







U. S. Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

Morgantown Historic District  
Fauquier County, Virginia

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification** (Enter categories from instructions)

   Other \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Materials** (Enter categories from instructions) **SEE CONTINUATION SHEET**

foundation \_\_\_\_\_

roof \_\_\_\_\_

walls \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

other \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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

**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)

- X    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.
- X    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 a grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

**Areas of Significance** (Enter categories from instructions)

   ARCHITECTURE \_\_\_\_\_

   ETHNIC HERITAGE: Black \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**    1876-1953 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Dates N/A

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation N/A

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Architect/Builder \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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

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### 9. Major Bibliographical References

#### Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

#### Previous documentation on file (NPS)

preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.

previously listed in the National Register

previously determined eligible by the National Register

designated a National Historic Landmark

recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

#### Primary Location of Additional Data

State Historic Preservation Office

Other State agency

Federal agency

Local government

University

Other

Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

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### 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Approximately 9 acres

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

Zone Easting Northing    Zone Easting Northing

1 \_\_\_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_\_\_

3 \_\_\_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_\_\_

See continuation sheet.

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

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

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**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title: Maral S. Kalbian/ Architectural Historian and Margaret T. Peters/Research Historian

Organization: Maral S. Kalbian date July 30, 2003

street & number: 2026 Old Chapel Road telephone 540-837-2081

city or town Boyce state VA zip code 22620

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets**

**Maps**

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

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

**Photographs**

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

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

**Property Owner**

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

name See Attached Property Owners List

street & number \_\_\_\_\_ telephone \_\_\_\_\_

city or town \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_\_ zip code \_\_\_\_\_

**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. 470 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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**6. HISTORIC FUNCTIONS:**

DOMESTIC

Single dwelling  
Secondary structure

EDUCATION

School

RELIGION

Religious facility

FUNERARY

Cemetery

**CURRENT FUNCTIONS:**

DOMESTIC

Single dwelling  
Secondary structure

RELIGION

Religious facility

FUNERARY

Cemetery

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**7. DESCRIPTION**

**Materials:**

FOUNDATION

Stone

WALLS

WOOD: weatherboard  
log

STUCCO

SYNTHETICS

ROOF

METAL: tin

OTHER

WOOD

BRICK

STONE

**SUMMARY DESCRIPTION:**

The Morgantown Historic District is located in the hamlet of Morgantown at the junction of Freestate Road and Mount Nebo Church Road in north central Fauquier County, two miles south of Marshall. The Reconstruction-era African-American district contains nine contributing resources: four dwellings, a church, an abandoned school, a meat house, the ruins of an outbuilding, and a cemetery. The cemetery is not contiguous with the other resources and is located .2 miles to the southeast, divided from them by modern development. The crossroads community was created after William Morgan deeded land to several former slaves during the mid- to late 1870s. Archaeological resources are not included in this nomination.

Even though Morgantown is an unincorporated village that was never officially named, "Morgantown" is used to describe it in Land Tax Books as early as 1876. The Morgantown Historic District contains a concentration of historic buildings that are not only the oldest in the

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community, but well represent dwellings and institutional buildings typical of Reconstruction-era African-American rural communities. All the buildings are of the vernacular and were probably constructed by members of the community. The district contains approximately nine acres.

Morgantown's layout is dictated by roads and landscape features. It is primarily a concentration of buildings around a crossroads in an area that is fairly hilly. While the Morgantown Community Cemetery is located a short distance from the concentration of historic resources remaining in the village, it is fairly visible because it is close to the same elevation and is divided by low areas that contain newer construction.

### ARCHITECTURAL ANALYSIS

At the physical center of Morgantown is Mount Nebo Baptist Church (030-5322-0002), organized in 1877. The original church, known as Morgantown Colored Baptist Church, stood on the hill next to the cemetery at the east end of Mount Nebo Church Road, and was moved to the rear yard of the current building in 1910 for use as a meeting hall. It recently collapsed. The current church was constructed by local builder T. J. Orndorff in 1902, on land deeded by Peter Grigsby (**Photo 1**). It is a one-story, three-bay, gable-end, stuccoed frame building with aluminum siding on the sides. It rests on a stone foundation with a projecting, square, two-stage entrance/bell tower. The square-headed window frames feature pointed-arched windows, and the building has a date stone of September 21, 1902. Modern additions include a one-story concrete block wing to the side and one to the rear.

Directly adjacent to the church is 4671 Freestate Road, a property that marks the northern edge of the district (030-5322-0001). It contains a two-story, four-bay, gable-roofed dwelling of cinder block construction on the first floor and frame construction that has been parged on the second floor (**Photo 2**). The house, which rests on a stone foundation, has two front doors, six-over-six-sash windows, a standing-seam metal gabled roof, and a four-bay hip-roofed front porch. Constructed ca. 1900, it may have been used as a duplex or partial commercial. The property also includes an early-20<sup>th</sup>-century frame meat house with board and batten siding, as well as a small, one-story concrete block secondary dwelling also from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (**Photo 3**).

