, settling in the growing towns or forming scattered rural African American communities such as Payne's Crossing, a settlement along the Hocking-Perry County border from which some of the early migrants to Mecosta, Isabella, and Montcalm Counties may have come.

The migration included former slaves and family members who had fled across the border to Ontario in the 1830s, 40s, and 50s. Some settled in Canada as recently escaped slaves, coming from the South north through Michigan and other Great Lakes states as directly as possible to reach the safety of Canada. Others, escaped slaves but also freed slaves who had been living in relative safety in the North, fled across the border into Ontario following the 1850 passage of the federal Fugitive Slave Act. "This law meant that Negroes who could not prove that they were free men were subject to seizure and removal to the Southern part of the United States, without due process of law. ... [It] forced any citizen to assist the authorities in the capture of any Negro suspected of being a fugitive or face the possibility of being fined" (McRae, 17). The act not only made it more difficult to protect escaped slaves in the North from recapture by their former owners but also, by stripping all African Americans of their legal rights to oppose the enslavers, led to widespread abuse of the legal system. The end result was the enslavement or re-enslavement of many legally free African Americans. In the wake of passage of the act, no African American was truly free of the threat of being abducted and sent into slavery in the South. The act's passage precipitated a mass migration of African Americans into Canada, particularly western Ontario, close to Michigan, the last stop on the Underground Railroad on several important routes to freedom from the South. Following the Civil War and the legal end of slavery, many African Americans, including some who had lived in Canada for many years, returned to the United States, drawn by the availability of cheap land in places like Michigan's Mecosta and adjacent counties where settlement was just beginning.

Morgan West Wheatland Cemetery
Name of Property

Mecosta Co., Michigan
County and State

A third source of migration was counties in southwestern Michigan, particularly Cass and Berrien counties. Among Cass County's early settlers in the 1830s were a number of Quakers, part of a larger Quaker migration from the South to Indiana, Ohio, and Michigan because of their abhorrence of slavery. Cass County's African American settlement began with the Rev. Henry Way bringing the first fugitive slave there in 1826. A colony of free blacks settled there in 1836 and another colony of forty freed slaves in 1847. The 1850 federal census showed 376 African Americans in Cass County and the 1854 Michigan census 692, the highest number of any Michigan county after Wayne, with its 959, almost exclusively in Detroit. Most Cass County African Americans were thought to be escaped slaves. The 1854 census listed 231 African Americans in Berrien County, to Cass's immediate west – only Wayne, Cass, and Washtenaw County (with 243, 72 in Ypsilanti and 100 in Ann Arbor city and township) had larger African American populations (McRae, 10-11; *Census and Statistics* 1854). The number of early settlers from Cass and Berrien counties probably reflects the relatively large size of the African American settlements in those counties compared to most other Michigan counties.

Beginnings of African American Settlement in Mecosta, Isabella, and Montcalm Counties

Doraville Whitney, perhaps the first African American to settle in the tri-county area, arrived in Isabella County's Broomfield Township in the fall of 1860 (Chapman Brothers, *Isabella County*, 550). One report has five families coming to the area from Hocking County, Ohio, in 1861 – those known to have come that year include James Guy and Daniel Pointer, with wife Millie Jane (Cummings) and foster child Aaron Morgan, who settled in Mecosta County, and Lloyd and Margaret Guy, the first African American settlers in Montcalm County, who bought 120 acres in Bushnell Township. Grandison Norman early in 1863 became the first African American settler in Isabella County's Rolland Township (Chapman Brothers, *Isabella County*, 548).

The three counties were still largely wilderness in the 1860s. Montcalm, the farthest to the south, saw the beginnings of settlement in the early 1840s, with the county being organized in 1850. Isabella and Mecosta counties were not organized until 1859, with future Lake and Osceola counties then tied to Mecosta until 1869. The Isabella and Mecosta County townships that became the centers of Black population were only being established in the 1860s – Mecosta County's Mecosta and Wheatland townships were the first, in 1861 and 1862.

The Black migration gathered momentum following the Civil War and continued into the very early twentieth century. Most of the settlers came seeking land to establish farms. The country was initially heavily wooded, and settlers during the first decades typically had to carve their farms from the forests, a task that went on for years. A few of the more prosperous settlers hired others to clear land. Charles W. Guy, who settled in Rolland Township in 1874, was one of many who added to his income by clearing land for others (*The Old Settlers*, 63). Like pioneers in newly settled lands throughout Michigan's history into the early twentieth century, many of the early Black settlers likely built log houses in their early years. For example, John Tate and his wife Sarah A. (Guy) Tate built their log house in Isabella County's Ronald Township in 1869, and Isaac Berry, Sr., and Lucy Esther (Millard) Berry built a log house when they moved onto their Morton Township (Mecosta County) farm in 1877. Photographs of a few of these early houses have survived: Marguerite Berry Jackson's "Little River" in the *Mecosta Area History Book* (46) pictures Isaac and Lucy Berry's side-gable log house in Morton Township and *Remus Area Centennial* (21) illustrates Joseph and Esther (Lett) Cummings' one-story gable-front house southeast of Remus, built with square-hewn logs.