Located diagonally across Freestate Road to the southwest of Mount Nebo Church is a two-story, four-bay, gable-roofed vernacular frame dwelling (030-5322-0003). It sits on a stone foundation, is clad in German-lap siding and features a standing-seam metal roof and two-over-

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two-sash windows (**Photo 4**). It has a rear saltbox extension and a three-bay front porch. The concrete block flues and rear deck are modern additions. Its most significant feature, like the house at 4671 Freestate Road, is that it has two front doors. Constructed ca. 1910, the house has most recently been associated with the O'Bannion family, although it was probably constructed by James Herder.

Just to the south of 4690 Freestate Road (030-5322-0003) is the abandoned Morgantown School (030-5322-0004). Constructed around 1891 as an African-American public school for the neighboring children, it closed in the mid-1960s. Although in fairly poor condition with one of the walls almost entirely missing, it still retains its character-defining features including its one-bay, one-story gable-end form, the open wooden school belfry on the gable end, stone foundation, weatherboard siding, capped corner boards, and a plain frieze with bowed returns (**Photo 5**). The windows are missing, as is the side wing that had been added in 1957. It has recently been deeded to the Afro-American Historical Association of Fauquier County, which hopes to restore it as a museum.

The oldest dwelling in the Morgantown Historic District is located at 9065 Mount Nebo Church Road (030-5322-0005) and is commonly referred to as the Miles House. Currently abandoned, the rear portion of the house is log and was probably constructed around 1890 or earlier (**Photo 6**). Robert Miles, who acquired the property in 1898, constructed the front frame portion of the house. The rear log section is a two-story, two-bay unit clad in stucco with a large exterior-end stone chimney, gable roof, six-over-six-sash windows and a screened-in side porch. The front frame addition is constructed in a two-story vernacular hall-parlor-plan on a stone foundation with stucco siding, a standing-seam metal roof, central brick flue and a plain frieze with boxed returns. These returns have decorative trim that match those on the Morgantown School and indicate the two buildings may have been constructed by the same builder. Also included on the property are the stone ruins of an outbuilding that appears to have been a banked structure.

The Morgantown Community Cemetery (030-5322-0006) is located .2 miles southeast of the center of Morgantown on a hill that is about the same elevation as the church, school, and surrounding dwellings (**Photo 7**). The site is partially enclosed by a wooden fence and contains close to 100 grave sites (**Photo 8**). The site was deeded by James Lawson to the Morgantown Colored Baptist Church in 1876. Although the church was moved from the site in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the cemetery is an important cultural resource in the community and is still in use today. The earliest documented tombstone is for Mollie Massie, dated 1880. The cemetery has mature

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trees, primarily cedars, and includes a variety of family plots ranging from ones delineated by low formed concrete walls with a large headstone, to more modest ones with unmarked graves. Many of the African-Americans who founded and developed Morgantown as well as residents of the surrounding rural areas are buried here.

Although the proposed historic district of Morgantown includes only six properties, they are the core of this Reconstruction-era African-American community and represent the oldest and most significant resources in it. The vernacular buildings range in date from the 1890s to 1910 and all retain a high degree of architectural integrity with few if any modern intrusions within the district boundaries. While there are several other rural African-American communities that developed in Fauquier County in the years following the Civil War, Morgantown and nearby Ashville are the best preserved and retain the largest concentration of historic buildings (**Photo 9**).

**MORGANTOWN HISTORIC DISTRICT INVENTORY**

**NOTES ON FORMAT AND ORGANIZATION OF INVENTORY:**

The properties are listed numerically by street address. All resources are contributing and are keyed to the map in regular order.

**Freestate Road**

**4671 Freestate Road 030-5322-0001**

*Primary Resource Information:* **Dwelling, Stories 2, Style: Other, ca 1900**

Two-story, 4-bay, gable-roofed dwelling of cinder block construction on the first floor and frame that has been parged on the second floor. The house rests on a stone foundation and features 6/6-sash windows, two front doors, a plain friezeboard, a 4-bay hip-roofed front porch and a rear shed-roofed enclosed porch on brick piers. The first floor of the house appears to have been rebuilt using cinder block on an earlier foundation. Also the second story as well as the standing-seam metal roof appear to pre-date the first floor. The concrete porch floor was constructed in the 1960s. The house features an exterior door on the south side as well as two front doors. It may have been used as a duplex or part commercial use.

*Individual Resource Status:* **Dwelling**

**Contributing**

*Individual Resource Status:* **Meat house - early-20<sup>th</sup>-century; frame (board and batten), gable-roofed (tar paper), meat house on pier foundation.**

**Contributing**

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*Individual Resource Status:* **Secondary Dwelling**-early-20th-century, small, 1-story, concrete block (parged) dwelling with exposed rafter ends, a standing-seam metal gable roof, concrete sills and 6/6-sash windows. This small house has a side concrete block wing with flue.

**Contributing**

**4679 Freestate Road 030-5322-0002**

*Primary Resource Information:* **Church, Stories 1, Style: Other, 1902**

The current building was constructed by local builder J. Orndorff in 1902. It is a one-story, 3-bay, gable-end stuccoed frame building (aluminum siding on sides) on a stone foundation with a projecting, square, two-stage, entrance/bell tower. The square-headed window frames feature pointed-arched windows and the building has a date stone of September 21, 1902. Modern additions include a one-story 5-bay concrete block wing to the side and one to the rear.