Work in the area's lumber camps and sawmills were prime occupations and income sources in the early days of settlement and as late as the 1880s and 90s, with farming taking over as the land was cleared. The 1883 and 1884 Chapman Brothers histories of Mecosta and Isabella counties note the extent of lumbering activities at the time and the gradual evolution to agriculture: for example, the Isabella County history notes for Broomfield Township that the settlers were primarily engaged in lumbering, with numerous logging camps in the township, while in adjacent Rolland Township, "Numerous mills are rapidly thinning out the forests, and many of the farms are highly improved where ten years ago the dense forest stood" (548, 550). Many African Americans worked in the area's or more distant logging camps in the winter, a few operating their own outfits. Thomas Guy, who established a farm in the Blanchard area in Rolland Township, was a logger as well as farmer and eventually had his own lumber mill on his farm (*The Old Settlers*, 71). Thomas Henry Johnson reportedly worked at various times for Joe Lett and Art Skinner,

Morgan West Wheatland Cemetery

Mecosta Co., Michigan

Name of Property

County and State

both among the small number of Blacks who had their own logging camps. Lett's all-Black crew logged the west side of the Bundy Hills east of Remus, while O. E. Hall and his all-white crew logged the east side (both crews apparently became integrated over time). Skinner's camp was described as being in the Boyne City area much farther north (Jackson, "Lumbering," 16; *The Old Settlers*, 89). Thomas W. Cross, who settled in Wheatland in 1869 and had a 160-acre farm, engaged in lumbering during the winters (*The Old Settlers*, 31).

The area's first railroad, the Detroit, Lansing & Northern Railroad, was built in 1878-80 from Stanton northwest through Edmore, Blanchard, Millbrook, Remus, Mecosta, and Rodney to Big Rapids and went into service in 1880 (Ivey, *The Pere Marquette Railroad Company*, 257). Many Blacks from the area hired out to help build the line, and some likely worked for it once it was in operation.

The 1900 federal census reveals the general area and extent of African American settlement. Six adjacent townships in Mecosta and Isabella County contained by far the largest part of the settlement. Mecosta County's Wheatland Township, in which Remus is located, had the largest Black population, with 149 out of the township's 1115 residents. Morton Township, next door west of Wheatland, held the second largest population, seventy-one, including eleven in the village of Mecosta within the township borders, out of a total township and village population of 1660. Next highest in numbers of Blacks was Broomfield Township, just east of Wheatland, but over the line into Isabella County, with sixty-four Blacks out of 646 residents, and then Rolland Township, directly south of Broomfield in Isabella, with sixty-three Blacks out of 960 residents. Sheridan Township, directly north of Wheatland (in Mecosta County), had fifty Blacks out of 864 in all, and Millbrook Township, directly south of Wheatland (these two townships both in Mecosta County) contained twenty-one out of a population of 1139.

Some other townships in the two counties also contained small numbers of Blacks. In Mecosta County, the 1900 census lists five in Green Township and one in Colfax, and in Isabella County four additional townships contained numbers of Blacks ranging from one to nine, these including Sherman, next north of Broomfield, with six.

The 1900 census population schedules show a total of 133 Blacks for Montcalm County, located directly south of Mecosta and Isabella counties. The county's greatest "concentration," if it can be called that, was located in the county's four southern townships, nearly twenty miles south of Mecosta and Isabella – Fairplains, with thirty-two Blacks; Bloomer, eleven; Eureka (including Greenville), ten; and Bushnell, eight. Richland, the county's northeastern-most township, also contained eighteen Blacks, and Montcalm Township twelve. Three other townships contained six to eight Blacks each (in townships having ten or fewer Blacks, the number commonly represented members of a single family).

No survey has thus far been done to identify buildings and other historic resources associated with the tri-county African American settlement. But one key Black institution and historic resource in the area that began in the settlement's early days and remains in operation today is the Wheatland Church of Christ located in Mecosta County's Wheatland Township north of Remus. The church's founder was Thomas W. Cross, who came to Wheatland in 1869 with a group of families from Ohio. Cross was born in Virginia in 1826 and moved in 1851 to Ohio. A deacon in his Disciples church in Ohio, Cross "set about to organize and build up the work" in Wheatland soon after his arrival. In 1870 the church was organized with six members. Schoolhouses initially served as the congregation's worship places, but in the 1880s the simple wooden church building still used by the church was built on land at the southwest corner of 11 Mile Road and state highway M-66 (Todd, "History of the Wheatland Church"). Cross, appointed elder at the church's establishment, served until his death in 1897. Early members of the church included members of the Cross, Lett, Guy, Norman, Scott, Cummings and Harper families and others, for many of whom several generations of family members rest in the Morgan West Wheatland Cemetery.