*Individual Resource Status:* **Church**

**Contributing**

**4690 Freestate Road 030-5322-0003**

*Primary Resource Information:* **Dwelling, Stories 2, Style: Other, ca 1910**

Two-story, four-bay (2-bay on 2nd floor), frame (German-lap), gable-roofed (standing-seam metal) with saltbox roof in rear dwelling that appears to have been constructed ca. 1910. It rests on a stone foundation and details include: 2 front doors; 2/2 windows; rectangular attic vent; modern central concrete block flue and exterior-end concrete block flue; and 3-bay, hip-roofed front porch with turned posts and 2-board railing. Except for the new flues, the house appears to be in very original condition.

*Individual Resource Status:* **Dwelling**

**Contributing**

**Old Ashville School, 000 Freestate Road 030-5322-0004**

*Primary Resource Information:* **School, Stories 1, Style: Other, ca 1891**

This one-story, one-bay, gable-end, frame former school building is abandoned and the south wall is entirely missing. Regardless, the building has good architectural integrity. Details include: weatherboard siding, stone foundation, capped cornerboards, a plain frieze with boxed returns, frame of the bell tower, three bays on side elevation, brick flue on rear, and ruins of concrete/stone foundation of 1957 wing.

*Individual Resource Status:* **School**

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**9065 Mount Nebo Church Road 030-5322-0005**

*Primary Resource Information:* **Dwelling, Stories 2, Style: Other, ca 1890**

The rear portion of this dwelling is a 2-story, 2-bay log unit and appears to be the oldest-probably dating to ca. 1890. It is clad in stucco and features a large exterior-end stone chimney, 6/6 windows, and a screened-in side porch. The front is of frame construction and is a hall-parlor-plan frame dwelling, probably constructed in the early 20th century. Details include 1/1 replacement windows, a plain frieze with boxed returns (that match the ones on the school); stucco siding, central brick flue, stone foundation and 1-bay front porch.

*Individual Resource Status:* **Dwelling**

**Contributing**

*Individual Resource Status:* **Ruins-** stone foundation of banked structure- probably an outbuilding.

**Contributing**

**Morgantown Community Cemetery, Mount Nebo Church Road 030-5322-0006**

*Primary Resource Information:* **Cemetery, ca 1880**

Morgantown Community Cemetery is located on a hill at the eastern end of Mount Nebo Church Road, southeast of the center of the village. The site is well-maintained and partially enclosed by a wooden fence. It contains between 50 and 100 grave sites with several family plots of varying sizes as well as both marked and unmarked graves. The original Morgantown Colored Baptist Church sat on a lot next to the cemetery but was moved off the site during the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

*Individual Resource Status:* **Cemetery**

**Contributing**

**8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:**

Morgantown, a very small collection of less than ten structures and a cemetery located northwest of Warrenton, Virginia, is significant as a rare and intact surviving collection of residences and institutional buildings associated with an early African-American community in Fauquier County. There were a number of such tiny communities in the county that grew after the Civil War, but Morgantown, and neighboring Ashville retain the highest level of integrity.<sup>1</sup> The resources, consisting of a late-19<sup>th</sup>-century dwelling and outbuilding ruin, two early-20<sup>th</sup>-century dwellings and associated outbuildings, a 1902 church, an early-20<sup>th</sup>-century schoolhouse, and a non-contiguous cemetery dating from the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, represent the village life for African-Americans in the surrounding area for over 125 years. With Ashville, which is

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less than ten miles away, Morgantown was at one time a thriving social center for the newly emancipated slaves and their descendants whose roots date back to the time when they were

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enslaved on nearby plantations. The land where Morgantown is located was once part of the extensive land holdings of William Morgan; Morgan's estate deeded various parcels of land in this area to his former slaves in transactions dating to the mid-to late 1870s, and it can be assumed the name of the community derives from this white landholder. Unlike many towns in neighboring Clarke County, this community's name did not evolve from the name of one of the newly freed slaves.<sup>2</sup> The Morgantown Historic District is eligible for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A and C. Its local significance is in the area of Ethnic Heritage for African-American history.