Not a building or structure, but another important long term community institution is the annual Old Settlers' Reunion held annually on the third Saturday in August. The reunion began with Pioneer Picnics, first held in a grove on a farm east of Remus by about 1890, as nearly as can be determined today. For a period the picnics were discontinued (for reasons unknown today). In 1933 three members of the area's early Black families, Arthur Cross, Emmet Porter, and Leslie Guy, established the Old Settlers' Reunion to bring back the picnics. The first of the Old Settlers' Reunions was held in 1935 and the tradition continues strong today, with groups of descendants living in the Remus area and Lansing, Grand Rapids, and Detroit areas alternating in planning the annual event. In 1971,

Morgan West Wheatland Cemetery

Mecosta Co., Michigan

Name of Property

County and State

through the efforts of the Old Settlers' Reunion and Arthur Cross, a state historical marker to "Negro Settlers" was placed in School Section Lake County Park in Morton Township, located about six miles west of Remus and four west-southwest of Morgan West Wheatland Cemetery. Beside the state marker a separate Old Settlers' Reunion Association, incorporated in 1977 through the efforts of Marguerite Berry Jackson, erected a granite monument that, under the heading "1860-1984, Honoring the Negro Original Old Settlers and Their Descendants of Isabella, Mecosta and Montcalm Counties," lists 256 names. The association was responsible for the 1988 publication of *The Old Settlers: A Nation Within Itself*, containing historical background on the tri-county area's Black settlement and family histories. In 2013 a new OSRW (Old Settlers' Reunion Website) organization published a new edition of the book (Diana Green email, 10/16/2014; *The Old Settlers*, 181).

Morgan West Wheatfield Cemetery

Along with the Wheatland Church of Christ the Morgan West Wheatland Cemetery is one of the key historic landmarks of the tri-county African American settlement, the largest Black cemetery in terms of burials and the final resting place of many of the pioneer Black settlers and, for many, several generations of descendants down to the present day. The cemetery is located on a part of a 120-acre farm purchased by Daniel and Millie Cummins Pointer in 1867. The Pointers migrated to Mecosta County from Hocking County, Ohio, in 1861. They left what came to be known as the Morgan Farm to their foster son, Aaron Morgan.

The cemetery may be said to date from 1864, when Ann Mariah (Caliman) Guy, first wife of James Guy, who migrated to the area from Ohio in 1861, died and became the first to be placed there (*The Old Settlers*, 68). Although there seems not to have been any formal action to set aside cemetery property, the grounds received numerous burials in the coming years, fifty-six before the beginning of the twentieth century according to the history of the cemetery in *The Old Settlers* (216). November 4, 1896, Aaron and wife Joanna Morgan, to whom the Pointers had bequeathed the farm, conveyed the old part of the cemetery, about one-half acre of land, with a two-rod wide right of way leading to it from the public highway to the west, to the West Wheatland Union Cemetery Association (*ibid.*, from Mecosta County deeds, Liber 98, 549). This "Old Cemetery" contained as of 2013 an estimated 225 burials. In 1954 Robert J. and Bernadette Lehnert, then owners of the adjacent Morgan Farm property, quitclaimed to the West Wheatland Union Cemetery Society an additional two acres of land west of the Old Cemetery, between it and the road (*ibid.*, county deeds, Liber 260, 157). These two parcels today constitute the entire cemetery grounds. The cemetery, today cared for by Wheatland Township, contains a total of about 400 burials.

The Old Settlers lists thirteen cemeteries in all that contain the remains of members of the pioneer Black families, including Morgan West Wheatland. At least three of the other twelve cemeteries – Maple Ridge, Bushnell Township, Montcalm County; Norman Cummings, Millbrook Township, Mecosta County; and Pine River, Rolland Township, Isabella County – date back to the 1860s when Morgan West Wheatland was established (*The Old Settlers*, 212-18), but none of the other twelve contains close to the number of pioneer Black settlers and their descendants whose remains are interred at Morgan West Wheatland. At Morgan West Wheatland are interred several generations of the Cross, Cummins, Gross, Guy, Harris, Johnson, Lett, Norman, and other pioneer Black settler families.

The following is a representative selection of members of the early Black families at rest in the Morgan West Wheatland Cemetery intended to illustrate how those interred in Morgan West Wheatland reflect the general background and settlement patterns of the area's early Black settlers:

- Thomas W. and Catharine Cross: Thomas W. Cross was born in 1826 in Loudon County, Virginia, to a white planter father and slave mother. He moved to Hocking County, Ohio, in 1851, perhaps brought there and freed by his father. In 1852 he was married to Catharine Harper. Cross served 1863-65 in the Wagner Company, 5th Regiment, U. S. Colored Infantry. In 1869 the Crosses with others migrated to Mecosta County, Michigan, where Cross bought 160 acres located two miles north of Remus in Wheatland Township. The Cross farm straddled 11 Mile Road west of Michigan Route M-66 in sections 4 and 9 (Cross Farm Centennial Farm application). Thomas W. Cross, as has been stated, was instrumental in founding the Wheatland Church of Christ in 1869-70. He played a leadership role in the church during the rest of his life, and provided the site for the church from his farm and also advanced the funds to complete the church building in the 1880s when the

Morgan West Wheatland Cemetery

Mecosta Co., Michigan

Name of Property

County and State

work stalled for lack of funds (Mrs. Emma Todd, "History of the Wheatland Church"; Beery). Thomas W. Cross died in 1897, Catharine in 1893. Morgan West Wheatland contains the graves of several of the Cross children who died young and also numerous graves of descendants.