**HISTORIC BACKGROUND**

Morgantown, which is located on Route 721, now called "Freestate Road," traces its roots to deeds recorded in 1871 from Ann R. Morgan and her children to seven Negro freedmen who may have been William Morgan's former slaves. The road acquired its name after the American Revolution when area land tenants on property of Thomas 6th Lord Fairfax stopped paying their rents because Fairfax was considered a "defeated enemy."<sup>3</sup> According to the deeds, William Morgan had died intestate in 1869. His property was described as being bounded by land of John Strother and John Washington. The plat that accompanies the deed to Brister Grigsby does not show any buildings or improvements; and the selling price for 30 acres was a mere \$5.00. The slave census of 1860 lists the grantees as slaves but the records do not specifically indicate that they all had belonged to Morgan. All the parcels were described according to the Land Tax Books for Fauquier County for 1872 as being located on Carter's Run. By 1876, and continuing well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the location of the parcels was noted as "Morgantown." The names of the grantees included Willis Gant, Alfred King, Stephen George, Brister (or Briscoe) Grigsby, James Lawson, and Henry Welch. The parcels ranged in size from about 8 acres to 20 acres. Of these initial grantees, the names Grigsby, Welch, Gant, and Lawson appear in succeeding years. The parcel charged to Willis Gant appears to have been acquired by Alfred King by 1880; however, the name Gant (later transcribed as "Grant") appears as land holder Amanda Grant in Ashville by the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The 1891 tax records show relatively substantial improvements on parcels charged to Alfred King (\$175), and the Grigsbys (\$250, \$25, and \$100).<sup>4</sup>

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Beginning in 1910, Robert E. Miles is taxed for 14 acres and \$198 for buildings, which is very likely the present dwelling located at 9065 Mount Nebo Church Road (030-5322-0005) at the southeast corner of the district and known as the Miles House. Miles had acquired the land in

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1898 in two parcels of 12 and 2 acres each from Peter Grigsby who had acquired it from Major A. Strother, another early white land owner in the area who was mentioned in the deeds of 1871.<sup>5</sup> The rear log addition may date to Strother's ownership of the land. The property, still owned by Robert Miles's heirs, has been abandoned. Robert Miles is buried in the Morgantown Community Cemetery with the dates on his gravestone 1858-1936. His wife, Kitty, died in 1900 and is buried next to him.

The other dwelling in the district known as the Wines-O'Bannion House stands on a  $\frac{3}{4}$ -acre parcel on the west side of Freestate Road at 4690 Freestate Road, (030-5322-0003) which Anna Elizabeth (Annie) O'Bannion acquired from Jessie and Lillie Ford in a deed dated October 15, 1932.<sup>6</sup> This was the same parcel that Jessie Ford acquired from James Herder and his wife Sadie in 1921.<sup>7</sup> The property is described as bounded on the south by the "public school" and on the west by the land of Emmett Miles.

It can be presumed that the establishment of the community of Morgantown grew from the concentration of African-American ownership of small parcels in this vicinity located at the intersection of two country roads, now Freestate Road and Mount Nebo Church Road. According to the census information for the year 1910, most of the "colored" residents of this area were either farm laborers or worked as servants in private, presumably white, homes. According to the Afro-American Historical Association of Fauquier County, some residents traveled as far as to northern areas of Virginia like Fairfax and Alexandria to work in homes of whites as domestics. They would live in and come home only intermittently. A very few are listed as "farmers," indicating that they probably owned farm land. It is likely, however, that African-American landholders in the surrounding area also identified with the village as the center of their lives. Towns were a very "potent unit" for the freedmen after Emancipation, serving as centers of political and social activity and offering the services of those institutions that were important to the African-American community, e.g. religion, education, and commerce. Prior to the Civil War, towns were often "off limits" to slaves, perhaps accounting for the importance attached to establishment of African-American towns following the war.<sup>8</sup> There was probably less freedom associated with rural living, since many of the freedmen worked for wages or were share croppers for their previous owners. Towns offered African-Americans opportunities; to freely worship, conduct commerce, and acquire an education, all activities from

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which they were barred when they were enslaved. Many African-American towns generated an elite African-American society, with more mulattos and more freedmen who could read and write.<sup>9</sup> It is not surprising that town living was viewed as preferable, and represented a strong

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departure from social life under slavery. The importance of land ownership cannot be over emphasized; in the eyes of many former slaves, land ownership was the first measure of true freedom. In the case of Morgantown, the acquisition by deed of parcels concentrated along Carter's Run led ultimately to locating a church, a cemetery and a schoolhouse in what would become the tiny village.

In 1891, Bennett Saunders deeded to the Trustees for the Public Schools of Marshall District in Fauquier County, a parcel on the main road for the purpose of constructing a school building for the community. The parcel was described as containing about one acre and provided for access and use of a spring for the benefit of the school. The selling price was \$40 and the lot was described as adjacent to Major Williams's farm and land of Lawrence Washington.<sup>10</sup> It is likely that the school was constructed soon after.<sup>11</sup> For such a small community, this action is indicative of the importance that the African-American community placed on education. Gerald David Jaynes, writing in Branches Without Roots: Genesis of the Black Working Class in the American South, 1862-1892, points out that there were "three defining characteristics of 19th-century Radical Republicanism: universal education, universal male suffrage, and universal small proprietorship." He indicates that prior to the Civil War the South had "failed to satisfy each of these fundamental criteria." In 1865 most Republicans agreed that "the whole fabric of southern society must be changed."<sup>12</sup> Prior to the Civil War and Emancipation, education for African-American was expressly forbidden in Virginia. It was not until the adoption of the Underwood Constitution in 1870, which provided for the establishment of Virginia's first statewide system of public education in the Commonwealth, that education was recognized as a governmental responsibility.<sup>13</sup> The fact that Bennett Saunders was willing to sell for a token sum of money, and that the trustees were willing to purchase land for a free school in 1891 demonstrates that African-Americans in this community recognized in a tangible way the overriding importance of education for their children. According to the Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction for the period from 1874-1878, Fauquier County had 15 colored schools with eight male teachers and one female teacher. It is likely that children in the Morgantown vicinity may have attended the school in Ashville before 1891, and either because of overcrowding or problems with transporting students the several miles by road to Ashville, the community established its own school. The average school year lasted only 4-3/4 months, which, although shorter than for white schools, probably had the same causes, e.g. the need for children to help in