- Joseph and Esther Cummins: Joseph (born 1840) and Esther (Lett) Cummins, both from Athens County, Ohio, were among the early settlers in the Remus area, arriving in the later 1860s or 70s. Joseph died in 1900, Esther in 1920 (*The Old Settlers*, 51).
- Abraham/Elizabeth Gross and James/Mary Gross: In 1869 a group of families that included those of Abraham and Elizabeth Gross and James and Mary Gross as well as Thomas W. and Catharine Cross migrated to the Wheatland area. Abraham (born c. 1817) and Elizabeth (born c. 1830) settled near the village of Millbrook near the Wheatland-Millbrook township line, and James (born 1853) and Mary (born 1849) settled in Mecosta Township. Abraham died in 1897, Elizabeth in 1894, and James and Mary both died in 1912 (*ibid.*, 61, 216).
- Ann M. Guy: Ann was the first wife of James Guy. James and Ann Mariah (Caliman) Guy were among the tri-county area's first Black settlers, coming from Ohio to Mecosta County in the spring of 1861 and settling on a 160-acre tract obtained from the federal government. She died in 1864 and became the first laid to rest in what subsequently became the Morgan West Wheatland Cemetery. It is not clear whether James Guy, who died in 1896, is also buried at Morgan West Wheatland (*ibid.*, 68).
- Thomas Harris: This Thomas Harris was a son of Thomas, Sr., and wife Sarah, both born c. 1818, who migrated in 1869 from Hocking County, Ohio, to Mecosta's Millbrook Township. Harris, Sr. eventually settled in Montcalm's Fairplains Township, where he died in 1907. The Thomas Harris, Jr., buried at Morgan West Wheatland was born c. 1842, served in the Civil War from Ohio, and married Elizabeth Ann Harper in 1867. Thomas and Elizabeth Harris migrated from Hocking County, Ohio, to Berrien County, Michigan, about 1880 and then to Wheatland in 1889, settling on a farm northeast of Remus. Thomas died in 1897 (*ibid.*, 81).
- Absalom W. and Cynthia Johnson: Johnson, originally from Virginia (born 1821), and wife Cynthia (Wilson), born in North Carolina in 1837, migrated to East Windsor, Ontario, a few miles from Detroit, before the Civil War. In 1877 they homesteaded eighty acres in Morton Township. Absalom died in 1901 and Cynthia in 1921 (*ibid.*, 89).
- David and Mary Jane Lett: David Lett was the eldest of fifteen children born to early Mecosta County African American residents Othias and Sophie (Stevens) Lett, who moved here from Morgan or Meigs County, Ohio, in the 1860s. David and wife Mary Jane (Harper) Lett (born 1817) arrived in Michigan in 1869 and settled on a farm in Isabella County just east of the Mecosta County line (*ibid.*, 101). David died in 1915, Mary in 1917.
- Gabriel and Mary Ann Lett: Gabriel Lett, born in Virginia, married Elizabeth (Gross) Lett and came to Mecosta County in 1870, traveling "by two white oxen pulling a covered wagon" and eventually buying forty acres in the Little River area in Mecosta's Morton Township west of Wheatland. He died in 1899, she in 1900 (*ibid.*, 96, 216). Descendants of Othias and Sophie Lett and several other Lett families that settled early in the area form one of the most heavily represented family names in Morgan West Wheatland.
- Daniel Pointer and wife: Both born in Ohio, Daniel Pointer and his wife Millie Jane (Cummings), with foster son Aaron Morgan, arrived in Mecosta County from Ohio in 1861 and in 1867 purchased 120 acres in section 7 of Wheatland Township that included the future Morgan West Wheatfield Cemetery site. Daniel Pointer died in 1878, Millie Jane Pointer in 1889 or 90 (*ibid.*, 132, 216). The Pointers left what came to be called the Morgan Farm to Aaron Morgan, who shortly before his death set aside the Old Cemetery property (*ibid.*, 216).

Morgan West Wheatland Cemetery
Name of Property

Mecosta Co., Michigan
County and State

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

Beery, Lawrence. "Wheatland Church of Christ gets historic marker." *The Pioneer*, Big Rapids, August 20, 1988.

Chapman Brothers. *Portrait and Biographical Album of Isabella County, Mich. Containing Portraits and Biographical Sketches of Prominent and Representative Citizens of the County, together with Portraits and Biographies of All the Governors of Michigan and of the Presidents of the United States. Also Containing a Complete History of the County, from Its Earliest Settlement to the Present Time.* Chicago, 1894.

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Dechow, Carmen Doyle, ed. *Mecosta Area History Book. Mecosta, Michigan, 1879-1979.* Morton Township Library, 1979.

Dunbar, Willis F. *All Aboard! A History of Railroads in Michigan.* Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1969.

Genealogy Trails History Group. "Paynes Crossing, Hocking County, Ohio."
<http://genealogytrails.com/ohio/hocking/PAYNECROSSING.html>. Accessed 6/10/2014.

Harris-Allen, Dorothy; Deonna Todd-Green; Diana Todd-Green; Marsha Todd-Sanders. *Millbrook Michigan.* Remus, MI: OSRW, 2014.

Ivey, Paul Wesley. *The Pere Marquette Railroad Company. An Historical Study of the Growth and Development of One of Michigan's Most Important Railway Systems.* Grand Rapids, MI: Black Letter Press, 1970 [1919].

Jackson, Marguerite Berry. In *Mecosta County History Book.*

- "Little River." 45-47.
- "Lumbering." 13-17.
- "Mecosta Colored 1861." 36-39.
- "Old Settler's Reunion." 125.

Keister, Douglas. *Stories in Stone: A Field Guide to Cemetery Symbolism and Iconography.* Salt Lake City, UT: Gibbs Smith, 2004.

Lehnert, Jennie, and Alice Welling, ed. *100 Years – Remus Area Centennial, Wheatland Township, Remus, Michigan – 1977.* Remus: Remus Area Centennial, Inc., 1977.

McRae, Norman. *Negroes in Michigan During the Civil War.* Lansing, MI: Michigan Civil War Centennial Observance Commission, Publications Committee, 1966.

Morgan West Wheatland Cemetery
Name of Property

Mecosta Co., Michigan
County and State

Mecosta County, Register of Deeds. Copies in working file.

- Liber 98, page 549: Warranty Deed, Aaron and Joanna Morgan to West Wheatland Union Cemetery Association, Nov. 4, 1896.
- Liber 260, page 157: Quit-claim Deed, Robert J. and Bernadette Lehnert to West Wheatland Union Cemetery Society, Aug. 17, 1954.

Old Settlers Reunion. *The Old Settlers: A Nation Within Itself*. Revised/updated edition. OSRW, 2013.

Romig, Walter. *Michigan Place Names: The History of the Founding and the Naming of More Than Five Thousand Past and Present Michigan Communities*. Grosse Pointe, MI: Walter Romig, nd [1973].

Todd-Sanders, Marsha. *The Old Settlers Journey to Michigan*. 2nd ed, 2nd pr. Remus, MI: OSRW, 2012 [2006].

Todd, Mrs. Emma. "History of the Wheatland Church." Read at 73rd Anniversary of Wheatland Church of Christ Aug. 23, 1942. In *Christian Banner*, Vol. XL, No. 10. Owosso, MI, Oct. 1942.

Todd, Marsha. *The Old Settlers Journey to Michigan – Volume 2*. 2nd ed, 3rd pr. Southfield, MI: OSRW, 2012.

United States Census, 1900, Schedule No. 1 – Population, Isabella, Mecosta, Montcalm Counties.

United States Department of Agriculture, Forest Service. Wayne National Forest – History. "Underground Railroad and Freedom Trails on the National Forests – Historical African-American Communities."

http://www.fs.usda.gov/wps/portal/fsinternet!/ut/p/c4/04_SB8K8xLLM9MSSz8xPy8xBz9CP... Accessed 6/10/2014. [About Payne's Crossing]

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 # _____
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other
- Name of repository: _____

Morgan West Wheatland Cemetery
Name of Property

Mecosta Co., Michigan
County and State

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): N/A

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 2.5 acres

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Latitude: 43.615262 | Longitude: -85.193771 |
| 2. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 3. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 4. Latitude: | Longitude: |

Or

UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or NAD 1983

- | | | |
|----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 2. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 3. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 4. Zone: | Easting : | Northing: |

Morgan West Wheatland Cemetery
Name of Property

Mecosta Co., Michigan
County and State

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

Land in township of Wheatland, Mecosta Co., MI, described as follows: Commencing at a point six rods and fourteen feet west of the southeast corner of South West $\frac{1}{4}$ of North West $\frac{1}{4}$ of South East quarter of Section 7; thence running North twelve rods; thence West six rods and fourteen feet; thence South twelve rods; thence East six rods and fourteen feet to Place of Beginning. Also a strip of land two rods wide off the South end of above South West $\frac{1}{4}$ of North West $\frac{1}{4}$ of South East $\frac{1}{4}$, Commencing at the South West corner and running east along the $\frac{1}{8}$ line to the said above described parcel. About $\frac{1}{2}$ acre.

Land in township of Wheatland, Mecosta Co., MI, described as follows: Beginning at the stake 13 rods, 11 $\frac{1}{2}$ feet of the South East Corner of the West $\frac{1}{2}$ of the North West $\frac{1}{4}$ of the South East $\frac{1}{4}$ [of Section 7], going West; thence running North 12 rods; then West twenty-six rods five feet; then South twelve rods; then East twenty-six rods five feet to Place of Beginning. Being two acres more or less.

The two adjoining parcels form a rectangle 547 feet, east-west, and 198 feet north-to-south, bounded on the west by 55th Avenue.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

Includes entire property associated with the cemetery.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Robert O. Christensen, national register coordinator
organization: MI SHPO
street & number: 702 W. Kalamazoo St.
city or town: Lansing state: MI zip code: 48909
e-mail christensenr@michigan.gov
telephone: 517/335-2719
date: August 2014

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A USGS map or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.