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the fields. It was pointed out in the report that one-story school buildings were better for the children's health because the space was easier to heat and ventilate. In the report from 1878, the general public sentiment about the schools in the county was generally favorable.<sup>14</sup> Most

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scholars agree that education in the South in the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was essentially a “bottom-up” development, with the impetus for education coming from the local communities themselves rather than being imposed from a higher authority.<sup>15</sup> This may have stemmed from the general suspicion among rural southerners of government and government control. Many white southerners believed that “education [unnecessarily] raised expectations” for the Negroes which led to an alliance between blacks and northern reformers.<sup>16</sup> There is no indication, however, that the African-American school in Morgantown received any assistance from outside the community. The tax records for 1891 show that \$3,123 of the \$12,490 paid in land taxes by Negroes went to free schools in Fauquier County, a portion of which undoubtedly was allocated to Morgantown.<sup>17</sup> Other funds were raised from among the parents and patrons of the school.

African-American communities, centered around institutional buildings such as schools and churches, began to emerge in the post-war years. They were shaped by the rural and agricultural environment in which they were located. In the case of Morgantown and nearby Ashville, the communities were at the center of larger tracts held by African-Americans who farmed them. Neighborhoods or small communities became “self-sufficient cocoons” and schools depended on local conditions and enthusiasm.<sup>18</sup> The schoolhouses, like the one built in Morgantown, tended to “blend into the topography.” Public schools in the rural South, were basically make-shift and reflected the communities that they served. Patrons or parents of school-age children usually determined the location of a school, and there were often complaints about accessibility.<sup>19</sup> This may very well account for the fact that the tiny communities of Ashville and nearby Morgantown each had their own school. Individual schools had considerable autonomy and often raised money locally to improve their facilities. Apparently, schools were forced to attract students to enhance their base of financial support. The schools were usually one-room style and featured hard benches and few windows; most African-American schools were overcrowded. Because of the short school term, schools played a somewhat “part time role,”<sup>20</sup> Many of the educational reforms of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century bypassed African-American schools.<sup>21</sup> There was a general acceptance by the white reformers that Negroes had inferior ability. The historic debate about whether the Negro should receive a classical or a practical education raged in those years. There are few records to indicate the direction of Morgantown School’s curriculum, but the small 19<sup>th</sup>-century schoolhouse continued to function until the 1950s, indicating that it probably followed the general direction of education in the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The US Census for 1900

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indicates that over 87% of whites in the Piedmont region of Virginia were literate, while only 41.3% of blacks were able to read and write.<sup>22</sup> The central role of the school in Morgantown’s community is expressed in The Circuit, the sole African-American newspaper in the area which was published in Catlett, Fauquier County, in the 1930s and 40s, where it reported on a

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Valentine's Day party hosted by little Jansie O'Bannion for all the pupils and teacher of the elementary school.<sup>23</sup> Another edition announced that Negro Health Week was to be celebrated by "our school."<sup>24</sup> The fact that two tiny Fauquier communities supported education for their children and clearly took great pride in their schools is a tribute to their persistence in sustaining education for their children and probably more important, attracting students from the surrounding areas. As late as the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, the local parents and patrons of the PTA raised money to make a substantial addition to the Morgantown School. By this time (1957) the tiny schoolhouse was accommodating 38 students in one room. What the local Warrenton newspaper called a "building inadequate for their needs," led to a "free voluntary" movement to build a multi-purpose room as an addition to the existing one-room schoolhouse in Morgantown. A subscription dinner was held at the local high school and another dinner at the Morgantown School itself to cover costs of wiring and light fixtures. Led by the PTA and the teacher, Roosevelt Barlock, trees, building materials, cement and labor were donated along with monetary contributions from "public spirited citizens;" a 42 X 18-foot all purpose room was completed in March of 1957. The school closed in the mid-1960s after court-ordered desegregation and consolidation of schools.<sup>25</sup>

The other institution that stood at the center of social life for the freedmen who lived in the village of Morgantown was the church. The public practice of religion for African-Americans was severely limited prior to the Civil War. Slaves were generally limited to attending white churches where they were forced to sit in the balconies and listen to white preachers. Religion, from the earliest days of slavery, however, was often central to the life of the slave. In the years following Emancipation, the church and its related organizations and activities formed a critical framework for the newly freed slaves. The church provided not only the social framework but a venue of most social activities for the community. The Morgantown Colored Baptist Church, organized in 1879, originally sat on a hill near the present cemetery on Mount Nebo Church Road (030-5322-0006). James Lawson, one of the original grantees from the estate of William Morgan, with his wife Letitia, deeded the land for the original church in 1876. The grantees are described as the "Trustees of Morgantown Colored Baptist Church...for purposes of building a church." The deed indicates that Lawson purchased this land from the widow and heir of William J. Morgan.<sup>26</sup> In its early years, the Morgantown church served as a school as well, with