Morgan West Wheatland Cemetery
Name of Property

Mecosta Co., Michigan
County and State

- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property: Morgan West Wheatland Cemetery
City or Vicinity: Wheatland Township
County: Mecosta State: Michigan
Photographer: R. O. Christensen
Date Photographed: April 2014

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

- 1 of 26: Cemetery from 55th Avenue, looking east
MI_Mecosta_MorganWestWheatlandCemetery_0001.tif
- 2 of 26: Front of cemetery, 1954 section in foreground, looking east
MI_Mecosta_MorganWestWheatlandCemetery_0002.tif
- 3 of 26: Looking west toward 55th Avenue from Old Cemetery
MI_Mecosta_MorganWestWheatlandCemetery_0003.tif
- 4 of 26: Looking NW from front of Old Cemetery, north edge drive across center of view
MI_Mecosta_MorganWestWheatlandCemetery_0004.tif
- 5 of 26: North center of grounds looking north
MI_Mecosta_MorganWestWheatlandCemetery_0005.tif
- 6 of 26: Northeast corner of cemetery looking northeast
MI_Mecosta_MorganWestWheatlandCemetery_0006.tif
- 7 of 26: Northeast part of cemetery looking southeast
MI_Mecosta_MorganWestWheatlandCemetery_0007.tif
- 8 of 26: Part of southeast corner of cemetery looking east
MI_Mecosta_MorganWestWheatlandCemetery_0008.tif
- 9 of 26: East part of cemetery looking ESE
MI_Mecosta_MorganWestWheatlandCemetery_0009.tif
- 10 of 26: Looking southwest from northeast corner of cemetery
MI_Mecosta_MorganWestWheatlandCemetery_0010.tif
- 11 of 26: Koch and Warrick tablet monuments looking ESE

Morgan West Wheatland Cemetery

Mecosta Co., Michigan
County and State

Name of Property

- MI_Mecosta_MorganWestWheatlandCemetery_0011.tif
12 of 26: Lett pulpit marker looking ESE
- MI_Mecosta_MorganWestWheatlandCemetery_0012.tif
13 of 26: Luke beveled markers and fieldstone planter, looking northeast
- MI_Mecosta_MorganWestWheatlandCemetery_0013.tif
14 of 26: Fieldstone marker or planter looking southeast
- MI_Mecosta_MorganWestWheatlandCemetery_0014.tif
15 of 26: Mable Carrothers boulder marker looking east
- MI_Mecosta_MorganWestWheatlandCemetery_0015.tif
16 of 26: Rev. C. Mortimer rustic monument looking southeast
- MI_Mecosta_MorganWestWheatlandCemetery_0016.tif
17 of 26: Susanah Cummins monument, weeping willow motif, looking east
- MI_Mecosta_MorganWestWheatlandCemetery_0017.tif
18 of 26: Alice Sleet monument, primrose motif, looking ENE
- MI_Mecosta_MorganWestWheatlandCemetery_0018.tif
19 of 26: Millie J. Morgan monument, dove motif, looking ESE
- MI_Mecosta_MorganWestWheatlandCemetery_0019.tif
20 of 26: Ann M. Guy monument (1st burial, 1864), upraised hand motif, looking ESE
- MI_Mecosta_MorganWestWheatlandCemetery_0020.tif
21 of 26: Cross family monuments (Thomas W. at right, wife Catharine center, daughter Ida left) looking southeast
- MI_Mecosta_MorganWestWheatlandCemetery_0021.tif
22 of 26: Joseph and Esther Cummins [Cummings] monuments looking southeast
- MI_Mecosta_MorganWestWheatlandCemetery_0022.tif
23 of 26: Abraham Gross monument looking southeast
- MI_Mecosta_MorganWestWheatlandCemetery_0023.tif
24 of 26: Thomas Harris monument looking east
- MI_Mecosta_MorganWestWheatlandCemetery_0024.tif
25 of 26: Mary Jane and David Lett monuments looking southeast
- MI_Mecosta_MorganWestWheatlandCemetery_0025.tif
26 of 26: Daniel Poynter [Pointer] monument looking east
- MI_Mecosta_MorganWestWheatlandCemetery_0026.tif

Morgan West Wheatland Cemetery

Mecosta Co., Michigan

Name of Property

County and State

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 listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 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 Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.



Morgan West Wheatland Cemetery, Mecosta County, Michigan
Latitude 43.615262, Longitude -85.193771











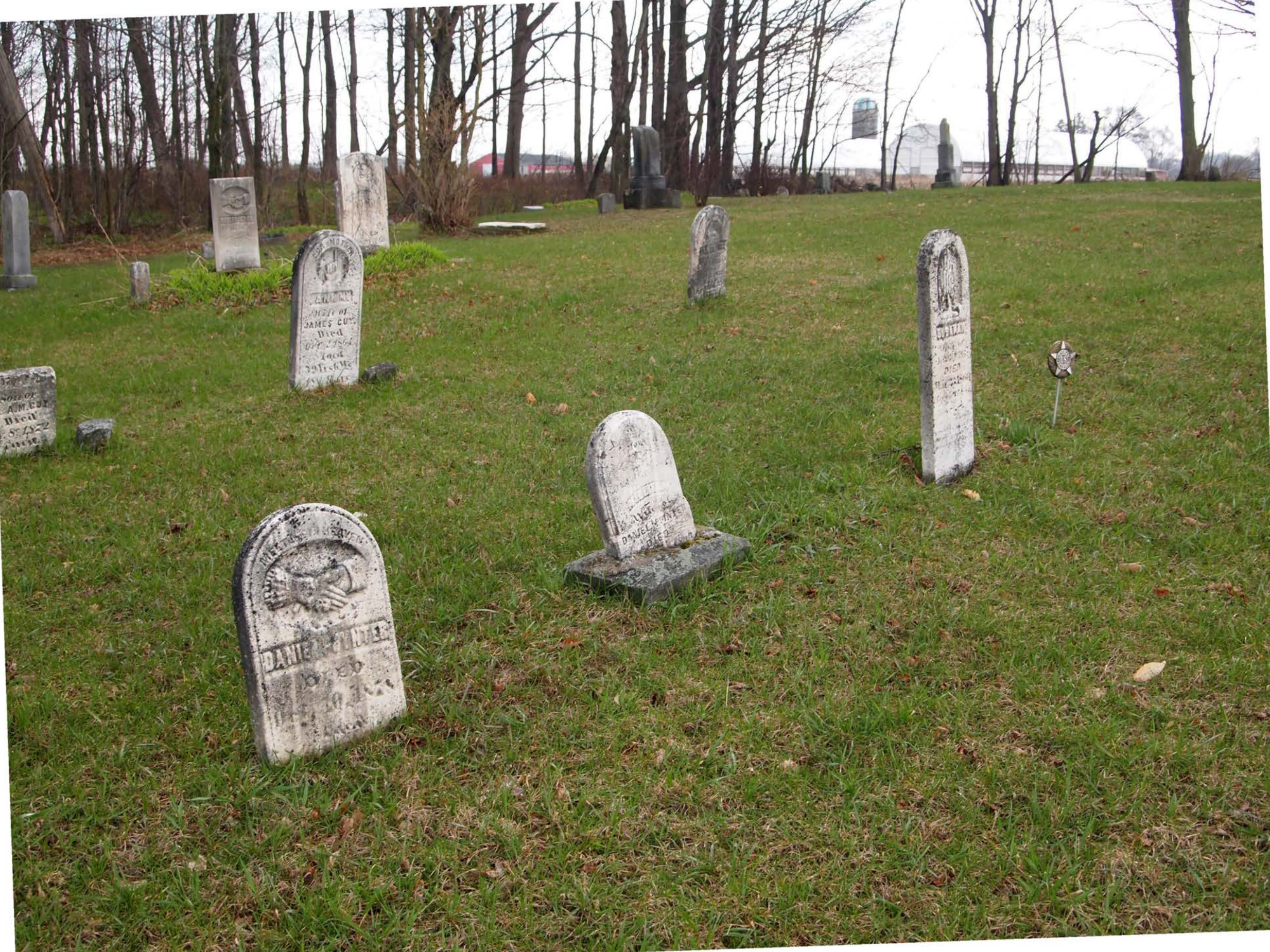


ELUCINDA L.
Wife of
J. O. RICE
died
Nov 18, 1877
Aged
22 years

L. R.

ELUCINDA L.
Wife of
J. O. RICE
died
Nov 18, 1877
Aged
22 years

ELUCINDA L.
Wife of
J. O. RICE
died
Nov 18, 1877
Aged
22 years



SON OF
A.M. EBY
Died
8-22-22
1888

WIFE OF
JAMES EBY
Died
1888

WIFE OF
JAMES EBY
Died
1888

WIFE OF
JAMES EBY
Died
1888

WIFE OF
JAMES EBY
Died
1888

WIFE OF
JAMES EBY
Died
1888

WIFE OF
JAMES EBY
Died
1888



M.
ROBINSON
BORN
DIED

HENRY
JOHNSON
1890 - 1918

SYNTHA
JOHNSON
1887 - 1971

W. JOHNSON
1888 - 1968





MOTHER
ROSA BERMAN CROSS
1899 1954

FRED SLETT
BORN [illegible]
DIED [illegible]

ALICE
FLOWER
[illegible]