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sisters Georgetta Hughes and Lula Welch as teachers. Thomas Edmonds was ordained as a Baptist minister in 1877 at the request of the Morgantown Baptist Church and served as its first pastor.<sup>27</sup> The earliest legible stones in the cemetery adjacent to the original church date from 1885 but earlier inventories indicated a burial from 1880. In a deed dated May 16, 1901, Peter and Lucy Grigsby, who owned several parcels of land in Morgantown, deeded a one-acre parcel

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to the Morgantown Colored Baptist Church, now known as Mount Nebo Baptist Church (030-5322-0002) for \$50 that was bounded on the west by the "Road" (now Freestate Road) and on the east by land belonging to Grigsby. Grigsby's home no longer is extant.<sup>28</sup> The date stone on the new church indicates that the builder was T. J. Orndorff.<sup>29</sup> According to the Afro-American Historical Association of Fauquier County, the older church on the hill was moved to the rear of the new parcel and a new church constructed, now known as Mount Nebo Baptist Church. Unfortunately, the original building suffered serious roof damage in 2002 and had to be pulled down. Peter Grigsby and William Oliver were the builders of the new church. Beginning in the early 1920s, Reverend Arthur Stewart served congregations in both Morgantown and Ashville, and his sermons were often praised in the pages of the Circuit. The residents' names that are mentioned in the Circuit in the early 1940s include Wines, Saunders, Ford, Miles and Sanford. The Circuit also announced the celebration of Mount Nebo Baptist Church's 67<sup>th</sup> anniversary in which many members and visitors participated, including "Reverend Ford" of Ashville.<sup>30</sup> The Mount Nebo congregation continues to be active in the community.

Another important feature of African-American communities is the cemetery (030-5322-0006). In Morgantown, the cemetery, which probably dates from the earliest years of the Morgantown Colored Baptist Church, stands on a scenic hill just to the east of the village overlooking a valley to the east. Although it is not contiguous to the other properties in the district, it is visible from the main road and has strong ties to the community. The Morgantown Cemetery was and continues to be a community cemetery, not owned by the church. The Mount Nebo Church administers the sale of lots in the cemetery, but those who are buried there come from all over that area of Fauquier County. The cemetery is enclosed by a wooden fence and contains between 50 and 100 marked grave sites, and a number of unmarked ones including several unusual mounds encircled with stones clearly marking burial sites. A handful of the family plots are marked by low concrete or stone footings or rails. The earliest marked gravestone is for Mollie Massie who died in 1880. Many of the people associated with Morgantown are buried in the cemetery, including members of the Miles, Butler, Ford, Smith, Williams, O'Bannion, Bushrod, and King families. Several veterans of both World War I and World War II are buried here with their military service prominently noted. The cemetery is still in active use as of 2003.

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The other institution that was necessary for a small town was the local store. It can be assumed that basic supplies and foodstuffs would have been essential to many who lived in the village of Morgantown and who worked the fields surrounding the town, either their own or as sharecroppers. The only structure supporting a store that survives today according to the Afro-American Historical Association of Fauquier County, stood on the lot just north of the Mount Nebo Baptist Church at 4671 Freestate Road known as the Bushrod House (030-5322-0001). It

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appears that during the last several decades of the 19th century, Peter Grigsby operated a store on this land. In 1898, Peter Grigsby, one of the original grantees from William Morgan's estate, deeded this parcel of .56 acres to Robert E. Miles.<sup>31</sup> The property remained in the ownership of Miles and later his estate until 1944 when it was deeded to Preston Bushrod. The plat attached to that deed shows that the parcel was bounded by Route 721 (Freestate Road), the Baptist Church, and the property of Jessie Ford.<sup>32</sup> Preston Bushrod died in 1992, and his will written in 1986 indicates that he was preceded in death by his wife Lula in 1980. Among his heirs was a daughter Louise Christian and another daughter Inez Ford.<sup>33</sup> The Ford family was very prominent in both Morgantown and in Ashville and many family members are buried in the Morgantown Community Cemetery. Later, in 1997, Louise Christian sold the .56 acre parcel to Elmer F. Christian for \$25,000.<sup>34</sup> According to the Afro-American Historical Association, a store stood on this parcel at 4671 Freestate Road. Today several late-19<sup>th</sup>- or early-20<sup>th</sup>- century structures stand on the lot, one of which may have served as Peter Grigsby's store.

Morgantown, like its neighbor Ashville, did not have the usual amenities of a town such as banks, multiple stores, government buildings or industrial structures; however, it had those buildings that most closely represent the needs of a newly freed population and served as a central point for the social, religious, and educational life of the African-American community. The surviving structures well represent those essential institutions. That a good representation of these structures, both institutional and residential and all of which retain remarkable architectural integrity, survives into the 21st century is a measure of the significance of this African-American community to Fauquier County.