CROSS





OUR FATHERS

PHILIP KOCHL
DIED
May 26 1866
Aged
57 years


DIED
MAY 26 1866
AGED
57 years

C. LETT
JOSEPHINE
LETT
REINEC LETT
MARCY LETT

LETT

MOTHER
MARY LUKE
1870-1957



FATHER
JAKE LUKE
1861-1938





Mable Cannothers
1896 - 1918



REV. C.
1832-1898

MORTIMER

1860
1916
1916



SUBANAH

Wife of
J. CUMMINS
DIED
MAY 21 1866
AGED 31 YRS



ALICE SLEET
1861-1922

At rest





CHILD MOTHER



MARY ANN

Wife of
JAMES CUY

DIED

NOV 27 1865

AGED

30 YEARS

18 1/2

DEAD OF
T.W. & C.B. CROSS
DIED
Oct. 4 1891
April 19 1901

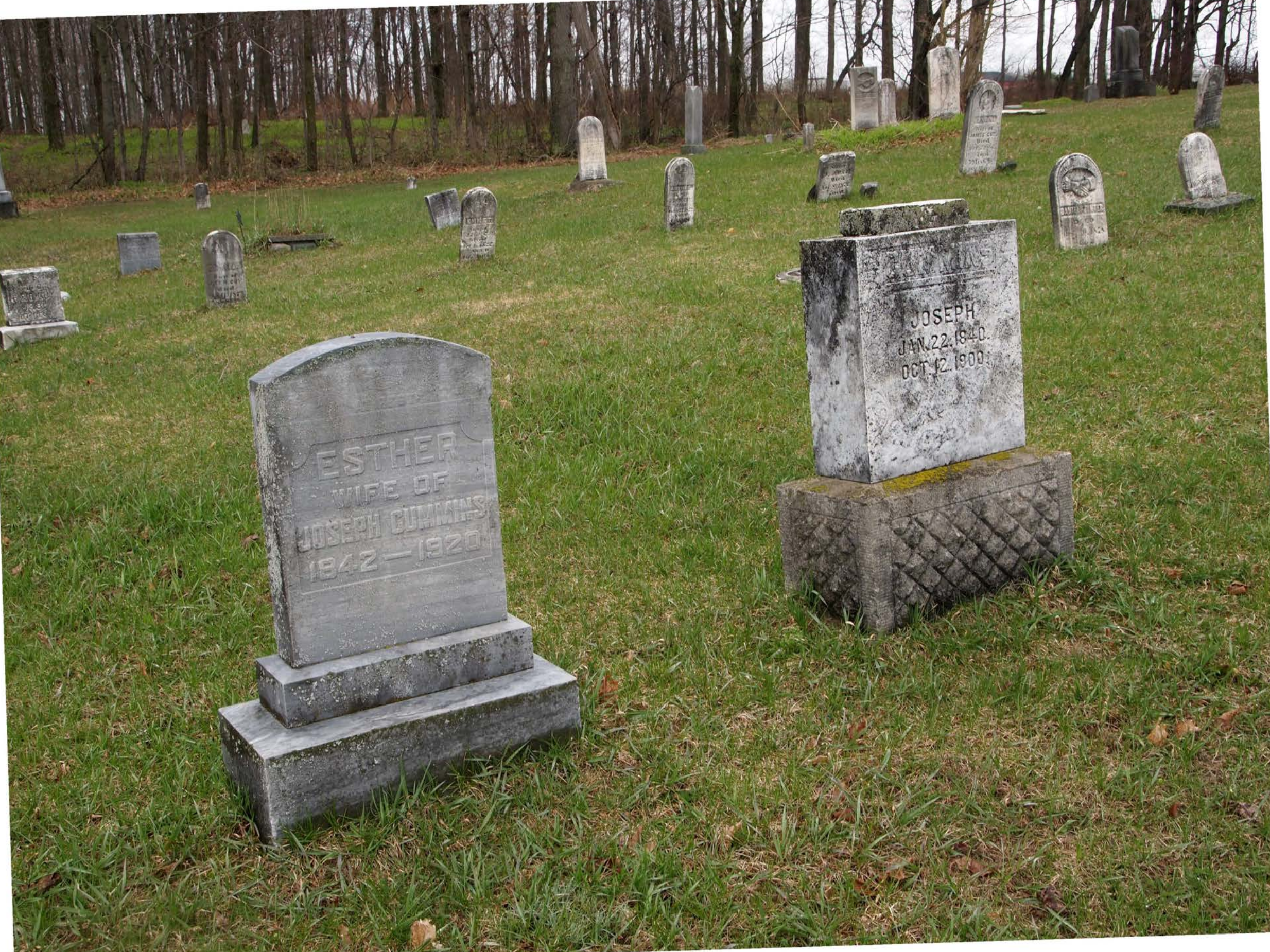
WIFE OF
T.W. CROSS
DIED
Mar. 6 1893
AGED
59 YRS.

WIFE OF
T.W. CROSS
DIED
July 21 1897
AGED
71 YRS.

TRUSTED GROSS
DIED
July 21 1897
AGED
71 YRS.

ESTHER
WIFE OF
JOSEPH CUMMINS
1842 — 1920

JOSEPH
JAN. 22. 1840.
OCT. 12. 1900.



ABRAHAM
GROSS

Wife
Jan. 22, 1897
Aged
62, 31, 1860.



THOMAS
HARRIS
DIED
OCT 5 1877
AGED
47 YEARS







DANIEL SYNTER

1830

1890

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY Morgan West Wheatland Cemetery
NAME:

MULTIPLE
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: MICHIGAN, Mecosta

DATE RECEIVED: 10/31/14 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 11/25/14
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 12/10/14 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 12/17/14
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 14001044

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT RETURN REJECT 12.16.14 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

Entered in
The National Register
of
Historic Places

RECOM./CRITERIA _____

REVIEWER _____ DISCIPLINE _____

TELEPHONE _____ DATE _____

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.



STATE OF MICHIGAN

RICK SNYDER
GOVERNOR

MICHIGAN STATE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY



October 22, 2014

Mr. J. Paul Loether, Chief
National Register of Historic Places
National Park Service
1201 Eye Street, NW, 8th Floor
Washington, DC 20005

Dear Mr. Loether:

Enclosed is a national register nomination form for the Morgan West Wheatland Cemetery in Mecosta County, Michigan. This property is being submitted for listing in the national register. No written comments concerning this nomination were submitted to us prior to the submission of this nomination to you.

Questions concerning this nomination should be addressed to Robert O. Christensen, national register coordinator, by phone at 517/335-2719 or email at christensenr@michigan.gov.

Sincerely yours,

Brian D. Conway
State Historic Preservation Officer

State Historic Preservation Office

Michigan Library and Historical Center • 702 West Kalamazoo Street • P.O. Box 30740 Lansing, Michigan 48909-8240
michigan.gov/shpo • 517.373.1630 • FAX 517.335.0348 • TTY 800.382.4568