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## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Conversation with Karen White, President of the Afro-American Historical Association of Fauquier County, April, 2003.

<sup>2</sup> Maral S. Kalbian, Final Report: African-American Historic Context, Clarke County, Virginia. County of Clarke (2002).

<sup>3</sup> Eugene M. Scheel, The Guide to Fauquier, a Survey of the Architecture and History of a Virginia County, Warrenton, VA: Fauquier County Bicentennial Commission, 1976, 16.

<sup>4</sup> Fauquier County Land Tax Books, 1870-1933.

<sup>5</sup> Fauquier County Afro-American Historical Association, Folder 1594.

<sup>6</sup> Fauquier County Deed Book 138/2 (1932)

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<sup>7</sup> Fauquier County Deed Book 122/8 (1921)

<sup>8</sup> Orville V. Burton, "The Rise and Fall of African-American Town Life," in Toward a New South: Studies in Post Civil War Southern Communities, edited by O. V. Burton and Robert C. McMath, Jr., Contribution in American History, No. 97; Westport, CT:Greenwood Press, 1982, 152.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 152-158.

<sup>10</sup> Fauquier County Deed Book 82/194 (1891).

<sup>11</sup> Scheel, The Guide to Fauquier..., 18.

<sup>12</sup> Gerald David Jaynes, Branches without Roots: Genesis of the Black Working Class in the American South, 1862-1892, New York and Oxford; Oxford University Press, 1986, 7.

<sup>13</sup> Emily J. Salmon and Edward D. C. Campbell, Jr., editors, The Hornbook of Virginia History, Fourth Edition, Richmond: The Library of Virginia, 1994, 98.

<sup>14</sup> Virginia School Report: Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1874-1878, Richmond: Superintendent of Public Printing, 70.

<sup>15</sup> William A. Link, A Hard Country and a Lonely Place: Schooling, Society and Reform in Rural Virginia, 1870-1920, Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1986, 43.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>17</sup> Fauquier County Land Tax Books, 1891

<sup>18</sup> Link, A Hard Country, 13.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 23, 28, 37-40.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 70.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 103.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 209.

<sup>23</sup> The Circuit, March 4, 1940.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. May 4, 1945.

<sup>25</sup> Fauquier Democrat, March, 14, 1957; April 14, 1966.

<sup>26</sup> Fauquier County Deed Book 73/191 (September 7, 1876) and Deed Book 76/203 (1875).

<sup>27</sup> "History [of] Mt. Nebo Baptist Church, Morgantown, 1877-1977," collections, Afro-American Historic Association of Fauquier County; History of Long Branch Church, publication date ca. 1886, p. 19.

<sup>28</sup> Fauquier County Deed Book 102, 279 (1901)

<sup>29</sup> Scheel, The Guide to Fauquier..., 18.

<sup>30</sup> The Circuit, August 2, 1946.

<sup>31</sup> Fauquier County Deed Book 89/256. (1898).

<sup>32</sup> Fauquier County Deed Book 156/327 (1944).

<sup>33</sup> Fauquier County Will Book 176/1283 (1992).

<sup>34</sup> Fauquier County Deed Book 779 (1176).

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## **10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

### **UTM REFERENCES**

A18 24991E 4302886N  
B 18 250346E 4302774N

### **VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION:**

The boundaries of the nominated Morgantown Historic District are delineated by two UTM coordinates: A18 24991E 4302886N and B 18 250346E 4302774N.

### **BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION:**

The Morgantown Historic District boundaries were drawn to include the largest concentration of historic buildings in the village of Morgantown, at the junction of Freestate Road and Mount Nebo Church Road, as well as a discontinuous cemetery located .2 miles to the southeast at the eastern end of Mount Nebo Road. The discontinuous cemetery is included because it represents an important connection with the African-American community in Morgantown, yet is separated from the contributing resources by numerous noncontributing elements. Because the cemetery and the rest of the district are on similar elevations and are separated by a low area, there is a visual connection between the two. Noncontributing buildings and more rural areas were excluded.

## **PHOTOGRAPHIC DOCUMENTATION**

Unless otherwise noted, all photographs are of:

### **MORGANTOWN HISTORIC DISTRICT**

Location: Morgantown, Virginia (Fauquier County)

VDHR File Number: 030-5322

Date of photograph: April 2003

Photographer: Maral S. Kalbian

All negatives are stored at the Department of Historic Resources Archives unless noted.

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SUBJECT: Mount Nebo Church (030-5322-0002)

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VIEW: Southwest view  
NEG. NO.: 20411  
PHOTO 1 of 9

SUBJECT: House, 4671 Freestate Road (030-5322-0001)  
VIEW: Southwest view  
NEG. NO.: 20412  
PHOTO 2 of 9

SUBJECT: House, 4671 Freestate Road (030-5322-0001)  
VIEW: Southwest view, secondary dwelling  
NEG. NO.: 20411  
PHOTO 3 of 9

SUBJECT: House, 4690 Freestate Road (030-5322-0003)  
VIEW: East view  
NEG. NO.: 20411  
PHOTO 4 of 9

SUBJECT: Old Morgantown School (030-5322-0004)  
VIEW: Northeast view  
NEG. NO.: 20411  
PHOTO 5 of 9

SUBJECT: House, 9065 Mount Nebo Church Road (030-5322-0005)  
VIEW: Northeast view  
NEG. NO.: 20411  
PHOTO 6 of 9

SUBJECT: View from Morgantown Cemetery toward Mount Nebo Church  
VIEW: Looking northwest  
NEG. NO.: 20465  
PHOTO 7 of 9

**Section \_\_Photos\_\_ Page \_\_20\_\_**

SUBJECT: Morgantown Community Cemetery (030-5322-0006)  
VIEW: View of entrance to cemetery

NPS Form 10-900-a  
(8-86)

OMB No. 1024-0018

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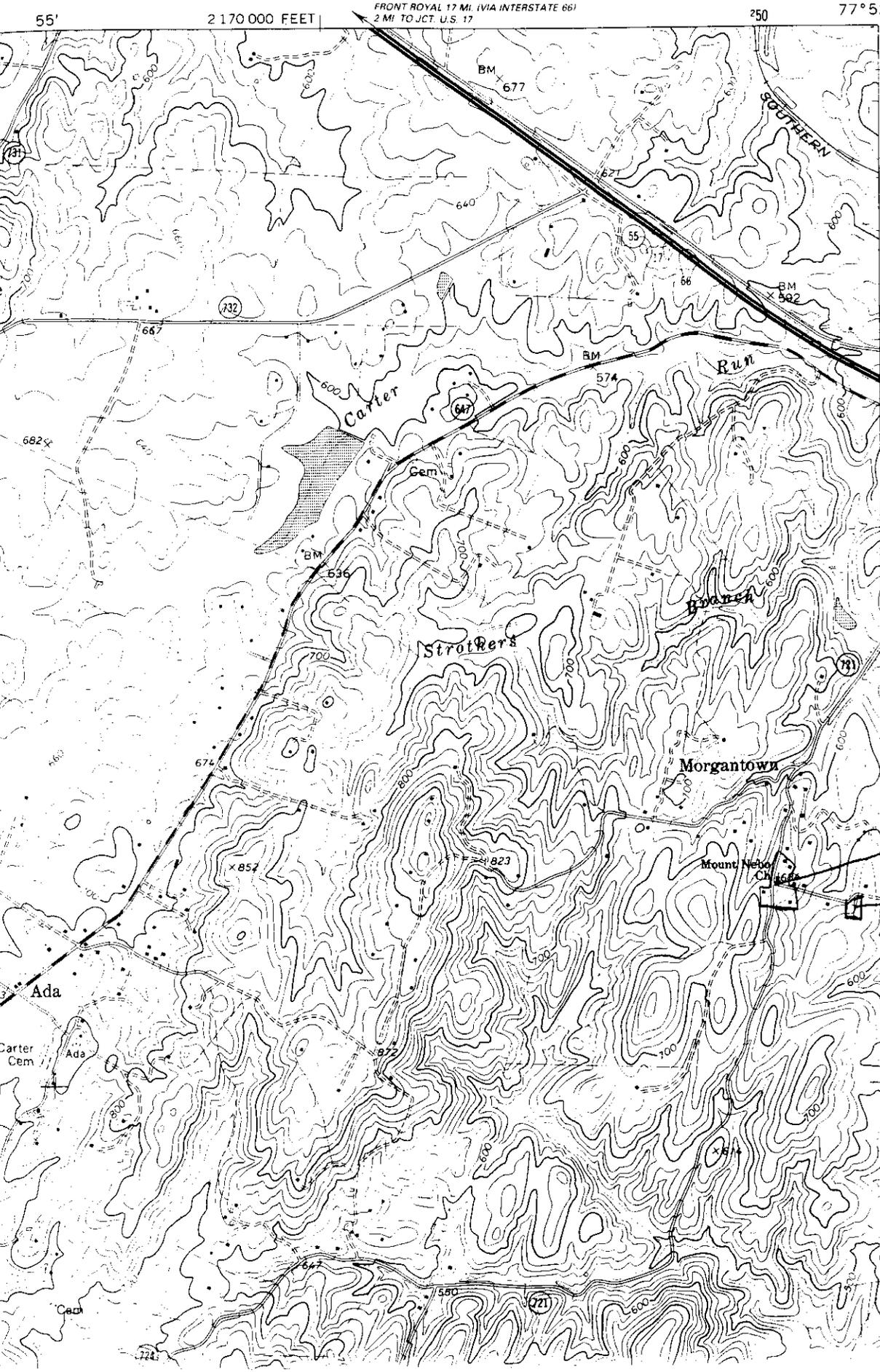
NEG. NO.: 20411  
PHOTO 8 of 9

SUBJECT: Streetscape, Freestate Road  
VIEW: Looking north  
NEG. NO.: 20411  
PHOTO 9 of 9



ORLEAN QUADRANGLE  
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Morgantown  
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District  
DHR#30-5322  
Fauquier County, V.  
UTM coordinates  
A 182491E/4302886N  
B 18250346E/4302774N